

FRANCE – CHAMPAGNE REGION & E-BIKING

7-days / 6-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn cycling amongst the finest vineyards from Reims



Champagne – the name conjures images of effervescent golden liquid, sparkling in an elegant flute, toasting a celebration – and also the rolling countryside in France where this fabulous drink is produced. This leisurely exploration of the Champagne region will reward you with beautiful, charming villages; chalk hillsides covered in pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay vines; and of course the opportunity to meet the families who create the world's most famous wine. Champagne-Ardenne also holds some surprises: medieval churches, the Gothic cathedral of Reims, and a lighthouse hundreds of kilometres from the sea, built as a publicity stunt in 1909. Moderate daily distances and flat to undulating terrain leave you plenty of time each day to tour the champagne houses lining the streets of Reims, Epernay and the smaller villages of the area or to visit cellars deep underground. There is an E-bike to help you up the slopes. Only 45 minutes from Paris by TGV train, but a world away from the bustle of the city, Champagne engages all of your senses.

Departs: Daily from March to October

Cost from: **\$1930** per person twin share. Single room supplement from **\$780**, Solo Traveller cost on request. Half board supplement **\$560** per person (includes 6 dinners) Optional tasting at a major Champagne house can be pre-booked at a cost of **\$55** per person.

Includes: 6 nights' twin-share ensuite accommodation in comfortable 3- and 4-star hotels or charming B&Bs; 6 breakfasts; E-bike hire with pannier; luggage transfers; detailed route notes with stage-by-stage route descriptions, maps and travel information; local support if required. If you choose to take the Half Board option then 6 dinners are included.

Not included: Other meals, drinks, personal expenses, entry fees, wine tasting.

Grading: Moderate cycling: daily distances of 25 - 55 kilometres on gently rolling terrain.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 Arrive in Reims

Arrive at your leisure in Reims. You may like to take some time to explore the city, which is renowned for its historical architecture, especially the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, where many French monarchs were crowned. You stay in a charming 3-star hotel in the heart of Reims.

Day 2 Reims - Matougues

Cycling distance @ 50km

Cycle through the vineyards and villages of the Montagne de Reims, including Taissy, Verzenay and Bouzy. Journey through the Forest of Verzy, renowned for its enormous twisted and gnarled beech trees. If your legs are up to the challenge, visit the Museum of the Vine in the lighthouse at Verzenay (entry fee approx €7, not included), and climb the 101 steps to the top for breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. Spend tonight in a 3-star *auberge* in the village of Matougues.

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Day 3 Matougues - Épernay

Cycling distance @ 30km

A leisurely ride today to Épernay along the Marne canal – short, flat and easy, leaving you plenty of time in the afternoon to visit the Champagne houses and cellars of Épernay. Major houses include Moët & Chandon, Piper Heidsieck, Perrier-Jouët and Pol Roger. Épernay, together with Reims, is the major wine centre of the Champagne region. Here three important areas meet: the Montagne de Reims, the Côte des Blancs and the Vallée de la Marne. Tonight's accommodation is either in a small, family-run 3-star hotel or a *chambre d'hotels* (guesthouse) in a converted townhouse, both centrally located, where you will stay the next three nights.

Day 4 Marne Valley circuit: The Champagne Trail

Cycling distance @ 36km

Today's route is a special treat, following the Champagne Trail through the Marne Valley. The undulating terrain means that you frequently find yourself above the valley, rewarded with wonderful views of the river and vineyards. Stop in Hautvillers, noted for its Benedictine abbey, where Dom Perignon legendarily discovered the process of making champagne, then the pretty riverside village of Cumières. Cross the Marne and return to Épernay, passing by the Widow Clicquot's neo-Renaissance Château de Boursault.

Day 5 Côte de Blancs circuit

Cycling distance @ 30km

Head south from Épernay into the Côte des Blancs, planted with chardonnay grapes, used for traditional Champagne, generally a blend of chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier, and for *blanc de blancs*, made solely from white grapes. You pass Pierry, with its 18th Century chateau, then the photogenic church at Chavot-Courcourt, standing isolated on a hilltop surrounded by vines. There is a fine Romanesque church at Cuis and a gimmicky 8.5-metre champagne bottle at Cramant (though still worth a photo).

Day 6 Épernay - Reims

Cycling distance @ 36km

Today's route takes you through the Montagne de Reims, a regional nature park on a plateau 300 metres above sea level. Cycle through forest and past small, quaint villages, and of course you will still be surrounded by the ever-present vines. Finish in Reims, staying again in a 3-star hotel.

Day 7 End your cycling trip after breakfast in Reims.



Outdoor Travel offer many guided or self-guided cycling holidays in the popular tourist areas of France and across Europe including Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland. Around the world we offer cycling holidays in South Africa, Japan, China, Vietnam, New Zealand, the USA or Canada.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations

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