

TOUR de FRANCE

Provence & Alpes, 2019



SIERRA

SPORTS & TOURS

www.sierrasportsandtours.com

AUS: +61 3 9016 9830

ESP: +34 679 236 928

TOUR de FRANCE



Tour de France – From Le Geant de Provence to Alpe d’Huez!

The 2019 edition of the Tour de France celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the yellow jersey. There are good opportunities for the sprinters but the real race feature is its 5 summit finishes above 2000m elevation. While the 2019 TDF does not include iconic climbs, such as, Mt Ventoux or Alpe d’Huez the race route passes these ‘cols’ by a whisker so we are pleased to present a tour package bookended by two cycling meccas!

By joining this tour you will begin pedalling in Provence enjoying its lavender fields, rolling terrain, medieval townships and country estate accommodation. Provence provides the perfect base to enjoy mixed terrain rides and cycle through a selection of our favourite ‘out of this world’ gorges. In saying that though you do not enter this region without also tackling ‘Le Geant de Provence’ – Mt Ventoux!

During the final week of the 2019 TDF you will experience Stages 16, 18 & 19 live. The race organisers have packed many legendary cols into Stages 18 and 19. The race will be set alight in the Hautes-Alpes and you will be road-side to watch all the action LIVE!

2019 marks our tenth year supporting groups at *Le Tour*. We understand the importance of designing a range of cycling routes (it’s not all climbing) and participating in the excitement and atmosphere of arguably the world’s biggest sporting event. For those looking forward to a challenge you will have the chance to ride Mt Ventoux, Col d’Izoard, Col du Telegraphe, Col de la Croix de Fer and Alpe d’Huez to name a few!

ITINERARY

DAY ONE – Sat 20 July 2019 – Nice: Côte d'Azur (Mediterranean)

The tour begins by collecting you all at Nice Côte d'Azur International Airport between 9:00 - 10:00am. There will be a 1.5 hour transfer to the edge of the Regional National Park Verdun. Here one encounters the outstanding Verdun Gorge which is often referred to as Europe's Grand Canyon. The river has cut through the limestone leaving a 700m deep gorge in places! There will be time to set up the bikes and have a bite for lunch before cycling through this geographical paradise. The ride finishes on the edge of Provence, one of France's premiere travel regions, and which will be home for the next four nights!

Note: Nice provides an excellent tour starting point for those guests looking for a few days pre-tour to relax on the famous Cote d'Azur beaches. This stretch of Mediterranean is one of Europe's great coastal destinations and beyond the beaches there are spectacular hilltop villages and mountain scenery. The Nice old town also has a charm of its own and its impressive markets, promenades and Baroque architectural gems offer something for travellers of all types.

Meals: Dinner

Destinations: Gorges du Verdons

Today's Ride: 60km

Accommodation: Provence (France)



DAY TWO – Sunday 21 July 2019 – Picture Perfect Provence!

A scenic hotel to hotel loop ride through Provence has been designed for today. The idea is that there are some short climbs to get the cycling legs going but always with the goal of climbing to the towering Mt Ventoux summit tomorrow! The first coffee stop will be in the small Provencal village of Gordes. The Tour de France when intersecting Provence often passes through this township for its dramatic position on the edge of a rocky escarpment. The cycling loop will also lead you through Roussillon another of France's 'Plus Beaux Villages'. The non-cyclists joining the tour will enjoy the 1 hour walk along the Ochre Trail. The red and colourful landscapes resemble a small piece of central Australia in France!

Meals: Breakfast

Destinations: Gordes & Roussillon

Today's Ride: 90km

Accommodation: Provence (France)

DAY THREE – Monday 22 July 2019 – Mont Ventoux

When it comes to challenging, beautiful, rewarding and historic pro-cycling routes then today's ride has all of the above rolled into one plus more! Cycling through Provence is amazing at the best of times but this adventure through Sault, Gorges de la Nesque and Mt Ventoux is simply jaw-dropping good! The 'Geant de Provence' has celebrated 10 TDF summit finishes and the last battle in 2016 saw Chris Froome actually comically running up the climb without a bike! Who remembers watching that and the bewilderment of the race commentators? For those who would like to climb 'The Bald Mountain' there are three ascents all ranging between 22km and 26km. Not only do they vary in difficulty but some are also better sheltered against the wind. We will assess the conditions on the day to make your climb the best experience possible. Be amazed as every pedal stroke reveals the lunar landscape towards the summit!

