



A Bicycle Tour of Provence for Cyclists Who Love Challenging Riding

This is the European bicycle tour for those desiring an epic Provence cycling vacation. Provence in general is a wonderful bicycle tour destination of incredible variety and diversity from the Riviera to the Rhone to the Alps. And you could ride for more than a decade and barely scratch the surface. We know, because we have. We cooked this tour up for riders seeking to push their limits and explore the very best of the mountainous side of Provence.

The Alpes-Maritime Provence ride is a perfect example of a tour designed by a cyclist, for cyclists. Rising rapidly from the shores of the Mediterranean, and forming the border between France and Italy, the Alpes-Maritime give way to the Alpes de Haute Provence (high mountains of Provence) and the Provence Alpes de Cote d'Azur to the west. So, while many know Provence, few plumb the depths of these the prime mountainous cycling regions. But if you ride with Veloski Tours you will, as this tour encompasses some of the finest parts of each. Each day will unfold pleasant surprises on the road as well at the comfortable and unique lodgings.

The backbone of the tour is based on portions of the Route Napoleon (his route to Waterloo on his return from Elba) and the Route des Grande Alpes. Myriad roads branching off these famous passages offer us a rich and deep exploration of the territory. Well known to French tourists, the area is essentially unexplored by Americans. You're sure to enjoy this unique opportunity to share roads with others who are passionate about natural scenery, quiet villages and well-maintained roads far off-the-beaten path.

You'll begin outside of Nice, in old town Vence, well known for its collection of Provencal fabrics, ceramics and restaurants. In Castellane, the highlight is the pilgrimage Chapel N-Dame-du-Rock perched high above the village on a 604ft block of rock. The Spanish influence of Barcelonnette appears out of place in this remote French valley, but the loop ride over the three cols (passes) is one of the most beautiful rides in all of the Alps. You'll be tested on the Col de la Bonette at 2710m is the highest paved road in Europe. This pass was first featured in the 1962 Tour de France, and then again in 1963 and 1993, before appearing again in 2008. The 1600m (over 5000) climb from Barcelonnette to the frontier between France and Italy is breathtakingly beautiful. And this is just one of many outright epic rides.

Before we descend all the way back down to the Mediterranean there are other, unheralded, climbs with stunning views (and descents!) that will leave you wondering why you waited so long to ride the Alpes-Maritime!

Tour Details

<p>2009 Dates: Arrival day: 6 September Departure day: 18 September</p> <p>Prices: 2000 Euro (double occupancy per person) 500 Euro (single supplement-limited spaces)</p> <p>Note: Special prices good until 15 January, 2009. After 15 January, 2009 prices at retail rate, currently 2250 Euro (double occupancy per person).</p>	Highlights	Quiet roads, Spectacular climbs, Gorge du Verdon, Highest paved road in Europe, Best loop rides in the Alpes-Maritime, Col du Cayolle, Col du Allos, Col de Champ, Col de Vence, Col de Bleine, Col de Vars, Col d'Izoard, Col de la Bonnet, Col de St Barnabe
	Includes	12 nights, 12 breakfasts, 10 dinners, 2 grand picnics, ride snacks & drinks, ride guides, daily luggage transfers, route maps & descriptions, van support, airport transfers on designated arrival/departure days
	Gateway	Nice, France
	Begin/End	Vence, France
	Total Distance	1042-1318km (646-817miles) depends on choices
	Daily Distance	64-122km (40-78 miles) depends on choices
	What to expect	Quiet roads, great scenery, exceptional meals, climbs of 8-25km at 5-9%, some short steeper sections
	Bicycle Rentals	None Riders bring their own bikes.

Day 1-- Vence arrival

Day 2--Seillans; 69-91km, 800-1300m climbing

The roads to Seillans are many and all choices lead to a wonderful introduction to the varied colors, flavors and fragrances that will be our backdrop for the coming days. We leave the hurried pace of the Cote dAzur behind as we follow winding roads deeper into the rock and oak covered hills and gorges of the Loup and Ceylon river drainages. Leaving Gourdon we continue our pleasant ascent into the pine forests of Andon. From Andon we glide down, down to Mons before our final secluded roadway into Seillans.

Day 3-- Moissac-Bellevue; 73km, 700m or 87km, 950m

The roads are highlighted with stops in the hilltop villages of Bargemon and Tourtour. Along the way we descend the Gorges du Chateaudouble and climb thru a forest of scrub oaks, before pedaling amid vineyards on the way to our secluded hotel. The first fragrances of the harvest will stimulate our senses as we lounge poolside in the afternoon sunlight.

