Bicycle Tours in France: Cycling the Dordogne

OVERVIEW

The Dordogne River valley in Western France is one of the country's longest and most scenic. For 500 km, the Dordogne cuts through layers of limestone plateau and meanders from the woody hills of the Massif Central through the heartland of prehistoric human settlements in Europe. Our bike tour of the Dordogne takes you on some of the nicest cycling routes in Europe, with breathtaking views of medieval castles topping the hills at every bend in the river. This is one of our all-time favorite bicycle tours.

Extend this bicycle tour 4 more days. Click here to review our Cycling Dordogne Plus! the Vineyards of Bordeaux tour details page.

HIGHLIGHTS

beautiful landscapes, Gouffres of Padirac, 3 nights in Sarlat, Rocamadour, medieval castles

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/classic
Includes	7 days, 6 nights accommodation, meals as noted in itinerary; canoe excursion
Countries	France
Begin/End	Cahors / Sarlat-la-Canéda
Arrive/Depart	Paris: Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) or Orly Airport (ORY) / Bordeaux-M&eacuteringnac Airport (BOD)
Total Distance	264 km (163 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	53 km (33 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	
Keep in Mind	We work hard to maintain consistency across all of our tours, but some trips have unique differences. Here are some things to keep in mind about this tour. We work hard to maintain consistency across all of our tours, but some trips have unique differences. Here are some things to keep in mind about this tour. For this trip, we recommend packing shoes that can get wet/dirty since you'll be visiting caves and canoeing.

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the online itinerary for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:
https://www.experienceplus.com/bike-tours/france/dordogne/cycling-the-dordogne

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
Sep 03, 2024	USD$4150	USD$550
Jun 02, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550
Sep 01, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	65km / 989m (41mi / 3244ft)	Hilly		
3	64km / 857m (40mi / 2811ft)	Hilly		
4	58km / 797m (36mi / 2614ft)	Rolling hills		
5	44km / 763m (28mi / 2503ft)	Hilly		
6	29km / 480m (18mi / 1574ft)	Rolling hills		Today's ride is an optional loop ride
7	Last Day			

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ARRIVAL INFO

Meeting time 2 p.m. - on Day 1, meet your fellow cyclists and Tour Leaders at the Day 1 Hotel specified on the itinerary.

Note: As you are planning, remember that the hotels listed in our itineraries are our primary hotels and are - in rare cases - subject to change. Before you make arrangements, check with us if your tour departure is guaranteed. If your tour departure is out further than 6 months, please also check with us as there might be slight changes to the itinerary.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio. The fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

Airports:

- We recommend flying into the Toulouse Airport (TLS).
- You can also fly into Paris Charles De Gaulle Airport (CDG). It is a 5.5 to 6-hour train ride from Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris to Cahors.

Getting from the Toulouse airport to the tour start

1. Tisseo shuttle bus from Toulouse airport to Toulouse Matabiau - runs every 20 minutes (30 min/EUR 8)
2. Train from Toulouse Matabiau to Cahors (1-1.5 hours/fares vary)
3. Walk 200 meters to hotel.

Look up French train schedules and book tickets, if necessary, at SNCF or Trainline. Questions? See our information on taking trains in Europe or ask us.

DEPARTURE INFO

Your tour ends on the final day after breakfast.

The below information will help you plan your departure. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio.

Airports:

- The airport closest to the tour end is Bordeaux (BOD).
- You can also fly out of Paris (CDG), which is a 5.5 to 8-hour train ride away.

Getting from the tour end to the Bordeaux airport:

1. Taxi from the Ending Hotel to the Sarlat Train Station (15 min/EUR 10)
2. Train from Sarlat to Bordeaux Saint Jean Train Station. No need to book in advance. (3 hours/fares vary)
3. Shuttle bus from Bordeaux Saint Jean to Bordeaux Airport. Departs every 30 minutes. (30 min/EUR 8) or taxi (30 min/EUR 30-40)

Look up French train schedules and book tickets, if necessary, at SNCF or Trainline. Questions? See our information on

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taking trains in Europe or ask us.

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Arrive Cahors, France

DAY 1: Tue, Sep 14th

Highlights Cahors, special introductory dinner

Arrive this afternoon in Cahors, known for its Malbec-based wines, it is a charming medieval town with ruins dating back to Roman times. After we fit and test bicycles, you're free to explore more of this town. This evening, we'll gather for a glass of wine and a welcome dinner together.

Meals Dinner
Lodging Hotel Terminus

Bicycle to Rocamadour

DAY 2: Wed, Sep 15th

Highlights Scenic cycling, pilgrimage village of Rocamadour, goat cheese

Enjoy superb views over the cliffs and valleys of the Causses du Quercy Regional Natural Park, a vast limestone plateau, to legendary pilgrimage site Rocamadour. Rocamadour will take your breath away as it clings miraculously to the sheer cliffs of the Causse de Gramat. Dinner together this evening, with a taste of Rocamadour's famous creamy, hand-made goat cheese.

