



FRENCH ALPS CYCLING TOUR

Alpe d'Huez to Mont Ventoux



2024 French Alps Cycling Tour

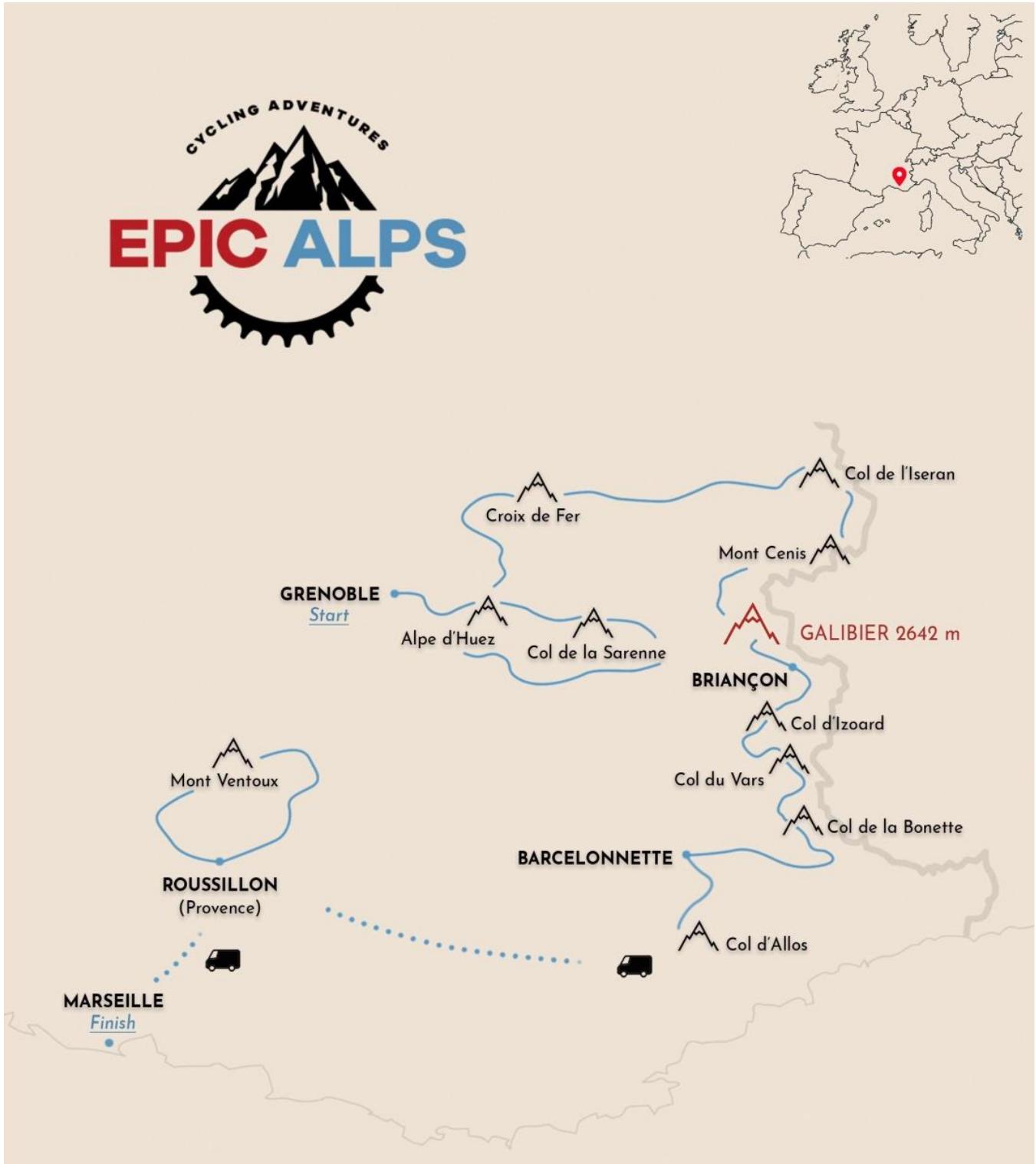
Cycling from Alpe d'Huez to Mt Ventoux

Here is a classic cycling tour to challenge all recreational cyclists looking to tick off a full bucket list of epic climbs in the French Alps. It all kicks off in Grenoble the capital of the French Alps and concludes on Mont Ventoux affectionately known as the 'Geant de Provence'. This iconic route includes some of the biggest household name climbs with Alpe d'Huez, Col de la Croix de Fer, Col de l'Iseran, Col du Galibier and Col d'Izoard all dotted along the route path.

There is no doubting that the giants of the French Alps will have you gasping for oxygen; Col de l'Iseran (2770m altitude), Col de la Bonette (2715m altitude) and Col du Galibier (2642m altitude). But what adds to this epic cycling adventure are the lesser known climbs such as Col de la Sarenne, Lacets de Montvernier and Col du Murs. Breathtaking scenery, challenging climbs, awesome descents and the quiet backroad experience all await!

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Alpe d'Huez and its mighty **21 bends!**
- ✓ Ride the **highest asphalted pass in Europe** – Col de l'Iseran (2770m)
 - ✓ Col du Galibier – **35 magical Tour de France moments!**
 - ✓ Be mesmerized by the **lunar landscape** above Col d'Izoard
 - ✓ Climb Mont Cenis close to the Italian border
(built by **Napoleon and his troops**)
 - ✓ **Conquer 'Le Geant de Provence'** – Mont Ventoux!

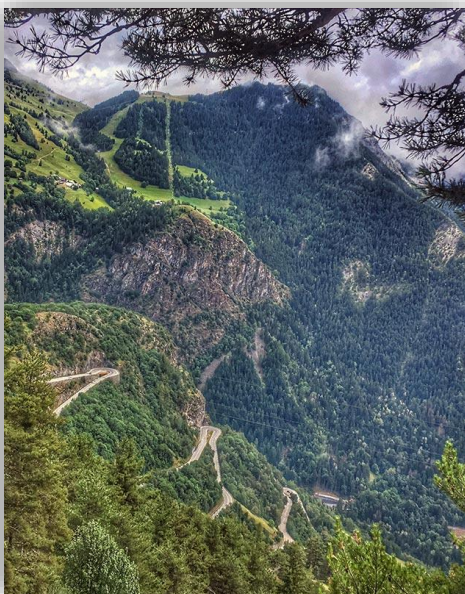


ITINERARY

