

Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling the South of France Plus!

OVERVIEW



The South of France or Languedoc region as it is known has always been a border region - between Spain and France, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and, in ancient times, between Rome and northern Gaul. Today it is classic Mediterranean France with vast expanses of vineyards, vestiges of Roman history in Nimes and Narbonne, and a mix of languages that include classic French, traditional Occitan and Catalan. Join us to bicycle and explore this little traveled region on roads not much wider than bike paths.


If this sounds great but you'd like a shorter tour, check out our [Bicycling the South of France](#) tour, which shortens this itinerary by 3 days.

HIGHLIGHTS

Nimes, Bamboo Forest Reserve, Carcassonne, Great bicycle rides, St. Guilhem le Desert, Canal du Midi, Cathar castles, Kings of Majorca and St. John's Cathedral

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	 Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/tours/bike-tour-styles/classic-tours
Includes	11 days, 10 nights' accommodation; meals as noted in itinerary; oyster tasting; guided visit Carcassonne; wine tasting and visit of artisanal bakery; and the usual (see below).
Countries	France
Begin/End	Nimes / Perpignan
Arrive/Depart	Paris (CDG), Marseille Provence Airport (MRS) /Paris (CDG), Perpignan (PGF), Barcelona (BCN)
Total Distance	609-621 km (326 - 383 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	61 km (37 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	

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/south-france-plus-pyrenees>

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
☑ May 13-23, 2023	☑ USD\$5450	☑ USD\$650
☑ Aug 26-Sep 5, 2023	☑ USD\$5450	☑ USD\$650

*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	Test ride			
2	59km / 784m (37mi / 2572ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
3	47km / 868m (29mi / 2847ft)	Very hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
4	98km / 1559m (61mi / 5114ft)	Very hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
5	58km / 528m (36mi / 1732ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
6	87km / 499m (54mi / 1637ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
7	78km / 615m (49mi / 2017ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
8	45km / 574m (28mi / 1883ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
9	87km / 1811m (54mi / 5940ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
10	55km / 673m (34mi / 2207ft)	Very hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
11	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.

We recommend flying into the Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) or into Marseille (MRS).

Flying into CDG

1. Airport shuttle to the Aéroport CDG 2 TGV station (located beneath the airport) (5-15 min/no cost)
2. Train from Aéroport CDG 2 TGV to Nimes (3.5 hours/fares vary)
3. Taxi from Nimes central station to Day 1 Hotel (5 min/EUR 15)

Flying into MRS

1. Airport shuttle to the Marseille Saint Charles Train Station (25 min/EUR 8.30)
2. Train from Marseille St. Charles to Nimes (1.15 hours/fares vary)
3. Taxi from Nimes central station to Day 1 Hotel (5 min/EUR 15)

Look up French train schedules and book tickets, if necessary, [SNCF.com](#) or [Trainline.eu](#). Questions? See our information on taking trains in Europe [here](#) or [ask us](#).

DEPARTURE INFO

The 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](#).

We recommend flying out of Perpignan (PGF)

- City Bus to the airport (40 min/EUR 2)
- or taxi from the ending hotel to the airport (15 min/EUR 20)

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Arrive in Nîmes

Highlights Roman buildings including the amphitheater or "Arena" and the Maison Carrée, a Roman temple in the Center of Nîmes

Our tour begins today in Nîmes, one of several cities founded along or near the Rhone River by the Romans in the first and second centuries B.C. Take time to visit the best-preserved Roman amphitheater in France, the "Arena" which is still used for Provençal style bull fights and the Maison Carrée, a perfectly preserved Roman temple dating to 16 BC. We'll fit bicycles this afternoon and suggest a warm up ride of 5-15 km (3-9 miles) for those who wish. We have a welcome dinner together this evening.

DAY 1

Meals Dinner

Lodging  Novotel Atria Nimes Centre

Bicycle from Nîmes to Anduze

Highlights Mediterranean villages, lavender, sage, rosemary, Costières de Nîmes wines

We ride west into Languedoc through small wine villages of the Costières de Nîmes today. Aromatic drought resistant scrub bushes and plants, including lavender, sage and rosemary, dot the landscape. Our hotel is in the foothills of the Costières de Nîmes a few kilometers outside of Anduze. If you are interested in plants take time to visit the Bamboo Forest that you'll pass by just before our hotel. It hosts a fascinating collection of exotic, tropical plants including 150 species of bamboo, Sequoia and banana trees.

DAY 2

Distance 59 km (37 mi)

Gain 784 m (2572 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  L'Auberge les 3 Barbus

Loop ride in the Cévennes

Highlights Tiny mountain roads, Alèscutes

We pedal in the foothills of the Cévennes Mountains where you'll have spectacular views and a gentle pace as we explore medieval villages that seem frozen in time. It was in the high Cévennes that Robert Louis Stevenson walked with his donkey, Modestine, and wrote his classic Travels with a Donkey. Plan to enjoy lunch in Alés, an important town in the Protestant fight for religious freedom, and home to Alphonse Daudet, and Louis Pasteur.