Day 4 --Mosaic-Bellevue loop rides 66km, 700m or ??

The vineyards of the area beckon exploration, so we have short loop rides planned to the village of Cotignac where you can enjoy a typical mid-day meal at one of the numerous cafes.

Day 5-- Aix-en-Provence; 90km, 500m climbing

Today's ride is a superb ridge-surf all the way to our picnic lunch. The roads are smooth and the hills are small as we quickly ride to Varages, where we'll stop in a pottery/ceramics shop famous throughout the world as Faience style. A grand picnic is planned today. The final kilometers into Aix-en-Provence are dominated by the ever-changing views of Mont Victoire; immortalized in the paintings of Cezanne and others. Here is where the Provencal style sprouted and still flourishes today. Bon Appetit!!

Day 6-- Gordes; 68km, 700m; or 82km, 1000m

Aix-en-Provence is an ideal town for exploring and shopping, so we have a late departure (after lunch) arranged today. After lunch we will ride together out of town to the smaller quiet roads that we enjoy as we leave Mont Victoire behind and climb over a ridge into the Luberon to the ever-so-photogenic Gordes.

Day 7-- Gordes Loop Rides; 72km, 1300 or 30km, 200m

Today we explore the many hilltop villages of the Vaucluse; an area known for rich textures, brightly colored shutters and fascinating history. The longer route circumnavigates the entire Vaucluse region, while the shorter route takes us to the source of the Sorgue River. And of course there are myriad options to explore. Enjoy!!

Day 8 -- Vaison-la-Romaine; 56km, 700m Optional Mt Ventoux add-on

Today we leave the Luberon and Vaucluse regions as we ride along the slopes of the imposing Mt Ventoux. Bedoin will be our lunch with great views of Mt Ventoux, before continuing on to Vaison-la-Romaine. Vaison-la-Romaine is filled with artists and artisans, historical amphitheatres, centuries-old chapels, buildings and Roman bridge.

Day 9 -- Vaison-la-Romaine; Wine Loop Ride -- 57km, 500m climbing

Today is perfect for sampling wines, selecting your favorite Provencal fabrics, and purchasing herbs or other gifts for friends and family. Walking thru Vaison or riding the wine route either way you are guaranteed an enjoyable day.

Day 10-- Sault; 51km, 500m or 69km, 800m

Today we ride around the north side of the mountain on quiet roads with splendid views of Mt Ventoux. Along the way we'll take a little deviation from the valley road up and over the Col des Aires. An early lunch or late morning café is appropriate here for enjoying the dramatic views of Mt Ventoux from a different perspective.

Day 11-- Manosque; 68km, 600m

There are many roads to choose from today; we offer one of our favorites. Gently rolling terrain with good pavement and ever-changing views are in store for you, as we leave Mt Ventoux behind and ride toward the Haute-Provence region. **Day**

12-- Manosque loop 75km, 1000m climbing

The ride today is on tiny roads leading to small villages overlooking gorges with chateaus perched on the edge. This is a ride far from tourists, a ride that takes us back to the roots of Provencal life where farmers meet in town to sell their produce and boulangeries supply the lifeblood of France's baguette. Or indulge yourself relaxing poolside.

Day 13-- Moustiers-St Marie; 73km, 1200m climbing

Today we continue our travels east and higher into the Haute-Provence region across the Valensole plateau to the charming village of Moustiers; famous for fine porcelain.

Day 14 -- Castellane; 65km, 1100m climbing or 85km, 1500m climbing

Moustiers-St-Marie to Castellane is truly an amazing ride as we traverse the north edge of the Grand Canyon du Verdon.

Day 15-- Vence; 74km, 800m or 83km, 1200m

This is our final day of riding, as we return to our starting hotel in Vence. What a great day it will be as we climb an almost forgotten mountain road, view a stunning gorge, travel where sheep and goats are beginning to move from the high country to the lower valley meadow, and have lunch on the Mediterranean side of the rocky mountains known as the Alpes-Maritime. Of course, there are always additional options for those desiring a little more riding or more shopping for a special souvenir. Finally, we view the Cote dAzur from the top of the Col du Vence, before the final exhilarating descent of the trip, ending poolside at our hotel.

Day 16-- Nice departures

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