

Length & Breadth – Canal du Midi

- ‘Back on a bike after many years away – your encouragement and simple cycling tips really boosted my confidence. Thank you so much. ‘

Moriah, Steyning,

- ‘We just loved Le Lavandou and the easy cycling along the coast towards St Tropez was such a surprise.’

Janet and Ron, Cheshire,

- ‘What a fantastic ride to Paris. It’s hard to put into words the euphoria I felt when we were cycling down the Champs-Élysées.’

Ian, West Sussex,

- ‘You were just wonderful guides on our first ever trip to Provence . . . we will definitely be back – in fact we’ve just booked!’

The Crane Family, Warwickshire,

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Highlights:

Toulouse the Rose City
Rivers and Ramparts
Canal du Midi Magic
Glorious Beaches
Cité de Carcassonne
Camargue Wilderness

Summary

Our Canal du Midi Tour makes for a great ride through the heart of southern France, where World Heritage Wonders will wow!. It is also the third and final leg of a potential three leg cycle tour which guides you down the Length and Breadth of France. Taking the famous canal as our rough guide, we chart a course from the beautiful Rose City of Toulouse to reach the sea and then, cycle some of the magnificent Mediterranean coastline towards Provence. Along the way we will leave and rejoin the Canal du Midi on many occasions, so that you have the opportunity to explore more than just its confined landscape corridor. Fabulous fortifications and enormous engineering feats are connected by wonderful rural riding routes which produces a tour of incredible variety, that is sure to help you create lasting memories from your sun-soaked saddle.

Be wowed by world wonders and wilderness.

As one of our 'Length and Breadth' Fully Guided Tours, this offers the option of a closer to nature experience as nearly all of the nights can be spent on campsites, with campsite meals provided on three of the evenings (but of course, you can still choose a fully hotel based tour if that level of comfort is desired). We provide the tents and, will pitch them for you; your own sleeping bag and camping mat are the only real extras you will need to bring in comparison to our other tours. Your luggage will be transferred for you between

campsites so, the cycling remains a relaxing pleasure but the feeling of a greater escape is real and the rewards are plentiful.

Tour in Brief:

- Fellow Velo Welcome Briefing
- 9 Nights Camping
- 1 Hotel Night
- or 10 Hotel Nights
- 10 Continental Breakfasts
- 9 Lunches
- 3 Campfire Meals
- Luggage Transfers
- Cycling Guide
- Carefully Selected Routes
- High Quality Bikes
- Support Vehicle

Tour Map

Introduction

The terrain on each of our Length and Breadth legs through France provides for really entertaining and easy cycling days, only the slightly longer distances and occasional crossings of larger rivers raise them from our lowest cycling grade. So, the remarkable feeling of adventure that comes with bigger cycling tours really is there to be grasped by anyone with the spirit to match the experience.

Day 1 Arrive Toulouse

Arrive in Toulouse and transfer to a charming hotel for a relaxing evening before the start of your cycling tour. Toulouse is the beautiful 'Rose City' and, it makes for an

excellent evening promenade to relax before the cycling that lies ahead.

Day 2 Toulouse to Castelnaudary – 74 km

The cycling starts from the centre of Toulouse but it quickly leaves the avenues and grand architecture behind as we join the Canal du Midi. The canals of the Garonne and Midi both climbed gently in land towards Toulouse so, the theory (and nearly all the practice) is that on this tour, it's downhill to the sea. The first day's ride is along some of the very best surfaces that the Canal du Midi offers so, easy cycling in all sorts of ways and, a really relaxed beginning to the tour to take in all around you. We finish near Castelnaudary which claims World Capital status for Cassoulet.



Day 3 Castelnaudary to Carcassonne – 54 km

The second day's riding mixes the real ease of cycling along the canal with great opportunities to meander through the surrounding landscape too. From a wonderful campsite base off the canal, we follow a few picturesque country lanes as we make our way back onto the canal towpath. East of Castelnaudary, the trail becomes a little more rural and informal but, this only seems to add to its charms (and your bike will just soak it up). You close the riding day as the magnificent fortified walls of Carcassonne dominate your view.



