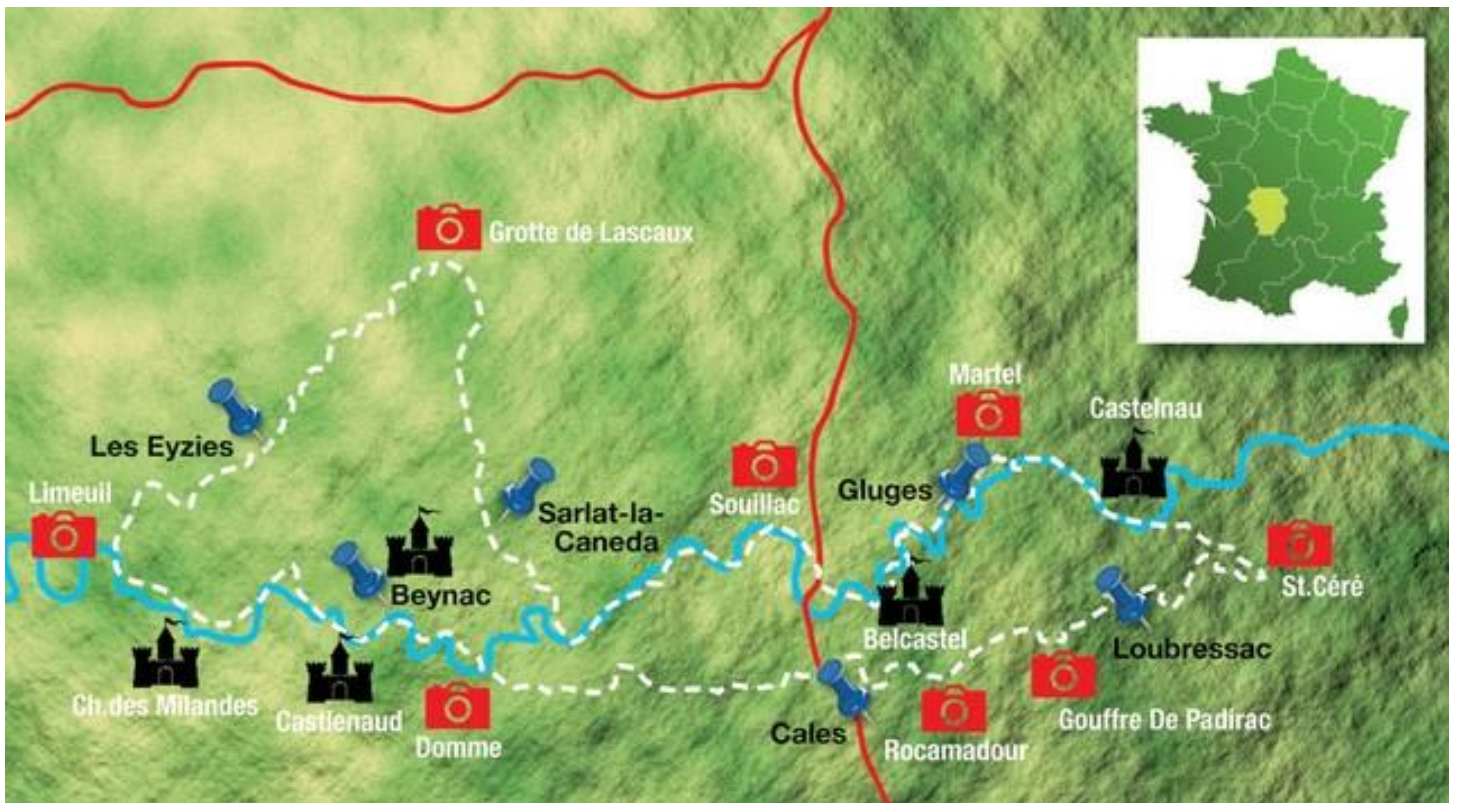


Cycling Safaris

DORDOGNE 2024

Guided Tour

Guide cycling with group | 288 km | 7 nights / 8 days



The Dordogne is a spectacular area of castles, gorges, cliffs and caves, all rich in history. This is the area where Cro Magnon was discovered, the earliest Homosapiens, and the scene of some of the bitterest fighting witnessed in the middle Ages. Because of the continual conflict, the area became heavily fortified – not just the castles and towns or bastides but the houses, churches and farms. They are dramatic but the landscape is equally stunning, varying from vertiginous cliffs and gorges to wide fertile flood plains. There are many cave including the famous one at Padirac rated as a 3*** attraction by Michelin. The Dordogne is famous as the home of truffles, foie gras, cepes and a cuisine based on duck and goose.

TOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 Saturday Arrive Les Eyzies

We will arrange collection from Angouleme train station and transfer you to Le Moulin de la Beune in Les Eyzies. Our host, George Soulié, specialises in local cuisine and was awarded a 'Toque' by influential French restaurant guide *Gault et Millau*.

