FRANCE - MONTPELLIER TO MONT VENTOUX - £1,180

23rd May 2020 - 1st June 2020 (10 days)
A leisurely spring tour beginning near Montpellier. Ride through flowery vineyards and the wild garrigue of the Mediterranean hinterland before moving on to the wooded Cévennes National Park. After passing through mixed agriculture and pastureland and a maze of tiny lanes we reach the foot of Mont Ventoux where there is an option of a ride to the summit before the cycling ends in Orange. This is a moving-on unsupported tour with one 1-night stand. Optional rest days include the Gorges de l’Herault, a choice of the Corniche des Cévennes or a spectacular steam train ride and the Gorges de la Nesque.

HOLIDAY TYPE: Guided
TOUR MANAGER: Sheila Simpson
GRADE: Moderate
BOOKING STATUS: Places Available
ACCOMMODATION: Hotel
BOARD BASIS: Half Board
TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS: Coach
ROAD / OFF ROAD: Road
HOLIDAY STYLE: Multi-centre
VEHICLE SUPPORT: Carry Own Luggage
HOLIDAY REF NO: 03424

Holiday Itinerary

Saturday 23rd May
We travel by European Bike Express (Bike Bus) from our chosen pick-up points to Dover for the P&O Ferry crossing to Calais and thence through the night towards Montpellier. Meals are available for purchase on the bus, at several service stations and on the ferry. Meals: None

Sunday 24th May
Arriving in Montpellier at approximately 0730, we cycle a short distance to Laverune to shop for provisions at the Spar shop and local market, then ride through flower-framed vineyards to the ancient village of Courmontieral. From here we climb gradually into the garrigue, a limestone wilderness of scrub oak trees and colourful Mediterranean herbs with the songs of nightingales almost deafening. Near the summit we snack before the long descent to Gignac where we take a look at the Convent and Stations of the Cross on the hill and have a late lunch in the town centre. Then ride along the first half of the Gignac to Pont du Diable cycle path (surface not yet sealed) to Aniane, a rosé wine centre. 47km. Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Monday 25th May
A free day with an optional circuit, easily short-cut. We shop for supplies on the outskirts of the village and then take 3km of the new, well-surfaced, cycle path to the Pont du Diable, a UNESCO World Heritage Site at the foot of the Gorges de l’Herault. Then a short distance on-road to explore the medieval village of St-Guilhem-le-Desert, another UNESCO Site, also designated one of ‘The most beautiful villages of France’. We then follow the Herault river and climb via Causse-de-la-Selle into the Buèges valley and St-Jean-de-Buèges for lunch with a choice of a restaurant or picnic. Those who want a shorter ride, totalling 58km, leave us just south of here. The rest follow this increasingly wild valley to Mas Aubert before swooping down to Aniane. 71km. Meals: B D
Tuesday 26th May
Our second moving-on day takes a rolling road to the attractive village of St Martin-de-Londres with its lovely Romanesque church. We have a break here, at the Café des Tourists in the Place de la Fontaine, and shop for a picnic. Then into lanes surrounded by flowers and nightingales, first to picnic by a stream just outside Ferrières-les-Verreries, with its ancient glassworks, then through Pompignan to reach civilisation at St-Hippolyte-du-Fort. Here we have a choice of cafés in the Place de la Canourgue before setting off into the dramatic woodlands of the Cévennes. After crossing the Gardon river we take a tiny lane following the track of the Cévennes steam train to St-Jean-du-Gard and our hotel in an old silk mill. 78km. Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Wednesday 27th May
A free day with a choice of exploring the market, taking the steam train, a gentle ride out and back along the valley, or riding the circuit of the Corniche des Cévennes and Vallée Francaise, which can be short-cut. We start the circuit in the valley and turn off right to climb the Col de St Pierre and reach the Corniche. There is a wooden shelter here with local information and signpost to the viewpoint, worth a stop. The road, built in the early 18C by Louis XIV's soldiers en route to quell the Camisard uprising, continues over the Col d'Exil (705m) to Le Pompidou. There is a mini supermarket and an auberge where we can picnic for lunch. The descent to the Vallée Francaise is spectacular, and the descent of the valley itself is breathtakingly beautiful. 64km. Meals: B D

