

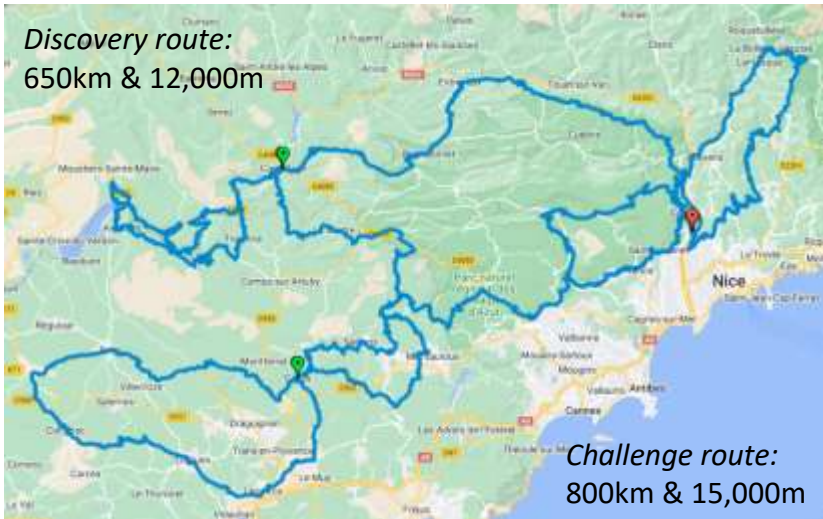


Cycle Provence

Back roads and beauty

7 day cycling tour with Alpine Cols
20-28 April & 7-15 September 2024

Provence and the Maritime Alps



A cycling trip you will never forget

There are few better places to cycle than in the *arrière-pays* (back country) between the French Riviera and the high mountains. Just a few kilometres from the overcrowded coast, the roads are quiet and the country unspoiled.

History seems to stand still in the numerous hilltop villages dotted around the area, where the local people still gather in the central square under the shade of plane trees to play boules and drink coffee (or pastis!) Many villages still have a traditional farmer's market, where people come to do their weekly shopping. The pace of life is slow and comfortable and the weather warm and sunny for most of the year.

The scenery is always impressive and often stunning, thanks to the limestone rock formations shaped by water over millions of years. The Gorges du Verdon, part of the UNESCO Geopark of Haute-Provence, have been a top tourist destination for over a century and are renowned the world over, as is the characteristic Provençal vegetation, the garrigue. Lavender, sage, rosemary and wild thyme thrive in the dry soils, while the trees are short and scrubby, mostly different varieties of evergreen oaks and juniper.

The back country has a very low population density and you can cycle for miles on excellent roads without seeing anyone. While not as mountainous as the heart of the Alps, there are plenty of serious climbs and delightful descents to enjoy. With 12,000m to climb in 7 days on the Discovery route, this is not easy cruising on the flat! Strong riders will find everything they want on the harder Challenge route, and we can add still more if desired.

Is this trip for you?

This not a trip for beginner cyclists, but **you do not need to be either fast or young**. Similar trips have been completed by many men and women in their sixties and even seventies.

You can choose each day whether to ride the **Discovery route**, which is typically ~95km and 1,700m, or the **Challenge route**, which is tougher at ~120km and 2,100m per day.

Small groups will form and you will be able to ride with people of a similar speed.

The main quality required is endurance and the ability to ride for 4 to 7 hours per day for 7 days. We will have our own masseur to help with recovery.

This is not a low budget trip. **We stay in the best available hotels (mostly 3*), eat excellent meals and provide a high level of service**. Our clients demand nothing less!

The rides are fully supported and at your own pace. **All our guides are qualified cycling coaches**. Their primary role is to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

You can of course **ask the coaches for tips and feedback on your cycling**, with suggestions for pacing, descending, nutrition and recovery. Equally, you are free to ride as you wish (so long as you do not endanger others).

The support vehicles are nearby if you need support, and you are welcome to jump aboard if you are too tired to complete the ride.

The trip is absolutely non-competitive. There will be plenty of time to take photographs or to stop for a coffee, if you so wish.



