

Cévennes & Ardèche

A spectacularly beautiful and flexible cycling holiday for spring and autumn, exploring this remote cycling haven in Southern France

Summary

WHERE: Cévennes & Ardèche (Southern France)
DISTANCE: to suit you
TIME : 6 days on the bike
PRICE : see website
DATES: May/Jun/Sep



Highlights

Ride the spectacular gorges of the Jonte, Tarn and Ardèche

Summit the TdF stage ending of Mont Aigoual

Enjoy the remote beauty of this lesser known part of France

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides



Cévennes & Ardèche

This flexible road cycling itinerary has been carefully crafted to give you the opportunity to cycle this remote and beautiful landscape in the South of France during Spring and Autumn seasons, when the weather is cooler and ideal for cycling.

With an abundance of quiet and well-surfaced roads, spectacular and varied scenery, historic and untouched villages, the mountainous region between Nîmes, Rodez and Valence is waiting to be discovered by the discerning road cyclist. During this week you will encounter deep gorges, open moorland, meandering rivers, vineyards, limestone plateaus and ancient forest.

This is a Classic Cols style holiday, so you can expect our usual route choices, Classic or Challenge, depending on how much or little you want to be on the bike. This holiday is ideal for mixed ability groups. Those on the Classic route can expect to cycle an average of 81km/day with about 1,280m ascent. The optional extras on the Challenge route mean an average of up to 125km/day with 2,100m ascent.

Regardless of which route you go for (perhaps a few days of either?) this week is definitely a holiday and riding on the quiet roads through the stunning mountain scenery and along the gorges is a joy. The views are far reaching and dramatic, and the sense of achievement as you summit the climbs really is incredible.

Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

Included transfers from Marseille Airport to the start hotel in the pretty market town of Anduze (transfer time 2hrs). Assemble your bikes and depending on your arrival time, go for an exploratory spin or swim. Welcome briefing and a great dinner will follow.

Day 1: Anduze to Meyrueis via the Corniche des Cévennes

We begin our week of adventure on the road appropriately named the "Corniche des Cévennes". It snakes its way along a ridge linking picturesque ancient villages nestled between forests of chestnuts & Mediterranean oaks. Rather than being one climb, it undulates over a series of cols to the high point of the Col de Solpérière (1010m). En route, there are several spectacular views of the region we'll be exploring for the rest of the week.

After climbing the best part of 50km, we enjoy a descent into the Tarnon valley, which we follow up to the Col de Perjuret (1030m) on the southern edge of the limestone plateau of the Causse Méjéan. Our destination is the picture-perfect village of Meyrueis, where we stay for 2 nights.

Those wanting a bit more cycling can extend the ride by heading up to the Causse Méjéan (987m) and looping back via the Gorges de La Jonte.

Classic route

Cols de Solpérière + Perjuret
[87km with 1670m ascent]

Challenge route

Cols de Solpérière + Perjuret + Causse Méjéan
[122km with 2100m ascent]

Day 2: Ride from Meyrueis up Mont Aigoual

Today is all about Mont Aigoual (1567m). When the sky is clear, it is possible to see Mt Ventoux, the Pyrenees and even Mt Blanc way off in the Alps. Six roads climb to the weather station and cafe on the summit and today we try to experience as many of them as possible!

Starting down at 700m, we follow the river Jonte to its source via the Col de Perjuret (1030m). The scenery and flora are ever-changing as we move from limestone to granite and steadily gain altitude. The forest

gives way to open moorland for the final push to the summit.

From here we descend to the Col de la Serreyrède (1299m), where you can choose to return to Meyrueis via the Col de Montjardin (1005m), or head south over the Col du Minier (1264m) and back to the Col de la Serreyrède via the spectacular Col de la Lusette (1351m).

Classic route

Mont Aigoual [57km with 1030m ascent]

Harder route

Mont Aigoual + Causse Méjéan
[95km with 1580m ascent]

Challenge route

Mont Aigoual + Col de la Lusette
[108km with 2400m ascent]

Day 3: Meyrueis to Florac via the gorges of the Jonte & Tarn

Today is less about climbing and more about the WOW factor. We start by following the river Jonte deeper into the gorge to Le Rozier, where it joins the river Tarn. Here you can start to climb up the Gorges du Tarn to Sainte-Enimie, or descend further to Millau (famous for the impressive viaduct) and climb back to Le Rozier over the Causse Noir - La Cade (836m)

Our destination is Florac, the capital of the Cévennes, which is undoubtedly worth an explore. If you feel that there has not been enough climbing today, then nipping back up to the Causse Méjéan and the Col de Pierre Plate (1016m) is another option.

Classic route

[84km with 640m ascent]

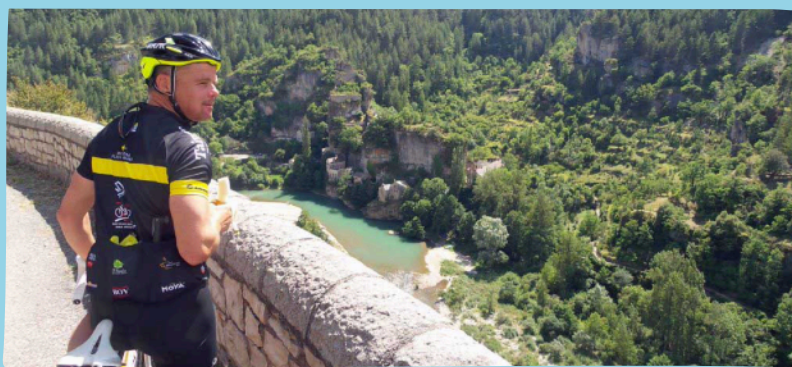
Harder route

[97km with 1100m ascent]

Challenge route

[129km with 1370m ascent]





Those wanting a bit more can venture further into the Massif de Prataubérat before rejoining the classic route at the Col de La Croix Blanche (890m).

