

Channel to Med 10-day



Welcome to Peak Tours' cycle challenge "extraordinaire" from one end of France to the other. Starting from the northern French coast at Ouistreham, close to the historic town of Caen, we continue southwards through the stunning scenery of areas such as the Loire Valley, Puy-de-Dome and Provence, before we finish the tour near Nice on the Mediterranean coastline approximately 870 miles / 1400 km and two weeks later.

France is a wide and diverse country which contains a variety of different and stunning landscapes. Most people have heard of the Tour de France and the country can arguably be considered the cultural home of cycling.

Covering a total of 870 miles, this iconic route provides another rewarding experience hosted by Peak Tours. Averaging 84 miles a day, the route is covered in 10 days of cycling. If you would like to take a little longer, see our 14-day route.

Highlights

- An amazingly quiet route, using lovely country lanes to connect villages and small towns
- Beautiful and varied regions to enjoy: the agriculture of Normandy, the chateaux of the Loire, the volcanic landscape of the Puy-de-Dome and the Central Massif, the rocky and dramatic Provencal area
- Climb Mont Ventoux, the iconic 'Giant of Provence'
- Incredible gorges – the Ardèche and the Verdon
- Plenty of historic sites to see en route
- Enjoy a variety of local food and drink – from the Calvados of northern France to the Rosé of Provence

"Channel to Med is a challenging trip, but with Peak Tours at the helm all the help, organisation & well planned stops make it a thoroughly enjoyable experience – Bravo! Those routes are obviously well planned – we saw all the best places & the real France!." Stephen

What's included?

10 nights' accommodation, 10 breakfasts, 10 lunches

Refreshment stops with our famous red brew vans

Mechanical support including spare bikes and equipment

GPS files and route notes

Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers

2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group

Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate

Lots of fun!



Itinerary

Tuesday: Non-riding day

Arrival day – welcome to the tour!

Arriving into Ouistreham by either the morning, afternoon or overnight ferry will see us safely in place ready for 'Le Grand Départ' the following morning. Accommodation on this day is not included within the tour price, but we can recommend places for you to stay.

Wednesday: Day 1 Ouistreham to Alencon

Distance: 89 miles / 143 km

Elevation: 5200 ft / 1600 m

After the obligatory photographs and adjustment of Lycra we gear up for our Gallic adventure with a gentle start to the day along the Suisse Normand cycle way. This smooth tarmac surface follows the river Orne, meandering along the banks of the river. We will pass through Caen and follow the river through a lovely gorge surrounded by woodland.

A lovely lunch with a view will stand you in good stead for the latter part of the day, as the terrain becomes hillier.

We round off the day making our way through the forest of Andaine to our first nights accommodation in the lively town of Alencon.

Thursday: Day 2 Alencon to Azay le Rideau

Distance: 101 miles / 164 km

Elevation: 4000 ft / 1200 m

Today starts us off fairly gently and then gives way to undulating roads through the pretty villages and countryside of France. The undulations eventually give way to easier terrain and we stock up on energy for the afternoon with our usual Peak Tours lunch feast!. Today and tomorrow will see us putting some extra miles behind us to reap what we sow in days to come. At the end of the day's cycling the grand buildings and chateaux by the river of Azay le Rideau await our arrival.

Friday: Day 3 Azay le Rideau to Argenton-sur-Creuse

Distance: 82 miles / 132 km

Elevation: 2600 ft / 800 m

Leaving the Loire region behind we will continue southwards alongside the River Indre.

Passing through Chatillon-sur-indre. Our mostly flat route takes us into the Brenne National Park. This calm, quiet area is known for its many lakes, interesting habitats and rare aquatic species. Further along we will join with the River Creuse and continue to the attractive town of Argenton-sur-Creuse.

Saturday: Day 4 Argenton to Aubusson

Distance: 76 miles / 122 km

Elevation: 6250 ft / 1900 m

Leaving lovely Argenton behind we head south to the Limousin region, characterised by gorges, woods, rivers and moorland. This beautiful but challenging day is a little shorter to allow for the climbing.

After a great lunch in the picturesque village of St Fiel we crack on through this undulating national park to the lovely town of Aubusson, well known for it's famous tapestries.

Sunday: Day 5 Aubusson to St Flour

Distance: 111 miles / 178 km

Elevation: 9900ft / 3000 m

This is the toughest day of the tour! We will start to notice the hills increase today as we continue to the foothills and into the volcanic region of the Massif Central. Today's ride will provide good practice for some of the larger climbs which lie in wait for us further south! Another cracking day with lakes, gorges, fine views and all that's inspiring in this fantastic country to cycle in. The afternoon will see us arrive at the attractive town of St Flour, often used as a staging post in the Tour de France.

Monday: Day 6 St Flour to Les Vans

Distance: 101 miles / 163 km

Elevation: 7200 ft / 2200m

Another tough day in the saddle! Once we have left St Flour a hilly road takes you over to the Viaduc de Garabit where the road descends to a scenic lake. A nice ride by the lake is followed by a big climb and a number of ups and downs.

