

Guided Wine Tasting & Cycling in Burgundy



Highlights

A week of great wine, excellent food and even better cycling in Burgundy - what could be better than a fully guided bike tour through the sleepy countryside of central France?

Burgundy (or Bourgogne in French) is a land full of splendid vineyards and subsequently produces some of the best wines in the country, noted for its rich selection of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It also has a wealth of history, being the birthplace of both the Benedictine and Cisterian orders.

The route for this Burgundy bike tour is gentle and scenic, avoiding both tricky terrain and populated main roads. Staying at a variety of predominantly three star hotels specialising in serving a high standard of French cuisine, each day's cycling routes are peppered with stopping points in which you'll be able to sample the region's famous produce. The landscape of Burgundy is characterized by a myriad of canals and unmarked trails, often making an effective cycling tour of the country very difficult to plan at best. The guides have already put in all of the ground work so you don't have to – simply get comfortable on the saddle and enjoy a back road tour of the best cycling in Burgundy.

Is it for me?

If you appreciate good glass wine and picturesque country, then you won't be disappointed with this Burgundy bike tour. Fitness requirements are at a minimum since the terrain is very gentle, and you don't have to worry about your luggage since it will be transported for you. Wine tasting is very much a highlight of this Burgundy cycling holiday, so it will be less suitable for those with an aversion to wine or those with young children, but older families will definitely have a blast. The maximum group size is 15, usually consisting of a mix of singles and couples.

Accommodation

Throughout the week you'll be welcomed to a fabulous meal and locally made beverages at a variety of 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 are en-suite and a day cycling in the fresh air will guarantee you sleep like a log.

As you'll see from the itinerary, there is a large emphasis on wine tasting and you'll become familiar with a variety of the region's top quality wines. All meals are included in the price from dinner on the arrival day, and feature mouth-watering examples of gourmet French cuisine. Please note that all beverages outside of the wine tasting experiences are at your own cost.

Itinerary

Day One: You begin your week cycling in Burgundy in Montbard, north of Dijon. Transfer will be arranged to the first three star hotel here, L'Hotel de L'Ecu. It is a family run business and the host, Gerard Coupat, is a wonderful chef. You'll be welcomed to an outstanding meal with some great wine to wash it down with before a comfortable

Prices from

1,150 GBP (7 days) per person

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night's rest to prepare you for the week ahead.

Day Two: Leaving Montbard, you'll head directly to the Abbaye de Fontenay, the oldest surviving Cistercian abbey in the world. The Cistercian order was founded by St. Bernard as a direct response to the luxurious lifestyle of the monks at Cluny. The setting is a beautiful river valley, and the monks were self-sufficient, growing medicinal herbs for their own hospital and mining local iron ore for their own forge. Michelin gave Fontenay the maximum three star rating, claiming it 'worth a journey in itself'. From Fontenay you'll follow the Canal du Bourgogne to Alise-Ste-Reine, where there is a giant statue of Vercingetorix erected by Napoleon III marking the site of an important battle between the Gauls and the Roman army. You'll follow the canal again before climbing to the beautiful walled town of Semur-en-Auxois. The town is surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs carved by the river Armancon, and is a truly beautiful little town. Tonight you will stay at the three star Hotel d'Aussois where the menu includes several Burgundy classics. (31 Miles)

Day Three: The tour continues downhill and back to the canal at Marigny le Cahouët. The quality of the towpath varies on this section, so taking a variety of tracks and the occasional main road will lead you through delightful villages like Braux and St Thibault. At Pouilly-en-Auxois the canal reaches its highest point and disappears into a tunnel while you continue over the top of the hill and down the other side to the charming village of Chateauneuf. (28 Miles)

Day Four: The route picks back up at the canal, and having passed the summit point the day's cycling is all downhill to Dijon. The journey leads through various forest cycle paths and passes more than 50 lock, as well as canal-side villages and restaurants. Dijon is steeped in history, having been the home to most of Burgundy's aristocracy. Anxious to be within the protection offered by the city walls, they were forced to buy existing plots of land and buildings to build their townhouses, which has led to the fascinating juxtaposition of grand town houses shoe-horned into strangely shaped plots alongside the housing and shops of ordinary Dijonais. In modern times, Dijon is of course famous for its mustard, and you'll get time to take a tour of one of the working factories. Tonight's stay is at the Hostellerie de Sauvage, a favourite stopping point amongst cyclists, and weather permitting you'll be able to eat in the lovely courtyard. (31 Miles)

Day Five: Today you'll leave Dijon alongside the now familiar Canal du Bourgogne before heading west towards the hills of the Côtes D'Or. Much of today's cycling follows tiny roads and tracks through vineyards, giving you the opportunity to visit the wine producing grounds in Marsannay and Gevrey-Chambertin, as well as the Clos de Vougeot. The Chateau at Clos de Vougeot is well worth a visit. Originally built by the monks of the Abbaye de Citeaux, the Chateau has been beautifully restored. One room dating back to the 12th century contains four original oak presses that are truly enormous, each one weighing over 20 tons and are still operational. Just on from the chateau is at Nuits St Georges where the group will stay at the Hostellerie Saint Vincent. (22 Miles)

Day Six: Still in the heart of wine country, today is devoted to exploring the area of Côtes de Beaune and involves some more challenging cycling. En route are the quaint villages of Savigny-les-Beaune and Aloxe-Corton. After some wine tasting in each of the villages you'll press on to the historical town of Beaune, another wine-producing settlement which makes very high-quality wines (though not at the sky-high prices of their more illustrious neighbours!) Beaune is a great place for picking up souvenirs, especially since the old town is full of quirky and independently run shops selling all manner of things from rare books to, somewhat obviously, top-class wine. Tonight you'll stay about 4 miles out of Beaune in Ste Marie-la-Blanche. (22 Miles)

Day Seven: The final day of cycling tour will be spent travelling south of Beaune along tiny roads winding through the vineyards. Known as the Beaujolais region, there are many wine villages along this path. The first small cluster you will come across are Pommard and Volnay, world famous for their reds, and nearby Meursault which produces highly regarded whites. From Meursault the group will cycle to the village of Puligny-Montrachet for a thoroughly enjoyable wine tasting session with Olivier-Lefalve Freres, a renowned expert in Burgundy wines. In the afternoon you'll return to Ste Marie-la-Blanche following a different custom route incorporating small roads which can be considered very far from the beaten track. (25 Miles)

Day Eight – After breakfast, transfer will be arranged back to Dijon for train travel to Paris and beyond.

Details

Getting there

Transfer will be made from Dijon which is easily reachable by direct train from Paris.

Price includes

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

Price quoted does not include single person supplement of £220. Additional charges apply for transfers to train stations and airports.

When is best

Cycling in Burgundy is best in summer and autumn, with nice warm temperatures and ripe grapes on the vines.

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.