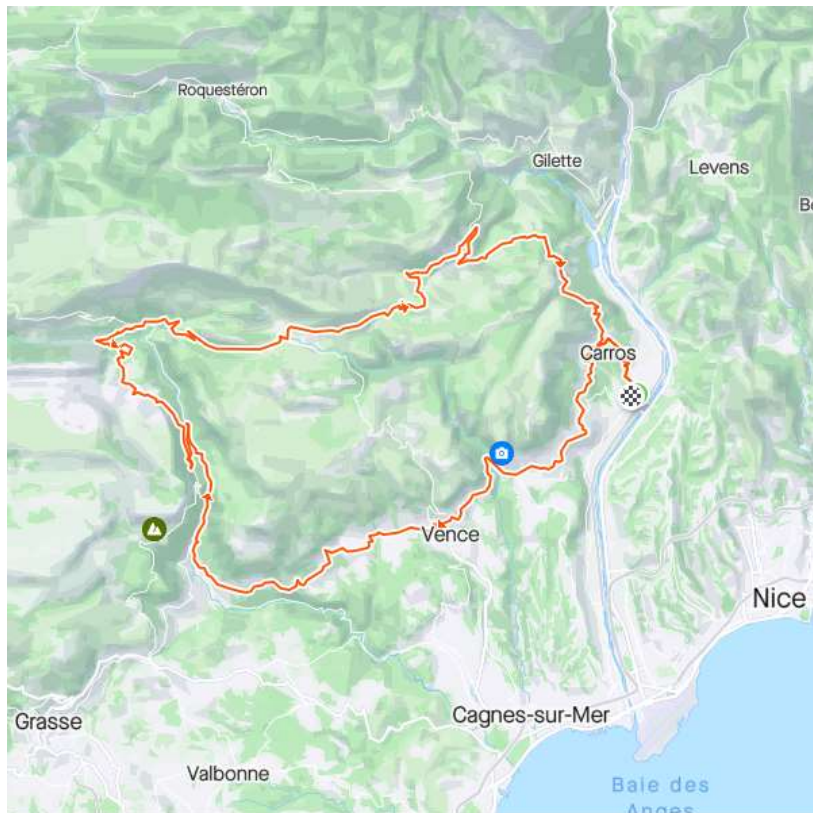


20-27 April and 7-15 September 2024

DAY	RIDE	DISCOVERY ROUTE		CHALLENGE ROUTE	
		KM	M+	KM	M+
Sat	<i>Arrival (nearest airport Nice, at 14km)</i>				
Sun	1. Loop from Carros	63	1,130	87	1,520
Mon	2. Carros to Castellane	106	2,280	127	2,950
Tues	3. Loop from Castellane	109	1,980	130	2,570
Wed	4. Castellane to Callas	84	1,400	100	1,670
Thu	5. Loop from Callas	90	1,380	123	1,730
Fri	6. Callas to Carros	108	1,740	123	2,095
Sat	7. Loop from Carros	102	1,970	119	2,500
Sun	<i>Depart (nearest airport Nice, at 14km)</i>	660	11,880	810	15,035

N.B. There are NO minibus transfers planned during your stay. However, the option to jump in the bus is always there if you are too tired, or if the weather turns bad. See next pages for details of each stage. Routes are subject to change depending on weather and road conditions.

Stage 1: Loop from Carros



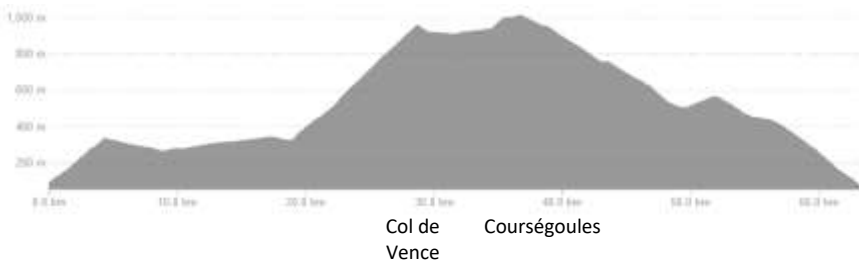
The week begins in Carros, just a short drive from Nice airport. Our first ride is a loop through the beautiful Provençal back country, and our first chance to see some of the famous hilltop villages. Carros itself is the first of these, soon followed by Gattières and Saint-Jeannet on the way to Vence.

The Discovery and Challenge routes diverge in Vence. The Discovery route heads directly north to the col de Vence (963m). This is a 9.7km climb at 6.6%, with ever more stunning views across the coastline below.

The Challenge route continues further to the south-west before turning north near Le Bar sur Loup and climbing the Vallée du Loup to Cipières (12km at 4.4%), enjoying a short descent and then climbing another 8km at 4.8% to re-join the Discovery route at Courségoules.

Courségoules is a great place to stop for coffee and photos before the 25km descent back to Carros.

