



Provence – Harvest Time - September 2009 Cycling Vacation in France

Early fall in Provence is magical: the grape harvest fills the air with sweet fragrance, the crisp, cool evenings punctuate still-warm days, the hordes of American tourists are mostly back home. The locals return to more relaxed lifestyles. And the roads are better than ever. It's the perfect time and place for North American cyclists who want to extend their summer of riding for a few more weeks before winter rolls in. And have an unbeatable adventure of a lifetime while doing it!

This is Veloski's signature tour, refined over more than a decade of intimate experience. This bike tour is designed especially for couples to enjoy shared cycling pleasure. It's great for any fit cyclist, and loved by tandem teams, too. Each day offers many options, with a variety of distance, elevation and endurance choices. Whether you are seeking a leisurely 60km roll thru the countryside or a strenuous 90km loop over the Giant of Provence (Mt Ventoux), you get to choose your tempo and distance with our expert guidance each day.

Provence and the South of France and leisurely, luxurious meals are nearly synonymous. Once you've left the coastline, you enter a world with a way of life far from any of the hurried rush of cities and stresses of modern technological society. Forget email, and ditch the cell phone. It's time to soak in the experience of Provence. In keeping with this leisurely lifestyle, our cycle-tour of Provence features a few of the many wonderful, small, villages for our nightly rest and repas. You will relax after a rewarding day of riding amid the Fall fragrance of ripe grapes enroute from vineyard to winery. And linger over Provencal feasts prepared by masterful chefs using only the freshest of ingredients. It's almost overwhelming, yet invigorating. And it must be experienced to be understood.

Provence, more than any other region, stimulates all of the senses with fragrances, flavors, sights and sounds. And it's only accentuated as you travel with friends and family to experience times of lasting memories and daily don't-miss photo-opportunities. It goes beyond words. The rich and vibrant colors of Provence, dominated by yellows, reds, lavender, blues and olive. The flavors, the relaxation, the exertion, the visual tapestry of color and texture. You will be surrounded. It's a sensory overload. Yet it's not necessarily any one thing you can put your finger to, but a harmonious whole of which the sum of the parts is greater.

Tour Details

2009 Dates: Arrival day: 19 September Departure day: 4 October Prices: 2750 Euro (double occupancy per person) 500 Euro (limited spaces) (single supplement) Note: Special prices good until 15 January, 2009. After 15 January, 2009 prices at retail rate, currently 2900 Euro (double occupancy per person).	Highlights	Provencal colors and fragrances, Wine Route Rides, Harvest Time, Mt Ventoux, Quiet roads, Quaint villages, Delicious meals, Gorges du Verdon
	Includes	15 nights accommodation, 15 breakfasts, 13 dinners, 2 grand picnics, ride snacks and drinks, maps and daily route descriptions, ride guides, van support, daily luggage transfers
	Gateway	Nice, France
	Begin/End	Vence, France
	Total Distance	705-1172km (437-721miles)
	Daily Distance	56-113km (35-70 miles) longest single day riding transfer 90km, 56mi
	What to expect	Varied terrain with some climbs of 10-12km (6-7miles) at 5-9%, except Mt Ventoux option
	Bicycle Rentals	None Riders bring their own bikes.

Day 1-- Vence arrival

Day 2--Seillans; 69-91km, 800-1300m climbing

The roads to Seillans are many and all choices lead to a wonderful introduction to the varied colors, flavors and fragrances that will be our backdrop for the coming days. We leave the hurried pace of the Cote dAzur behind as we follow winding roads deeper into the rock and oak covered hills and gorges of the Loup and Ceylon river drainages. Leaving Gourdon we continue our pleasant ascent into the pine forests of Andon. From Andon we glide down, down to Mons before our final secluded roadway into Seillans.

Day 3-- Moissac-Bellevue; 73km, 700m or 87km, 950m

The roads are highlighted with stops in the hilltop villages of Bargemon and Tourtour. Along the way we descend the Gorges du Chateaudouble and climb thru a forest of scrub oaks, before pedaling amid vineyards on the way to our secluded hotel. The first fragrances of the harvest will stimulate our senses as we lounge poolside in the afternoon sunlight.