Day 4 Carcassonne Day

A rest from the saddle today, giving you time to explore Carcassonne at your leisure. It is famous for the Cité de Carcassonne, a medieval fortress significantly restored in the 19th Century and, understandably a feature in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. You can wander the narrow cobbled streets, peruse the tiny shops, quench your thirst at a café in a square or, refuel at any of the great restaurants around town (unless you would prefer to join a Medieval Banquet). Walking the whole Cité walls circuit is wonderful and, has a great atmosphere when illuminated at night.



Day 5 Carcassonne to Paraza – 64 km

Back in the saddle as we leave the citadel behind and continue towards the sea. The gentle slopes all around are rich in the fruit that gives us the wines of Minervois and Corbières. Once more the route blends the canal with the tracks and trails that crisscross the land.



Day 6 Paraza to Gruissan – 35 km

Canals, lagoons and the sea; on today's ride we reach the Mediterranean Sea. A little way further down the Canal du Midi, we join the Canal de la Robine through Corbières country and on to Narbonne. Once a prosperous and important Roman port, the town now lies about 10 miles from the sea. Changes in the course of the River Aude and the silting up of waterways over time diminished Narbonne's grip on trade until a boost came from the new canal linking with the Canal du Midi.



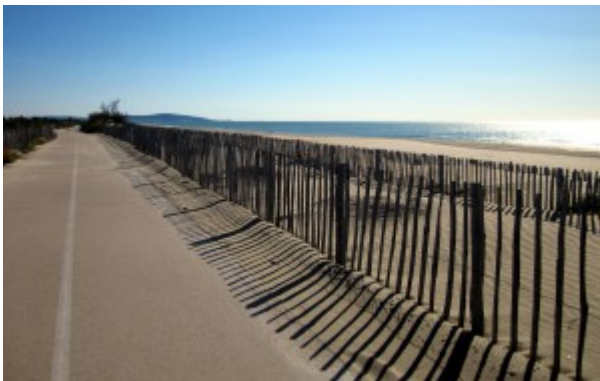
Day 7 Gruissan to Marseillan – 61 km

All along the coast; from the lagoons that buffer Narbonne from the Mediterranean, with sweeping sea views and sandy beaches, we turn eastwards along a low lying coastline as the trail rejoins the Canal du Midi near to its end. We pass through Valras-Plage a great little seaside resort with elegant charms to match Biarritz or Deauville, where we cross L'Orb as it flows down from Béziers. At Agde we find the Mediterranean port of the Canal du Midi in one of the oldest recorded villages of France.



Day 8 Marseillan to Aigues-Mortes – 71 km

Marseillan gave the world Noilly Prat (and T. S. Eliot a name for his cat) and, just a few gentle tipplers the night before will probably leave you in still great shape for our continued trail along the coast. Beautiful cycling boardwalks bound great sandy beaches as we bypass the lagoons near Montpellier on our route to the Camargue.



Day 9 Aigues-Mortes to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer – 45 km

The day begins with a ride into Aigues-Mortes in the Petite Camargue, a superbly preserved walled town, its name is derived from the Occitan meaning 'dead waters'. Surrounded by salt marshes the town has never had its own natural drinking water but, is now a great place for a refreshing morning break on your tour. Today begins our crossing of the Camargue, Western Europe's greatest river delta; ferry over the Petit Rhône and end the day in Saines-Maries-de-la-Mer.



Day 10 Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer to Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts – 33 km

The final cycling day of your tour and, the conclusion to our Length and Breadth journey through France. From the heart of the Camargue in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, we ride along sandy trails through some of the remotest parts of the National Park, nodding to the flamingo on the way. We leave the Camargue on the little ferry over the Grande Rhône, to meet our shuttle bus to a great final campsite stay on the shore of the Étang de Berre.



Day 11 Depart Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts

Leave Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts on your onward journey or homeward return.

Eat Sleep Drink

Eat

From when the cycling starts, to the day of your departure, breakfast is included every day on the tour. Typically that means pastries on the campsite or maybe an early stop at a

tastebud tingling boulangerie. Lunches are included on each of the cycling days, either gathered up near the beginning of the ride or planned at a local hostelry (and, there may be a day when you will just come upon a picnic laid out for you around a corner on the journey). On this tour, three 'campfire meals' are included; and on the other evenings there is plenty of restaurant choice in the small towns or at the campsites where you will be staying, with at least one recommendation for each evening.



