

# Cycling holiday in the Lot



## Highlights

A quintessentially French cycling holiday, with the emphasis on good food, fine wines, bonhomie et joie de vivre! This seven-day break takes you to the Lot, one of southwest France's hidden gems, where you'll find rolling farmlands, forested valleys and endless leafy lanes.

The Lot is one of the least populated and least polluted departments in France. It is also one of the most picturesque, with gently rolling farmlands, lush river valleys, shady groves and rocky limestone cause. The rustic landscape is scored by mile upon mile of leafy lanes that converge occasionally in a sleepy hamlet; old men sip cassis, boys play pétanque and other idyllic clichés unfold before your eyes! The region is also home to the medieval yellow-stone town of Gourdon, with its impressive hilltop vistas, and the stunning cliff-side citadel of Rocamadour.

This seven-day holiday gives you the chance to explore this stunning region on two wheels. Based at a converted farmhouse and barn complex in Mas de Flory, each day will see you visit a different area. One day you might be following the course of the Dordogne river, taking in the hilltop bastides, the magnificent Château de Beynac and the historic riverside settlement of La Roque Gageac, the next might see you explore the pretty villages of the Bouriane, with their charming squares and ancient churches. There'll also be time to visit the majestic Château Chambert and the surrounding Cahors vineyards where, needless to say, you'll get to try the famous 'black' wine! Then at the end of the day, it's 'home' to the farm for a truly awesome four-course meal with excellent wines and coffee served on the terrace – what more could you want?

## Is it for me?

A quick glance at some of the reviews for this trip should make it pretty apparent that this one's that little bit special. The attention to detail is the best bit, from the fantastic breakfast spreads (fresh croissants, crusty baguettes, pain au raisin, juices and coffee, on checkered cloth of course!) to the lovingly-decorated double rooms. The cycling's not bad either, with a huge variety of landscapes and historic sites to explore. There are no off-road or downhill sections, nothing technical, rather, this holiday is all about cycling as relaxation, a philosophy that extends to the food and accommodation. It's great for people who haven't cycled for a while, for those who want a taste of travel and adventure without sacrificing comfort. And you can be guaranteed of much bonhomie with your fellow, like-minded cyclers.

## Accommodation

Aileen and John have converted the 18th century barn adjacent to their home into 5 ensuite guest rooms, to accommodate up to 10 visitors at a time. The bedrooms have all been designed to be nice and light. The communal areas consist of a mezzanine lounge and a dining room looking onto the gardens and countryside beyond.

Breakfast and dinner are both included in the price. Breakfast will be a continental affair, with lots of delicious freshly baked goods to fuel your days cycling. Dinner is served in the French style, with several courses accompanied by good wine. As much as possible, ingredients are all sourced locally. You will need to buy lunch while out cycling but your hosts will be more than happy to suggest one of their favourite local restaurants or point you in the direction of a market where you can practice your French and buy ingredients for a rustic picnic

## Itinerary

Prices from  
**1,195** GBP (7 days) per person

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Itinerary varies depending on departure. The following is an example itinerary.

#### Day 1 (Sunday)

##### Welcome

You will be met at Bergerac airport or Gourdon rail station and driven to Mas de Flory, your home for the week. Relax and unwind with a glass of fizz while you settle in and later enjoy a long, lazy meal – 4 courses with plenty of wine and coffee to finish – and meet your fellow guests for the week.

#### Day 2 (Monday)

##### Meander the Dordogne.

After a substantial buffet breakfast you'll be fitted with your bike and have time to check that everything is comfortable before setting off at your leisure for your first cycle tour.

This is a mostly flat route following the river valley

to give you a nice gentle introduction to your cycling holiday week. You'll ride through pretty, sleepy villages and explore the spectacular, historic riverside settlement of La Roque Gageac, carved into the rocky hillside, the magnificent Château de Beynac towering high on the cliff top overlooking the Dordogne river and pretty, Domme, perched high above the Dordogne and beautifully preserved from the 12th century.

#### Day 3 (Tuesday)

##### Catus market and valley vistas

Cycle along quiet, leafy backroads to the small town of Catus where you can browse the Tuesday market and buy some fresh provisions for a lazy lunch by the lake – the lovely Lac Vert. In the afternoon, you'll make your way towards the Lot River valley and the pretty town of Luzech. You'll get there via the amazing views from the Col de Crayssac and the spectacular downhill, switchback sweep of the route de Cevenne - a thrilling ride! You can then meander through the AOC Cahors vineyards (along the Cahors Wine Trail and Lot Valley Cycle Route) and Chateaux of Caix, Parnac, Caillac and into Douelle where we'll meet at a riverside bar before we drive you back home at the end of the afternoon.

#### Day 4 (Wednesday)

##### Gourdon and Rocamadour

In the morning you'll take the winding, country route to Gourdon, where you can explore the history of this ancient town with its medieval centre of yellow-stone houses cladding a prominent hilltop - worth the climb for the 360 degree far-reaching views. There is also a great range of shops, bars and cafes to explore or you could even take a swim in the outdoor pool!

In the afternoon you can choose to have a break away from cycling and join the optional visit to amazing Rocamadour, a mediaeval settlement and renowned site for pilgrims which clings precariously to dramatic limestone cliffs; it is one of the most popular tourist attractions in France and is within easy reach. Alternatively, you may prefer to continue cycling the pretty, but fairly challenging route, and meet up with the rest of the group in Rocamadour.