Distance 65 km (41 mi)
Gain 989 m (3244 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Beau Site

Bicycle loop ride to Padirac and to Carrenac

DAY 3: Thu, Sep 16th

Highlights Medieval Carennac, prehistoric caves of Padirac

We bicycle quiet country roads to the picturesque medieval town of Carennac this morning, stopping at the caves of Padirac on the way. Our exploration of Padirac begins with a 75-meter descent and culminates with a boat ride on one of the most spectacular underground rivers in the world. Along the way we'll discover stone tools dating back more than 50,000 years. After our exploration back in time we'll continue the ride to the picturesque medieval town of Carennac which is a perfect spot for lunch. We'll be back in Rocamadour tonight.

Distance 64 km (40 mi)
Gain 857 m (2811 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Beau Site

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Bicycle to 16th century Sarlat

DAY 4: Fri, Sep 17th

Highlights A duck farm, Souillac, a gorgeous ride along the Dordogne, and rails-to-trails path to Sarlat

We leave Rocamadour this morning for a short ride along country roads to encounter some "local flavor" in the form of duck. We will visit a local foie gras producer and you'll have a chance to taste this famous delicacy from the southwest. Then we enter walnut country --la route de la noix-- as we head for a stunning ride along the Dordogne River to S. Julien-de-Lampon. The last ten kilometers of the ride we'll be on a rails-to-trails path that takes us to our home for the next three days, Sarlat. The June 4, 2024 departure will be at the Au Grand Hotel De Sarlat. The September 3, 2024 departure will be at the Plaza Madeleine.

Distance 58 km (36 mi)
Gain 797 m (2614 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Au Grand Hotel De Sarlat
Hotel Plaza Madeleine

Rest day in Sarlat

DAY 5: Sat, Sep 18th

Highlights Regional market in Sarlat, 9th-century Benedictine abbey, Bastide town of Domme, optional bike ride

Today is a free day to enjoy the extraordinary regional market in Sarlat. The town was built around a 9th-century Benedictine abbey and today preserves a collection of 15th-century buildings - many constructed with golden sandstone - which gives it a unique character. If your legs are feeling strong, take an optional climb to the 13th-century bastide town of Domme for a chance to visit the medieval castle of Castelnaud.

Distance 44 km (28 mi)
Gain 763 m (2503 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Au Grand Hotel De Sarlat

Loop ride from Sarlat and Canoe trip

DAY 6: Sun, Sep 19th

Highlights Canoe trip, La Roque-Gageac, and visit to Beynac Castle

We begin the day with a leisurely ride back to the Dordogne River where we'll find our canoes for an easy float trip past La Roque-Gageac to Beynac Castle. This imposing castle, built during the 13th Century, was a French stronghold during the Hundred Years War. You can visit the castle, then we bicycle back to Sarlat.

Distance 29 km (18 mi)
Gain 480 m (1574 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Au Grand Hotel De Sarlat

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Bicycle Tours in France: Cycling the Dordogne

Tour ends in Sarlat

DAY 7: Mon, Sep 20th

You're on your own now, prepared to face Bordeaux and a few more castles and wineries. Have fun!

Meals Breakfast

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INCLUDED

WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include what we believe are the most important aspects of a bike tour.

- On all our guided tours, you can expect superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel. Plus, all the logistics are taken care of.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing EP!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer and Self-guided tour styles excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer and Self-guided tours we include a GPS device on all bikes.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

On a guided tour, each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. On a self-guided tour you'll receive a comprehensive orientation and bike fit on the first or second morning of your trip. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information on the RWGPS Experience includes important phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks.

On a guided tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths. On a self-guided tour you will have luggage transfers that will transport your bags from one hotel to the other.

Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options or ask when you are planning your self-guided trip.

Need Fewer Miles? On a guided tour, the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. On a self-guided tour we recommend you review the tour level to make sure you can ride the full distance.

ON A GUIDED TOUR: TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADERS

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5-8% of the tour cost per traveler — this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing and not expected on self-guided tours.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

STYLES

OUR TOUR STYLES

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2 tour leaders, GPS and van support
- Price: $$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip except for land extension.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation and support:2 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

Self-guided Tours: perfect for those who have an independent spirit, want the flexibility to choose their own dates, and don't need van support or tour leaders during their trip. Every departure is a private tour!

- Tour Length: 6-8-days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel on bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: GPS routes and luggage transfers
- Price: $
- Tour Levels: 1-4

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LEVELS

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 — 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

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CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- ☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- ☐ Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- ☐ Complete the Customer Information Form: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/customer-information-form/
- ☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/travel-insurance/
- ☐ Choose a bicycle training program: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/
- ☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- ☐ Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- ☐ Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- ☐ Begin your chosen training program
- ☐ Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/.
- ☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/packing/.
- ☐ We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!

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