The day continues with a long winding descent into the town of Mende and then a lovely winding and undulating road continues through woodlands with some stunning views on to the pretty town of Les Vans in the Ar-deche.

Itinerary

Tuesday: Day 7 Les Vans to Malaucene

Distance: 84 miles / 134 km
Elevation: 5481 ft / 1670 m

In the morning we head past the iconic natural bridge of Pont d'Arc in Vallon. The scenery is stunning as we cycle above the limestone gorges of the Ardeche with fantastic vistas around every bend.

Further along the road descends and we will pass through St Martin before we catch our first glimpse of Ventoux, the revered mountain that will be ever present for the next few days. Our day's ride ends at the lovely town of Malaucene at the start of the climb to Ventoux.

Wednesday: Day 8 Malaucene to Manosque

Distance: 69 miles / 111 km
Elevation: 7800 ft / 2400 m

Following in the footsteps of some of the previous Tour de France greats, we'll begin today's ride with a climb of the iconic Mont Ventoux. This classic ride is a tough climb but you will be rewarded with fine panoramic views over area. A long descent takes you down into Sault where you will have a well deserved brew.

For those who don't fancy Ventoux there is an easier route to Sault which is also a fantastic ride. Either way we will continue through the lavender fields and small villages to the outskirts of Manosque for a well deserved rest!

Thursday: Day 9 Manosque to Castellane

Distance: 83 miles / 134 km
Elevation: 7500 ft / 2300 m

One of the toughest but most rewarding days of the trip today as, with the ever present

smell of lavender we leave Manosque passing through a number of ancient towns and villages and the landscape changes to steep sided valleys with a number of fantastic views opening up. Passing by the picture postcard town of Moustier St Marie, one of the most spectacular sections of the tour awaits as we venture into the Gorges du Verdon. The azure waters of the Lac de Saint Croix marks the start of the "glorious ascent" to the top of the canyon. After the gorge the route is mostly flat and down hill as the route takes us along the top of the gorge then down to the strikingly aquamarine Verdon River which we follow to all the way to Castellane.

Friday: Day 10 Castellane to Nice

Distance: 52 miles / 83 km
Elevation: 2300ft / 800 m

Our final day in the saddle is another stunning ride. A climb away from Castellane reveals superb views back over the town before the road flattens out and continues along a lovely valley surrounded by mountains. Further along we will cycle along the top of the Gorge de Loup and descend for about 20 miles all the way down to Nice. The scenery is stunning on our ride to the coast. As we near our final destination we will meet the coast and cycle along the sea front beaches and soak up the sun and maybe a dip in the Med before our final photo's and group meal.

Saturday: Departure day

Following our final night's accommodation in Nice, today is departure day. The guides will be leaving around 8am as they have to drive back to the UK but Nice Airport is within easy reach from the hotel you will be staying at and public transport and taxis are readily available to transfer you there.

"A spectacular ride that rewarded cycling effort with some stunning vistas. At times every corner brought a new photo opportunity. The organisation was excellent and enabled me to concentrate on just chilling and riding. The roads were mainly car and pot hole free and as smooth as a billiard table. It was a delight to see rural France away from the big cities and immerse yourself in true French culture. David"

Tour Logistics

The start of the tour

The tour starts at Ouistreham (near Caen) and finishes near Nice on the south coast.

To get to Ouistreham you can take the ferry from Portsmouth. The guides will be around on the Monday afternoon/evening for any bike hand overs but they will need to get the overnight ferry to make sure they are in place and can get all the bikes set up in Ouistreham ready for our first cycling day on Wednesday. Most people will choose to get the ferry from Portsmouth to Ouistreham on Tuesday, ready to start cycling the following morning at around 08:45 on Wednesday morning.

Accommodation is included on the Wednesday night but the ferry fare or Tuesday night Ouistreham accommodation isn't included in the tour price. A guide to Ouistreham accommodation is provided.

The end of the tour

The tour ends on Friday where we will stay for the final meal near Nice. Some people choose to stay on in Nice / south of France to continue their holiday.

For those returning home, Nice has a large train station, with direct trains to Paris taking 6hrs, then the Eurostar from Paris to London, which takes between 2-3hrs. Nice Airport also has flights to various different UK airports.

We can take your bike back to our HQ in Glosop for you to collect at a later date or meet the guides at a service station on their way back.

If you choose the 'return transport' option then your bikes will be packed & couriered back to your address for you.

Support

Usually each tour has 3 guides:

- One driving the 'brew van' - each day will usually have a morning and afternoon 'brew stop,' with a table full of snacks and drinks. You will also bring a small bag/rucksack to the morning brief and leave this in the 'brew van' which can be accessed throughout the day.
- One driving the 'luggage / lunch van' - transporting your luggage from hotel to hotel, as well as setting up your lunches.
- One riding at the back of the group - you will have detailed route notes so that you can go slower or faster than the leader if you prefer or you can cycle with the tour guide at the back so that you don't have to navigate at all.
- Mechanical support: we carry a range of spare parts so that repairs can be made en route and we also have spare bikes available in the event that your bike has a serious breakdown. If we can't fix your bike then we will get it to the nearest bike shop.
- Each guide will be contactable by phone during the day so if you have any issues you can get straight in touch with them.
- For smaller groups you might only have one guide that cycles with the group and one back up driver or for groups of 12 or less just one tour leader will provide back-up for you.

