

Purely PYRENEES

walking and cycling holidays

Canal du Midi Via Carcassonne to the Med



This cycling holiday takes you to so many fascinating places in such a short time, and with no challenging hills or distances. You'll discover and taste the real France - its rich history, unspoilt villages, vineyards, wines and traditional cuisine. Plus the enormous satisfaction of having cycled to the Mediterranean.

6 nights - 5 days cycling

- Minimum required 2 persons. Our prices are
- From point to point
- With luggage transportation
- Self-guided

Code :
FP9PUCM



The plus points

- **So many highlights in one short break**
- **Discover the real France - its villages, vineyards and restaurants**
- **24/7 English speaking customer service if you need it**
- **Bike hire included**



Before departure, please check that you have an updated fact sheet.

https://www.purelypyrenees.com/canal_du_midi_via_carcassonne_med.html

Suitable for a hybrid or mountain bike, electric bike possible but not normally required. You begin in the vibrant Pink City of Toulouse before gently cycling along the banks of the Canal du Midi discovering villages and churches, castles and vineyards as you go. One highlight will undoubtedly be the walled city of Caracassonne, but you may well enjoy other, lesser known places just as much. You will cycle along the Mediterranean coast to complete your journey in the historic fishing port of Sète. A truly memorable short break that will appeal to those who already love cycling as well as those who may not be quite so sure !

DAY 1

Arrival at Toulouse

Standard option: You make your own way to your first night's hotel in Toulouse.

With extra airport pick-up: We can pick you up from Toulouse airport or train station and take you to your first hotel. *Pick-ups from other airports are also available (please consult us for prices).*

Toulouse is known as The Pink City - a wonderfully vibrant, artistic and historic city that is a joy to wander around. Your bikes will be waiting for you at the hotel. Electric bikes are a pre-book option (see price list), but we feel that they are not really necessary on this almost entirely flat journey.

You stay at the three star Hôtel Grand Orléans, superbly located off the Capitole with well equipped, quiet rooms, on a bed and breakfast basis, leaving you free to choose the restaurant that most appeals to your tastes.

Transfer: 20mins.

DAY 2

Toulouse - Castelnaudary

You start from Paul Riquet bridge named after the man who supervised the canal's construction when it began in 1666, and soon you are rolling along right beside the canal through delightful open country accompanied by numerous péniches, the ubiquitous boats of the Canal du Midi. Your first stop is Avignonet made famous by Cathar tragedies, and today renowned for its medieval houses, sculptures and huge churches that make it well worth an hour or so's visit. You pass close to several villages along the way, but the next significant location, at the foot of the Black Mountains, is the Seuil de Narouze, which is the highest point of the whole Deux Mers (two seas) canal at 600 feet, and is the point that divides waters flowing into the Atlantic one way and the Mediterranean the other, so it is downhill all the way from here - literally! - and certainly to your destination for the day, Castelnaudary, famous for its cassoulet.

You stay at the comfortable, modern three star Hôtel Clos Fleuri in Castelnaudary with its pleasant outdoor terrace, very welcome swimming pool, smart restaurant (dinner included), and all a stroll from the town itself.

Distance: 65km.

DAY 3

Castelnaudary - Carcassonne

Today is truly a journey through, and to, history. You pass several two thousand year old villages, but the jewel is undoubtedly Bram, founded in the 2nd century BC and once named Eboromagnus when it became an important trading city, but today it is best known as being the best preserved circular town in Europe. Then there are 17th century places relating to the canal itself, including the fascinating double lock at Lalande, the windmill at Cugarel, the grand basin at Villepinte, and the 4 way aquaduct at Rebenty. Finally, Carcassonne itself, probably the best preserved large scale walled city in Europe and, of course, a UNESCO world heritage site. A medieval city like no other, and there is no better way to discover it than by staying right beside the walls.

The three star Hôtel Aragon is a very comfortable, well appointed hotel with swimming pool, and, just as importantly, is 50 yards from the main gate into the city - the best of both worlds. You stay on a bed and breakfast basis leaving you free to choose a restaurant inside the great walls of the city.

Distance: 40km.