DAY ONE – Sat 3 August 2024 – Grenoble to Alpe d’Huez

We will be available to meet you at Grenoble Train Station around 9:00am. Grenoble is considered by many as the French Alps capital and the Fort de la Bastille sitting high above the city centre provides an amazing backdrop. The town is surrounded by inspiring mountain peaks which will have you all itching for some cycling action. Note: if you are going to arrive to Grenoble early please let us know so we can forward you the details for an excellent loop ride straight from the city centre!

From Grenoble Train Station we will transfer you 45min to La Mure which during 2017 was the Tour de France Stage 17 stage start town. You will ride the first 50km on the TDF stage route which includes the Col d’Ornon climb (14km / 600m ascent). Following a great descent, we will have you at the base of Alpe d’Huez and its famed 21 switchbacks. No other mountain has had so much Tour de France drama. With the number of roadside spectators over the years it is easy to call it the Hollywood of French cols. With or without the TDF the atmosphere on the mountain is always fantastic and the 13km at 8% average grade will be a constant test. Each of the 21 hairpin bends has been named after past stage winners and you too will soak up all the history!





Why Epic?

Alpe d'Huez has hosted 30 Tour de France stage finishes making it centre stage for many famous battles. Going back to 1952 and Fausto Coppi won the first ever summit finish attacking with 6km to the summit. Alpe d'Huez is a household name amongst cyclists and non-cyclists alike. Now you can say you have also ridden up it!

