

THE ATLANTIC COAST – LA ROCHELLE TO ROYAN

8-days / 7-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn coastal cycle touring on the Bay of Biscay



The Atlantic Coast is a paradise of easy scenic trails for cyclists. Discover the fantastic coastline and the many marvellous sandy beaches, historic fishing ports, cycling paths through tranquil pine forests. It is a region of natural beauty, of history and, typical of all France, of good seafood and wine and the dramatic Atlantic Ocean.

This cycle tour begins and ends in La Rochelle, on the Bay of Biscay just north of Bordeaux. La Rochelle is known as *La Ville Blanche*, the White City, for its many limestone buildings which dazzle the eye on a sunny day. Like much of the region, La Rochelle passed from French to English to French hands in the 11th and 12th Centuries and came under siege during the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion. From the 14th to 17th Centuries La Rochelle was France's largest Atlantic port and its maritime legacy is invoked today by the hundreds of sailboats moored at the modern yacht harbour and by dozens of shipyards and boat builders. From La Rochelle you cycle to lively fishing villages, to white sand beaches, to marine reserves and protected wetlands, and to other historic seaside towns like Rochefort and Royan. There are many opportunities to sample local seafood, including the oysters of Marennes and mussels harvested from the Baie de l'Aiguillon. The wines of the region are typically lively, fresh white wines which match perfectly to seafood.

Inn-to-inn self-guided cycling holidays are perfect for exploring France's iconic landscapes. Travelling by bike gives you the freedom to see more of the countryside, following mostly quiet roads and paths, and offer a memorable active holiday experience. Being self-guided gives you the flexibility to travel at your own pace, to stop and relax or explore, secure in the knowledge that your room is waiting for you, your bags have gone ahead and the day is your own.

Departs: Ask for details

Cost from: \$1550 per person twin-share

Single room supplement from \$610

Half Board supplement \$555 per person (includes seven 4-course dinners)

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in comfortable 2- and 3-star hotels or guesthouses in ensuite rooms with breakfast daily; hire of multi-gear hybrid touring bike with pannier; luggage transfers; welcome briefing; detailed route notes with stage-by-stage route descriptions, maps and travel information; emergency telephone support; transfer from Royan to La Rochelle.

If you opt to pay the Half Board supplement then a 4-course dinner is included each night.

Not included: Other meals, drinks, personal expenses, entry fees, travel to the start/end of the tour. Bike helmet not included – we recommend you take your own helmet or hire one for @ \$20 when making your booking.

E-bike hire: From \$195 per E-bike – availability strictly limited, please request when making your booking.

Grading: Easy to Moderate – 35 to 60km daily cycling on flat to gently undulating terrain

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive La Rochelle

Make your way by mid-afternoon to La Rochelle. La Rochelle is easily accessible by train from Bordeaux or Paris. Your accommodation is in a hotel in the heart of the town centre. Take the time to explore the city – the maritime museum and aquarium are both worth a visit. This evening you will collect your bikes and receive a briefing on the week ahead.

Day 2: Circular route to Ile de Ré and return

cycling @ 57km

Cross a long, narrow, modern bridge to reach the island of Ile de Ré. Discover the lively fishing villages of Rivedoux and La Flotte, with their colourful markets. Ride on a cycle path to Saint Martin. Pass many charming white painted villages as you travel along the coastline with many opportunities to stop for a swim on the way.

Day 3: Circular route to Baie de Chatelaillon and return

cycling @ 42km

Leave La Rochelle heading south on a pleasant cycling path along the coast. Enjoy the wonderful scenery from Chatelaillon Plage. After a little walk in the charming town centre and its tiny streets, why not spend some time swimming or relaxing on the beach. Return to La Rochelle on small country roads via De Buzay Castle.

Day 4: Circular route to Baie de l'Aiguillon and return

cycling @ 46km

Situated north of La Rochelle, the Baie de l'Aiguillon is a graceful link between continent and ocean. Your itinerary along the white coast is an easy and beautiful ride. Baie de l'Aiguillon is famous for its mussel farms. We suggest you take the opportunity to visit one of them, the fascinating Maison de la Mytilculture.

Day 5: La Rochelle – Rochefort

cycling @ 53km

It's time to leave La Rochelle for another great town: Rochefort, near the mouth of the Charente River, where in 1666 Louis XIV chose to settle a powerful naval arsenal on the Atlantic. Today, as you ride along the coast you can see the remnants of this history with the former prison at Fort Boyard and the island Ile d'Oléron.

Day 6: Rochefort – Marennes

cycling @ 37km

From Rochefort to Marennes, you cycle alongside a marine reserve and a wide swathe of protected wetlands. There are many opportunities for birdwatching, as many species have adopted this part of the coast as their home or stop here on their migrations. Marennes, your destination for today, is a centre for the most famous oyster farms in France and there are a number of places to sample them in Marennes.

Day 7: Marennes – Royan

cycling @ 45km

You leave Marennes along a cycle path through a pine forest overlooking the sea. Be sure to pack your swimsuit and towel in your pannier today, as there are many opportunities for a refreshing swim. Your ride continues on a cycle path along the rocky coast to Royan. Varied and colourful landscapes abound on this last day of cycling – shining limestone cliffs alternate with sandy white beaches. Royan sits at the mouth of the Gironde estuary and the architecture here reflects a more modern style, as much of the city centre was rebuilt after WWII.

Day 8: Departure day

After breakfast you will be transferred back to La Rochelle where your tour ends and you can make your onward travel arrangements. There is a small airport at La Rochelle, or there are several connections daily by train to Bordeaux (2½ hours) or Paris (3½ hours by TGV).

These are just a few of the many small group guided or self-guided inn-to-inn cycling tours **Outdoor Travel** offer in Europe. We offer famous cycling trails such as the river rides from **Passau to Vienna** along the Danube or along the **Inn Bike Trail** from Switzerland to Austria. Travel too from **Vienna to Budapest** through Austria, Slovakia and Hungary, from the mountains near **Bolzano to Venice** in Italy, or across **Tuscany** or **Umbria**. If you prefer a leisurely cycle, ride around **Lake Constance** in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, or if you are up for a challenge, take on the **Camino de Santiago** in Spain or the **Coast to Coast** crossing in England. Other **Outdoor Travel** cycling destinations include Spain, France, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland, Poland, in the Czech Republic, Romania, China, Japan, Vietnam, North America, New Zealand and South Africa.

We also offer group guided **Bike and Barge** cycling cruises in many destinations including along the canals and rivers of **France, Belgium, Holland and Germany**, the **Amalfi Coast** or **Venetian Lagoon** in Italy or the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the many beautiful **islands of Greece**, the **Lycian coast of Turkey**, or **Vietnam**.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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