Day 4 --Mosaic-Bellevue loop rides 66km, 700m or ??

The vineyards of the area beckon exploration, so we have short loop rides planned to the village of Cotignac where you can enjoy a typical mid-day meal at one of the numerous cafes.

Day 5-- Aix-en-Provence; 90km, 500m climbing

Today's ride is a superb ridge-surf all the way to our picnic lunch. The roads are smooth and the hills are small as we quickly ride to Varages, where we'll stop in a pottery/ceramics shop famous throughout the world as Faience style. A grand picnic is planned today. The final kilometers into Aix-en-Provence are dominated by the ever-changing views of Mont Victoire; immortalized in the paintings of Cezanne and others. Here is where the Provencal style sprouted and still flourishes today. Bon Appetit!!

Day 6-- Gordes; 68km, 700m; or 82km, 1000m

Aix-en-Provence is an ideal town for exploring and shopping, so we have a late departure (after lunch) arranged today. After lunch we will ride together out of town to the smaller quiet roads that we enjoy as we leave Mont Victoire behind and climb over a ridge into the Luberon to the ever-so-photogenic Gordes.

Day 7-- Gordes Loop Rides; 72km, 1300 or 30km, 200m

Today we explore the many hilltop villages of the Vaucluse; an area known for rich textures, brightly colored shutters and fascinating history. The longer route circumnavigates the entire Vaucluse region, while the shorter route takes us to the source of the Sorgue River. And of course there are myriad options to explore. Enjoy!!

Day 8 -- Vaison-la-Romaine; 56km, 700m Optional Mt Ventoux add-on

Today we leave the Luberon and Vaucluse regions as we ride along the slopes of the imposing Mt Ventoux. Bedoin will be our lunch with great views of Mt Ventoux, before continuing on to Vaison-la-Romaine. Vaison-la-Romaine is filled with artists and artisans, historical amphitheatres, centuries-old chapels, buildings and Roman bridge.

Day 9 -- Vaison-la-Romaine; Wine Loop Ride -- 57km, 500m climbing

Today is perfect for sampling wines, selecting your favorite Provencal fabrics, and purchasing herbs or other gifts for friends and family. Walking thru Vaison or riding the wine route either way you are guaranteed an enjoyable day.

Day 10-- Sault; 51km, 500m or 69km, 800m

Today we ride around the north side of the mountain on quiet roads with splendid views of Mt Ventoux. Along the way we'll take a little deviation from the valley road up and over the Col des Aires. An early lunch or late morning café is appropriate here for enjoying the dramatic views of Mt Ventoux from a different perspective.

Day 11-- Manosque; 68km, 600m

There are many roads to choose from today; we offer one of our favorites. Gently rolling terrain with good pavement and ever-changing views are in store for you, as we leave Mt Ventoux behind and ride toward the Haute-Provence region. **Day**

12-- Manosque loop 75km, 1000m climbing

The ride today is on tiny roads leading to small villages overlooking gorges with chateaus perched on the edge. This is a ride far from tourists, a ride that takes us back to the roots of Provencal life where farmers meet in town to sell their produce and boulangeries supply the lifeblood of France's baguette. Or indulge yourself relaxing poolside.

Day 13-- Moustiers-St Marie; 73km, 1200m climbing

Today we continue our travels east and higher into the Haute-Provence region across the Valensole plateau to the charming village of Moustiers; famous for fine porcelain.

Day 14 -- Castellane; 65km, 1100m climbing or 85km, 1500m climbing

Moustiers-St-Marie to Castellane is truly an amazing ride as we traverse the north edge of the Grand Canyon du Verdon.

Day 15-- Vence; 74km, 800m or 83km, 1200m

This is our final day of riding, as we return to our starting hotel in Vence. What a great day it will be as we climb an almost forgotten mountain road, view a stunning gorge, travel where sheep and goats are beginning to move from the high country to the lower valley meadow, and have lunch on the Mediterranean side of the rocky mountains known as the Alpes-Maritime. Of course, there are always additional options for those desiring a little more riding or more shopping for a special souvenir. Finally, we view the Cote dAzur from the top of the Col du Vence, before the final exhilarating descent of the trip, ending poolside at our hotel.

Day 16-- Nice departures

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