DAY 2 Sunday Les Eyzies to Beynac 35 miles / 56 km

Today we follow the Vézère to Limeuil where it meets the Dordogne. On route, we will pass through Le Bugue a great place to have our first coffee stop. We will have lunch in Limeuil, a beautiful bastide town, and where the rivers meet is a great place for a swim. Before lunch we'll have a brief stop at the church of St Martin, built in the 12th century by Richard the Lionheart to placate a vengeful God following the assassination of the Archbishop of Canterbury by Richard's father, Henry II of England.

In the afternoon we follow the Dordogne along quiet roads and pass the Châteaux of Beynac and Castelnaud facing each other across the Dordogne. Passing the old home of Josephine Baker at the Château des Milandes. Finishing the day at Beynac, a picturesque village beside the Dordogne dominated by its castle set on a cliff 500 feet above. The castle was once visited by a certain Richard The Lionheart and is well worth a look. You can reach it by an absurdly steep path called the Basketmakers path. More recently, Beynac played host to the river scenes from the movie *Chocolat*. We will stay tonight in the Hostellerie Maleville and eat in a restaurant perched on the bank of the Dordogne.

DAY 3 Monday Beynac to Payrac 30 miles / 48 km

First stop is a visit to Château Castelnaud, the perennial enemy of Beynac. Although both châteaux were held by the English and French armies, neither held both at the same time, and Castelnaud has a fascinating medieval warfare museum dedicated to this period of history. A short ride upstream from Beynac, we pass La Roque Gageac, an amazing town built into the side of a cliff beside the Dordogne, originally built as a prehistoric fort. Next up, Domme sits 450 feet above the Dordogne and has famous panoramic views of the river. Known as the 'Acropolis of the Périgord', Domme was a key battleground in both The Hundred Years War and The Wars of Religion.

It is still surrounded by a medieval wall and is one of the best preserved of all the Bastide towns. (Medieval towns built in south-west France and usually easily recognised by their well-planned, grid system of streets) It was used to imprison the Knights Templar in the 14th century, and on top of all this is the site of some interesting limestone caves. From Domme to Payrac you head cross-country on tiny roads and see barely a soul. This is beautiful cycle through countryside with the scent of strawberries, plums, blackberries and figs along the way. Today is a tough day and probably the hilliest of the week but the swimming pool in the hotel at Calés and the superb food this evening are welcome and well-deserved.

DAY 4 Tuesday Cales to Loubressac 27 miles / 44 km

Leaving Calés this morning, descent down to the landscape changing from the lush farmland of yesterday to the arid limestone causses on the way to Rocamadour. At the base of the first descent is the ancient fortified mill of Cougnaguet. This enchanting pocket of French history gives a fascinating insight into the lawlessness of this region during the 13th century.

Leaving the mill, we head across country on the old pilgrim's way into Rocamadour, one of the most spectacular towns in France, on the side of a cliff hundreds of feet above the Alzou Gorge. The town developed around the site of a 13th century hermitage, and is now ranked as the second site in France. Michelin gave Rocamadour 3*** - worth a journey in itself! The underground journey, including a boat trip along the river will last around an hour and you should ensure you have something warm to wear, By the time we emerge from the cave, it is usually late afternoon, and a 5-mile cycle ride brings us to the Hotel Lou Cantou in Loubressac, and the tender mercies of the Cayrouse family. Loubressac sits on the edge of the Causses, and we get beautiful views across both the Dordogne and Bavé valleys.

DAY 5 Wednesday Loubressac to Gluges 30 miles / 48 km

A downhill cycle ride into the village of Autoire and on the way here we stop to overlook and admire the superb Cirque d'Autoire, a limestone horseshoe dominating the valley. From Autoire we head across country into St Céré where, two Wednesdays each month, there is a great food market - great for picnic lunch. Out of St Céré we pass the huge and ruined castle at Castelnau and arrive back at the Dordogne. We follow the Dordogne downstream to Carennac, a great place for a picnic.

After Carennac the road twists and turns as it follows the Dordogne, we cross the river and pass the spot where the underground river from the Gouffre de Padirac enters the Dordogne. We pass several minor châteaux on our way to Gluges, where the pool catches the late afternoon sun; a perfect end to the day. Although we cycle more than 30 miles today, it is the easiest 30 miles you're ever likely to ride with the disappointing exception of what always seems to me like a wholly unnecessary hill just before Gluges.

DAY 6 Thursday Gluges - Sarlat 36 miles / 57 km

This stretch of the Dordogne cuts right through the limestone causses offering spectacular gorges and cliffs. Our route criss-crosses the river using backroads to avoid some unseemly hills, this stretch of the river is home to kingfishers and herons. After lunch we follow tiny backroads from Souillac to Sarlat-la-Caneda, entering the town on a cycle path built on a disused railway. Our hotel is the Hotel Compostelle, a beautifully modernised hotel near the heart of the old town. Sarlat is so well preserved that it also rates 3*** from Michelin.

