



Discounted E-bike option

Cycling in France – Canals and Castles of the Midi

France | Cycling | Trip code CCM

88Kg of CO₂e
Average carbon footprint per person



Days 8

Deposit from
US\$197

Was From
US\$2110

Now from
US\$1970

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Witness France's rural charm on our cycling tour along the iconic Canal du Midi. Take a leisurely cycle via vineyards, olive groves and medieval settlements, stopping to explore Cathar castles, ruined ramparts and elegant chateaux. Along the way, refuel with French favourites from creamy cheeses to buttery pastries and, of course, world-renowned wines.

Why we love this trip

- **Canal du Midi** - Soak in France's rural landscapes as you cycle alongside the Canal du Midi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Historic Narbonne and Carcassonne are cities though we do go to historic villages too.** - From Narbonne to medieval Carcassonne and the picturesque stronghold of Minerve, take a tour through France's ancient history.
- **French cuisine** - Visit a family-owned chateau to sample regional wines and drop by local cafes and restaurants to refuel with rich French flavours.

INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 7 Lunch: 1	TRIP STAFF Explore Tour Leader	TRANSPORT Bus Bicycle Train	ACCOMMODATION 7 nights comfortable hotel	CYCLING GRADE: Leisurely	GROUP SIZE: Trip maximum 16 Explore Average 11
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Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip Toulouse

Our tour starts at Toulouse Blagnac Airport (TLS) where we'll meet today at 7.15pm. On arrival, the transfer will be waiting for you outside Hall B as the driver is not allowed to leave the car unsupervised. If you're arriving early in Toulouse and would rather not wait, you could hop on a train to Carcassonne -

the French rail network is easy to navigate and the journey is around one hour. Toulouse has many wonderful sites to discover, if you'd like to add time there on to the start of your tour, contact us for accommodation options.

Once we have our group together, we'll transfer to Carcassonne, a fortified city in southwestern France. Perched on a hilltop, the picturesque city is a popular tourist draw thanks to its Medieval ramparts, which have been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1997.

On arrival, we'll have time to wander the historic ramparts and soak up the city's charm.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel l'Aragon Carcassonne (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Circular ride around Carcassonne

Today, we'll escape the crowds and hop on our bikes to explore the peaceful countryside surrounding Carcassonne. We'll spend some time getting acquainted with our bikes before pedalling off.

Our route takes us to the beautiful villages of Bouilhonnac, and the tiny village of Les Rustiques, once a Knights Hospitaller commandery. We'll then join the Canal du Midi at the village of Trebes to make our way back into Carcassonne.

This evening, we'll have more time to enjoy Carcassonne, beautifully lit in the evening, and without the chaos of the daytime crowds.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres/21.7 miles with a total ascent of 89 metres/300 feet and descent of 89 metres/300 feet.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel l'Aragon Carcassonne (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Cycle to Jouarres, winetasting at Marseillette

Today, we'll cycle along the famous Canal du Midi. Our destination is le Residence de Jouarres in Homps, a pleasant yet simple resort with a pool, which will be our base for the next three nights.

As we pedal, we'll soak in more of France's rural beauty. The Canal du Midi is known for its picturesque locks, aqueducts and bridges, and our ride lets us admire it in all of its photogenic glory.

It's not all about historic waterways today, en route, we'll diverge from our path to visit Marseillette for a spot of wine tasting at Chateau l'Amiral. Surrounded by rolling countryside, this vineyard is the perfect setting to enjoy one of France's most-loved exports. The family has been producing Minervois wine for seven generations and we'll learn about the production process and the history of the chateau as we enjoy a tasting.

The Canal du Midi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and so much of our route remains as it once was. The towpath was originally built for horses to pull cargo barges; hence many sections do not have a modern surface. Ever changing, due to climatic conditions, the sections we cycle include earth and gravel paths with some holes and tree roots and can be narrow and overgrown in places. Whilst beautiful, these sections can prove bumpy to ride.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 43 kilometres/26.6 miles.



ACCOMMODATION:

Residence Jouarres (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Leisurely circular ride around La Laviniere.

Today, we'll head out on a leisurely loop of the village of La Laviniere. The historic village has wine-making roots that go back as far as the Roman times - in fact, the village's name comes from the Occitan translation for 'vine'. As well as wine, La Laviniere is known for its charming stone buildings, covered market square and 15th-century church. It's surrounded by vineyards and olive groves, making it a particularly pretty route to cycle through.

We'll get a chance to sample regional dishes and stop for a relaxed lunch at a local restaurant, serving seasonal produce. Afterwards, we'll head back to our hotel.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 28 kilometres/16 miles



ACCOMMODATION:
Residence Jouarres (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

DAY 5 - Optional circular cycle route to Minerve

Today, we have the option to visit one of France's 'Les Plus Beaux Villages de France' (The Most Beautiful Villages of France), an honour given to just 176 of the country's 30,000 villages.

Minerve is famous for its medieval architecture, ancient cobbled lanes and ruined ramparts. It sits on a rocky outcrop between two limestone gorges, making the cycle hilly but worth it for the village's charming appeal.