"I thought the whole thing was absolutely brilliant. A life-enhancing experience. The route was so fantastic and climbing Mont Ventoux was brilliant. The Peak Tours team were excellent and the other riders were friendly and delightful." Sebastian

What's Included?

- 10 nights' accommodation, 10 breakfasts, 10 lunches
- Refreshments from the brew van
- Mechanical support including spare bikes should these be needed
- GPS files and route notes
- Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers
- 2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group
- Pick up from airport / station on arrival day (Tuesday)
- A Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate
- Luggage transfer each day
- Lots of fun!

What's not included?

- Evening meals / dinner
- Drinks at lunchtime
- Cycle hire (available for a fee)
- Garmin hire (available for a fee)
- Transport to the start of the tour and home at the end of the tour
- Insurance



Food

Breakfast

Breakfast is included in the cost of the tour, and will vary slightly between the various hotels and B&Bs that we use, but you can usually expect have a choice of some cooked breakfast options, as well as toast, cereals, fruit juices, tea, coffee etc.

Lunch

Lunches will be provided each day and will generally be a picnic, buffet at a cafe or a restaurant.

Evening meals

Evening meals can be bought at your accommodation or in a nearby restaurant. On the first and final evenings of the tour we will have a group meal together.

Dietary requirements

Please let us know of any dietary requirements you have and we will ensure that all lunch stops and places we eat evening meals are informed.

There will also be snacks on the 'brew van' to suit any and all dietary needs!

Accommodation

You have a choice having your own room or sharing a double or a twin room. If you would like your own space then you can choose the single room option, or sole occupancy of a double. Most of the rooms are en-suite however there maybe a few nights where your room isn't en-suite (Sole occupancy of a double room or double room option is guaranteed en suite).

Kit list

Clothing for all weathers is recommended so waterproofs are essential

A full recommended kit list is provided and we are always happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can see details of a kit list [here](#).

Luggage is restricted to a maximum of 18kg per person—we have to look after our guides and their backs as they will be carrying your luggage in and out of the hotels!

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out adequate insurance for your tour which, as an absolute minimum should cover accident & medical expenses if you are travelling outside the UK, cover for your bike and belongings and cancellation cover in the event that you have to cancel your tour for unforeseen circumstances.

You should be aware that if you have an accident or fall ill while on the tour you will lose the money paid for the trip. A travel insurance policy would allow you to reclaim most of the money as well as providing insurance in case you lose your bags or if your bike is stolen, broken etc.

Your policy should also cover cancellation costs if you cancel the tour within 8 weeks of departure. If this happens we will try to fill your space and return your funds to you but if we are unable to fill your place you will lose the funds paid for the tour.

We have partnered with Yellow Jersey who provide Travel and Cycle insurance for UK residents. You can find further details [here](#).

Am I fit enough?

Difficulty

The C2M route covers a total distance of 870 miles and is another memorable achievement. This tour is classed as a grade 9 tour so Comparable to our 10 day LEJOG tour. See details of difficulty rating [here](#).

You will be expected to be able to complete an average of 84 miles / 135 km per day.

Most people on the tour will be active cyclists, and cycling the above distances on consecutive days will not be too challenging for them.

How fast do I need to be?

Generally, most cyclists completing this tour will be capable of cycling at 12-14 miles per hour over the whole day, keeping in mind that some days are hillier than others, and you will be stopping for breaks and lunches.

Most days start at 8:30 and we ask that all riders are finished by 19:00 at the latest if possible, to allow you time to relax and explore the places that you stay in the evenings.

Are there any hills on the tour?

The first half of C2M is slightly easier but the second half is harder as there are a number of long climbs as we cycle through the Massif Central, The Ardeche, Provence etc. There are some shorter days in the hillier areas especially when we climb Mont Ventoux (there is an option to cycle round it).

Training

The fitter you are and the more training that you do beforehand will add to the enjoyment of your tour and improve your chances of succeeding the challenge.

If you need any advice about fitness please contact us and we will be happy to discuss any questions and concerns that you may have.

We have a training document which has a suggested training programme, which you can access [here](#).

Bikes

The C2M tour can be completed by people on all types of bikes: it is important you ride on a bike on which you are most comfortable. Most people choose to ride on road or touring bikes for this tour.

You can transport your bike in the following ways:

- Bringing your own - most people using this option will arrive by train/ferry
- We can transport your bike for you if you can get your bike to us in Glossop in the Peak District
- At the start of the tour we can pick your bike up from a service station that lies along our route from Glossop to Portsmouth and at the end of the tour we can drop off at a service station along our route from Calais to Glossop

Please ensure that your bike is fully serviced and in good working order before the start of the trip. It is advisable to have your bike service a few weeks before the start of the tour. This will allow time to 'bed in' before you start your ride.

Alternatively you can hire a bike from us, please see our website for more information.