Meals

Dinner

Destinations

La Mure & Le Bourg d'Oisans

Today's Ride

75km cycling / 1850m elevation gain

Accommodation

Allemont (France)

DAY TWO – Sunday 4 August 2024 – Col de la Sarenne

From the Alpe d’Huez ski station the ride follows a small backroad which initially descends, later slightly rises, hugs the edge of the mountain and then provides spectacular views down to the valley floor. To make sure you are properly warmed up the ride follows the bike lane along the valley floor back towards the base of Alpe d’Huez. From here there are going to be two options based on whether you want to ride Col de la Sarenne only or also take on an optional extra! If you are looking for more action the optional climb to Villard Reymond will be sure to impress. The climb rises out of Le Bourg d’Oisans and while it is asphalted for the most part it also includes a few unsealed sections for the gravel grinders in the group. The views across the valley to the Alpe d’Huez ski station are exceptional and all past guests love to see what they achieved yesterday!

With some good work under the belt there will be time for a lunch stop in ‘Le Bourg’ to gain energy for Col de la Sarenne. To get things going again we have what’s best described as a lumpy 20km to the base of ‘Sarenne’ following yet another remarkable balcony road. The 15km climb to Sarenne needs to be respected as it has $\geq 10\%$ ramps in places and will be a huge test. The trade-off though is cycling through the beautiful Ferrand valley and the final hairpins which take you up to 1999m elevation (yes 1999m to be precise)!

Why Epic?

It’s true that everyone needs to cycle Alpe d’Huez at least once in their lifetime. But what most do not realise is that the Villard Reymond, Auris and Col de la Sarenne to Alpe d’Huez balcony roads are simply jaw-dropping good.

Meals

Breakfast

Destinations

Villard Reymond & Lac Chambon

Today’s Ride70km / 1800m elevation gain or
100km / 2500m elevation gain**Accommodation**

Allemont (France)

DAY THREE – Mon 5 August 2024 – Col de la Croix de Fer

Col de la Croix de Fer offers a fantastic climb for those keen to add another Tour de France giant to their CV. It has been used during the TDF on 19 occasions and the climb is a serious 29km test with an average gradient of 5%. It is a difficult climb which should not be underestimated as a number of short downhill sections misrepresent the average grade (maximum uphill gradients of 11%)! Cycling from the Allemont approach means you also collect Col du Gandon for free. With only 3km to the summit we pass Col du Gandon and veer off to the right with Croix de Fer always now in our line of sight. It is now time to take in the expansive views before enjoying the long 20km descent down Col du Gandon.

While the next climb is not overly difficult the chance to ride Lacets de Montvernier will be truly memorable. This short but spectacular climb has only been used twice during the 2015 and 2018 Tour de France editions. 18 tight switchbacks ('lacets' in French) wind up over 3.5km creating a simply incredible cycling experience. Remember: the mythical Alpe d'Huez has 21 switchbacks over 13km!! Once we are all photo'd out the route continues down to our finishing town of St Jean de Maurienne. The tour in total has only a few transfers and post ride we need to drive 1hr close to the French/Italian border.

Why Epic?

The Gandon / Croix de Fer double is one of few mountain climbs where you receive 2 cols for the price of 1! Just like the Telegraphe / Galibier or Soulor / Aubisque climb combinations.

Meals

Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations

St Jean de Maurienne

Today's Ride

90km / 2000m elevation gain

Accommodation

Lanslebourg (France)



DAY FOUR – Tuesday 6 August 2024 – Col de l’Iseran

Today the mighty Col de l’Iseran and its staggering 2770m elevation awaits. Despite this giant col being ranked number 1 on the list of Europe’s highest asphalted passes it has only been scaled on nine occasions during the Tour de France. During 2019 the race successfully scaled its summit before later having to cancel the stage finish due to a freak storm on the way to Tignes ski station. The climb measures 48km with an average 4% grade:

