

Alps & Lake Annecy: July 9–15, 2010

7 Days/6 Overnights



INCLUDED

Hotels: Choice of single 3- or 4-star lakeside hotel throughout trip

Meals: Daily full breakfasts, minimum of 6 other meals

Staff: 3 professional guides 15 guests

Transportation: All daily transportation, plus Geneva airport pickup/dropoff.

Price, 3-star hotel: \$5295 per person in shared double room, \$795 single supplement

Price, 4-star hotel: \$5995, per person in shared double room, \$995 single supplement

HIGHLIGHTS

Best Day: For a mix of race viewing and riding, it will be hard to beat our July 11 (stage 8), the first full-blown mountain day of the Tour. Our ride leaves right from the hotel, following the small roads through the Alpine foothills heading north. After a few minor challenges, we are onto the Tour course to tackle the 1st category Col de la Ramaz, followed by the climb to the mountain-top finish line at Avoriaz. Post-ride, we'll enjoy an Alpine lunch, followed by live viewing of the race finish as the top climbers stretch their legs and the real contenders show themselves. Our day wraps up with a helicopter transfer off the mountain, providing superb views of the splendid scenery and the crowded roads below.

Toughest Ride: We'll have plenty of hard days in the mountains, so it's a tough call. But we'll take on the north side of the Col de la Madeleine on July 13, following the race course up for some 25 kilometers of *hors categorie* climbing. Following several days of mountain rides, the legs will definitely feel this one!

Coollest Inclusion: If it's not our heli lift post-stage from the mountain-top finish at Avoriaz, then it's just being based for a week of riding and Tour viewing in Talloires on Lake Annecy. It's one of the most beautiful lakes in Europe, surrounded by mountains and some of the best cycling roads in France.

Viewing Stats: Three Tour viewing days, including a mountain-top finish, a classic mountain stage, and a stage start.

Daily Rides: 6 total, all days except departure day.

Ride Distance: 4 long, 1 medium, 1 short. This refers to the maximum amount of time available to ride while still participating in race viewing and other activities. Long = 3-5+ hours available; medium=2-3 hours; short=1-2 hours. All rides are verified in advance and have daily distance options and the choice of at least two guided groups.

Early Arrival: One good option is to spend a night or two in Paris then go by train to Geneva for our pickup. Or arrive in Geneva a day early for a relaxed day of sightseeing.

ITINERARY

Day 1 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): Arrival in Geneva (Geneva International Airport-GVA). Lake Annecy and our hotel are just an hour away; after the transfer we'll have plenty of time for check-in and bike assembly. Once the bikes are set, there should be time as well as an easy "shakedown" ride along the lake before our welcome dinner.

Day 2 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): Our goal for today is to at least ride the travel out of the legs, but those already in the swing of things will want to do more. The circuit will include the relatively easy Col du Marais, with option to add on the pastoral Col de la Croix-Fry (12K/7.5M, 6.5%) loop through the charming ski resort of La Clusaz. It's a rolling but mostly downhill ride from there back to the lake and the relaxing afternoon that awaits us.

Day 3 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): We ride right from our hotel, climbing up from the lake onto a beautiful valley warm-up stretch before rolling onto the final 60K/37M of the Tour stage route. Serious climbing begins with the Col de la Ramaz (14K/9M, 7%), followed by a tricky descent into Les Gets and the valley before Morzine. Then it's onward and upward towards the finish at ski-station of Avoriaz, some 14K/9M at 6%. After lunch, we'll enjoy watching the peloton climb the same roads, with a first-hand view of the top finishers. Our helicopter transfer off the mountain gives us a breathtaking view of the Alps and the atmosphere of a Tour mountain-top finish.

Day 4 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): It's a Tour rest day, but everyone still needs to ride. We'll see if we can spot a few Tour riders enjoying their day at the office as we stretch our legs on the Col de la Colombiere (13K/8M, 6%) and in the surrounded gorges. For those feeling the affects of the prior day, an easy lake loop may be the better choice.

Day 5 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): Leaving from our hotel, it's some 60K/31M of mostly flat warm-up before our major challenge of the day: the Col de la Madeleine (25K+/15M, 6%). After a relaxing mountain picnic and the passage of the entertaining publicity caravan, we'll cheer the remnants of the peloton up the climb before they plunge towards Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne for the finish.

Day 6 (Overnight, Talloires/Lake Annecy): The day's Tour stage starts from nearby Chambery, just on the other side of the Bauges mountain range. After a short drive around, we'll take our time to enjoy the relaxed pre-race atmosphere and check out the morning's events and entertainment as well as the rider sign-on. Once the peloton rolls off, so will we, riding on hand-picked small roads leading us gradually back to Annecy and our hotel. We'll gather for a final farewell dinner and toast to a great week in the Alps.

Day 7: For those leaving today from Geneva, transfers are included and pre-arranged by the VSV staff, making for an easy departure. Bon voyage!

All itineraries details are subject to change.