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations: Gorges de la Nesque & Mt Ventoux

Today's Ride: 70 & 100km options

Accommodation: Provence (France)

DAY FOUR – Tuesday 23 July 2019 – TDF Stage 16 – Nimes

The Tour de France is keen to showcase the town of Nimes as a major tourist attraction. The 2017 La Vuelta a España (Tour of Spain) actually started in Nimes and the success of the race departure now sees the arrival of *Le Tour*. After already spending three excellent days on the bikes today is a perfect opportunity to soak up the TDF race atmosphere. The race boasts both a stage start and finish in Nimes so the excitement of the team buses, riders signing-on & warming-up, the race expo & stands, the TDF publicity caravans and the all important sprint finish are all there to be enjoyed!

For our keen cyclists though, don't worry, there is always a cycling option available. The epic Col d'Izoard is on tomorrow's agenda so this morning you will ride a 75km route crossing the Regional National Park des Alpilles through to Nimes!

Meals: Breakfast

Destinations: Nimes

Today's Ride: 75km cycling or Rest Day

Accommodation: Provence (France)



DAY FIVE – Wednesday 24 July 2019 – Col d'Izoard & Alpes Arrival!

Stage 17 of the 2019 TDF is a transition route which takes the pro-peloton to Gap one of the gateways to the Alpes. Our plan is to leapfrog *Le Tour* today in order to offer what will be a dream cycling experience on Col d'Izoard! This tour itinerary gives you the comfort of crowning one of the jewels of the Alpes a day before the professionals; away from the big crowds and road closures.

After four nights in Provence this morning we say goodbye and jump in the vans for a 3hr transfer to Guillestre. You will begin cycling after lunch and the early kilometres follow the gorge road towards the Italian border before veering off to confront 'Izoard'. For many Col d'Izoard and its sandy eroded cliffs above la Casse Deserte resemble an amazing rocky desert landscape. The TDF has featured the Col d'Izoard on 34 occasions and its 2360m altitude has provided many iconic race photos! Our climb from the eastern approach measures 16km at an average gradient of 7% with maximum ramps between 10-13%.

Non-cyclists today will also have the chance to explore the medieval township of Briancon. While our cycling team is slugging it out on Col d'Izoard down below in Briancon you can explore its narrow laneways, small shops and even have time for a long lunch!

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations: Col d'Izoard & Briancon

Today's Ride: 60km or 100km

Accommodation: Hautes-Alpes (France)



DAY SIX – Thursday 25 July 2019 – TDF Stage 18 – Valloire

Today we return to watch Stage 18 of the Tour de France LIVE in the ski village town of Valloire. Valloire is neatly and strategically placed between the epic Col du Telegraphe and Col du Galibier climbs. After some strong riding yesterday and the chance to ride Col d'Iseran tomorrow (Europe's highest asphalted pass) this is the chance for our group to notch another famous 'col' under their belt whilst still reserving some energy for the days to come!

Col du Telegraphe is your challenge today and this 12km climb at 7% average grade will have you work up a sweat before retiring to the bar to watch the stage develop on TV. Watching the peloton scale Izoard (which you rode yesterday) will be a highlight before hitting the race barriers to see who will take out the win on this critical 2019 TDF stage!

Meals: Breakfast

Destinations: Valloire

Today's Ride: 60km

Accommodation: Hautes-Alpes (France)



DAY SEVEN – Friday 26 July 2017 – Col d'Iseran

The mighty Col d'Iseran at 2770m elevation awaits and the TDF has only scaled these heights on seven previous occasions. This giant 'col' is ranked number 1 on the list of Europe's highest passes! The pro-peloton and Sierra guests alike will tackle 'Iseran' from the southern approach. The climb measures 33km with an average 4.2% grade but these statistics do not give the full picture. The first 20km are a very accommodating 2-3% average grade while the final 13.5km incline to a more challenging 7.5%.

At these altitudes the weather is always something that needs to be monitored. Our support vans will be close at hand for those who are happy to only ride 'Section I' of this beauty before taking a road-side vantage point for what will be a race defining tour stage!

Once the peloton passes by our ride descends back towards Col du Mont Cenis which has been a strategic crossing for thousands of years. Both Constantine the 1st and Charlemagne crossed this pass with armies. It was the most frequently used passage between Italy and France in the Middle Ages. When the French ports were blockaded by the British after the battle of the Nile, Napoleon ordered an improved road to be built over the pass. Today these mountain roads are cycling paradise and the main attraction is the stunning lake which lies up on this elevated plateau.

One feels very small when cycling at such elevation!

Meals: Breakfast

Destinations: Col d'Iseran & Mont Cenis

Today's Ride: 80km cycling

Accommodation: Hautes-Alpes (France)

DAY EIGHT – Saturday 27 July 2019 – Switchbacks & Croix de Fer

If you haven't heard of 'Lacets de Montvernier' before then start searching Google right now! This short but spectacular climb is one of the world's most photogenic cycling destinations. The climb was last used during the 2015 TDF edition and its 18 switchbacks over only 3.5km are simply incredible. Remember: the mythical Alpe d'Huez has 21 switchbacks over 13km!!