KM 0 - 9: a very accommodating 1-2% average grade

KM 9 - 24: constant climbing which ranges between 4-7%

KM 24 - 33: easy 1-2% average grade

KM 33 - 48: constant 6% average

It is really only the final (12km) where the feeling of riding an epic mountain road takes shape. From here switchbacks, rock carved tunnels and glaciers are all around. Once at the top our ride descends back towards the base of Col du Mont Cenis where we will again sleep tonight. This location is very strategic on a tour front because one can decide to rest at the hotel with ‘Iseran’ successfully accomplished or even take on the additional Mont Cenis climb up to the French/Italian border. The optional 10km final climb up towards the Italian border averages 7% and these mountain roads are simply put cycling paradise!

Why Epic?

Col de l’Iseran is number 1 on the list of Europe’s highest passes and a must for all recreational cyclists!! Mont Cenis has also been a strategic crossing between France and Italy for thousands of years. To cap it off Mont Cenis has 5 x Tour de France appearances (3 from our French side) and the 2013 Giro d’Italia created an amazing stage where the peloton scaled both sides!

Meals

Breakfast

Destinations

Mont Cenis

Today’s Ride

65km / 1700m elevation gain or
110km / 2500m elevation gain

Accommodation

Lanslebourg (France)

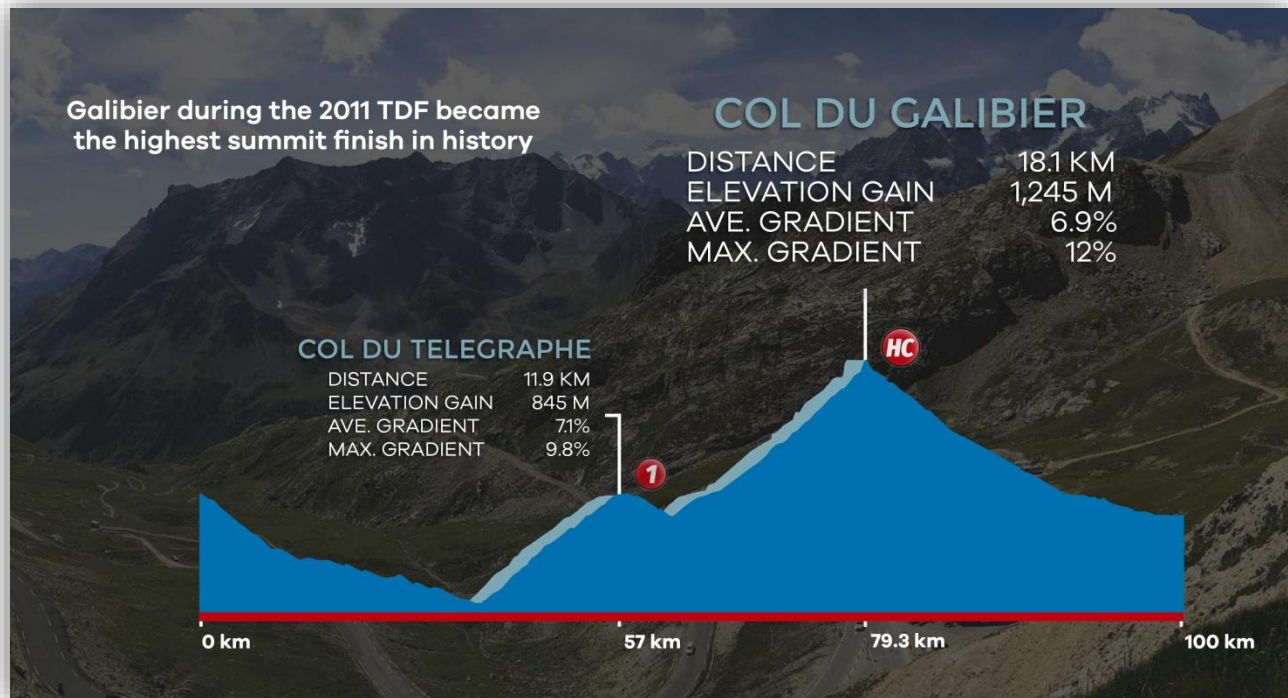
DAY FIVE – Wednesday 7 August 2024 – Col du Galibier

Today is a fantastic ride that combines the best of Stages 18 and 19 from the 2019 Tour de France. The first 45km are mostly downhill however we make sure to include Montee d'Aussois and Cote de Saint Andre. Both are 3km climbs at around 6% average grade and provide the perfect chance to get the legs going after what has already been a solid four days on the bikes.

