

Great Explorations

CERTIFIED OFFICIAL OPERATOR of TOUR de FRANCE



Particulars

Trip Dates:

Pyrenees: July 15-21, 2012

Custom trips also available. Call or email for details.

Total Days:

7 days/ 6nights

Arrive/Depart:

Toulouse / Bagneres de Bigorre

Activity Level:

Daily Options:

Moderate: 40-60 km
Intermediate: 60-80 km
Advanced: 80-100+ km

Cost:

Before Dec 31
Classic:
US\$2650
6B/ 2L/ 5D

After Dec 31
US\$2950

Single Supplement:

US\$600

Tour with the Pros in France- Pyrenees,

If you are considering a trip to France in July, 2012, you may be overwhelmed by the number of different companies offering tours. The most important thing is not to be rushed into a decision. Take your time, consider the options and try to compare apples to apples. We have been offering trips to the world's greatest bike race for over a decade and to France and around the world for over 28 years. We don't sell anyone else's tours – we design, sell *and* operate only our own.

In 2012, we have designed our trips to minimize transfers and to maximize both the time and the quality of riding. We'll watch the race on days that it makes sense to do so, in locations that will have you mixing with locals, watching large screen televisions of riders approaching (beer in hand if you choose); there will be live music, festivities and then of course, the peleton with your front row vantage point.meet your favorite riders.

Only Great Explorations:

- Small groups, extraordinary guides, and authentic experiences.
- meeting legends for autographs- in the past our guests have gotten photos and autographs with Laurent Fignon, Miguel Indurain and Bernard Hinault, Cadel Evans, Lance Armstrong
- spa pass while in Bagneres
- Order off the menu at restaurants you won't find in guidebooks (including at atmospheric auberge in the hills east of Bagneres).
- We design and operate our own trips so there are only good surprises.

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Bike Rental Options:

Racing:

Van Nicholas Mistral with

shimano 105- \$390

Cannondale CAAD 5-

US\$290

Hybrid:

Cannondale

US\$210

Itinerary

July 15: Toulouse

Our 2012 Tour with the Pros; Pyrenees trip will begin in Toulouse. There are 25 flights per day from Paris, and 2 from London ; 4 high-speed TGV trains connect Paris and Toulouse also. Your arrival hotel is included (the 4-start Hotel Garonne) and if you arrive early, you can wander around one of the most beautiful cities in the south of France and the gateway to the Pyrenees. We will have bike fit between 4-6 and enjoy dinner at a favorite local bistro. Bienvenue.

July 16: Bagneres-de-Luchon

Stage 15: Samatan to Pau (160 km)

We will depart Toulouse on bikes and ride to Samatan, start of Stage 15. After watching the start, we will continue south towards the Pyrenees. Ride as far as you like today- we have options for 60, 80 and 100 km. Arriving to Bagneres de Luchon, we will stay at the Majestic Hotel in the historical center. Luchon features on two stages in 2012 and it will be an exciting village to be staying. Ride Distances: 60, 80, 100 km

July 17: Bagneres de Bigorre

Leaving Luchon, we will ride one of the most dramatic routes in the Pyrenees, over Col De Peyresourde and descending to the quaint village of Arreau, before climbing Col D'Aspin, where we'll enjoy a picnic with a superb view. Descending to Campan and Bagneres will make for an epic finish. We will dine at a restaurant we know well- Jardins des Brouches. Ride Distances: 70 km

July 18: Bagneres de Bigorre

Stage 16: Pau to Bagneres-de-Luchon (197 km)

There are good reasons we stay in Bagneres de Bigorre; it is just the right size with great restaurants, thermal baths, and is the center of great cycling (perhaps why cycling legend Laurent Fignon was based here). The pros will be riding from Pau to Bagneres de Luchon today and we are in the perfect position. We will ride from Bagneres de Bigorre to Lourdes and then along the valley to Argeles Gazost before climbing the famous Tourmalet and back to Bagneres. On this evening, we have planned dinner at a country Auberge. Ride Distances: 60 km/ 104 km

July 19: Bagneres de Bigorre

Stage 17: Bagneres-de-Luchon to Peyragudes 144 km

The pros will be riding from Bagneres to Peyragudes today and again, we are in an ideal position. We suggest a route today over Hourquette D'Ancizan, featured in the 2011 Tour, and then an ascent to Peyragudes, where Stage 17 will finish late afternoon. Afterwards, descend to Arreau and ride a flat and fast route to the ancient abbey at Mauvein and back to Bagneres. Free night dinner tonight.