DAY 4

Carcassonne - Olonzac

You leave the city alongside the canal, and appreciate the shade from those plane trees that so characteristically line the route. You can choose to visit what most interests you whether it be the 12th century church at Trebes guarded by 320 crows carved in oak, Marseillette, an ancient Gaul village, or Capendu with its Romanesque chapel. Alternatively, you can sit and read in village cafes, and picnic tranquilly on the banks of the canal. You are in the heart of southern France, and the ambiance is almost tangible. Just being here is a huge pleasure, and on a bike you can reach the parts most tourists never reach. The nearer to your destination in Olonzac you get, the more fields of grapes dominate the landscape and the economy of the region. If nothing else, it promises interesting local wines tonight.

You stay and dine at the characterfully homely Maison d'hôtes Eloi Merle - a real taste of France, but there is a heated swimming pool, jacuzzi and plenty of space to lounge peacefully.

Distance: 42km.

DAY 5

Olonzac - Béziers

You pass the Argens lock, then follow the canal as it snakes towards a major four way canal crossroads. You take the Canal de la Robine en route to the Mediterranean and Beziers, but do stop at the wonderful 12th to 15th century Capestang Cathedral that dominates the landscape. as you can best see by climbing the bell tower. There are many remains of Roman occupation - a lost 5,000 feet long Roman bridge over the marshes, the Gallo-Roman village of Poilhes la Romaine, and the oppidum (hill town) of Ensérune, which was continuously occupied from the 6th century BC to the 1st century AD. Then there are canal related discoveries: the 500 foot 17th century Malpas tunnel - secretly dug in 8 days against government wishes, and the first canal tunnel in Europe - and the 9 technologically advanced locks at Foncérannes. All unfolding before you arrive in Beziers to explore its historic streets, its cathedral, and its Pont-Vieux - all too often ignored, it's others' loss and your gain.

The three star Hôtel Imperator occupies a magnificent building right in the heart of historic Beziers with atmospheric public and bed rooms as well as a lovely private terrace. The best place to stay in Beziers where you are free to discover the restaurant that suits you best - there are plenty to choose from.

Distance: 64km.

DAY 6

Béziers - Sète

In Beziers you feel you are within touching distance of the Mediterranean - and indeed you almost are as you set out on this final morning seeing a mosaic of sand dunes, wetlands and salt lagoons. It is a landscape almost indistinguishable from the nearby Camargue, not least with its egrets, wild horses and bulls, but you stay true to the canal passing the impressive round lock at Agde before cycling through the city - do visit the cathedral and historic quarter - and rejoining the canal soon which runs beside the huge Thau etang (lake or, in this case, lagoon), then the Bagnas etang before finally arriving right beside the Mediterranean beaches of Marseillan. You now cycle beside the sea all the way into the historic port of Sete. A truly memorable journey!

You stay for your final night at the rightly named three star Hôtel Grand, superbly located in the town centre overlooking the harbour, and retaining all its original 19th elegance, while delivering all the contemporary comforts of the 21st century. Dinner is included in its stylish restaurant, but, unfortunately, not the bubbly you might be celebrating with!

Distance: 50km.

DAY 7

End of stay

Standard option: After breakfast, you leave your bikes here and make your own way onwards.

With extra airport pick-up: After breakfast, you leave your bikes here before being picked up for a transfer to Montpellier airport or train station. *Transfers to other airports are also available (please consult us for prices).*

Elements beyond our control (the weather, level of the group, logistical risks, other miscellaneous reasons...) may lead our team to modify the programme. We aim to please, but your safety will systematically be our priority.

■ PRACTICAL INFORMATION

DISPOSITIONS COVID-19

Because of the added health precautions relating to COVID, you must be equipped from the start of your trip with:

* a sufficient quantity of masks (at a rate of 2 per day minimum). Wearing a mask will be compulsory during any transport, in certain accommodation, crowded places etc.

- * zipped pockets for masks and other items such as used tissues
- * hydro-alcoholic gel
- * a thermometer to take your temperature in case of symptoms appearing during your stay
- * a pen (sometimes necessary to sign an agreement in certain accommodation).

The hosts who will welcome you (hoteliers, refuge guards, restaurateurs, transporters, local teams ...) are the people who will help to guarantee the smooth running of your stay and will ask you to conform with certain health related protocols. Out of respect for them and other people who frequent the same places, we ask you to commit to respecting the instructions given to you.

