

Cycling Safaris

BURGUNDY 2010



A day of healthy activity in beautiful surroundings followed by good food, fine wines at a traditional hotel is as close to perfection as one can get. Burgundy provides all the elements to make this dream a reality. Historically and culturally rich, it is one of the most fascinating areas of France.

Burgundy is synonymous with fine wines, the highest standards in cuisine and a harmonious landscape of gentle hills and green valleys. From the vineyards of the Cote D'or to the beautiful scenery north of Dijon this is a region to savour and enjoy.

The tour itinerary encompasses quiet lanes, beautiful little towns and villages, regal chateaux, splendid churches and basilicas and as much historical interest as one can absorb in a week.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Saturday Arrive Montbard

This tour starts in Montbard between Dijon and Auxerre. Our transfer will take you to our first hotel in Montbard, the 3*** Hotel de L'Ecu in the centre of this small town. We meet as a group just prior to dinner at 7.30 p.m.

DAY 2 Sunday Montbard to Semur-en-Auxois 31 miles / 52 km

From Montbard we head directly to the Abbaye de Fontenay, the oldest surviving Cistercian abbey in the world. The Cistercian Order was founded by St Bernard as a direct response to the opulent and luxurious lifestyle of the monks at Cluny, and the lack of decoration and pomp at Fontenay is stark. The setting is a beautiful verdant river valley. The monks were industrious and self-sufficient, growing medicinal herbs for their own hospital and mining local iron ore for their own forge. Little wonder that Michelin give Fontenay the maximum 3*** rating, 'worth a journey in itself'.

One of the most important infrastructural developments in Burgundy was the construction of the Burgundy Canal. It completely changed the social evolution of hundreds of small villages and hamlets. Described as the most beautiful route in France, the canal is a masterpiece of pre-industrial revolution technology, spanning more than 250 kilometres in length and two centuries of construction.

After lunch we follow the Canal du Bourgogne along the towpath to Alise-Ste-Reine before climbing to the beautiful walled town of Semur-en-Auxois. There is some irony in this name as Semur derives from the Latin sine muros, without walls. The town is surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs carved by the river Armancon, and is a truly beautiful little town. Tonight we dine on a menu including several Burgandy classics.

DAY 3 Monday Semur-en-Auxois to Chateauneuf 28 miles / 47 km

We start to day with a downhill spin back to the canal at Marigny le Cahouët. The canal follows a route that might normally be too hilly to tackle. The quality of the towpath varies on this section, so occasionally we divert to the road, but this is no great hardship as we pass through delightful villages like Braux and St Thibault. At Pouilly-en-Auxois the canal reaches its summit, the highest point on the canal network of France, and by the time we get there you'll know you've been cycling uphill. Just think how bad it would have been without a canal!

At Pouilly the canal disappears into a tunnel, and we cycle over the top of the hill and down the other side to tonight's destination - the delightful village of Chateauneuf.

DAY 4 Tuesday Chateauneuf to Dijon 35 miles / 56 km

We return to the canal and enjoy a great day of cycling that follows first the Ouche Valley and then the Canal du Borgogne right the way into the heart of Dijon, the old capital of Burgundy.

Dijon is a fascinating place. Historically the aristocracy of Burgundy built their town houses here, close to the Palais des Ducs. Anxious to be within the protection offered by the city walls, they were forced to buy existing plots of land and buildings which has led to the fascinating juxtaposition of grand town houses shoe-horned into strangely shaped plots alongside the housing and shops of ordinary Dijonais. The centre of it all is the Duke's Palace, now the town hall and housing the Musée des Beaux-Arts.

DAY 5 Wednesday Fenay to Nuit St George 22 miles / 37 km

Today we leave Dijon and the Canal du Bourgogne to head west towards the hills of the Côtes D'Or, and visit the famous vineyards en route to Nuits St George and Beaune.

We follow tiny roads and tracks through vineyards, as we visit Domaine Fougery de Beauclair in Marsannay and in Gevrey-Chambertin for tastings. Following this we tour the wonderful Chateau at Clos de Vougeot. Originally built by the monks of the Abbaye de Citeaux, the Chateau has been restored to its former idiosyncratic glory. The main function room is the old wine cellar. They didn't excavate a cellar, but instead replicated the attributes of a cellar by building a vast low-ceilinged room with tiny windows and a roof of soil several feet thick. The Château also boasts a 'spectacular' 14th century pitched roof. The adjective is from Michelin, and a 15-minute slide show starts off with a cleverly illuminated display of the roof. It is spectacular! Our final destination tonight is Nuits St Georges.

DAY 6 Thursday Nuit St George to Ste Marie-la-Blanche 22 miles / 37 km

Today, as we explore the Côtes de Beaune, we tackle some more challenging cycling and visit the beautiful villages of Savigny-les-Beaune and Aloxe-Corton on our route to Beaune.

Yesterday we cycled through world-famous vineyards, producers of wines that frankly most of us will never buy. Today, we are still in the heart of wine country, but with a difference...Here, the wine makers can't command the sky-high prices of their more illustrious neighbours but still produce high-quality wines, both red from the pinot noir grape, and whites from the Chardonnay grape.

It is a relatively short cycling day, so we'll try to taste in both Aloxe and Savigny before we make our way to Beaune.

