

# *St Malo to Nice...*



*... two weeks across some of France's best countryside!*

**ST MALO TO NICE** is one of our most popular rides across France, and with a lower daily mileage than our ten day route you have 16 days' riding to savour all the delights of our rural route. As always, we use the quietest roads possible and there are hardly any busy roads to contend with—getting into Nice is as busy as it gets, and that is mostly cycle path. For the remainder of the ride white lines down the middle of the road are the exception not the rule!

With the Massif Central, Tarn, Ardèche and Verdon gorges there is plenty of truly spectacular scenery and we are confident that this is a holiday you will remember fondly for a long time to come—and not forgetting the option to tackle Mont Ventoux if you wish!

As always our route is tried and tested and constantly revised and improved so that we can be sure that you are riding the best roads with the best views. Our hotels are all friendly and characterful, meaning you get a real taste of the real France!

## ***At a glance.....***

- 16 days' riding
- 946 miles (1,513km)
- 19,969m ascent
- Daily distances from 30 to 78 miles (48 to 125 km)
  - Mont Ventoux option
- 17 nights in comfortable family run hotels
  - 14 dinners
  - Rest day half way
- 3 dinners not included
- 5 picnic lunches included
- Snacks, drinks and cakes along the way
- UK bike return option
- Fully supported

**YOU WILL SEE** during your journey to the south of France: tranquil lakes; pretty villages; mountain peaks; lots of rivers (we picnic beside some); lots of chateaux; just a few vineyards; spectacular gorges; ancient oak forests; and finally, two weeks after you turned your wheels away from the English Channel, the thin blue line of the Med will come into view. *Chapeau!*\*



**Day 1:** Leaving the walled town of St Malo you will follow the rocky Breton coastline to Cancale, a pretty fishing port. Leaving here, the route takes you around the Bay of Mont St Michel to one of the most famous places in France. A shorter day, but it would be wrong not to explore the famous abbey at Mont St Michel. We stay just beyond in a comfortable hotel with excellent restaurant. (51 miles).

**Day 2:** Striking inland you will say goodbye to the sea for the next two weeks. This western area of Normandy has some pretty villages and is full of history. Passing through historic Fougères, we continue to another fortress town, Vitre, with a fantastic turreted chateau; your hotel is beneath the walls and there are plenty of *creperies* and restaurants amongst the cobbled streets. (48 miles).

**Day 3:** In mileage terms a longer day but the terrain is not arduous and everyone always makes good time and gets into a good rhythm on this day; you will make good time to Angers with ample opportunity to wander around this lovely city. The second half is all following a river and the first crosses very gently undulating farmland. (70 miles).

**Day 4:** From Angers you will head south to cross the Loire. This is always considered the first landmark of a north to south tour and south of here the weather is said to be better (although in July you should be fine north of here too!). Following the river east a lovely easy route passes through ancient villages to Saumur, the 'pearl of the Loire' and thence through its famous vineyards. Passing Chinon with its majestic fortress you will then head south again to Richelieu, a pretty town built by the cardinal of the same name. (70 miles).

\**Chapeau*. n. (Fr.) Hat. *Chapeau!* (colloq.) Well done! I take my hat off to you!





**Day 5:** Today you will really start to feel like you are exploring rural France as the route heads into the delightful Creuse region. A stop for lunch by a ruined chateau is our recommendation, in one of France's '*Plus Beaux Villages*'. We continue to a well-preserved market town for the night where our hotel is more simple but clean and near the historic abbey with its

UNESCO murals. (55 miles).

**Day 6:** A more undulating day but none of the climbs are especially steep - as is usual in France, the gradients allow for gaining height without undue work. The route is beautiful as you pass through villages clinging to the gorge-side, ruined hilltop castles and some lovely small towns. We stay in a small village with a very well run hotel with a great restaurant - and a lovely outside terrace and swimming pool! (70 miles).

**Day 7:** As well as some climbs there are some great descents, one 5 miles long! This is rural France at its best and some stunning views will open up before you on the way to our lakeside hotel. Enjoy a glass of wine with the view over the lake. (51 miles).

**Day 8:** In our opinion the hardest day of the ride and an early start is recommended to see the early morning stillness of the first section; it is incredibly beautiful, along a very quiet road beside a lake. We enjoy coffee at the watershed where the rivers now flow south to the Garonne rather than north to the Loire. You are now approaching the Massif Central and the tendency is up, although the gradients are gentle. With sensible pacing the miles will pass. This is a part of France that not many people know and our riders love it. Salers is a beautiful town high in the plateau and as you approach you will see the high peaks in the distance, laid out before you. (78 miles).