Be reassured and optimistic, because as you know, cycling is an activity that will allow you long and enjoyable periods of time during which the wearing of a mask is not mandatory!

PROGRAMME OF DEPARTURES

1 April to 30 October.

MEETING POINT

Standard option: You make your own way to your first night's hotel in Toulouse.

With extra airport pick-up: We can pick you up from Toulouse airport or train station and take you to your first hotel. *Pick-ups from other airports are also available (please consult us for prices).*

END OF STAY

Standard option: After breakfast, you leave your bikes here and make your own way onwards.

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TO GET TO THE MEETING POINT

There are planes and trains to both Toulouse and Montpellier from Paris, London and many other European cities. You can take a public shuttle bus or the tramway from Toulouse airport to the city centre, or take the "extra airport pick-up" option for a private transfer.

PARKING

If arriving by car and leaving your car in Toulouse for the week, the best option is to leave your car in the Jean Jaurès Car Park (secure parking). This is just a 10-minute walk from your hotel in Toulouse.

IF YOU WANT TO ARRIVE THE NIGHT BEFORE OR STAY AFTER THE TRIP

To book extra nights before, during or after the holiday, just ask us for a quote.

GUARANTEED DEPARTURE FROM (PERS)

2 persons. Our prices are based on a minimum of 2 participants

LEVEL

This is an easy cycling holiday almost entirely on the flat and a hybrid bike is included in the price. Electric bikes are available for a supplement, but we don't think they add much to this particular holiday.

LUGGAGE TRANSPORTATION

Your luggage is transported daily to the next hotel, so all you need is a day sack.

SUPERVISION

This is an independent, self-guided holiday, although we provide comprehensive itinerary information.

ACCOMMODATION

You stay in five 3 star hotels, and quality one maison d'hotels. Three nights are on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis (nights 2, 4, 6), and the others on a bed and breakfast basis.

TRANSFERS

Usually transfers are in people carriers, mini-buses, cars or taxis. Often they will be exclusively for you.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

Three nights dinner, bed and breakfast (nights 2, 4, 6), and the other nights on a bed and breakfast basis; transport of your luggage each day; your bike (non-electric); comprehensive itinerary information and directions including all the maps you will need; 24/7 English speaking customer service.

THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE

Transfers to your first night's hotel or back from your last night's hotel (unless specified in the option you have chosen), drinks with dinners; entry fees; additional transfers; electric bikes; picnics (buy locally or ask the hotel the night before - pay locally); dinners on the first, third and fifth nights; booking fee of 20€ / person, personal insurance.

FORMALITIES

You need to keep your passport with you at all times, and ideally insurance information. You need to make your own arrangements to claim local healthcare. There are requirements in France and Spain for all vehicles to carry safety equipment.

CONTENTS OF YOUR TRAVEL FOLDER

In the month preceding your holiday (and after the totality of your trip has been paid for), you will be sent a travel folder containing all the necessary documents for the completion of your holiday: a practical information sheet (giving you your meeting times, transfers, accommodation contact numbers and addresses etc), detailed route descriptions and itinerary, maps (sometimes integrated into the route descriptions), necessary documents (your invoice, hotel vouchers if required etc), and luggage tags.

■ EQUIPMENT

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

For your upper body: in all countries and in all seasons, the principal of wearing 3 breathable layers works well in most situations (T-shirt - warmer layer - waterproof and windproof outer layer). Choose clothes that dry quickly (synthetic fibres) and avoid cotton (dries too slowly => discomfort). Wool is a natural fibre that also has excellent properties and has recently made a great comeback in the outdoor clothing industry due to new manufacturing processes. Make sure you cover up before you get too cold, but above all make sure that you take layers off before you get too hot - sweat should be seen as an enemy for a cyclist (especially in winter) as it dampens clothing which can later freeze or cool too quickly. Avoid anoraks - they can turn a pleasant ride into a absolute nightmare!

For your lower body: shorts and trousers made from tough, synthetic fabrics that dry quickly and therefore allow for greater comfort. Be particularly careful in your choice of socks: bring tough, reinforced cycling socks with flat seams (to avoid blisters). In winter, choose warm socks. You should also avoid cotton socks (even if they have been blessed!).