Tonight, stroll into the labyrinthine old town to Les Jardins d'Harmonie for a meal.

DAY 7 Friday Sarlat - Les Eyzies 22 miles / 35 km

The last day of our cycling holiday, so there is a 'couple of hills'. Once we leave Sarlat we turn onto tiny country roads that lead to the hilltop town of Marquay and beautiful views across the Vézère and Beune valleys.

Descending to the Vézère we've arrived back in prehistory territory. We pass the Abri de Cap Blanc with its sculptures on the way to the amazing prehistoric fort at La Roque St Christophe. This village was carved out of overhanging galleries in a 900 metre limestone cliff. It was continuously inhabited from 50,000 BC until the 16th century at which point it was destroyed by the English. There are records of the settlement in Roman accounts - although they never managed to capture it - and also in 16th century government record in Paris where details of the fireplaces were kept to levy 'hearth taxes'. You can identify the church, rings cut in the roofs to hang food, and even safes and water stores. Les Eyzies is another 5 miles, and if we haven't been able to visit the Font de Gaume, there is the National Prehistory Museum to round off a real prehistory day.

DAY 8 Saturday Departure

Transfer to Angouleme train station.

2024 GROUP TOUR DATES

June 29
July 20
September 7

2024 TOUR PRICE

€2180 per person sharing
+ €435 single room supplement
If you are travelling on your own we will endeavour to find a roommate for you

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- 7 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast
- All evening meals
- Luggage transfers
- Route notes and maps
- Tour guide that accompanies the group
- Bike hire, with panniers, water bottle, helmet, etc.
- Details of all hotels and restaurants
- All routes available in GPS form
- Cycling jersey
- Vineyard tasting fees
- Set transfer from Angouleme to the start of tour (Les Eyzies)
- Set transfer to Angouleme at tour end

Not included:

- Admission charges to the chateaux.
- E-Bike hire (€175)

WHAT TO BRING

- Comfortable cycling clothing – padded cycling shorts and cycling gloves are invaluable.
- Hat, sunglasses, suntan lotion, swimwear.
- Casual clothes for evening. You may be grateful for something warm with long sleeves.
- Helmets, though not obligatory in France, are highly recommended. To be sure of comfort we suggest you bring your own helmet, however, they are also provided.

BIKE / FITNESS



Bike Rental is included in the tour price.

We use Trek 7300 FX Hybrid 24 speed touring bike with aluminium frame and Shimano gear system.

Level of difficulty:	Dordogne - *** a hilly region, moderate fitness required.
Average daily distance	30 miles / 45 kms
Maximum daily distance	38 miles / 61kms

TRAVEL INFORMATION

You will be met on Saturday at 5.00pm in Angouleme and brought to the starting point at Les Eyzies.

At the end of the tour you will be brought back to the train station in time for the 08:50 departure to Charles de Gaulle airport and London (via Lille) and the 09:28 departure to Paris.

Both local transfers are included in the tour price.

Train Arrival and Departure Times from London. *Note: Check-in no later than 30 minutes before departure.*

Please check train times prior to departure

From/To London:

Outward Journey	Departure London St Pancras International	09:31	Change of train in Lille Europe
	Arrival Angouleme	16:29	
Inward Journey	Departure Angouleme	08:36	Change of train in Lille Europe
	Arrival London St Pancras International	14:39	

Note, there is a change of trains in Lille Europe. Local transfers are to and from Angouleme station and your hotel.

From/To Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport

Outward Journey	Departure Ch. De Gaulle Airport	10:16
	Arrival Angouleme	13:35
Inward Journey	Departure Angouleme	08:26
	Arrival Ch. De Gaulle Airport	12:42

From/To Paris Montparnasse Train Station

Outward Journey	Departure Montparnasse	14:03
	Arrival Angouleme	16:29
Inward Journey	Departure Angouleme	08:36
	Arrival Montparnasse	11:13

Please take careful note of the train times above. Our transfers are scheduled to meet these designed trains, if these train times are inconvenient please contact us so that we can be sure of arranging appropriate transfers.

If you do miss the train, try and arrange to get on the next one. If you have to pay for another ticket you are responsible for the cost (depending on circumstances you may be covered by insurance). Call the owner of the first hotel and give them your name and arrival details.

All details on trains in France are available through the website www.raileurope.com/us/index.htm. It is very easy to use and tickets can be booked directly.

GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK-UP SERVICE

The maximum group size on these tours is fifteen people and one, sometimes two guides. Each person has their own route details, as well as a guide who cycles with you, while your luggage is locally transferred each day. There is no “sag” wagon as such but we can arrange to collect the weary!!

GENERAL INFORMATION

Food and Drink

What if I have any special dietary requirements?

Vegetarians are catered for (please advise if you eat fish). Vegan’s choice will be limited but they can be accommodated.

Is the water safe to drink?

Yes, it is important to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluid each day.

Are beverages included with the meals?

No, all beverages are to your own account.