Discovery route: 63km | 1,130m

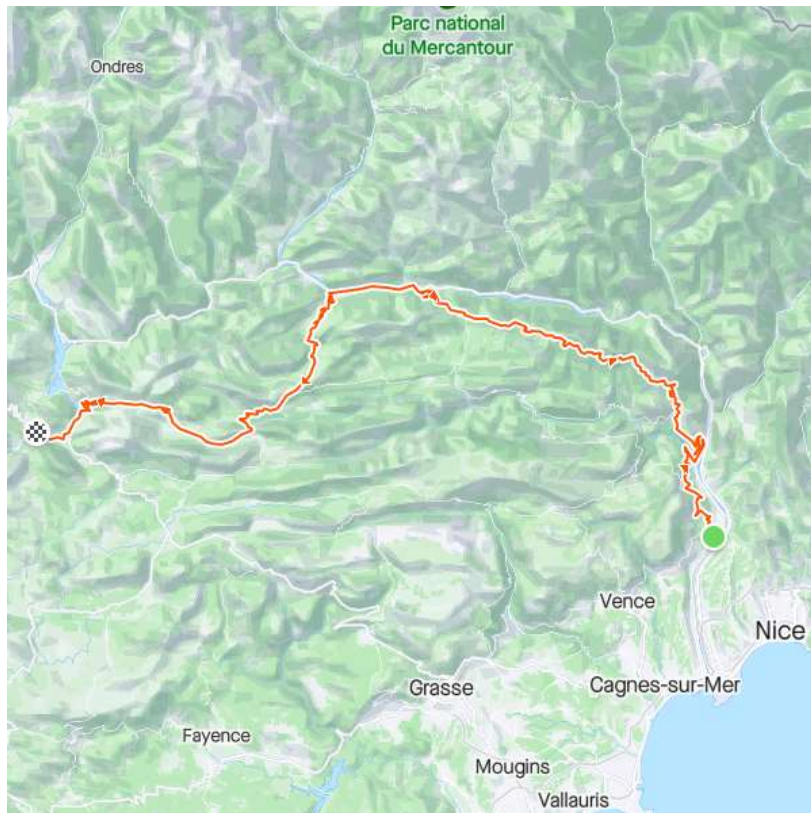


Challenge route: 87km | 1,520m

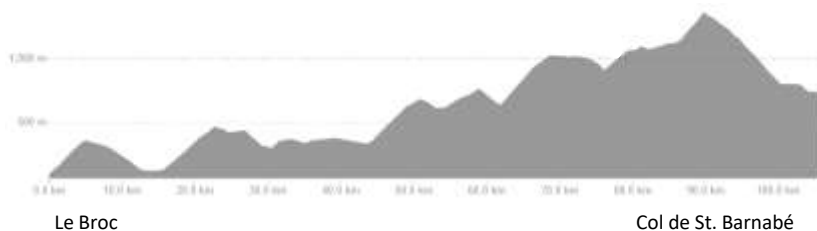




Stage 2: Carros to Castellane



Discovery route: 106km | 2,280m



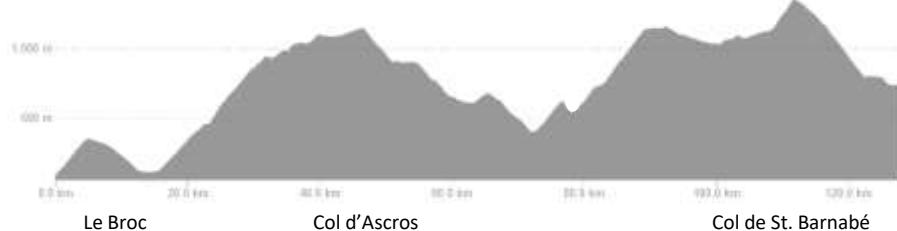
Stage 2 will see us cycle from Carros to Castellane, at the gates of the Gorges du Verdon. We begin with a short climb via the charming hilltop village of Le Broc, and then descend to the valley floor before climbing back up. The two routes are the same until km 20, at which point the Discovery riders will turn left to the hilltop village of Gilette, and then continue west on a popular cycling road through Roquestéron.

The Challenge route follows a delightful minor road climbing steadily along the flank of the mountain to the col d'Ascros. and has been used several times by the Haute Route.

The two routes come together again at km 47 or km 62, respectively, and actually ride in opposite directions for 6 km., then following parallel routes to the west before joining again at Saint-Auban (km 79 or 100)

The final 28km from St Auban to Castellane take us over the col de St Barnabé before descending to the lac de Chaudanne and on into the town.