LUGGAGE

You should bring:

- 1 travel bag per person (or suitcase with wheels). Make sure they are not too big in order to avoid logistical problems (taking up too much room in transfer vehicles, for example). On holidays where you move from one hotel to another during your stay, try to keep the weight down to 10-12kg (the extra weight can make it difficult to get all the suitcases to certain hotels that are difficult to get to). Be certain not to leave any fragile or valuable objects in your main luggage.
- 1 rucksack (around 30-40 litres) with integrated water-bag (e.g. Camel-Back). These bags are more practical than carrying bottles. The rucksack should also have a waist belt and allow your back to be well ventilated for extra comfort. Keep the total weight of your rucksack plus belongings down to a maximum of 10kg.

CLOTHING

- 1 set of cycling clothes: cycling shorts, breathable T-shirt (long-sleeved or short-sleeved depending on the time of year)
- 1 other pair of shorts or trousers for cycling (padding essential)
- cycling shoes
- comfortable clothes and shoes for the evenings
- underwear
- spare long-sleeved breathable T-shirts (1 for every 2_3 days) and 1 or 2 short-sleeved T-shirts
- 1 warmer layer (a fleece or water-resistant "softshell"jacket). Or a "primaloft" jacket (warm and easily compacted down to fit into rucksacks).
- 1 breathable, windproof and waterproof out layer (e.g. Gore-Tex) with a hood

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- 1 large plastic bag to be used as a rucksack liner for protecting your belongings from the rain and/or 1 waterproof rucksack cover
- 1 waterproof bag containing: travel insurance contract, ID or passport, health card, and all other documents mentioned in the "formalities" section.
- 1 pair of good quality sunglasses (protection factor 3) plus high-factor sun cream and sunscreen for your lips (should always be carried in your rucksack)
- 1 folding pen-knife (Swiss Army knife or similar)

- For lunches: cutlery and 1 plastic/tupperware container (0.5 litres minimum). You may end up not using it but it is important to have it just in case
- washbag and 1 quick-drying towel (try to bring only essential items that don't take up too much space, biological soap...)
- 1 swimming costume / pair of swimming trunks
- ear plugs (to protect you from snoring neighbours or other annoying noises)
- 1 sleeping-bag liner if spending a night (or nights) in dormitory accommodation (hostels or refuge huts)
- handkerchiefs
- toilet paper
- 1 cigarette lighter (be careful not to provoke a fire - always use responsibly and not unless you have to)
- 1 torch or head-torch plus a survival blanket: always put this in your rucksack as set-backs due to accidents are always possible, even on easy rides
- spare glasses (if you wear glasses)
- camera, binoculars, paint brushes and canvas... (optional)

Depending on the characteristics of the holiday you are going on (if bike hire is included or not, or if you have indicated that you wish to bring your own bike anyway), it may be a good idea to bring some (or all) of the following cycling kit (please also check in the "bicycle hire" section to see what kit is already provided on the holiday you have chosen):

- cycling gloves (normal or fingerless depending on the time of year)
- 1 bike helmet (legal requirement in most countries)
- 1 or 2 cycling bottles or a hydration system such as a Camel-Back (1.5 litres), whichever you prefer
- 2 inner-tubes
- a few spare spokes (especially on mountain-bike tours)
- 1 spare derailleur
- 1 set of spare brake pads
- 1 spare cable for derailleurs or brakes
- 1 spare chain
- any other kit that you deem to be necessary...

You should try to be self-sufficient for all minor cycling breakdowns typical of these kinds of cycling tours (tyre-lever, puncture repair kit, multi-tool, quick-fix chain link...). If you have disk-brakes or high-tech bikes, be sure to bring the necessary kit for repairs.

FIRST AID KIT

Let us know about any illness, treatments or allergies that may complicate things should you have a problem or an accident and need taking to hospital during your stay.