Sleep

This special Fully Guided Tour is one of our camping trips; all the campsites have been carefully selected by us and as we all know, France is one of the best places in the world to camp. Sites will vary from small family run ones to larger, beautifully equipped parks. We will provide the tents, and you'll probably arrive on site to find them put up for you. All you need to bring is whatever it takes for you to have a good night's sleep. All our Length and Breadth trips have a hotel stop where you can luxuriate in the hotel's splendour, on this tour that is on your first night in Toulouse but, rest assured, there is a great final campsite to round off the adventure. You can of course opt for hotel accommodation for the whole tour if you wish.



Drink

Maintaining both your energy and hydration levels while cycling is very important. On each day of this tour, it is easy to keep yourself supplied with water and soft drinks. We will ensure you have plenty of access to places to buy drinks or obtain water. As you are in some of the most scenic parts of France, there are many opportunities for morning coffee or an afternoon chilled drink at quiet little cafés in the most secret of places.



France – Length & Breadth Recommended Tour Months

We normally recommend that customers undertake this tour in June, July, September or October but you could choose almost any time during our cycling season – just contact us to check on availability.

Our Canal du Midi Tour is great as an individual ride but, is also one of three tours which can be combined to complete a cycle ride the Length and Breadth of France. It is the third natural leg of that potential combination with Atlantic Coast and Entre Deux Mers being the other legs.

Canal du Midi Camping Version – Tours from £985.00/person

**Canal du Midi Hotel Version – Tours from £1415.00/person
(Deposit of £450.00/person)**

Booking from this Tour Page is for the Canal du Midi Tour only – if you want to combine two or three of the tour legs into a longer holiday then, just start the booking process from the first in your chosen sequence and send us an email from Contact Us to confirm the additional elements.

Combined Leg Prices:

Two Legs Camping Version – From £1765.00/person

Two Legs Hotel Version – From £2625.00/person

Three Legs Camping Version – From £2365.00/person

Three Legs Hotel Version – From £4075.00/person

More Information

Travel to and from your Tour

- This tour starts in Toulouse, which can be reached in a number of ways. Via budget flights, www.flybe.com www.easyjet.com and www.ryanair.com Or via train direct from the UK or train to a ferry port. There are so many options to choose eg. from www.brittany-ferries.co.uk and www.voyages-sncf.com
- This tour ends in St Mitre in the Remparts and we will transport you to Marseilles. Again there are many options for reaching the UK, via budget flights eg. www.easyjet.com www.ryanair.com and www.airfrance.co.uk And many high speed train links to Paris and onward to the UK, see www.raileurope.com and www.voyages-sncf.com You would be surprised how quickly you can travel to the UK via high speed trains, it is very competitive time-wise when compared with flying.

If you are bringing your own bike

- For anyone seeking the comfort and convenience of using

their own bicycle, contact us for tips on how to transport your bike. It may be much easier to use one of our fleet bikes but, the choice is yours.

Fancy a longer holiday

- For anyone who wants to extend their holiday with us, we can book additional hotels for you at the start or end of your Tour, just call us on 07811 285021.

Families, and/or non cycling companions

- We think Canal du Midi is ideal for families with older children, perhaps Dads and Lads or Mums and Daughters, imagine the bonding experience of campfire treats and days spent in the comfy saddle.. Most of the cycling is flat and a significant proportion of this tour is made up of dedicated cycle routes and quiet country lanes. Call us to discuss the different cycle options available to children (tag along, child bike etc).
- A partner, spouse or friend who doesn't share your love of cycling. On any of our Fully Guided Tours, a non-cycling person can get a lift with the support vehicle from location to location.

Travel Pack

- Your personally tailored travel pack will be with you approx 3 weeks prior to your Tour start date. There will be oodles of information for you in this pack.

Any queries at all before you book

- We don't want to bombard you with masses of text to read, so anything at all that needs clarification please call us on 07811 285021 or 01788 568371 or, email us at jane@fellowvelo.com