

Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling Paris to Lyon Plus! Marseille

OVERVIEW



Experience the fairytale landscapes of France's beautiful forests and countryside on a journey from Parisian Île de France to the exciting multicultural Mediterranean port city of Marseille. A route steeped in history, this tour takes cyclists through the Loire River valley with stops at Roman ruins and Renaissance châteaux -including the breathtaking Palace and Park of Fontainebleau. Much of our tour traces the route of Annie Londonderry, who in 1895 became the first woman to bicycle around the world solo-on her 42-pound Columbia bicycle! After a stop in beautiful Lyon, renowned for its authentic French cuisine and its perennial appearance as a stage city in the Tour de France™, we'll continue through the famed Côte du Rhône wine region, cycle past (or up) legendary Mont Ventoux, and wind through the pastoral Provençal region of southern France.

If this sounds great but you don't have time for the full 12 days, check out our [Bicycling Paris to Lyon](#) tour, which features the first nights of this itinerary.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Château de Fontainebleau
- Loire River Valley
- Lyon
- Roman Ruins in Orange
- Côte du Rhône Vineyards
- Marseille

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	 : Learn more about our tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/tours/bike-tour-styles/-tours
Includes	12 days, 11 nights accommodation; 8 dinners with wine, 1 lunch, 11 breakfasts; guided visit of Fontainebleau; 2 to 3 bilingual tour leaders
Countries	France
Begin/End	Barbizon / Marseille
Arrive/Depart	Paris / Marseille, Paris
Total Distance	514-613 km (317-378 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	Average if you ride every mile 68 km (42 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	 Some long days and varied terrain as you bicycle across four regions of France.

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/guided-bike-tours/france/paris-lyon-marseille>

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
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*We are happy to match solo travelers who would like to share a room with someone of the same gender. If no match exists, due to hotel pricing, we will charge 50% of the single supplement rate. This fee will be collected at the time of the final payment. If a roommate assignment is available this fee will be refunded at the conclusion of the tour.

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling Paris to Lyon Plus! Marseille**Welcome to Barbizon!****DAY 1**

Highlights Fit bicycles, welcome dinner

Meals Dinner

Meet this afternoon in Barbizon a short train ride from Paris. We fit bicycles this afternoon and go out for a warm up ride. Distance: optional warm up ride. Meals: DLodging: Hotel des Pléiades

Barbizon**DAY 2**

Highlights Guided visit of Fontainebleau Castle, Vaux le Vicomte

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Start the day visiting the illustrious Renaissance châteaux of Fontainebleau. Napoléon (of course!) slept here, and may have even resided here for a while. The château of Fontainebleau rivals the palace in Versailles and the châteaux of the Loire Valley in its magnificence. It sits in the middle of a 40,000 acre forest and gardens. After our guided visit, pedal through shaded forest roads back to our comfortable hotel. You'll have the chance to visit another historic castle along the way: Vaux le Vicomte. Distance: 59km (36 miles) more if desired. Meals: B, DLodging: Hotel des Pléiades

Barbizon to Montargis**DAY 3**

Highlights Perched village of Château-Landon, historic Montargis

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

New Years' eve 1894, Annie pedalled from Nemours to Montargis by way of Souppes-sur-Loing. The route she most likely would have followed is a major highway now so we'll follow her presumed route, or at least approximate it, on parallel roads. Today's ride is packed with history, from pre-history, to Romans, and into the Middle Ages. We're sleeping in Montargis, the "Venice of the Gâtinais" tonight. Distance: 74 km (46 miles). Meals: BLodging: Ibis Montargis Hotel

Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling Paris to Lyon Plus! Marseille**Montargis to Sancerre****DAY 4****Highlights** Pont-Canal in Briare**Meals** Breakfast, Dinner

Annie rang in the New Year with a long ride on her single speed bike. She pedaled from Montargis to Cosne-sur-Loire. Annie would have picked up the Loire River valley today and followed it for the next several days, avoiding the adjacent short but steep climbs. She spent the night in a private home in Cosne-sur-Loire. You'll pedal across the famous Briare canal bridge this afternoon, Europe's longest junction canal. Distance: 98km (61 miles). Meals: B, D Lodging: Hotel Le Clos Saint-Martin

Ride up the Loire Valley to Nevers**DAY 5****Highlights** Loire River Valley**Meals** Breakfast

You'll continue up the Loire River Valley today to Charité-sur-Loire and on to Nevers. Annie would have followed the river most of the way today, so we'll do the same with a beautiful forested foothills of the Morvan. Annie rode only to Charité today so you might want to stop for photos and then plan on time to take a walk in Nevers this evening. Distance: 89 km (55 miles). Meals: B Lodging: Hotel de Diane

Nevers to Lyon**DAY 6****Highlights** Lyon, Bouchon Lyonnais, Vieux Lyon**Meals** Breakfast, Dinner

It is 230 km from Nevers to Lyon, Annie's next stop. In 1895, the local head of the Union Vélocipédique du France, Mr. Nicart, persuaded Annie to take the train to Lyon "because of the deplorable state of the routes." She heeded his advice and spent two days resting in Lyon. Stage 6 of the 2003 Tour de France™ pedaled from Nevers to Lyon. While you are not going to try and pedal the entire distance, you will take a ride this morning then catch the train into Lyon like Annie did. Distance: 44km (27 miles). Meals: B, D Lodging: Sofitel Lyon Bellecour