July 20: Bagneres de Bigorre

Stage 18: Blagnac to Brive-la-Gaillarde 215 km

We've saved one of our favourite rides for today and again, you can choose the distance that suits you (and your legs). It's on small, quiet roads and passes through quaint artisan villages, and Lourdes, with its pilgrimage site and many monuments. Back in Bagneres, we will treat you to a pass at the thermal baths and then dinner at L'Auberge Gourmande. Bon Appetit.

July 21: Depart

(or continue with Paris extension). You can depart by train or air from Tarbes, just 20 km away.

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Paris Extension

If continuing with our Paris extension, we will transfer to Chartres to watch the Time Trial. If last year is any indication, this is where *le maillot jaune* may be decided. We will finish this day with dinner in one of the oldest restaurants in Paris. Staying in Paris will allow us to wake up and have a leisurely start to the final day of the tour- you can visit markets or stroll along the Seine. We have arranged a private viewing room that boasts unobstructed views of the race from a 2nd floor balcony with adjoining suite. Air conditioning, live television coverage, bathrooms, food and beverages all provided. We've sat in the 'VIP grandstands' in the unrelenting sun (and sometimes rain). Trust us- you are much better off with us hosting. Did we mention we are staying in the same hotel as the pros? After the final laps of the Champs, you will have a chance to mingle with the pros before dinner at a restaurant where we will toast an incredible finish to the 2012 Tour. Salute.

Price: US\$950 includes 2 nights, breakfast lunch and dinner both days, transfers between Tarbes and Chartre and Paris, champagne on the Champs, wine with evening meals. You will depart on the morning of July 23.

Note: Once our access is confirmed, you will have the option of opting 'in' for this

On our Tour with the Pros trips, we generally try to provide options to cycle 60 km, 80 km or 100 km on each cycling day. Although anyone of moderate cycling level may

Accommodations



Hotel Garonne , Toulouse

Sheltered from the lively bustle of town, yet right in the heart of old Toulouse, this tasteful, quiet, elegant, warm hotel offers spaces with contemporary charm in which every detail has its own importance



Le Majestic , Bagneres-de-Luchon

Le Majestic hotel is housed in a historical building, dating back from 19th century and restored respecting the typical architecture of thermal cities. It boasts an exceptional location in Luchon, in the heart of the *Ramel Park*



Residence Des Thermes, Bagneres de Bigorre

This 3-star hotel directly faces the Grand Thermes in the historical center of Bagneres. There is a charming café on the main floor and everything in Bagneres is a short stroll away. We stay in Bagneres because it is a cyclist's mecca and is one of the most beautiful villages in the Pyrenees.

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What's Included in the Cost of Your Trip?

- Services of one or more experienced Great Explorations guides and support vehicle
- Lodging as per final itinerary
- All breakfasts, 1 lunch, 5 dinners (included wine with 2 dinners)
- Wine reception on arrival and final night cocktail celebration prior to dinner
- Entrance fees for selected historical sites and museums (included spa entry at Aquensis in Bagnères)
- Detailed map and cue sheets
- All baggage transportation during the tour
- Travelogue
- Pre-departure Trip Planner with tips on what to bring and general information about traveling in France
- All tips in hotels, restaurants etc. (excludes discretionary tips for guides)

Please note: Final itinerary is subject to revision; any changes made are done so in an attempt to provide the best possible trip given route conditions and available services. Due to the nature of our business and exchange rates, prices are subject to change. All prices quoted are U.S. dollars but we gladly accept payment in Canadian dollars also. Due to cancellations and waiting lists, trip availability fluctuates daily. If you have any questions or would like to confirm space on this trip before making your reservation, please contact us at info@great-explorations.com or by telephone at **604.730.1247**