

## **Pyrénées to Paris: July 15–23, 2012**

9 Days/8 Overnights

\$5695 per-person in shared double accommodations

\$1495 single supplement (guarantees a single room)



### **INCLUDED**

Hotels: 8 overnights total in two hotels (select 4 and 5-star accommodations).

Meals: Daily full breakfasts, minimum of 7 lunches and/or dinners.

Staff: 3 professional support staff for maximum of 15 guests.

Paris: 5-star viewing of final stage finishing circuit.

Transportation: All daily transportation, arrival and departure airport transfers, plus one-way flight from Toulouse to Paris for the final weekend.



### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Best Day: For the best mix of riding and Tour immersion, it's hard to beat July 18 and the Stage 16 finish in our overnight town of Luchon. The morning ride route leaves from our hotel near the finish line, starting on perfect warm-up roads down the Pique river valley. We loop back towards the mountains, then onto the race route for the jam-packed final climb of the day, the Col de Peyresourde. You may choose to join tens of thousands of race fans near the summit, or continue on the course back to our hotel for a shower before strolling out to the finish line to see the live finish of the epic four-col Tour stage.

Toughest Ride: Though any day in the Pyrénées is tough, our hardest may be the Tour rest day, July 17. We have the entire day for our "epic" ride, with a choice selection of the area's historic and challenging climbs. Options include the ascent of HC climbs like the Col du Tourmalet, the Port de Balès and 1<sup>st</sup> Category climbs like the Col d'Aspin.

Cooler 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 live-viewing days, including two classic mountain stages, the Paris finish-circuit, and the Tour's concluding individual time-trial.

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

Ride Distance: 3 long, 3 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 rendez-vous hotel near the airport.

## **DAILY ITINERARY**

Day 1-Sunday, July 15 (Overnight, Luchon): Arrival in Toulouse (Toulouse Blagnac Airport-TLS). Our first overnight is in Luchon, so we have a hotel right by the airport as a meeting spot and for early arrivals. After driving to Luchon, there's plenty of time for check-in and bike assembly, where our professional mechanic provides all the assistance you need. We'll then stretch the legs with an easy "shakedown" ride before our welcome dinner, hosted at a nearby restaurant.

Day 2-Monday, July 16 (Overnight, Luchon): The Tour stage to Pau passes just to the north, so we'll hop on the race route for a relatively easy roll-in to the finish line. Odds are in favor of a bunch finish, and it's our one likely chance to see an exciting mass sprint before Paris.

Day 3-Tuesday, July 17 (Overnight, Luchon): While the pros are having a rest day, it's our time for an "epic" ride and the opportunity to test our legs on nearby historic climbs like the Col du Tourmalet and the Col d'Aspin. Both of these monuments were on the Tour's first high-mountain stage ever, which routed through our base of Luchon back in 1910.

Day 4-Wednesday, July 18 (Overnight, Luchon): It's another ride right from our hotel, heading down the Pique river valley before looping back into the mountains to join the Tour course near the base of the Col de Peyresourde. After a 10K gradual uphill along the Louron River, we'll be on the climb proper (9K/5.5M, 7%), forcing our way up to the summit through the mobs of fans. You may choose to watch the stage on the climb, or continue back to Luchon for the finish.

Day 5-Thursday, July 19 (Overnight, Luchon): We're right on top of the Tour today, as the start is in Luchon and the mountain-top finish is only 17K away. There are several fantastic ride options and it's even possible to see the start and then shortcut the course directly to the finish line!

Day 6-Friday, July 20 (Overnight, Paris): As the Tour heads north from the mountains, we follow, taking in the stage start near Toulouse before our flight to Paris. With the Saturday time trial course just an hour from Paris, we'll have an option to go out for a preview ride in the late afternoon.

Day 7-Saturday, July 21 (Overnight, Paris): Today's stage is the longest individual time trial of the 2012 Tour and could well determine the overall champion. After a leisurely morning Paris spin, we'll make the short transfer to Chartres for the stage. It's a perfect chance to take pictures and absorb the ambiance around the intense warm-up and preparation of each rider for the challenge of their 52K/32M race against the hands of time.

Day 8-Sunday, July 22 (Overnight, Paris): With the stage starting after lunch, we take the morning for our traditional Sunday morning cycling tour of Paris, including the stage finish-circuit. After the ride and a bistro lunch, it's a 100-meter stroll from our hotel over to VSV's 5-star race-viewing suite at the Hotel de Crillon, where we'll take in the grand finale in luxury. With the green jersey potentially at stake, all bets are off as we wait to see which of the sprinters has best survived the three-week trial.

Day 9-Monday, July 23: 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.***