- personal medication
- painkillers: preferably Paracetamol
- medication for indigestion
- throat tablets
- elasticated sticky bandage (e.g. Elastoplaste): 2.5m long and 5/8cm wide
- strip plasters (e.g. Steri-Strip)
- set of smaller sticky plasters plus some sterile compresses
- blister plasters (e.g. Compeed)
- hair tweezers (can also be used for extracting splinters and thorns)

- small scissors
- vitamin C tablets
- small bottle of bacterial hand-gel (e.g. Sterilium)

■ MORE INFORMATION

THE AREA

The "Canal du Midi" has existed since the 17th Century and links up Toulouse with the Mediterranean. It has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1996 and is one of the oldest surviving canals in Europe. At the time of its construction, it was one of the greatest feats of engineering of the 17th Century. It was built between 1666 and 1681, under the rule of Louis XIV. It has now been linked to the "Canal de Garonne", which runs parallel to the River Garonne from Bordeaux to Toulouse. This effectively allows vessels to navigate between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea without having to go via Gibraltar. Nowadays, the canal is still used for commerce but its main use is for tourism. It has gained an international reputation and 80% of tourists are non-French. There are beautiful ports all along the canal, and nature is never far away. Thomas Jefferson even came to study the canal before he became president of the United States, with the idea of building a similar masterpiece in America. For many holiday-makers, the canal is the perfect image of what they expect France to be like - well-conserved and beautiful but also industrious and inventive. "Midi" means "midday" in French and it is, in fact, the entire south of France that is given this name, in allusion to the sun being in the south at midday.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WEBSITES

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■ INSURANCE

According to the regulation of our profession, Purely Pyrenees is covered by a Civil Professional Liability. However, each client must hold an individual civil liability as well as an individual multi risk guarantee in order to protect themselves from incidents or accidents that may occur before or during their hiking trip.

We remind you that a credit card covers, in general, only assistance in repatriation and not the cancellation of your trip, and this only provided you use the card to pay for the total of the trip.

We offer a choice of three insurance options which you can purchase at the time of booking.

Package 1 : simple cancellation insurance at 2.5%

This insurance provides reimbursement of the amount incurred (excluding fees and the cost of insurance) in case of cancellation due to one of the following causes: serious accident, illness or death of insured, spouse or person accompanying them, and certain family members.

Package 2 : simple cancellation insurance and assistance / repatriation at 3.7%

This insurance allows, in addition to the benefits described in the plan No. 1; - To benefit from assistance in case of illness or injury during the trip and covers your return home if necessary. - A reimbursement paid on a pro rata basis (excluding transportation costs and with a waiting period) in the case of an interruption of your trip following an accident, the death of a loved one or other specified accidents.

Package 3 : Package "super multi-risk": 4.8%

This insurance offers, in addition to the benefits described in the packages No. 1 and No. 2, - A wider cancellation insurance with the repayment of amounts incurred (net of deductible) in case of cancellation for any justifiable reason including an exceptional and unexpected event. - The management of some of the costs incurred at the time in case of return not linked to an exceptional and unexpected event. - Compensation (capped) for loss, theft or destruction of baggage. - Payment of compensation for delayed baggage delivery of more than 48 hours.

The rapatriation is not valid for all countries, please check with us before subscribing the insurance.

You will receive with the confirmation of your booking an extract of the general conditions of contract chosen (in french). Take this document with you on your journey. The validity of all guarantees corresponds with the travel dates indicated on the invoice and applies only to services sold. For departures and returns postponed, please contact us. Warning: If you buy only the contract No. 1 (simple cancellation insurance), this means that you need to have your own insurance, repatriation assistance (related notably to certain credit cards). We advise you to check your contract and cover guaranteed. In this case, we ask you to tell us when you book the name of your insurance company and your policy number. You will assume, therefore, the responsibility of certain risks, especially in the advance payments of certain costs.

Important: If you must use the assistance during the trip, you must obtain the prior consent of Europe Assistance before taking any action or incur any expenditure by telephoning: 33 1 41 85 85 85 and quoting the number of contract: 58662860

■ ACTING FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Purely Pyrenees is a founding member of Action for Responsible Tourism. The label "Action for Responsible Tourism" was awarded Purely Pyrenees in 2009. It is controlled, every year, by ECOCERT. Based on common values of respect, solidarity and quality, ATR aims to harmonize professional practices of its members. To win the confidence of customers, it focuses on four key commitments, which arise from many activities in the field and at home.

- Clear information and awareness of responsible tourism given to the traveller.
- Selection of providers in the spirit of responsible tourism.
- Setting up of a transfer of competencies to the providers.
- Commitment in relation to the tour operator's own structure.

More information on the label ATR on : www.tourisme-responsable.org

■ CONTACT US

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Purely Pyrenees is a mark from La Balaguere SAS.

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■ NOTES