Classic route

[87km with 1700m ascent]

Challenge route

[136km with 2500m ascent]

Day 4: Florac to Les Vans via Mont Lozère

Climbing is back on the agenda today, as we continue up the river Tarn to the pretty village of Le Pont-de-Montvert. Here things get a bit more severe as you climb up through the 'broom' scrub moorland to the bleak Col de Finiels (1541m) in the heart of Mont Lozère. Your effort is rewarded with another big view and a sweeping descent, past a ski station, to Le Bleymard.

A small climb over the Col de Tribes (1131m) takes you down to Villefort, which is dominated by a reservoir that is bisected by a railway viaduct! From here a small climb over the Col du Mas de l'Ayre (946m) takes you into the Ardèche and the large touristic town of Les Vans, where we spend two nights.

The optional extra today takes you back over Mont Lozère via the Col du Pré de la Dame (1474m) for some more spectacular views.

Classic route

Cols de Finiels + Tribes + Mas de l'Ayre
[96km with 1540m ascent]

Challenge route

Cols de Finiels + Tribes + Mas de l'Ayre + Pré de la Dame [139km with 2700m ascent]

Day 5: Ride from Les Vans into the Ardèche

If the weather is good, then there are plenty of non-cycling activities to be enjoyed within walking distance of the hotel.

However, there is also some excellent cycling to be done. We have opted for a spectacular route up a very narrow road that follows the river Borne to La Bastide-Puylaurent and back via St-Laurent-les-Bains and the Col du Chap del Bosc (1169m). This ride is genuinely remote!

Day 6: Les Vans to St-Martin-d'Ardèche via the Gorges de l'Ardèche

Thought by many to be the most spectacular canyon in France, the Gorges de l'Ardèche certainly make for an impressive grand finale! (Verdon Gorge is the other contender, where we also offer cycling holidays.)

The first 35km of our ride through rural France 'at its best' takes us to the entrance of the canyon at the Vallon-Pont-d'Arc.

The canyon road starts at the same level as the river and you get a great view of the iconic rock arch. It soon climbs up onto the plateau and meanders its way along the top of the precipitous cliffs. It is well worth detouring slightly at the viewpoints to look down at the groups of canoeists way below.

A wonderful descent takes us to the picturesque town of Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche where we stay the night. Here you can opt to hang up your bike and enjoy an afternoon swim in the river or head off on an undulating ride to explore the Cèze valley.

Classic route

[75km with 1100m ascent]

Challenge route

[116km with 1600m ascent]

Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer included transfers back to Marseille Airport (1hr 30min) - read on for more detail about your travel options.



Start & End Hotels

Start: La Porte des Cévennes, 2300, route de Saint-Jean-du-Gard, 30140 Anduze, France (Tel +33 466 619 944)

End: Hôtel Les Petits Oreillers, 60 Rue du Candelas au Sablas, 07700 St-Martin-d'Ardèche, France (Tel +33 475 048 785)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to MRS'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving into Marseille a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip

to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and to **Marseille-Provence airport (MRS)** are included in the holiday price. The transfers times are around 2hrs at the start and 1hr 30min at the end of the trip.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

The Marmot Tours App provides you with maps, altitude profiles, general information and safety notes, as well as detailed directions of where to go (via RWGPS). Your holiday will be available to view on the App from 7 days before and until 7 days after your holiday.

Our guides will also aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and you will see the van and guides regularly.

Additionally, we provide you with GPS files in .fit and .tcx formats for your navigation devices. They will be available on The Link a week or so before the start of your holiday.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

If using a Garmin, please ensure you download the base map of the country you're visiting before you go as this helps greatly with your navigation.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are, the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route.

It can be difficult to find extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardio vascular fitness overall, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.

Am I fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

We have created our Classic Cols range of holidays in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before. Our itinerary warms you up gently to the altitude, the extended climbing and to the technique of descending.

Our Classic Route is an achievable goal for regular and fit cyclists who have never climbed a mountain on a bike before, though we would suggest starting with our Pyrenean itinerary, which has even more route options available. Our vehicles and guides are on hand to support you on your holiday and can offer advice, moral support and lifts in the van if you are tired.

Other holidays where the Classic route is considered 'easier' are the Pyrenean Foothills, Classic Cols of Catalonia, Sardinia, Corsica and Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge (although if you like to test yourself, their Challenge routes certainly pack a punch!)

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create an ambience of non-competitive cycling with no pressure to keep up with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Am I too fit?

We have designed our Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long, making yourself very tired indeed! If you do our Challenge Route each day then you are looking at 750km with 12,670m of ascent during your week.

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily route for you.



Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to **focus on the road at all times**.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK) but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

Please note that carbon wheels with rim brakes are unsuitable for this holiday. Find more info about this in our [FAQ section](#) on the webpage.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace with a level of independence on this holiday. One van stays on the Classic route and one van covers the Challenge route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full challenge route may need to be more independent than those on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical issue (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

"The support [the guides] provided was exemplary and their competences were complimentary." Steve P

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

We stay in a selection of 2-3* hotels with en-suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. We're in France of course, so expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Some hotels offer cheese, eggs & meats for your protein kick start.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner or up to 2 beers or 2 soft drinks are included, however, coffees are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's Included?

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Access to Marmot App with daily holiday info, directions, maps and GPS files
- 7 nights half board accommodation and table wine during dinner (up to half a bottle per person), or up to 2 beers or 2 soft drinks
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water



Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our cancellation policy.

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

