

Cycling Safaris

Atlantic to the Mediterranean Cycle (Les Deux Mers)

This ride is designed to be two rides in one!

The simple challenge is to ride from one coast to the other, essentially from Biarritz on the Bay of Biscay to Narbonne Plage on the Mediterranean. Although not flat, the basic route sticks to the foothills of the Pyrenees and does not seek out any great climbs. There are options for the more experienced cyclists and those looking for a greater challenge, to tackle hillier terrain in the Pyrenees including the fantastic Tourmalet being the highlight.

DAY 1

ARRIVE AT THE ATLANTIC

Biarritz is only 11 miles from the border with Spain, nestling along the Bay of Biscay. The town is well known for surfing and has several great beaches, thus the perfect point to embark on our journey from sea to sea.



DAY 2

Biarritz to Oloron-Saint-Marie

115kms / 125kms



After leaving the Atlantic Ocean we will follow a pleasant road beside the river to leave the city. Quickly we will find ourselves in the countryside and Basque style towns and villages, with perhaps Cambo-Les-Bains one of the best examples.

An extra option for the more experienced rider is the Col d'Osquich, which makes a pleasant leg stretcher for the greater climb ahead. The climb is almost 12km long and has an elevation gain of 392metres.with an ave. gradient of 3%, so relatively gentle.



Oloron is a pleasant town with a very interesting ancient quarter including a Romanesque church. Its most important feature (aside from one of Europe's largest chocolate factories) is its location at the base of the Pyrenees and forming part of the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage route.

DAY 3

Oloron-Saint-Marie to Bagneres-de-Bigorre 100km/145km

Leaving Oloron the Pyrenees come into view creating a great backdrop to the surrounding countryside.

Our lunch stop is the well known pilgrimage town of Lourdes. From here the route follows a dedicated cycle path before splitting in two.

The regular route heads along quite roads in the foothills to reach our next destination of Bagnieres de Bigorre.

The alternative route tackles the mighty Tourmalet, one of the Tour de Frances earliest and greatest climbs (and one of the select few 5 star climbs). Not for the faint hearted as the gradient constantly changes and gets harder at the finish. The summit requires an obligatory photo with the giant metal cyclist statue and perhaps a treat from the café and gift shop, before the wonderful descent.



DAY 4

Bagneres to St Giron

110km/125km

Again the afternoon provides another challenge for those looking for some Tour de France glory as we again dip into the Pyrenees. This time it is the Col de Portet d'Aspet that attracts us, a tour favourite and well known for the haunting memorial to the Italian rider Fabio Casartelli, one of the few riders to have ever died on the tour.

This climb is not the longest on the tour (18.1km) and includes some relatively easy sections given the height gain is only 586 metres. However it has a nasty sting with a twisted irregular section that includes a 17% section – so low gears required!

Our destination is the pleasant town of St Giron nestling on the Salat river.



DAY 5

St Giron to Carcassone

125kms



Today will see us skirting the edge of Eastern Pyrenees following roads with great mountain views. Generally we lose height over the day as we leave the mountains behind. The imposing Chateau de Foix can be seen from miles around and numerous small medieval towns such as Mirepoix with its 14th Century wooden arcades being one of the more notable. Carcassone is a wonderful fortified city. The medieval core is a fairytale like UNESCO world heritage place of drawbridges, towers and cobbled streets.

DAY 6

Carcassonne to Narbonne Plage/Narbonne

110km

The last day is the easiest of the ride as we ultimately end up back at sea level.



The route passes through a number of attractive villages and follows the tree lined Canal du Midi for a while. Finally we get our first sighting of the sea and ride along the coast at Narbonne Plage and have a celebratory lunch here. It is then a short ride along cycle paths to the attractive city of Narbonne and our last night together.



DAY 7

Departure

After breakfast you are free to make your own way home, while we pack up all the bikes to bring back to Dublin.

Price on application : (in 2014 it was €1095.00 per person sharing for a group of 20)

Includes:

- › 6 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast & dinner
- › Lunch & Snacks on all cycling days
- › Cycling guide (1 guide per 10 cyclists)
- › Experienced mechanic in back up van
- › Transfer of luggage each day
- › Full training schedule on booking
- › Transfer of bikes to and from Dublin

Does not include flights,

Nearest Aer Lingus Airports

Start: Bordeaux – 12.10 on Sundays from Dublin

Finish: Perpignan (alternative Toulouse/Marseilles) – 16.30 on Saturdays

Ryanair Airports

Biarritz & Carcassonne