DAY 3

Distance 47 km (29 mi)

Gain 868 m (2847 ft)

Terrain Very Hilly

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  L'Auberge les 3 Barbus

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Ride from Anduze to St-Guilhem-le-Désert

Highlights One of our favorite bicycle rides anywhere, Market day in St Jean du Gard

People who have ridden today's route tell us it is one of the prettiest rides on any of our tours. Enjoy traffic-free roads not much wider than a bike path, and get picnic supplies at one of the most charming local outdoor markets we know. We leave the Cévennes mountains behind as we glide downhill through the gorge of the Herault River to St-Guilhem-le-Désert ("desert" because it is the only village for as far as the eye can see).

DAY 4

Distance 98 km (61 mi)

Gain 1559 m (5114 ft)

Terrain Very Hilly

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Hotel Le Guilhaume d'Orange
 Hotel La Taverne de l'Escuelle

Bicycle St-Guilhem-le-Désert to Sète

Highlights St-Guilhem-le-Désert, oyster beds, the Mediterranean Sea

It's an easy ride to the Mediterranean coast today, so take some time to explore more of St. Guilhem's medieval atmosphere. Here, in 904 AD William of Gellone established a monastery. The village still retains an ancient Medieval atmosphere. Part of the cloister from the monastery was moved to Manhattan in the 1930s and is now "The Cloisters" portion of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Stop in St. Guilhem for coffee and a stroll before heading on to the Mediterranean Sea. Our approach to the delightful seaside town of Sète will be via ferry and you'll visit the famous oyster and mussel beds of the Etang de Thau.

DAY 5

Distance 58 km (36 mi)

Gain 528 m (1732 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  Grand Hotel de Sete

Bicycle from Sète to Narbonne

Highlights Roman Narbonne, Narbonne's 13th century cathedral, Canal du Midi

We're on the road again today among vineyards and farmland as we head to the ancient Roman city of Narbonne. Narbonne was built along the Via Domitia, the Roman road that connected Italy with Spain during the second century B.C. when Rome expanded beyond the Alps. We'll bypass the busy city of Beziers and ride along the famous Canal du Midi. The canal connects Atlantic France with the Rhone River and Mediterranean France. Narbonne was and continues to be a major transportation corridor on the great coastal plain of Languedoc.

DAY 6

Distance 87 km (54 mi)

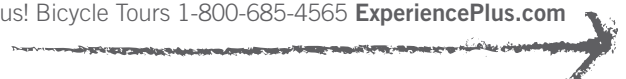
Gain 499 m (1637 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  Hotel La Residence



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Bicycle from Narbonne to Carcassonne

Highlights Small country roads, Corbières vineyards, Canal du Midi, Carcassonne

Our leisurely ride today takes us across the flat plains of Languedoc to the perfectly preserved late Medieval town of Carcassonne. This corridor between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, bounded on the south by the Pyrenees Mountains, has been an important transportation route since pre-Roman times. Completed in the 13th century, the famous walls of Carcassonne were restored in the late 19th century. Before dinner, we'll explore Carcassonne's narrow ancient alleyways with a local guide.

DAY 7

Distance 78 km (49 mi)

Gain 615 m (2017 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  [Hotel Le Montmorency](#)

Loop ride out of Carcassonne

Highlights Carcassonne

Take a loop ride north of Carcassonne today toward the "Montagne Noire." Like the Cévennes, "Black Mountain" is a part of France's central mountains, the "Massif Central." Depending on how far you venture, you may begin to see the transition zone where Mediterranean vegetation begins to give way to a wetter, more Atlantic vegetation zone. Today's ride should leave you plenty of time to wander the Medieval streets of Carcassonne.

DAY 8

Distance 45 km (28 mi)

Gain 574 m (1883 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  [Hotel Le Montmorency](#)

Bicycle from Carcassonne to Cucugnan

Highlights Vineyards, Cathar castles, river gorges and beautiful vistas in the foothills of the Pyrenees

Some vintners in Limoux would have you believe that they produced sparkling wines even before Champagne did. We'll ride through this wine region south of Carcassonne as we enter the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains. Today's ride features meandering river valleys, steep sided gorges, and perched Cathar castles. Bicycling has been a part of the local culture since the Tour de France came through here in 1909. Our destination is the small town of Cucugnan.

DAY 9

Distance 87 km (54 mi)

Gain 1811 m (5940 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  [L'Auberge de Cucugnan](#)

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Bicycle to Perpignan

Highlights Queribus castle, Cathar castle ruins, Perpignan Cathedral

In Nîmes we were on the border of Provence and Languedoc where Occitan was the historic language. Today we pedal out of the Pyrenees to Perpignan and enter another border region between France and Spain where Catalan is the second language. The bicycling here is exhilarating and the culture unique to this corner of France. In Perpignan you'll want to visit the palace of the Kings of Majorca and St. John's Cathedral, both built by Spanish kings who controlled the region off and on over four centuries. We'll enjoy a special final dinner together this evening.

DAY 10

Distance 55 km (34 mi)

Gain 673 m (2207 ft)

Terrain Very Hilly

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Mercure Perpignan Centre

Tour ends in Perpignan

Highlights Bon Voyage

Our tour ends today in Perpignan. Perpignan was once the capital of the Kingdom of Mallorca so perhaps you'd like to continue your travels to that exotic island. Alternatively, Barcelona is not far across the border. Whatever you choose, "bon voyage," or, as they say in Catalan "bon viatge!"

DAY 11

Meals Breakfast

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: <https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/>
- 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: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/>
- 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.)
- 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 our bikes page (<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 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. 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 also includes Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. 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. 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.

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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 (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.

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 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, Spotlight 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!