Whichever option you choose you will be collected and driven back home in time to relax and refresh before dinner.

#### Day 5 (Thursday)

##### Villages of the Bouriane

Today you'll cycle through the dappled green shade of the wooded backroads in the Bouriane, exploring tiny and pretty hamlets, such as Lherm, Thedirac and Goujounac and the small town of Cazals with its attractive central square, where you could stop for a drink in one of the bars or cool off by the pretty lake on the edge of the town. You'll also pass through quaint Les Arques where a visit to the museum of Zadkine with its remarkable sculptures, is a must. Les Arques is also home to the wonderful La Recreation restaurant, (see bottom right) whose story is charmingly told in the book 'From Here You Can't See Paris' by Michael Sanders.

#### Day 6 (Friday)

##### River Lot and Chateau Chambert

On your last cycling day you'll explore the lovely winding River Lot and finish the day with wine-tasting! This tour follows part of the Cahors AOC wine route - voted best wine route by The FrenchPaper, June 2009.

You'll meander along the river and among the vineyards passing through the small villages of Albas, Castelfranc and Grezels – all of which have bars where you can stop for a coffee or a cool beer and watch the river flow. If you'd like to work a bit harder you could take a detour up to either Albas or Belaye – both fairly steep climbs, but absolutely worth it for the breathtaking views across the valley from the top.

After lunch by the river you'll cycle along to Puy L'Eveque, where you can take some time to explore the ancient port and mediaeval town with its 14th century narrow streets and houses rising from the Lot river and cladding the hillside beyond.

Take the rest of the afternoon to cycle through the Cahors vineyards and make the gentle climb to Floressas, where you'll find Chateau Chambert sitting majestically above the vines. Here you can join a tour of the grounds and then taste their wonderful selection of Cahors wines, based on the Malbec grape and grown biodynamically. You don't need to worry about cycling afterwards as your hosts will meet you with the support vehicle and drive you back home to enjoy your last evening with yet another delicious dinner!

#### Day 7 (Saturday)

##### 'Au revoir'

After a leisurely breakfast you'll be taken to Gourdon rail station or Bergerac airport to meet your homeward connection.

## Details

### Getting there

Transfer from Bergerac Airport (flights from all around UK) or Gourdon Rail Station (trains from Paris Gare du Nord or Toulouse Airport)

#### Price includes

Breakfasts and 4-course evening meals with wine  
Bike hire, routes and maps and full cycling support  
Optional trip to Rocamadour  
Transfers to and from Gourdon rail station or Bergerac airport, as required

#### Typical Duration

1 week

#### Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

#### Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed

#### Travellers should bring

Although none of the routes is difficult, they all contain occasional, moderate climbs so you do need to be reasonably fit and healthy to be able to complete them comfortably. Most people wear normal shorts and trainers but padded cycling shorts do help (although all the saddles are memory foam).

### Reviews (3)

#### Reviews of this experience

“ By far the best cycling holiday I have ever been on! Staying in the stunning converted barn in Mas de Flory, I was treated to fabulous 4 course dinners every evening after touring the spectacular sites that the region has to offer. I particularly enjoyed the visit to Rocamadour, a beautifully unusual Monastery overhanging a cliff with spectacular views over the valley below- especially if you're brave enough to venture to the top! As this is quite a way away, John kindly drove us here on our rest day, although I have heard some valiant souls once cycled this! A very personalised , perfectly balanced holiday with carefully planned routes by the very patient John and amazing food and wine prepared by the extremely talented Aileen, who in my opinion deserves a few Michelin stars! - The best Tarte Tatin probably ever made! I would happily recommend this to anyone who is a lover of great food and cycling (at any level), and will definitely be paying them another visit. ”

chloj110 reviewing Cycling holiday in the Lot

“ Everything about this holiday was brilliant. LOCATION - very rural, next to woodland, peaceful and relaxing. ACCOMMODATION - in a superbly converted barn - first class, very comfortable, lovely showers. FOOD - to die for - every meal was a class act. THE CYCLING - different routes every day, includes historic sites, vineyards, great scenery - friendly bars! Diversions available for those who wish for a more challenging ride. THE COMPANY - great to spend a day relaxing with the others over a glass of wine on the decking, enjoying some music in the spacious dining room. THE SUPPORT - Nothing was too much trouble, whether at the farm or out cycling. We felt really well looked after at all times. All in all a fantastic experience. ”

scrunch reviewing Cycling holiday in the Lot

“ Well, what can I say?, This has to be one of the best holidays I have been on for a while. Very knowledgeable people who will go out of their way to make sure everything is to your expectations. All the cycling equipment was in a very clean and very good condition. I was a bit dubious at first about going as I'm not a fast cyclist and like to take things easily, but this was no problem as we were able to go at our own pace due to having very clear instructions on which route to take. We visited some fantastic places and I was able to take some wonderful photographs. Another great thing about this holiday was the food Aileen prepared for us. It was out of this world. Excellent home made soup for starters followed by fillet of beef (which I believe is sourced locally), locally produced cheese with walnuts and to top it all off some fresh fruit. With excellent accommodation, gourmet cuisine, picturesque scenery and excellent hosts you just cannot go wrong with this cycling holiday. Highly recommended. ”

mjd245 reviewing Cycling holiday in the Lot