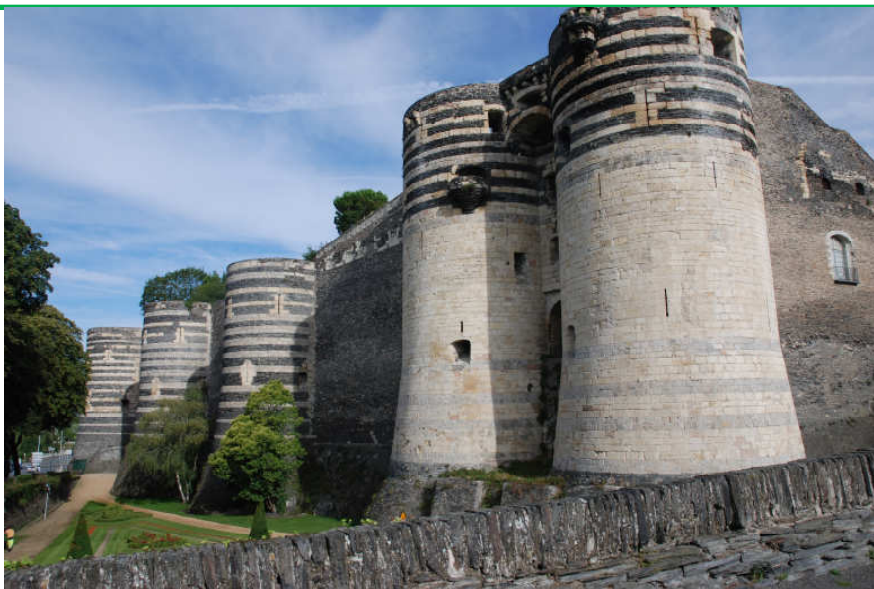
**Day 9:** The main event today is the ascent of the Puy Mary, a proper mountain climb. The views at the top are simply spectacular and there is a very good mountain restaurant for an early lunch. Then, enjoy the descent! Another small climb leads to Murat, and another one out of the town, before you cross a plateau leading to St Flour with its dramatic cathedral

dominating the town. (48 miles)

**Day 10:** Rest day in St Flour.

**Day 11:** South of St Flour are several climbs of several kilometres but once again sensible pacing will win the day. You will pass a ruined castle beside a lake, cross a huge dam and then, after our suggested

lunch stop, ride along my favourite road in France beside a babbling brook; looking back you can see the high peaks disappearing behind you. Approaching Marvejols there is a fantastic descent which goes on and on and on before a stiff hill and the descent into Mende for the night in our historic hotel by the ramparts. (63 miles).



**Day 12:** Some really amazing scenery awaits as we ride along quiet roads in the lovely Auvergne. There are some long climbs but they gradients once more make them a very achievable ride and you will not be crawling along in bottom gear; added to which is a simply wonderful 15 mile descent where a pedal hardly needs to be turned! Our hotel is next to one of the most famous landmarks in France, the limestone arch crossing the Ardèche river at the entrance to the Ardèche Gorge. (74 miles).

**Day 13:** A spectacular ride takes you through the Ardèche Gorge with its 14 viewing platforms from which to marvel at this natural wonder. Don't forget your camera today! Crossing the river Rhone we are now in Provence and our hotel is a real charmer in an historic Roman town with a wonderful terrace on which to enjoy a sundowner after a swim in the pool, with

breathtaking views over the countryside. (59 miles).



**Day 14:** If you like a challenge this is the day you will have been waiting for! The day will be dominated by Mont Ventoux, which you can either opt to climb or to skirt round. Whichever you choose you will see



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spectacular scenery. Vineyards, olive groves, lavender fields and Roman remains are all abundant in this region. Sault is a small town on the far side of Mont Ventoux. (30 miles without the Ventoux, 60 miles with).

**Day 15:** Some lovely riding along quiet roads with remote hilltop villages. You pass through busier Manosque and then one last climb to finally descend into Greoux, a bustling small town with lots of great places to eat and watch the world go by. (48 miles).