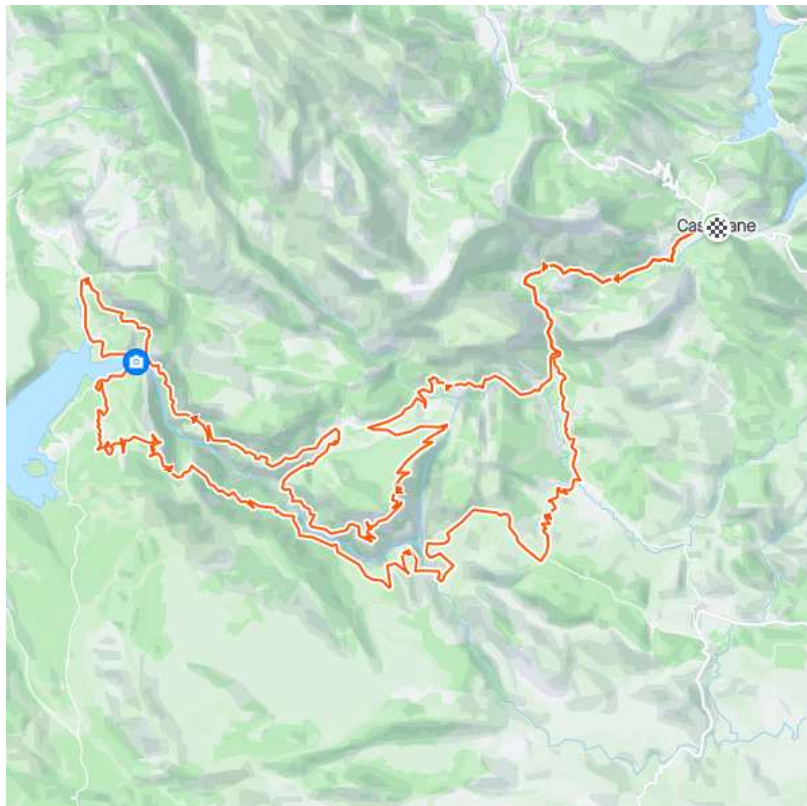
Challenge route: 127km | 2,950m





Gorges du Verdon
(Stage 3))

Stage 3: Gorges du Verdon (Loop from Castellane)



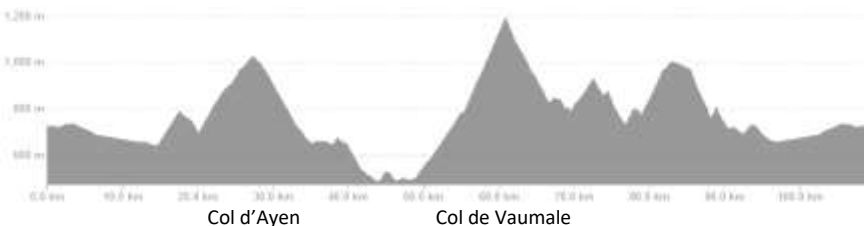
Stage 3 is a real treat for the eyes as we enjoy the astonishing scenery of the world-famous Gorges du Verdon. This is situated in the first of UNESCO's Geoparks and is France's answer to the Grand Canyon.

Starting and finishing in Castellane, we visit the Gorges from both sides. All along this route are quite exceptional views of the natural scenery. It is a magnificent spot and you will find yourself stopping every few metres to take pictures.

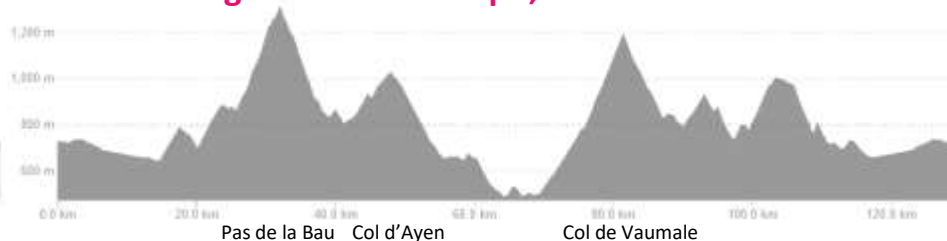
The difference between the Discovery and Challenge routes is the addition of the climb to the Pas de Bau, which adds 21km and 600m of climbing. The reward is – you probably guessed – the view, down hundreds of metres of sheer cliffs, with eagles and vultures floating on the wind currents far above the river.

At the end of the Gorges they open out with a magnificent vista across the lake. Enjoy it before turning back and starting the long climb to the col de Vaumale (12km, 5.8%), and seeing the Gorges from the other side!

