

Pyrénées to Paris: July 18–26, 2010

9 Days/8 Overnights



INCLUDED

Hotels: Select 4-star accommodations throughout trip

Meals: Daily full breakfasts, minimum of 9 other meals

Staff: 3 professional guides for 15 guests

Paris: 5-star viewing of final stage finishing circuit

Transportation: All daily transportation, plus high-speed train (TGV) Bordeaux-Paris transfer and airport pickup/dropoff.

HIGHLIGHTS

Best Day: A tough call, but if you like mountains, Stage 16 from Luchon to Pau on July 20th is the day. The ride leaves from our hotel and, after a rolling warm-up stretch, we intersect the Tour course for the ascent of the Col du Tourmalet. We'll have lunch waiting for us in La Mongie some four kilometers before the summit. Then we'll get set roadside to catch the live action amid the high peaks of the Pyrénées.

Toughest Ride: A Tour rest day can be as hard as you want to make it! Since there's no racing on July 21, we have plenty of time for a long mountain mission on the nearby historic climbs, with options including the ascent of Hautacam (15K/9M, 7%) and the Col de Marie-Blanche (9K/5.5M, 8%).

Coolest Inclusion: Our balconied suite at the 5-star Hotel Crillon provides a spectacular view of the final-day finishing circuit in Paris, with luxurious shelter from the elements, live TV viewing, VIP visitors and easy access to course-side views. After the race ends, the Place de la Concorde staging area for the final parade of Tour teams is right in front of the hotel!

Viewing Stats: Six viewing days of six possible, including a flat-stage finish, two classic mountain stages, a finish-circuit, and the final individual time-trial.

Daily Rides: 8 total, all days except departure day.

Ride Distance: 4 long, 2 medium, 2 short. This refers to the maximum amount of time available to ride while still viewing the racing live. 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: As this program jumps into the Tour right away, we recommend arriving in Europe a day or two early to get over jet lag. One good option is to overnight first in Paris or London, and then go on to Toulouse for the start of the trip. Another possibility is to arrive in Toulouse a day early and rest-up at our first hotel, situated right near the airport.

ITINERARY

Day 1 (Overnight, Toulouse): Arrival in Toulouse (Toulouse-Blagnac Airport). We're staying at a 4-star hotel close to the airport, where we'll have plenty of time for check-in and bike assembly, as well as an easy "shakedown" ride before our welcome dinner.

Day 2 (Overnight, Lourdes): After a short transfer, we're immediately immersed in the Tour, riding into the mountains and onto the route to tackle the climbs of the Col de Portet d'Aspet (6K/3.7M, 7%) the Col des Ares (6.5K/4M, 5%) and perhaps even the final climb, the Port de Balès (19K/12M, 6%). We'll cheer the remnants of the peloton over the top of one of the last climbs before they plunge into Luchon for the finish.

Day 3 (Overnight, Lourdes): We ride right from our hotel onto a beautiful valley warm-up stretch before hitting the race course to challenge ourselves on the historic out-of-category Col du Tourmalet, some 17K/10.5M at 7.5%. It's the next-to-last mountain day of the Tour, so the climbers will be on the attack throughout this difficult 4-climb stage.

Day 4 (Overnight, Lourdes): It's a rest day with no racing, but everyone still needs to ride. We'll join the Tour riders stretching their legs on the roads around Pau and Lourdes. Our ride options include an easy recovery circuit or the "challenge" loop, which will be 60+ miles and include several of the historic Tour climbs in the area.

Day 5 (Overnight, Bordeaux): Leaving from our hotel, we ride onto gently rolling roads in the foothills bringing us to the Tour route near the foot of the Col du Soulor (22K/14M, 5%) our major challenge for the day. After another epic climb, it's time to enjoy lunch and the incomparable spectacle of the Tour's final mountain day.

Day 6 (Overnight, Bordeaux): The race moves north from Pau with an almost pancake-flat ride to Bordeaux, where we're already installed at our 4-star hotel near the finish. That gives us plenty of time in the morning to ride out and preview the next day's individual time-trial course, which passes right by our hotel. Today's finish line is close at hand, so you can clean up and have lunch before strolling over to join the throngs watching the finish. All bets are off as we wait to see which of the sprinters has best survived the mountains.

Day 7 (Overnight, Paris): Today's stage is the main individual time trial of the 2010 Tour and could well determine the overall champion. After a leisurely morning spin through the nearby vineyards, it's over to the nearby start-line. It's the perfect chance to take pictures and take in the intense warm-up and preparation of each rider as they ready themselves for the challenge of their 51K/32M race against the hands of time. When all is said and done, it's time to board the roomy, high-speed (TGV) train and head to Paris!

Day 8: (Overnight, Paris) With the stage starting after lunch, we take the morning for our Sunday morning cycling tour of Paris. After brunch, it's a 100-meter stroll over to our 5-star race-viewing suite at the Hotel Crillon. There we'll take in the grand finale in luxury.

Day 9: For those leaving today, airport transfers are included and pre-arranged by the VSV staff, making for an easy departure. Bon voyage!

All itineraries details are subject to change.