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Rest Day in Lyon

DAY 7

Highlights Lyon's monuments, museums, architecture

Meals Breakfast

After a fascinating guided tour of Vieux Lyon you'll have the entire day to relax and enjoy this wonderful city. The historic old town stretches out along a peninsula between the Rhône and Saône rivers, and is filled with beautiful monuments, museums, and buildings. Be sure to take the tramway to the top of the city heights where you'll have a magnificent view over the roof tops of the entire city. Distance: Rest Day. Meals: B Lodging: Sofitel Lyon Bellecour

Train to Orange, ride to Mont Ventoux

DAY 8

Highlights Roman ruins of Orange, Côtes du Rhône vineyards

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

We'll take a train out of Lyon this morning to Orange, where you'll pedal through some of France's most famous vineyards to the base of Mont Ventoux - a perfect position if you'd like to challenge yourself with a ride to the top tomorrow! Distance: 40km (25 miles). Meals: B, D Lodging: Hotel des Pins

The Mont Ventoux!

DAY 9

Highlights Mont Ventoux, wine villages, Roman and medieval history

Meals Breakfast

Take your choice today between relaxing by the hotel pool and getting a massage, to climbing the legendary Mont Ventoux. For those who prefer something in between, we'll mark a stunning ride through some of the best and prettiest wine country in the world. Our loop takes you through several Roman or medieval villages including Malaucène, Vaison la-Romaine, Séguret, Gigondas and Vacqueyras which will leave you arguing over which is the most charming and magnificent. It is also possible to combine Mont Ventoux and the loop. Distance: 0-99 km (0-61 miles). Meals: B, D Lodging: Hotel des Pins

Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling Paris to Lyon Plus! Marseille**Ride to the Luberon Valley****DAY 10**

Highlights Bonnieux, Lourmarin

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Head south to the Luberon Valley, made famous by Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*. Pedal through ochre-colored Roussillon, and the perched village of Bonnieux on your way to our luxurious farm house just outside of Lourmarin. You can relax by the pool or stroll through the vast hotel grounds and herb garden this afternoon before dinner together. Distance: 70 km (43 miles). Meals: B, DLodging: Le Mas de Guilles

Ride to Marseille**DAY 11**

Highlights Marseille

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Today we'll take on the last stage of Annie's journey all the way to her triumphant arrival in Marseille. Although Annie took the most direct route into the city, we've planned for a much more scenic approach to the base of the Chaine de l'Etoile mountains that serve as a magnificent backdrop for Marseille set against the sea. Our ride ends with a picnic lunch just outside Aix-en-Provence. After lunch we'll shuttle to our hotel in the heart of Marseille where you can spend the rest of the afternoon discovering the city. We'll have our final dinner together tonight at a local's favorite. Distance: 40km (25 miles). Meals: B, L, DLodging: Hotel de la Résidence du Vieux Port

Tour ends in Marseille**DAY 12**

Highlights Marseille

Meals Breakfast

Our journey ends this morning after breakfast. For those of you who would like to spend more time visiting this unique city, we'll suggest some highlights. It was a pleasure having you join us on this ride into history. Meals: B

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 the three most important aspects of a guided bike tour.

- 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. More details on our [bikes page](#).
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel.

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](#).
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing ExperiencePlus!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Not included on Explorer Tours.)

ON TOUR

- See "What's Included" on your tour Itinerary for tour-specific inclusions.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see [Our Bikes page](#). If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer tours we include a GPS device on all bikes. We ask that you bring your own helmet to ensure the best fit. Please ask if you would like us to provide you with a gently used helmet and we will do so.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

Each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map and daysheet (print or digital) that includes information on the day's activities, meals and ride. Daily information also includes Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information.

You'll receive a highlighted route map each day or a briefing with the GPS tracks. On Classic, Bike and Boat, Spotlight 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.

Before each tour we offer the opportunity to download GPS tracks of most tour routes to your personal GPS device or smartphone using RideWithGPS.com. We do not provide GPS tracks for tours in South America.

On 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.

Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options.

Need Fewer Miles? If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM:

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% 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.

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 taken by our guides or travelers free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you on tour, you must inform 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. No matter what you are looking for in a cycling vacation, we have a tour with just the right pace for you.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? then our Classic style bike tours are for you! 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, most itineraries include at least one two-night stay at the same hotel.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: 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, occasional multi-night stays at the same hotel.
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Group riding and GPS
- Price: \$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Spotlight Tours: Multi-nights stays, loop rides, choose from a selection of activities or enjoy hotel amenities during your free time.

- Tour Length: 6-7 days
- Hotels: 3-5 stars, typically 3-nights spent in one hotel and 2-nights in the other.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Multi-night Stays: Min 2 night stays
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- 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.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation: 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, typically there is a 2-night hotel stay every 5-7 days.
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

**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 (EXPEDITIONPLUS!)

Our ExpeditionPlus! 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.

CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- Read through your Reservation Confirmation (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/blog/travel-planning/customer-information-form/>
- We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/travel-insurance/>
- Choose a bicycle training program: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/>
- Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/>

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- Review the arrival and departure information under the "Travel Information" tab to see meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, and 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 Deposit Payment Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail you have received 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/blog/travel-planning/>.
- Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists on our website at <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/packing/>
- We'll email your Hotel Itinerary, the Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date.

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!