Discovery route: 109km | 1,980m



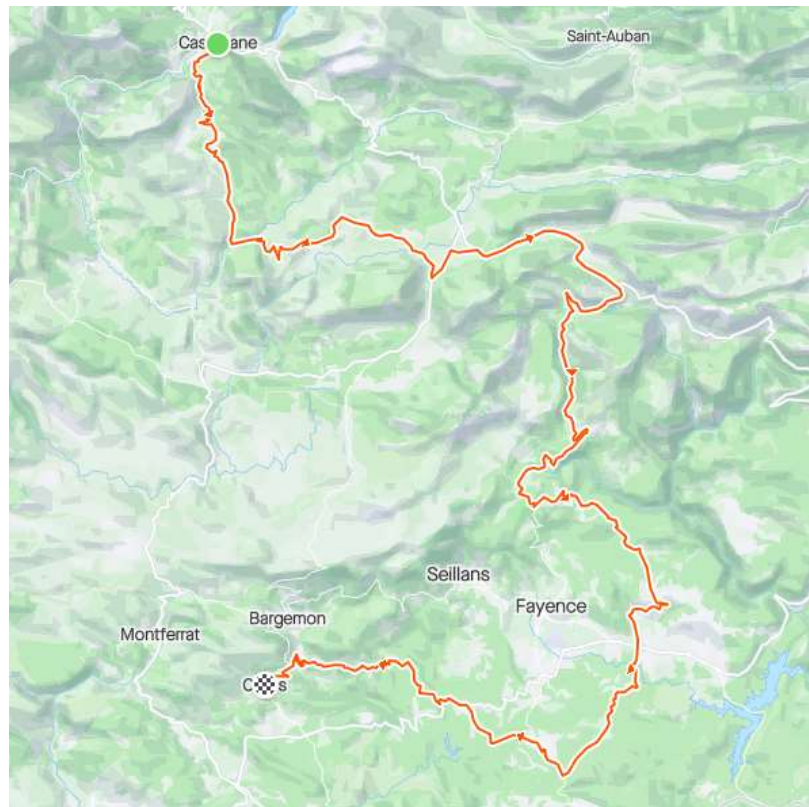
Challenge route: 130km | 2,570m





Gorges du Verdon
(Stage 3)

Stage 4: Castellane to Callas



After two tough stages it's time for an easier one! Not only are the climbs on stage 4 straightforward, we will descend far more than we climb.

We leave Castellane by a quiet, rural road to the south, and climb steadily for the first 5km at 6% though a limestone ravine. We continue on minor roads until km 30, where we join the Route Napoléon for 7km of gentle climb until the turn-off to Mons.

We are back in hilltop village territory, and Mons is the first of several. It's a great place to stop for a coffee.

A few kilometres later the two routes diverge. The Discovery route turns right and descends directly to the charming village of Seillans, while the Challenge route makes a loop to the east and passes by Callian, another scenic hilltop village.

The two routes meet up again for the last 15km to our destination in Callas.

Discovery route: 84km | 1,400m



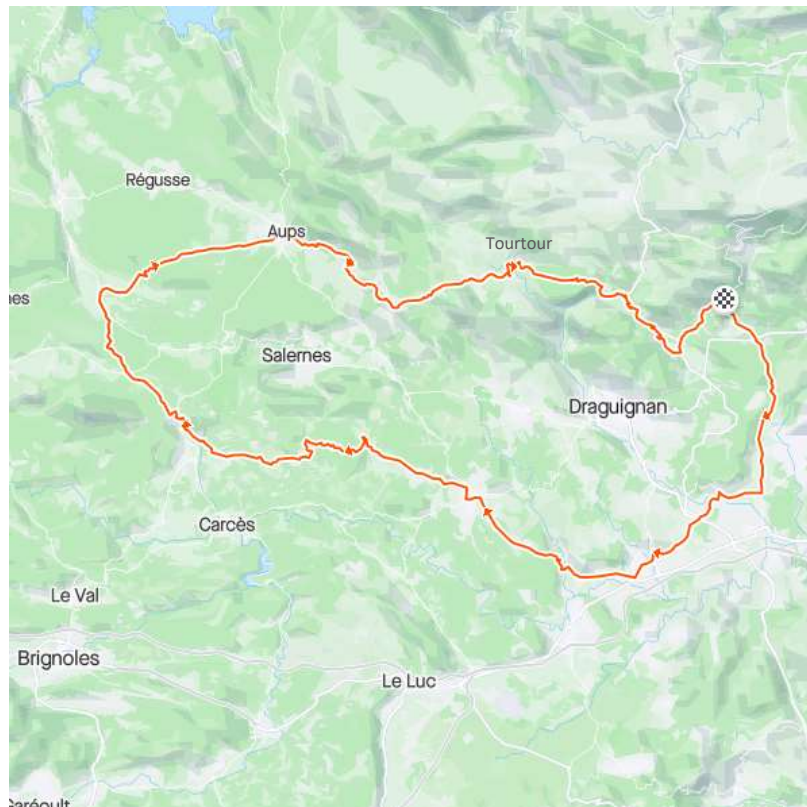
Challenge route: 100km | 1,670m





Callian
(Stage 4)

Stage 5: Loop from Callas



Stage 5 is a change of scenery from the deep gorges and steep escarpments we have seen so far. The countryside on this stage is rolling hills through the garrigue, the characteristic Provençal vegetation. The trees are short and scrubby, mostly different varieties of evergreen oaks and juniper. Lavender, sage, rosemary and wild thyme thrive in the dry limestone soils.

The area is not densely populated. We pass through the occasional village and vineyard, but for long stretches we are unlikely to see anyone else.

The longest climb is 8.5km at 4.6%, and brings us from the outskirts of Salernes to the charming hilltop village of Tourtour (km 61).

The Challenge route goes further to the west, remaining almost exclusively on the quietest back roads through vineyards and garrigue. None of the climbs are long, but there's not much that's completely flat!