**Day 16:** The first section gains height ever so gradually before you enter the Gorges de Verdon: one of the undisputed highlights of the ride. Europe's answer to the Grand Canyon is amazing and you will see cobalt blue lakes and the river far below. The Gorge climbs for the first half and descends for the second to your overnight stop in pretty Castellane with its church perched high up on a rock above the village square. (48 miles).

**Day 17:** There are easier and harder section on today's ride but you will find the kilometres pass quickly as you approach your destination. The first section along the old 'Route Napoleon' is a climb to warm up, and then a pretty section across the plateau before passing the lovely town of Greolieres, and a final descent along the Col de Vence to the western end of the famous Promenade des Anglais on the seafront, and journey's end! (62 miles).

## BIKES & EQUIPMENT

This tour is one on which to bring your best bike. We recommend road or touring bicycles, although we have had people complete the ride very happily on mountain bikes with road tyres ('slicks'). All bikes are secure at night. You won't need panniers or bar bags as you will frequently see



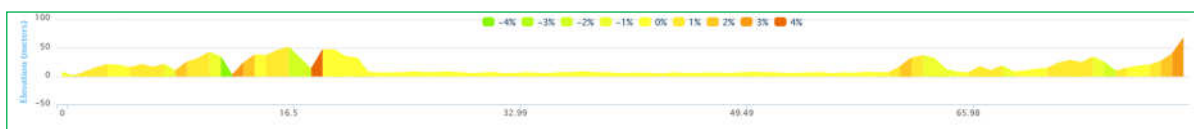
the vans. Garmins / GPS are highly recommended and gpx files are provided. We will also send you a printed route book if you prefer more traditional methods of navigation.

We send you out a kit list in advance of your holiday so you know what to pack.