Thursday 28th May
We move on, crossing from the valley of the Gardon de St Jean to that of Mialet with a long, lovely descent to Anduze. Here we park outside the Mairie for a break at the Café du Centre and exploration of the old town with its strange pagoda-fountain. After stopping for lunch we leave the Cévennes, following the Gardon valley to the outskirts of Vézénobres for a picnic in the park. We continue on lanes through vineyards and pastureland to Uzès, riding first into the centre to park at the Restaurant du Fontaine and explore the magnificent old town with its famous 12C Tour d'Horloge and Tour Fenestrelle and superb Place aux Herbes with restored Medieval arcades and plane trees, before booking in at our hotel on the outskirts. 68km. Stay 1 night. Meals: B D

Friday 29th May
We leave on single-track lanes, shopping at St Quentin-la-Poterie, then through orchards and vineyards to Pouzillac. Here we climb gently into the garrigue for a picnic break before descending past the Chateau de Castellias to St Victors-la-Coste and Montfaucon, whose chateau dominates the River Rhone. We cross on the old bridge alongside the autoroute and take the road to Chateauneuf-de-Pape, clustered beneath its ruined medieval castle, for a choice of a restaurant lunch or picnic. Continuing across the broad Rhone valley, Mont Ventoux and the jagged Dentelles de Montmirail appear on the skyline. We take our afternoon break at Sarrians or Aubignan, as time permits, and continue through vineyards to Bedoin. 82km. Stay 2 nights. Meals: B D

Saturday 30th May
A free day with two optional circuits. Firstly, if the weather is clear, Mont Ventoux summit (1,912m) and Malaucène. This is the steepest of the three on-road ascents. There are free toilets and water at le Chalet Reynard plus snacks. For a meal we recommend the Café Vendran on the corner 50m before the summit. There are superb views on the long descent to Malaucène and cafés before and in the town, 60km. Or, secondly, a circuit of the Gorges de la Nesque via Villes-sur-Auzon for a cafe break, Monieux for a hotel lunch or picnic and the remote lane past the St Hubert gite, 70km. Both circuits can be short-cut: out-and-back to Ventoux summit, 43km, or up and down the gorges, to Monieux, 68km. Longer rides are available on request. Meals: B D

Sunday 31st May
For our journey to the European Bike Express pick up point at Orange, we have the choice of an attractive flat route through vineyards and orchards (total 44km), or a hilly route with closer views of the dramatic Dentelles de Montmirail (total 51km). Both routes meet for a morning break at Beaumes-de-Venise. We then take increasingly minor lanes to Violes for a long restaurant lunch or picnic. In the afternoon we ride through Camaret-sur-Aigues with its ramparts, accessed by several gates including the impressive Porte de l’Horloge (clock gate). We continue to Orange where there is time to visit the Roman Arc de Triomphe and Amphitheatre. The Bike Bus departs at approximately 1930 for the return overnight journey to Calais. Meals: B

Monday 1st June
We awake in the early morning for our P&O Ferry crossing to Dover and your chosen Bike Bus set-down point in the UK. Meals are available for purchase on the ferry, and at several service stations. Meals: None

Meals: B = Breakfast  D = Dinner

Holiday Summary
Accommodation & Meals
Accommodation will be in 2- and 3-star hotels in rooms based on two people sharing. Meals are half-board, with the possibility of vegetarian meals if indicated when booking, though choice is sometimes limited in France. All the hotels have swimming pools, two of which are heated.

Vehicle Support
Riders will carry their own luggage. No backup is provided.

Passports, Visa & Health
EU citizens must hold a passport that is still valid on the date of their return to their home country. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa.
There are no compulsory health related requirements for UK residents, but you are strongly advised to check that your tetanus protection has not expired. You must also carry your European Health Insurance Card.

Travel Insurance
Our Booking Conditions stipulate that, for holidays outside the UK, travel insurance is mandatory. Details of the level of cover needed and other
conditions you should check are stated in the Booking Conditions. CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours Ltd cannot accept responsibility for any costs that may be incurred due to insufficient insurance cover.