Discovery route: 84km | 1,400m



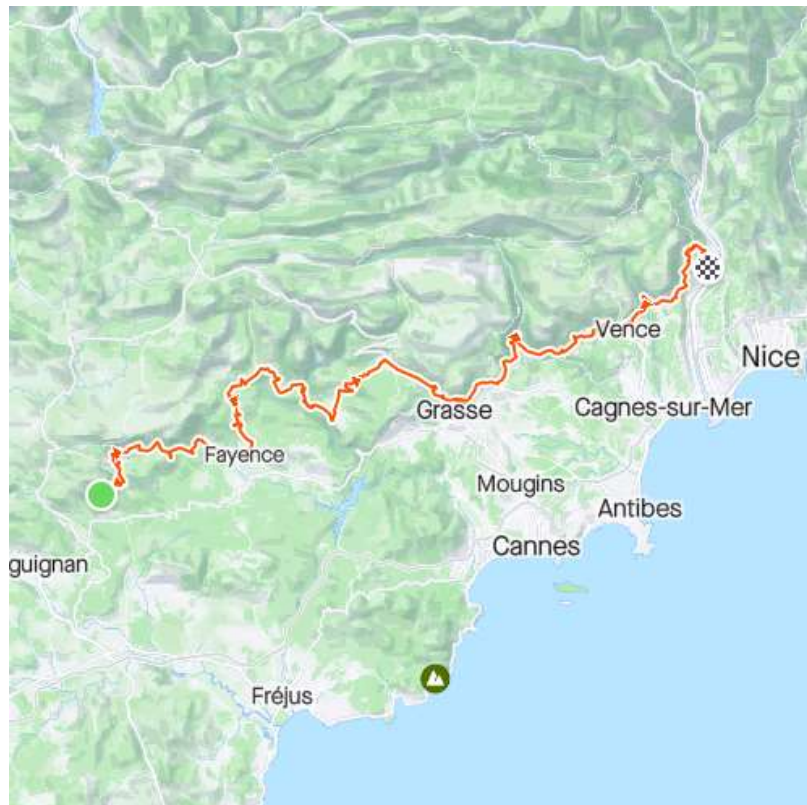
Challenge route: 123km | 1,730m





Mons
(Stage 6)

Stage 6: Callas to Carros

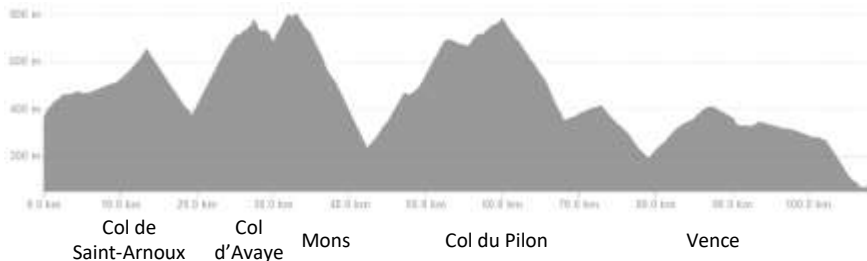


Stage 6 brings us back to our starting point, by a wonderfully scenic route through historic villages and with stunning views down to the distant coast. The two routes start slightly differently before coming together at Bargemon, and then separate at Seillans, the first of many of the best-known hilltop villages of Provence.

The Discovery route turns left in Seillans and climbs for 8km to the col d'Abaye (780m), then continues to Mons before descending 9km, climbing through Saint-Cézaire and on up to the col de la Lègue (692m) and the col du Pilon (783m). From here it's an easy descent to Grasse and along to Vence, passing through Tournettes-sur-Loup, Saint-Jeannet and Gattières, each one more charming than the last!

The Challenge route adds some additional climbs, initially via a different route to Bargemon, then by riding through Fayence on the way to Mons and finally at the finish via Carros itself.