## Elevation Charts

1

51 miles  
389m



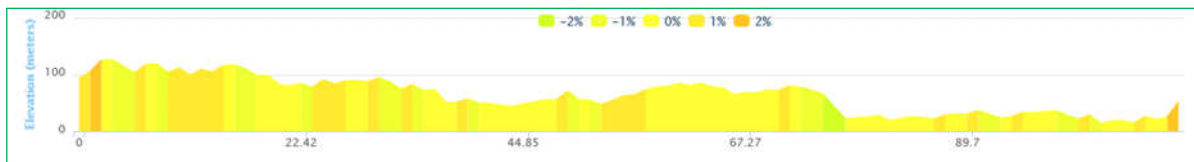
2

48 miles  
862m



3

70 miles  
649m



4

70 miles  
826m



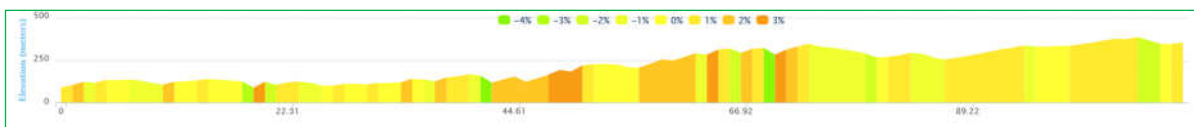
5

55 miles  
816m



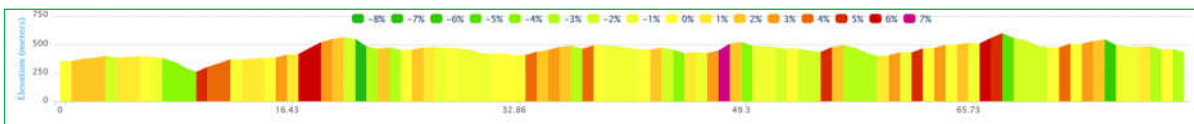
6

70 miles  
1,246m



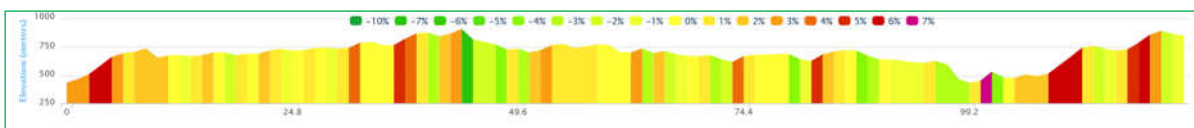
7

51 miles  
1,316m



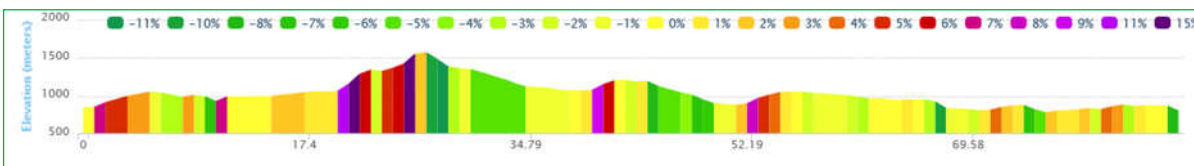
8

78 miles  
2,171m



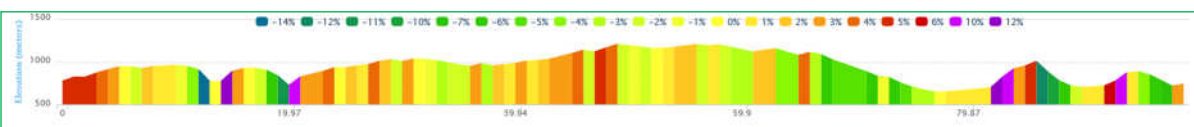
9

48 miles  
1,539m



10

63 miles  
2,003m



*For general identification only. Actual route may vary. Note different scales for each day. Distances on graphs are km.*

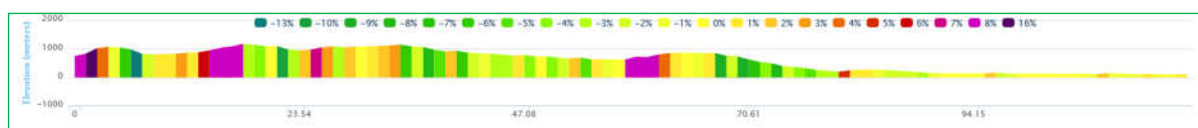
*Starting elevation 0m. Finishing elevation 0m. Average overall gradient therefore 0% !*