Once you have enjoyed the thrill of riding 'Montvernier' and taking dozens of happy snaps the cycling returns to the valley floor and the base of Col de la Croix de Fer. This is a long 24km climb averaging a constant 7%. Three km before reaching 'Croix de Fer' you will also pass by Col du Glandon and in that way pick up two cols for the price of one! The pro-peloton followed this route during Stage 17 of the 2017 Tour de France. It is always a special moment on 'Croix de Fer' as this epic mountain pass has provided many great TDF race moments and the views are expansive to say the least. The long descent towards the base of Alpe d'Huez is free flowing and a good reward for what will have been a bike adventure and a half through Provence and the Hautes-Alpes!

[CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE] – From here on it is time to 'Choose Your Own Adventure'. Some of our guests love the chance to get to Paris to watch the Stage 21 finish on the Champs-Elysees while other guests are keen to tick the box on even more epic climbs. This is where we are pleased to offer flexibility for our guests with either a final night in Grenoble or the base of Alpe d'Huez – the choice is yours!

Grenoble is only a 3hr fast train connection to Paris making it an easy option to continue your 2019 TDF journey. For those who select Alpe d'Huez then in 2019 you can select an additional two night stay to ride the famous 21 bends, Col du Solude, Col d'Ornon and Col du Sabot!

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations: Lacets de Montvernier

Today's Ride: 90km cycling

Accommodation: Grenoble or Rhone-Alpes (France)

DAY NINE – Sunday 28 July 2019 – Goodbyes or Alpe d’Huez

After breakfast some will board a train to Paris while others ‘kit-up’ for the mighty Alpe d’Huez. If you would like any help with Paris hotel suggestions please feel free to ask us.

OPTIONAL - For those continuing their cycling journey it is time to present Alpe d’Huez and its 21 switchbacks. With over 30 stage finishes it’s a regular TDF feature and has been centre stage for many famous battles. During 2015 Nairo Quintana attacked Chris Froome and almost caused a boilover with a stunning Stage 20 ascent. The initial km are some of the hardest so remember to pace yourself accordingly. Depending on interest the Col du Sabot climb is also available!

Meals: Breakfast (All) & Dinner (Optional Package Clients Only)

Destinations: Alpe d’Huez

Today’s Ride: 90km cycling

Accommodation: Rhone-Alpes (France)



OPTIONAL: DAY TEN – Mon 29 July 2019 – Col de Solude & Ornon

For those looking for an authentic 'backroad' experience then look no further than the lesser known Col de Solude. This climb takes you into the forest and at various points offers simply amazing views back across the valley and over to the Alpe d'Huez climb. Having ridden Alpe d'Huez yesterday your appreciation for the switchbacks that are packed into the mountain-face will continue to soar. These roads which the TDF finds impossible to access are perfect for recreational road cyclists looking for pure adventure. Like any good tour day there are always options and Col d'Ornon is there for the taking for those who want to end their time in the Alpes on a high!

Meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations: Col de Solude

Today's Ride: 85km cycling

Accommodation: Rhone-Alpes (France)

OPTIONAL: DAY ELEVEN – Tuesday 30 July 2019 – Goodbyes

After breakfast our guides will be available to transfer you 1 hour to Grenoble train station. Grenoble has excellent links to Paris via the fast train network.

Note: If you are planning some post-tour holidays then Grenoble is a good base. Grenoble is considered by many as the French Alpes capital and the Fort de la Bastille sitting high above the city centre provides one of the prettiest backdrops of any city in France. The city is also surrounded by inspiring mountain peaks and there are several good local cycle routes we can suggest.

Meals: Breakfast

TRIP DETAILS

REGION: PROVENCE & ALPES

LEVEL: BEGINNER +

TOUR DATES: 20 – 28 JULY 2019

PRICE: 3250 € p.p. (twin share)

Single Supplement: **600 €**

Carbon Road Bike Hire: **350 €**

HOTELS: Provence (x4), Hautes-Alpes (x3), & Rhone-Alpes (x1); 3-4 star hotels

OPTIONAL EXTRAS:

Alpe d'Huez Package (2 nights): **825 €**

DURATION: 9 DAYS / 8 NIGHTS

PAYMENT:

Option 1: In Euro to our nominated Spanish bank account (via international bank transfer)

Option 2: In \$AUD to our nominated Australian bank account.

INCLUDED

Arrival & Departure transfers (Nice & Grenoble)
8 nights accommodation including breakfast
4 dinners with beer & wine included
8 guided cycling stages with van and mechanic
Food & drinks during cycling stages
Commemorative TDF cycling tour jersey

NOT INCLUDED

Airfares or Train Tickets