

FRANCE – CANAL DU MIDI CYCLING

7-days/ 6-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn cycle tour from Carcassonne to Sète



Discover the UNESCO World Heritage listed walled city of Carcassonne. Visit Béziers' 15th Century cathedral, explore Narbonne and the picturesque Canal de la Robine, wonder at the engineering feat of the nine locks at Fonsérannes and the Oppidum at Ensérune with relics of Iberian, Greek, Celtic and Roman civilisations and end at Sète with its canals and waterways, the French region of Languedoc's equivalent to Venice.

The architectural marvel that is the Canal du Midi is the stunning backdrop for this weeklong self-guided cycling holiday where your accommodation is booked ahead and your main luggage is moved each day. Cycling is mostly on quiet back-roads (often favoured by Tour de France organisers) with some undulations, on canal towpaths and on dedicated cycle paths. Accommodation is in carefully selected, comfortable *chambre d'hôte* and 2- or 3-star hotels in rooms with private bathroom facilities. Where the usual hotel is not available a suitable alternative will be confirmed.

This region has a well-deserved reputation for its original cuisine, with dishes like the bean and sausage stew *cassoulet*, a perfect complement to an active day's cycling. The Corbières and Minervois wine regions are known for their crisp and zesty white wines and their full-bodied reds.

Dates: Daily on demand from April to October (subject to a minimum of four people travelling)

Cost from: \$1620 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$365

Grading: Moderate. Daily distances 25 to 50km per day over flat to undulating terrain.

Included: 6 nights' twin-share accommodation; 6 breakfasts, luggage transfers; hybrid bike hire, route information, maps and detailed route notes; emergency telephone support (if required).

Not included: Meals not mentioned, drinks, personal expenses, entrance fees, arrival/departure transfers.

Starts: Carcassonne

Ends: Sète



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Carcassonne

Arrive in Carcassonne by early afternoon, allowing time to explore the narrow cobbled streets, drawbridges and towers of its famous medieval citadel, the Cité de Carcassonne, on a hill overlooking the city and the River Aude. There has been a fortification on this site since Roman times. Spend tonight in a hotel at the foot of the Cité.

Day 2: Carcassonne – Homps/Olonzac

cycling @ 40km

Bicycles will be delivered and fitted this morning, then set off cycling alongside the Canal du Midi. Enjoy a peaceful ride passing vineyards, locks, and fields of poppy and sunflower. Spend the night in a charming 18th Century coaching inn located in the small village of Olonzac.

Day 3: Olonzac/Homps – Narbonne

cycling @ 45km

Follow the Canal du Midi until Le Somail, with its pretty stone-built bridge across the canal. From here head south, away from the canal. Riding on quiet, small paved county roads you reach the Canal de la Robine; cycle alongside the canal to the centre of Narbonne. Spend the night in a hotel in Narbonne centre.

Day 4: Narbonne – Beziers

cycling @ 35km

Perhaps take some time this morning to browse Les Halles, Narbonne's large indoor food market, and pick up some supplies for a picnic lunch. Ride through rural countryside, with an uphill detour if you like to the Oppidum at Ensérune. Near Béziers you encounter the Nine Locks of Fonseranes where the Canal du Midi drops 21.5 metres. At the bottom of the locks the canal splits in two. The older section carried canal traffic straight from the locks to the river Orb; boats had to navigate this dangerous river and re-join the Canal du Midi later. Floods caused delays and boats sank, so in the 1850s the canal company constructed a new section of canal and a beautiful aqueduct carrying boat traffic over and across the river. The aqueduct offers a marvellous view of Béziers Cathedral. Your hotel is in the historic centre of Béziers.

Day 5: Beziers – Agde

cycling @ 30km

After breakfast cycle through the Parc des Poets towards the Canal du Midi. Look for the glimmer of the Mediterranean Sea in the distance. Look for flamingos and horses towards the southern end of your route, between Portiragnes and Marseillan. Spend tonight in Agde, one of the oldest cities in France, dating back to Greek times, where you spend the night in a beautiful B&B.

Day 6: Agde – Sète

cycling @ 25km

A short and relaxing ride today. The bicycle path from Agde to Sète follows the beach and is paved and flat, taking just around an hour to complete. There is time to explore Sète, the official end of the Canal du Midi, sometimes called the Venice of southern France. Stay in a comfortable inn near the port of Sète.

Day 7: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast.

Outdoor Travel offers a wide range of guided or self-guided inn-to-inn cycling holidays in Europe including France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, Ireland and the UK. Outdoor Travel offer **Bike & Barge** holidays for those interested in a more relaxed pace combination of cycling and cruising in many areas of Europe including France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Croatia, Greece, Turkey, Austria and Romania.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

- Call Toll free 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright VIC 3741, Australia