## Elevation Charts

**11**

74 miles

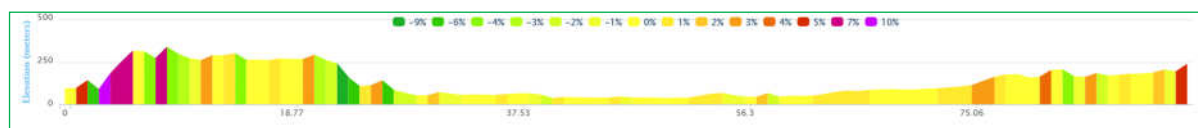
1,559m



**12**

59 miles

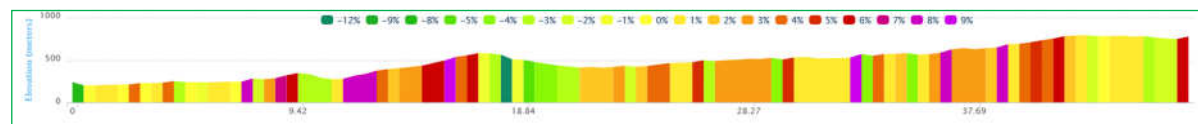
1,090m



**13(a)**

29 miles

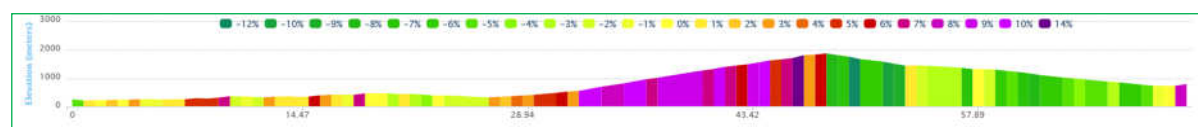
1,024m



**13 (b)**

45 miles

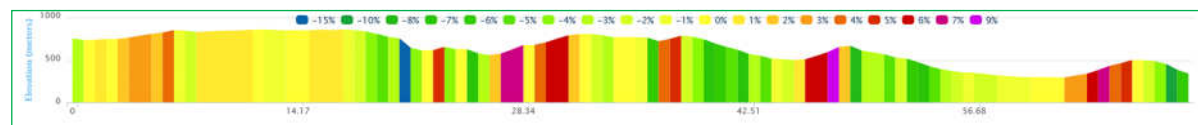
2,083m



**14**

48 miles

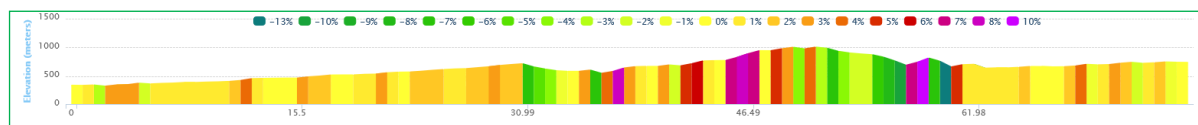
1,155m



**15**

48 miles

1,116m



**16**

77 miles

1,808m



**13 (a) - option without Mont Ventoux**

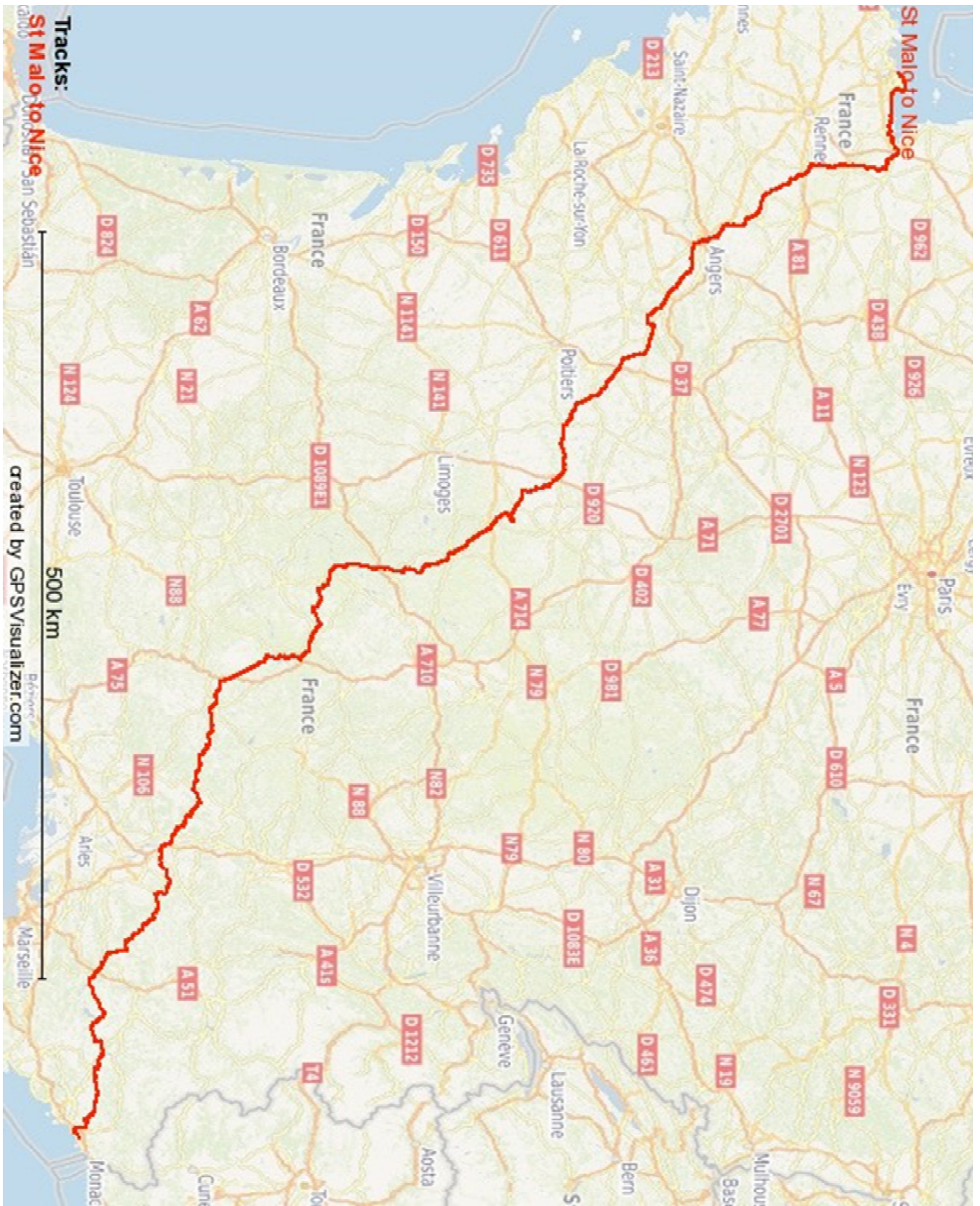
**13 (b) - option with Mont Ventoux**

*Barely a day goes past that I don't have memories of our trip to Nice with you and we enjoyed it so much that I am very tempted to repeat the same journey next year!*