It is from the bottom of the valley though where to be honest things will start to get very interesting. One of the toughest Tour de France climb doubles is calling; Col du Telegraphe (13km) & Col du Galibier (18km)! The ride will be broken up with a lunch stop in the ski village town of Valloire. Valloire is neatly and strategically placed between these two epic cols.

The Galibier featured in the Tour de France for the first time during 1911 when only three riders got to the summit without walking. When it comes to the Pyrenees the Tourmalet rules yet Galibier is a futher 500m higher and 14km longer making this arguably France's most epic col. Quite the challenge awaits! From the top of Galibier you will descend one of the most scenic mountain roads down to Col du Lauteret and ride through to Briancon.





Why Epic?

While the Galibier peak stands at 2642m it really makes one feel like they are on top of the world!
In 2011 the Tour de France finished on top of the col and to date is the highest mountain used for a TDF stage finish.

Meals

Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations

Valloire

Today's Ride

105km / 2400m elevation gain

Accommodation

Briancon (France)

DAY SIX – Thursday 8 August 2024 – Col d'Izoard

Today is yet another classic route which includes many kilometres from Stage 18 of the 2019 Tour de France. To put it simply the Col d'Izoard and Col de Vars climbs are there for the taking! We will ride the two climbs from north to south whereas the 2019 TDF raced in reverse. For many the 'Izoard' (2360m) and its sandy eroded cliffs above la 'Casse Deserte' resemble an amazing lunar landscape. The 36 TDF crossings have provided many an iconic photo of the race! Our climb from the north-west approach includes 19km at an average gradient of 6% and a maximum of 9%. The gorge road linking Izoard and Vars is another highlight (all downhill) before the final assault climbing the green lush pastures of Col de Vars. Tonight you will sleep at the base of yet another resting giant, Col de la Bonette.





Why Epic?

The 'Casse Déserte' is a truly epic location for the sport of cycling.

As you approach the summit, the glare off the scree slopes will leave a lasting impression. Make sure to pay your respects and take a photo at the memorial to Fausto Coppi and Louison Bobet!

Meals

Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations

Col d'Izoard

Today's Ride

100km / 2300m elevation gain

Accommodation

Barcelonette (France)

DAY SEVEN – Friday 9 August 2024 – Col de la Bonette

The legs will get going again with a 10km warm up to the base of the ‘Bonette’. This 24km climb averages 7% and is a constant climb that rarely gets too steep (you will just have to trust us on that one!). Let the switchbacks take you up into what is an expansive alpine landscape and which officially rounds out at 2715m altitude. Being so far above the tree line means the views are awesome!

The reward for all of your climbing will be the descent. From the ‘Bonette’ summit we will head south following the signs to Nice. This is one of the best switchback descents you could possibly ask for. 20km of quality asphalt heading all the way down! The next 40km also trend downhill – we are heading towards the Mediterranean coast after all. By the end of today’s ride you will actually have 800m more of descent than ascent!

Isola will be a nice town to pull into for a well deserved lunch break. Following lunch there is the final 4km climb with 5% grade to get over. Post ride there will be a 2hr transfer to our home for the next three nights in the heart of the Luberon Natural Park (Provence).

Why Epic?

Col de la Bonette at 2802m altitude
(what was all that 2715m talk)
is the highest asphalted
road in France.
The extra loop up
to the car park means
it leapfrogs ahead of *Iseran*.
The rivalry for bragging rights
really does exist
in the French Alps!

