

Cycle the Bordeaux Wine Trail!



Highlights

Bordeaux needs no introduction in terms of its largest export. Producing around 850 million bottles a year, it is one of the world's most acclaimed wine producing regions and has a heritage dating back to the 8th century. Join your guides on this week of cycling in Bordeaux and the Dordogne and delve into the heart of France's wine country.

The countryside in the south of France offers some of the most idyllic rural scenery in Europe. It's big enough to get blissfully lost in and varied enough to hold anyone's interest, and there's a reason why Bordeaux is so suitable for wine production – the climate here is characterized by mild winters and long warm summers, making it a very inviting holiday spot for visitors from colder climes!

This tour has been put together for anyone wishing to explore the wine legacy of Bordeaux while enjoying some great cycling in the country. Along the way you'll stay in a variety of carefully selected predominantly 3 star hotels and meet some of the famous players in the Bordeaux wine scene.

The history of Bordeaux is as fascinating as it is extensive. It produces a large variety of everyday wines as well as some of the most expensive bottles in the world. The most costly bottle of wine ever was accidentally broke here; though luckily the owner had the good sense to insure it (the single bottle was valued at \$225,000!) This is a wine tour above and beyond anything you might expect. Of course, tasting the stuff is a given, but what sets your week apart are experiences such as sharing a glass with a respected winemaking Count in his country house and watching the famous master Patrick Bernard at work.

Is it for me?

Bordeaux is one of those idyllic European countrysides you can't help but fall in love with. Cycling in Bordeaux would certainly appeal to romantic couples, as well as wine aficionados and cycling enthusiasts. Obviously a fair amount of Bordeaux wine is consumed on the trip, so anyone who isn't comfortable with this may wish to choose from one of the other country cycling holidays listed on Tourdust (similarly, this trip isn't ideal for minors.)

As the routes travelled lead you mainly through estate lands, the cycling isn't technical and does not require a great deal of fitness, making your week all about tranquillity rather than white-knuckle riding. You will spend a long time in the saddle though (covering on average 30 miles per day – see itinerary below) so a little bit of muscle tone will go a long way to avoiding aches the next day!

Accommodation

Throughout the week you'll be welcomed to a fabulous meal and locally made beverages at a variety of predominantly three star hotels, which at the end of a long day's riding will seem like home away from home. All of the hotels are independently run and as a result you can expect great service from your hospitable hosts, as well as top notch facilities from indoor pools to tennis courts. All rooms are en-suite and a day cycling in the fresh air will guarantee you sleep like a log. It has to be noted that the food served on the tour is worth travelling all the way to the south of France for! No expense is spared on the trip when it comes to delivering these gourmet French dishes and lovely wine is carefully picked to compliment the meal, resulting in gastronomic perfection.

Prices from

1,150 GBP (7 days) per per person

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Itinerary

Day One: The group will meet at the small town of Les Eyzies in the heart of the Périgord region of South France. In the evening the tour will officially begin with a feast of gourmet food at Le Moulin de la Beune, a great restaurant attached to your hotel.

Day Two: Today's cycling will take you over the Cingle de Tremolat, a famed viewpoint where you'll be treated to some great views across the Dordogne valley. The group will stop and take a lunch break at the charming Bastide town of Limeuil where the Dordogne and Vézère rivers meet. A gentle afternoon ride will bring you to the day's end point of Lalinde, another Bastide and once an important town where the canal took boat-traffic past the rapids of the Dordogne. (30 miles)

Day Three: Today you'll enter Bordeaux wine country with St Foy La Grand as the destination, just the other side of the Bergerac appellation, but en route you'll visit two very special areas within the Bergerac vineyard. The first stopping point is Pécharment, locally referred to as 'The St Emilion of Bergerac.' This appellation is the oldest collective of vineyards in the Bergerac region, and the growers take great pride in their wines. While here you'll partake in wine tasting at Château Tiregand, courtesy of the charming Count who lives and produces wine there. In the afternoon you'll continue your cycling tour through Monbazillac, home of exquisite sweet wines which are extremely difficult to make due to the vine's tiny yields. Your host here is Dominique Vidal (of Chateau Fonmourges,) a specialist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things wine. You'll end the day in St Foy, one of the best preserved Bastides in France. En route you'll pass through Bergerac, with a beautiful old town and a rich history. (30 Miles)

Day Four: Today you'll cycle alongside the Dordogne river, first passing through the appellation of Montravel before arriving at le Puy Servain estate. Here you will get the chance to meet one of the finest winemakers in the region whose catalogue of awards is impressive to say the least. Passing the Monument Talbot, where the English Admiral Talbot finally lost The Hundred Years War in 1453, you'll cycle through Castillon to arrive in St Emilion. Here you'll have the opportunity to visit Château Belair, one of St. Emilion's top wine estates, for wine tasting and a tour of their amazing underground caverns. In the evening the party will eat a luxurious meal at the restaurant of Francis Goulée and stay overnight in St. Emillion. (30 Miles)

Day Five: Today is the longest cycling day of the itinerary. Leaving the Dordogne behind you at Libourne, you'll begin following the Gironde River. The first place of interest is St. Andre de Cubzac, birth and resting place of Jacques Cousteau, continue cycling through Pomerol, Fronsac and the Côtes de Bourg on your way to the Gironde port of Blaye, gateway to Bordeaux. The town boasts an enormous citadelle which once protected the approaches to Bordeaux from the English, who own it in the 14th century. The hotel tonight is the delightful Auberge de Porches. The owner is a renowned cook who has a deserved reputation for her adventurous cooking, featuring in many culinary magazines. Depending on timing during the day you may also be able to taste at two of the premier estates in this appellation, Château Peybonhomme-les-Tours and perhaps at the Syndicat du Vin in Blaye. (38 Miles)

Day Six: Embarking on this slower paced day, you'll begin by crossing the Gironde by ferry to Cussac and make our way to the Bernard family at Château du Raux in the Haut Médoc. Here the qualified winemaker Patrick Bernard will provide a fascinating insight into the craft and you'll even get to sample wine straight out of the barrel. Following lunch, you'll visit one of the more famous producers at Chateau Lynch-Bages. With a history stretching back to the 17th century, this is a fantastic opportunity to see one of the finest names in wine-making going about their business. Time and energy permitting, you may also get the chance to visit the museum at Mouton Rothschild. Tonight's stay will be in a hotel in Pauillac, the world centre of fine wine. (25 Miles)

Day Seven: Today will see you descend from the Haut Médoc area of the previous day, and the landscape subtly changes around you as you cycle throughout the morning. On your circular tour back to Pauillac the group will visit some more wonderful estates. These include Le Tour de By situated close to the gravelly banks of the Gironde (where they still use huge wooden vats in their wine production) and Château Loudenne, an excellent example of a large commercial vineyard. (32 Miles)

Day Eight: After breakfast in Pauillac the holiday is at an end with transfer to the international train in Bordeaux taking you home.

Details

Getting there

International trains run from London St. Pancras and Paris direct to Angouleme station.

Price includes

Expert cycling guide from days two to seven, equipment hire, seven nights' accommodation, meals throughout (except lunches), wine tasting experiences

Typical Duration

1 week

Comfort level

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

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed

Travellers should bring

Bringing your own cycling helmet is advised, though not essential.