Discovery route: 108km | 1,740m

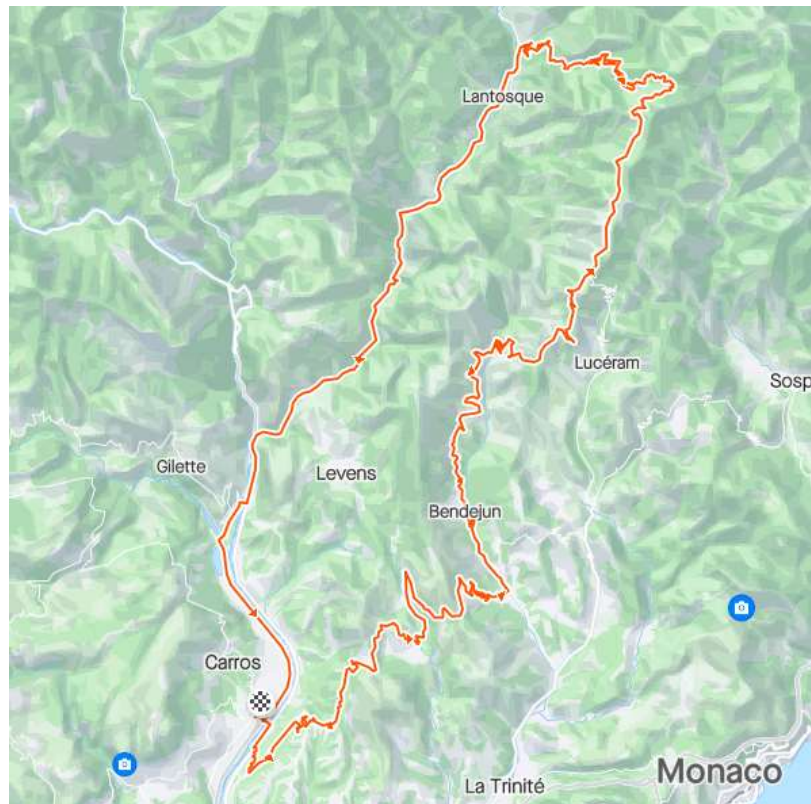


Challenge route: 123km | 2,100m





Stage 7: Col de Turini: loop from Carros



The col de Turini (1,607m) is arguably the most iconic col in the region, mostly due to its long association with the Monte Carlo rally. The spectacular series of hairpin bends will be familiar to many. The col has been used 4 times by the Tour de France, most recently in 2020.

It is quite a challenging ride from Carros, so we have only included it in the Challenge route (+17km, +530m). The Discovery route takes a shortcut, descending to Lantosque after the col de Porte, above Lucéram. The first and last part of the two routes are identical.

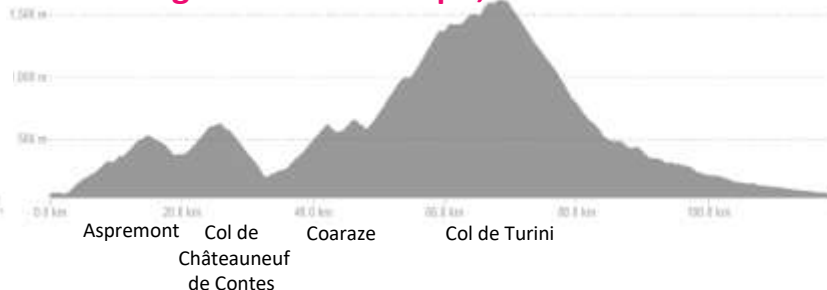
Starting from Carros, we cross the valley and climb immediately through a series of historic villages: Colomars, Aspremont, Tourette-Levens and Coaraze. Just before the col de Porte we separate and the Challenge riders climb another 15km and 640m to reach the col de Turini.

After a highly photogenic descent we reach Lantosque. From here it's an easy 33km of false flat descending to the finish.

Discovery route: 102km | 1,970m



Challenge route: 119km | 2,500m





Col de Turini
(Stage 7)



Services & Support

Daily briefing

- We provide a detailed briefing each evening, complete with a weather forecast, route profile and route conditions. During the rides we comment on local history, geology, the vegetation and the animal life.

Coaching

- Alpine Cols doesn't employ guides, only qualified cycling coaches. As such we are always available for coaching advice on any aspects of cycling performance.

Feed stations

- We provide two feed stations per day, the first mid-morning and the second early afternoon. The food is sourced locally, fresh and fully adapted to endurance cycling. Let us know if you have any special requirements or food allergies.

Support vehicle(s)

- If the group is at least seven persons, there will be two vehicles (otherwise just one). The vehicle(s) will transport your baggage between the hotels, set up the feed stations, deal with any mechanicals, and pick you up if you are too tired to continue.



PACKAGE PRICES

From **Sat April 20 to Sun April 28**

- Twin-share: **€3,175**
- Single supplement: **€400**

[BOOK
NOW](#)

From **Sat Sept. 7 to Sun Sept. 15**

- Twin-share: **€3,350**
- Single supplement: **€400**

[BOOK
NOW](#)

5% reduction for returning clients

10% reduction for a second trip in the same year

ADDITIONAL NIGHTS

Please contact us for your personal quote if you would like to stay additional nights in the region.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE

- Accommodation,
- Meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner, including drinks with the meals)
- On-the-bike guiding, and coaching if desired
- On-the-road support vehicle with free energy drinks and snacks. If there are seven persons or more, there will be two vehicles.
- Mechanical assistance
- Photographs taken during the week (digital copies)

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- Travel to/from Nice
- Airport transfers (15km)
- Bicycle hire: ask for help with this
- Minibar or drinks at the hotel bar
- Coffee or snacks during café stops
- Massages (optional extra)

Practical matters

Airport transfers

- The closest airport is Nice. Taxis are available to take you to and from the hotel, which is only 15km from the airport.

Weather

- The normal daytime maximum temperature in April is 18°C, whereas in September it is normally around 26°C. It is of course cooler at altitude.
- Rain is possible in either month but more likely in April.
- Bring cycling clothes appropriate for both wet and dry conditions and for temperatures between 0° and 30°C.