Beaune is dominated by the wine industry. The old town exists still behind its old wall, and the centre is filled with the premises of négociantes as well as the wonderful Athanæum shop, a serious threat to the wallet of any wine-lover, and featuring books and artifacts as well as its fine wine shop. The highlight, though, is the amazing Hospice de Hôtel de Dieu. Founded as a hospital for the poor, this beautiful 15th century building is now is a museum that shows how the Hospices cared for the sick from 1443 through the 19th Century.

We stay about 4 miles out of Beaune in Ste Marie-la-Blanche.

DAY 7 Friday Round trip from Ste Marie-la-Blanche 25 miles / 42 km

You don't even have to pack today, as we'll be returning to Ste Marie-la-Blanche tonight. There are a whole series of classic wine villages running south of Beaune toward Macon and the Beaujolais region. Once again we're on tiny roads winding through the vineyards as we visit Pommard, Volnay and Meursault, home to white wines hailed as the finest in the world.

From Meursault we cycle to the village of Puligny-Montrachet where we'll taste with Olivier-Lefalivè Freres before going to Chassagne-Montrachet and onto Cagny where we join the Canal du Centre on a tailor-made cycle path.

We'll then begin our return to Ste Marie-la-Blanche via tiny roads with the hills of the Côtes D'Or behind us.

DAY 8 Saturday Tour end

There is a reasonably civilised departure this morning to catch the 10.52 from Dijon to Gare de Lyon, Paris (arriving approx. 12.37) for onward connections to London and Paris airports.

GROUR TOUR DATES

July 10, 24
September 11

TOUR PRICE

€1335.00 euro per person sharing
€1585.00 euro for single occupancy

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- 7 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast
- 7 dinners
- Guide cycling with the group
- Luggage transferred locally
- 24 speed hybrid touring bike
- Transfer from Montbard to your hotel at the tour start
- Transfer back to Dijon at tour end.

Not included:

- Admission charges to the chateaux.

WHAT TO BRING

- Comfortable cycling clothing – padded cycling shorts and cycling gloves are invaluable.
- Hat, sunglasses, suntan lotion, swimwear.
- Casual clothes for evening. You may be grateful for something warm with long sleeves.
- Helmets, though not obligatory in France, are highly recommended. To be sure of comfort we suggest you bring your own helmet, however, in the event that you need a helmet, they are provided.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

It is up to you to make your way to and from the tour. To help you in your travel arrangements we will arrange a transfer to the start point.

You will be met in Montbard at 18.06 on Saturday by a tour representative and brought by minibus to your hotel. At the end of the week you will be brought back to Dijon Ville train station for the departure to London (via Lille) and Paris at 09.57. Both transfers are included in the tour price.

These are the only transfers that we arrange, so it is very important that you are on the right train.

Train Arrival and Departure Times from London/Paris. *Note: Check-in no later than 30 minutes before departure.*

From/To London:

Outward Journey	Departure London St Pancras Internacional	11:32	Change of train in Paris
	Arrival Montbard	18:06	
Inward Journey	Departure Dijon Ville	09:57	Change of train in Paris
	Arrival London St Pancras Internacional	14:34	

Transfers are from and to London using Eurostar and TGV trains, and also includes local transfers. Note, there is a change of trains in Lille Europe. Local transfers are from Montbard station to the first hotel, and from the last hotel to Dijon Ville station. Please note the arrival and departure stations are different.

From/To Paris Lyon Train Station

Outward Journey	Departure Paris Lyon	16:58
	Arrival Montbard	18:06
Inward Journey	Departure Dijon Ville	09:57
	Arrival Paris Lyon	11:37

Transfers are from and to Paris Lyon, and also includes local transfers. Local transfers are from Montbard station to the first hotel, and from the last hotel Dijon Ville station. Please note the arrival and departure stations are different. There are no direct trains from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport.

If you do miss the train, try and arrange to get on the next one. If you have to pay for another ticket you are responsible for the cost (depending on circumstances you may be covered by insurance). Call the owner of the first hotel, Mme COUPAT (0380 92 11 66 from within France, 00 33 380 92 11 66 from outside France) and give her your name and arrival details. The tour guide will help you arrange another transfer to the hotel (approx. €10.00, at your own expense).

You can of course make your own way to and from the tour. All details on trains in France are available through the website <http://www.raileurope.com/us/index.htm>.

BIKE / FITNESS

We use Trek 7300 FX Hybrid 24 speed touring bike with aluminum frame and Shimano gear system.

Level of difficulty: **1/2.
 Hilly at the beginning, a couple of difficult days, a couple of easy days.
 Average daily distance 30 miles
 Maximum daily distance 35 miles

- ***** Training camps / sport cyclists. 50 to 80 miles per day, hills an integral part.
- **** Distances and / or hills make this a challenging tour suitable for people who exercise regularly.
- *** Moderate level of fitness required. Distances are no more than 40 miles a day, but hilly terrain.
- ** Distances and terrain are slightly easier, suitable for people who are not strangers to exercise, but don't get out as often as they'd like!

GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK-UP SERVICE

The maximum group size on these tours is fifteen people and one, sometimes two guides. Each person has their own route details, as well as a guide who cycles with you, while your luggage is locally transferred each day. There is no “sag” wagon as such but we can arrange to collect the weary!!

GENERAL INFORMATION

Food and Drink

What if I have any special dietary requirements?

Vegetarians are catered for (please advise if you eat fish). Vegans choice will be limited but they can be accommodated.

Are beverages included with the meals?

No, all beverages are to your own account.

DON'T FORGET YOUR PASSPORT