Price
The price of £1,180 is based on a minimum number of 8 people taking part in the holiday; please note Booking Conditions, clause 3. If there are insufficient bookings by 14th March 2020, we will contact you and return all monies paid, although in certain circumstances the tour may still run at below minimum numbers but at the same price.

Price Includes
- Coach travel to Montpellier, returning from Orange, to any Bike Bus pick-up point in England
- 7 nights hotel, sharing room
- 7 breakfasts, 7 dinners
- Daily cycle routes on marked-up maps, cue sheets, profiles and GPS tracks
- CTC Cycling Holidays & Tours costs

Price Does Not Include
- Travel to and from your Bike Bus set-down point in England
- Meals in transit
- Drinks with evening meals
- Lunches or refreshments during the day
- Entry fees to any attractions
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Single occupancy supplement (£300 per person, subject to availability)

Payment Schedule
A deposit of £295 per person is payable upon booking, with the final balance of £885 per person to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 14th March 2020.

Cancellations
Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

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<th>Written notice received:</th>
<th>Cancellation charge:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Before 14th March 2020</td>
<td>Deposit (£295)</td>
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<tr>
<td>From 14th March 2020 through to departure</td>
<td>100% (£1,180)</td>
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Additional Information

Area Covered By The Holiday
This is a tour of the Mediterranean hinterland in the Languedoc and Provence, from Montpellier to Orange, travelling as far east as Bedoin. The terrain is flat to rolling with some climbs, partly through vineyards and garrigue (mix of forest and aromatic scrubland), partly through the Cévennes with some well-graded climbs and descents. Road surfaces are generally good.

Rides & Rest Days
There are five moving-on days, much of which will be spent cycling and sightseeing from the saddle. The group will be led at a pace of approx 18kmph on the flat, tackling hills at a slower pace, and cover 47 to 82km a day. We use minor roads almost entirely, though as with any tour, road closures and landslips can affect our route choice. Weather might even affect your decision to ride up Mt Ventoux. You are free to ride separately, but it is important that you are fit enough to undertake each moving-on day’s ride, carrying your own luggage. There are three rest days when we ride without luggage, or you can take a complete rest from the bike.

Accommodation & Meals
The hotels are used regularly by cycling groups. We buy supplies individually for lunch, which is often at or near a bar-café, and stop whenever possible at mid-morning and afternoon cafés.

Travel
When booking this holiday online it is also necessary to complete a booking form for the European Bike Express and to email that to the Tour Manager. The form can be downloaded here.

Group Information
The maximum group size will be 11 excluding the Tour Manager.

Weather & Clothing
The weather should be warm, even hot, but there can be occasional showers in spring. Bring lightweight summer clothing with extra layers in case of cool weather (or to protect from sunburn), a change for evenings and a light waterproof.

Cycles & Equipment
A touring cycle, hybrid or lightweight ATB is suitable. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. Tandems should have at least one hub brake. A low bottom gear (eg a small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended; if unsure about gears, please email the Tour Manager. Mudguards are optional. Lights are recommended, as they are a legal requirement in France at any time that there is poor visibility, as well as a retro-reflective gilet. You should have ridden your cycle fully laden before the tour to ensure that you are happy with its handling. Participants will be expected to carry each day sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, along with any waterproofs and spare clothing needed for the day. Anyone considering bringing an electric bike must select this on the booking form, mention it under Special Requests and discuss this with the Tour Manager before their booking can be confirmed.

Maps & Guides
Each day you should carry the route sketch map, which will be provided. Michelin 526, ‘Languedoc-Roussillon’, 1:200,000, and 527 Provence-Alps Cote d’Azur covers the whole tour, but you could use just the relevant pages cut from a Michelin Atlas. You will need several 1:100,000 IGN maps.

Travel Insurance & Advice
In addition to travel insurance, EU nationals should carry a European Health Insurance Card, obtainable from most Post Offices. This enables you to take advantage of emergency medical services free or at a discount under a reciprocal provision that exists between EU member states. Your travel insurer may refuse to meet the extra costs of medical treatment if you do not carry this card.
Before booking you should check the Foreign Office ‘Travel Advice by Country’ at www.fco.gov.uk or on 0845 850 2829.

Tour Manager’s Contact Details
If you require any assistance, or have any queries, please don’t hesitate to contact the Tour Manager using the information provided below.

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