Shops, currency and language

- We have chosen the hotels carefully for their quality, their character and their location. There are always local cafés, pastry shops and supermarkets close by.
- The currency in France is the Euro. Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted or can be used to withdraw Euros from a bank machine.
- English is reasonably well understood, but not by everybody!

Staying over

- It would be a pity to arrive at the last minute and leave at the first opportunity: there is so much to see and do in this beautiful part of the world! If you would like to extend your trip, please let us know and we will suggest some options.



Suggested Kit List

ITEM	CHECK
Bike (unless hiring)	
Spare tyres & inner tubes (2 each)	
Spare brake pads	
Spare derailleur hanger	
Any special tools or spare parts	
Lights (front and back)	
Charger for electronic gears	
Heart rate chest strap	
Cycling computer & charger	
Mobile phone & charger, adaptor	
Cycling helmet	
Water bottles (2)	
Base layer short sleeve	
Base layer long sleeve	
Cycling jerseys short sleeve	
Cycling jerseys long sleeve	
Cycling shorts	
Cycling tights $\frac{3}{4}$ or long	

ITEM	CHECK
Cycling socks	
Cycling cap or balaclava	
Cycling gloves (summer)	
Cycling gloves (long, waterproof)	
Cycling gloves (long, cold weather)	
Arm warmers and leg warmers	
Warm waterproof jacket	
Lightweight rain jacket	
Windproof jacket	
Cycling sun glasses	
Cycling shoes (with spare cleats)	
Waterproof overshoes	
Chamois cream	
Sun cream	
Personal pharmacy	
Insurance	
Medical certificate	
Day bag (for the van)	

Additional kit recommendations

Day bag

Your day bag should contain anything you might need during the day's ride but don't want to carry from the start. Bear in mind that the van may NOT be close to you later in the day when you need it, so you need to think ahead and be able to carry what you need on your bike. Autonomy is less risky than dependence!

- Overshoes
- Arm & leg warmers
- Gloves (at least two: waterproof and thermal)
- Neck warmer and riding cap/thermal bonnet
- Jackets & gilets: at least three: thermal, waterproof, lightweight.
- Spare parts: cleats, tyre, inner tubes, brake pads
- Bike lights, front & back (required for tunnels)
- Sunscreen and chamois cream.

The key to riding in the high mountains in variable weather is layering. Several options of light, compact layers are much better than one heavy jacket.

Personal pharmacy

- Magnesium (may help with recovery)
- Multi-vitamins (may help with recovery)
- Skin-wound dressings (vital for dressing minor cuts, burns or road-rash; hydrocolloid are best)
- Anti-inflammatory pills (may help with soft-tissue injuries)
- Any other tried-and-tested personal items

Tips before travel

Preparing your bike

- Make sure you have appropriate gears. We recommend a **compact chainset (50/34)** and a **cassette suitable for steep climbs** (such as **11/32** or better).
- The bike should have new puncture-resistant tyres. Many of the roads have a rough, granular surface and sharp flints are common, especially if it has rained recently. We recommend at least 27mm tyres, better still 30-35mm. You can run these at lower pressure for increased comfort.
- Please get your bike serviced by a qualified mechanic. Tell the mechanic that you will be riding 700 km or so through the mountains so the bike needs a thorough check, including the bottom bracket, the head tube and the wheels as well as the obvious brakes, gears, cables & chain.
- Ride the bike for at least 50km after the service to make sure any stretch in the cables or other kinks are ironed out.

Travelling with your bike

- If you are new to travelling with your bike, give yourself plenty of time to pack it, preferably the day before travel.
- Follow the instructions of the bike box manufacturer carefully.
- Remember to reduce the pressure in your tyres and leave the CO2 cylinders at home.
- Include any special tools required to re-assemble your bike.
- If you need help setting up your bike on arrival we will be happy to assist.

Insurance

Accident & illness

Please note that you must have insurance in place in order to cover the cost of assistance and repatriation in the event of accident or illness. The insurance must provide specific cover for cycling and should cover the following risks:

- medical expenses,
- personal accident,
- personal liability,
- emergency rescue,
- repatriation if you become too ill to travel,
- cancellation or curtailment of your holiday,
- travel delay,
- loss or delay to your baggage,
- loss or theft of personal effects and legal expenses.

If you are based in the UK, we suggest you contact one of the specialist cycling insurance firms.

Cancellation

You should also take out cancellation insurance to cover the cost of your cycling holiday should you be forced to cancel for any reason. Cancellation charges will be applied on the following scale:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| – More than 8 weeks prior to your holiday start date: | Deposit only |
| – 4-8 Weeks prior to your holiday start date: | 50% of the total amount invoiced |
| – Less than 4 weeks prior to your holiday start date: | 100% of the total amount invoiced |



On the road between
Fayence and Mons



Contact us with your questions!
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