If you'd rather sit out of the optional ride, you can relax in Jouarres or take a self-guided ride on a shorter, and mainly flat route near the hotel.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 37 kilometres/23 miles with 450 meters/1,480 feet of ascent.



ACCOMMODATION:
Residence Jouarres (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Continue on Canal du Midi and follow Canal de la Robine into Narbonne

Today we pack our bags again and continue our Canal du Midi adventure.

We'll reach the junction of the canals, making sure to stop for coffee and lunch, where the Canal du Midi loops north to avoid the hills and the Canal de la Robine which was later dug to connect the city of Narbonne to the canal network.

Narbonne is a hidden gem with many treasures for those who take the time to look for them. Once the second town of the Roman empire (more than a century before Caesar's conquest of Gaul) and flourishing during the early medieval times, the city's glory days were halted by the silting up of the harbour. This has, however, left us with a nicely preserved time capsule.

Today, Narbonne is known for its historic old town centre with an underground labyrinth of Roman warehouses and a 13th-century gothic cathedral, as well as its pretty pedestrian promenade.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres/26.6 miles.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Zenitude Residence - Narbonne (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Half day cycle to beaches of Gruissan Plage

Our trip wouldn't be complete without ending up on the shores of the Mediterranean and today's ride will follow the Canal de la Robine almost to the shores.

We cycle towards Gruissan, once a pirates' nest, and now a wonderful coastal town - make sure to bring your swimwear if you want to take a dip in the water.

After a soak, we'll head back to Narbonne in time to optionally visit the Narbo Via Museum (Roman Museum of Narbonne) or toast to the final night of our tour with an aperitif at one of the many local cafes.

The total cycling distance today is approximately 30 to 45 kilometres/18.6 to 26.6 miles.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel Zenitude Residence - Narbonne (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Trip ends Toulouse

Our trip ends this morning at Toulouse Blagnac Airport (TLS), where we aim to arrive at 10am.

Please note, the earliest your flight can depart is 12pm



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Is this the tour for you?

- We've graded the cycling on this tour as leisurely. You don't need to be a pro to take part but you should enjoy being in the saddle and have a basic level of fitness.
- The Canal du Midi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and some of our cycling routes will be along older, bumpy pathways.

- It can get incredibly hot during the summer months; we recommend carrying sun protection and water at all times.
- Breakfasts in France are typically a light affair. Expect a buffet - style spread featuring yoghurts, cereal and fresh fruit. Beyond breakfast hours, French cuisine truly shines and we'll take every opportunity to indulge in classics from croissants to cheeses and, of course, fine wines.

Cycling Information

Daily distances

Day 2	20mi
Day 3	26mi
Day 4	17mi
Day 5	22mi
Day 6	27mi
Day 7	21mi

Total distance : 133 miles

Key: Tour rides Optional rides

General cycling information

On this trip we cycle 223 km/139 miles over six days (an average of 37 km/23.2 miles per day) with further optional rides available. Most of the cycling days are circular routes and therefore optional. We travel mainly on canal towpaths and country roads, on flat or gently undulating terrain. Two days are on tow paths which can be bumpy. This is a fully guided tour and your luggage is transported for you on the 2 transfer days. We have graded the route as easy. GPX files are available for this holiday.

Bike information

Your included bike is an 18 gear Trek Dual Sport hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. These are unisex step-through frames, but women's step through frames are available, but are limited in number and size and may vary in bike type - please request at time of booking. A 15-litre pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle carries the luggage from point to point and is driven by the Explore Leader. Maps are provided to cycle individually or as a group. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet and water bottle.

Electric bikes are available for an additional cost of £255. Please note these are subject to availability on a first come first served basis and the cost is subject to change. If this is a condition of your booking please mention it at time of sale. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

Cycling grade

Leisurely

Trip information

Climate and country information

France

Climate

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. Winds can be strong all year around. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juras and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+1	2 Pin Round	Catholic	French

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities

are booked and paid for locally and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Narbonne - entrance fee for the Via Narbo museum Approx. €8 per person

Carcassonne - entrance fee for the Chateau Comptal and acces to city walls Approx. €9.50 per person

Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather. During the day you can expect to live in T-shirts and shorts, but you may wish to bring smart casual wear for the evenings. Bring a warm fleece for cool evenings and raingear for occasional rain. May, June and September may be slightly cooler. Please note that French health regulations require that men wear 'proper' (Lycra) swimming trunks in pools and not shorts.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike. Remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage - don't overload yourself.

Equipment

It is compulsory to wear a cycling helmet on all Explore cycling holidays. As we cannot guarantee the quality or structural integrity of locally hired cycling helmets, it is a requirement that you bring your own helmet with you. Most insurance providers require helmets to be worn whilst cycling, so in the event of an accident, it is likely that any insurance claim will be invalidated if you are not wearing a helmet.

Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may

however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £20 of local currency for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

France

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£17	£20.00 - 25.00	£4	£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

Where To Exchange

Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

ATM Availability

In cities and most major towns

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

Transport, Accommodation, Food & Drink

Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle, Train

Accommodation notes

During this tour, we stay in comfortable-grade hotels. Our accommodation is chosen based on location, comfort and authenticity to bring us closer to our destination. In general, comfortable-grade hotels are three-star equivalent with good amenities including en-suite rooms, air conditioning and WiFi. Hotels may also have extra amenities such as a swimming pool or bar/restaurant.

France

Food and drink

Can you drink the water?

It is generally possible to drink the local tap water, therefore to reduce the need for single-use plastic bottles we recommend you bring a refillable water bottle with you. Your leader will advise you on refill points each day.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination's safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. Relevant government website links for UK, US, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand citizens are available on our Travel Safety page.

If you'd like some initial information on country-specific entry requirements, such as visas or any health declaration forms, please refer to our Entry Requirements page. The services and information on this page are provided by a third party, and so we will still recommend that you cross check this against your government website for the latest advice.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Our price guarantee does not apply to Polar Voyages. However, please note that if you voluntarily make any changes to your booking including changing your trip or departure date, any additional costs or charges incurred will not be covered. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

France: Visas are not required by UK, EU, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

For customers visiting the EU, or transiting via EU countries, please be aware that the European Union's (EU) new Entry/Exit System (EES) is being rolled out, with full operation from 10 April 2026. This means that when you travel into, or depart from, the Schengen area for short stays, you will need to register your biometric details, such as fingerprints and a photo. You do not need to take any action before you arrive at the border, and there is no cost for EES registration. On your first entry or exit into a Schengen country, you will be asked to register your details at a special booth before proceeding to the immigration desk.

At some ports and international stations allow for extra time as there may be increased wait times while EES registration is completed before passengers leave the UK and transit through a EU country. Once initial registration has been completed future entering or exiting of an EU Schengen country should be simplified as only a single fingerprint scan or facial recognition scan will be required.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Minimum age restrictions

For our group tours, the minimum age is **16**. The minimum age on Family trips varies between 7 and 11 - please check the 'Family information' section of the trip page for more information.

Your safety and enjoyment on tour

We want everyone to have a safe and enjoyable holiday, so we ask you to confirm when booking this trip that you are fit and able to fully participate in all elements of the itinerary. If you have any concerns about your fitness or ability to complete any of the activities, please get in touch with our Customer Relations team at cr@explore.co.uk as soon as possible. Our tour leaders are trained and experienced in managing differing abilities within a group, but if they have concerns about a group member's ability to safely participate in any element of the itinerary or believe someone's presence could affect the safety or enjoyment of the holiday for others, in accordance with our Booking Conditions our tour leaders have the authority to ask an individual to miss an activity or activities. This decision would never be taken lightly, but on the rare occasions our tour leaders ask someone to sit out part of the tour, refunds will not be offered and individuals may be liable for additional costs incurred.

Your Tour Leader

All tours aside from extensions, Galapagos cruises and polar expeditions will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are local experts who are bursting with first-hand knowledge which they love to share, and their unique insights will bring the destination to life. Your Tour Leader will be on hand throughout your tour to make sure arrangements run smoothly, to organise all the local logistics and to keep you safe. Your Tour Leader

should be your first point of contact if you encounter any difficulties or disappointments in country – please raise any concerns, however small, with your Tour Leader as they are best placed to assist you.

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Polar customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore can arrange your flights for you, to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

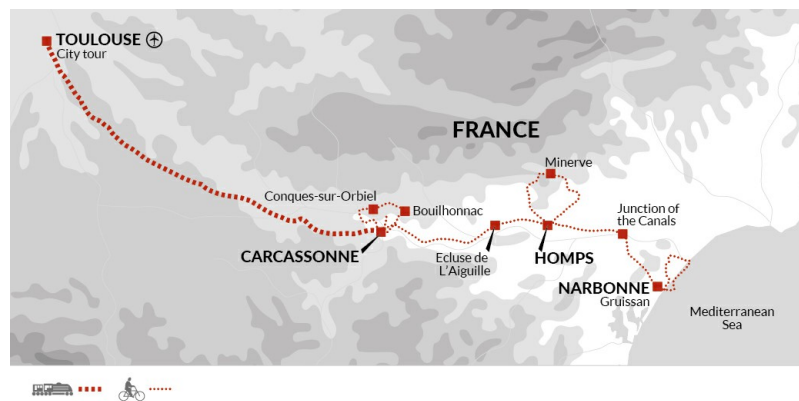
We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport. On our website we display the price of the tour only. Please call us or select the flight option during the online checkout to receive a quote for a flight inclusive package. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

France

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by on the NaTHNaC website and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

Dates, prices and booking

- ▣ Prices may change - book now and today's trip price is guaranteed in our [price promise](#)
- ▣ Book online to secure your price and space. Your deposit is refundable for 14 days. Find out more [here](#)

Departure guaranteed. Find out more [here](#)

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