Meals

Breakfast

Destinations

Col de la Bonette

Today’s Ride

105km / 2150m elevation gain or

Accommodation

Provence (France)

DAY EIGHT – Saturday 10 August 2024 – Provence

A scenic hotel to hotel loop ride through Provence has been designed for today. The idea is that there are some short climbs but nothing too taxing seeing we have the goal of climbing to the towering Mt Ventoux summit tomorrow! Before pulling in at the first coffee stop you will have rolled over Col de Murs and Col de Trois Termes. These are two small climbs which peak at approximately 600m elevation and are often linked during a Tour de France rendezvous. Back to the coffee and you will pull into the the small Provencal village of Gordes. The cycling loop continues by taking you through Roussillon another of France's 'Plus Beaux Villages' and its famous Ochre Trail. The red and colourful landscapes resemble a small piece of central Australia in France!

Why Epic?

The Tour de France when intersecting Provence often passes through Gordes for its dramatic position on the edge of a rocky escarpment.

Meals

Breakfast

Destinations

Gordes & Roussillon

Today's Ride

70km / 1350m elevation gain

Accommodation

Provence (France)

DAY NINE – Sunday 11 August 2024 – 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 one to savour! The 'Geant de Provence' has celebrated 10 TDF summit finishes and a recent 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? From Bedoin the early kilometres up Ventoux are quite easy cycling past vineyards with the group chatting away. Here you can still keep an eye on the prize being the iconic summit weather station. On reaching the St Esteve bend you enter the 'forest' and things do not let up for nearly 10km. Rejoice on arriving at Chalet Reynard where you can catch your breath. From here the average 8% now feels flat unless you are unlucky to be hit by strong winds on the exposed white cliffs. Be amazed as every pedal stroke now reveals the lunar landscape towards the summit! After such a big week on the bikes we won't compare you against the pro's who typically need 60 to 75 minutes to climb Ventoux. Our aim is to get to the top and enjoy the incredible views from the Le Geant de Provence!



Here is a glimpse of what to expect on Ventoux:

KM 0 - 6: 4% average grade up to the famous St Esteve bend

KM 6 - 15: the feared forest with constant climbing always touching 9 - 10%

KM 15 – 21.4: the lunar landscape above Chalet Reynard at 8% average grade

Tonight there is a celebratory dinner in a fabulous wine estate which is the perfect way to look back over some amazing achievements. How about a glass of wine for every epic col?

Why Epic?

The gorge, dramatically cut into the landscape, leads us to Mt Ventoux. The ‘Bald Mountain’ has three ascents ranging from 21 to 26km.

From Bedoin you will cycle the famous route straight from the Tour de France.

What a way to bookend an ‘epically’ amazing tour, starting with Alpe d’Huez and finishing with Mt Ventoux!

Meals

Breakfast & Dinner

Destinations

Gorges de la Nesque

Today’s Ride

90km / 2000m elevation gain or

Accommodation

Provence (France)

DAY TEN – Monday 12 August 2024 – Goodbyes

Following breakfast the guides will be available to transfer the group to Marseille Airport by approximately 11:00am (1.5hr drive). We hope you enjoyed your French Alps cycling challenge and we look forward to seeing you in the near future!

Meals: Breakfast

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Tour Package:

French Alps (3 – 12 August 2024)

Tour Inclusions:

9 nights accommodation (twin share), 3-4 star hotels
All breakfasts included, 3 picnic lunches & 5 dinners with beer & wine
9 epic guided rides (includes support van & mechanic)
Food and drink during rides
Commemorative cycling jersey
Comprehensive tour booklet (ride maps and profiles)

Price: 3975 Euro

EXTRAS

Single room supplement: 750 Euro
Carbon road bike hire (Orbea Avant M30, 105, compact, 11/32 cassette, rim brakes): 325 Euro
Carbon road bike hire (BMC Roadmachine, Di2, Ultegra, 11/32 cassette, disc brakes): 550 Euro

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