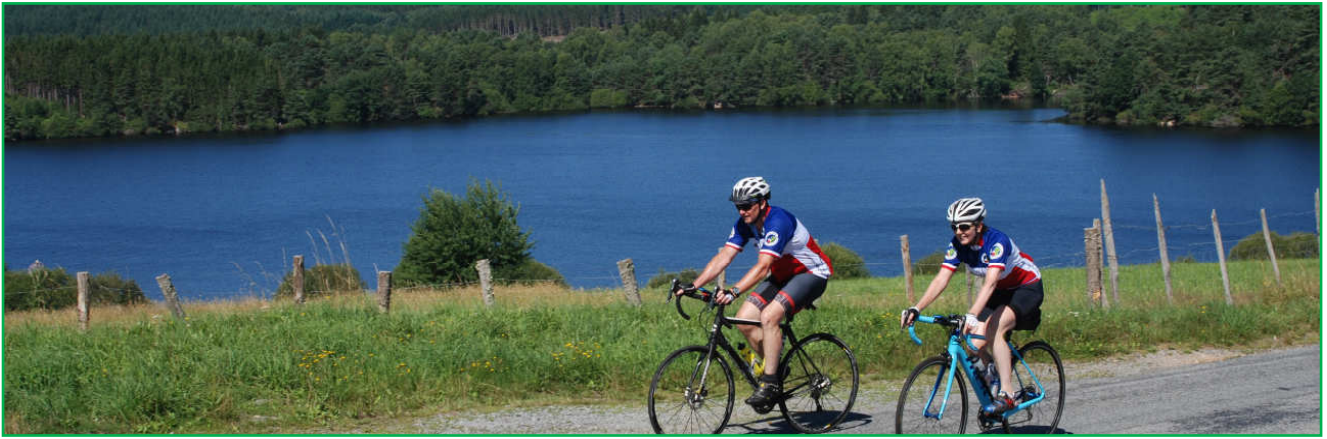
For general identification only. Actual route may vary. Note different scales for each day—e.g. days 5 and 6 are not as flat as they look! Distances on graphs are km.

Starting elevation 0m. Finishing elevation 0m. Average overall gradient therefore 0% !









## TRAVEL TO THE TOUR

Travel to and from the start and end of the tour is not included in our prices due to the vast range of places our riders come from. For many of our riders it's perfectly possible to do this trip without flying. Our bike return service (£50) takes the hassle out of getting back to London and is timed to allow plenty of time for onward connections to the rest of the UK. Many people decide to come over a day early and explore St Malo and it is certainly worth it if you have never been before.

**Ferry:** The easiest way to St Malo is via the ferry from Portsmouth (Brittany Ferries). This is an overnight service departing at c.8 pm, arriving c.8 am the next day. You can travel as a foot passenger with your bike without needing to take a car. We can give you a discount code for the ferry, which arrives about half a mile from the start point of the ride. We will come and pick up your bags from the port.

**Train:** St Malo is on the TGV line so is easily accessible from Paris. You will need to book your bike onto the train if it is fully assembled. We can advise and assist in this.

**Air:** The nearest airport is Dinard which RyanAir serves from Stansted. Other local airports within striking distance include Rennes and Nantes. Paris Charles de Gaulle airport is about 3 hours away by train, with one change. We can collect you from Dinard.

## TRAVEL HOME

**Air:** Nice is a large international airport serving a great many UK and European destinations. We can transport your bike box south but we do need AT LEAST 4 WEEKS notice.

**Train:** From Nice you can easily take the TGV home; it's a great journey up through the Rhone valley past Mont Ventoux and then through Burgundy to Lille. For London it's best to avoid Paris and change in Lyon and Lille. Fares

and timetables are released 3 months before travel and if you then, the fare from Nice to London starts at about £80 (less for over 60s). You will



need a bike bag to travel on this train as they do not take assembled bikes and you should carefully check the size of any bike box you will be using to verify it complies. Alternatively use our bike return service and finish your holiday in a relaxed state!

**BIKE RETURN SERVICE:** For 2020/21 we are continuing to offer our popular bike return service to St Pancras for £50 per bike. Your bike will be ready and waiting for the arrival of the 8am departure from Nice, which gets to London at about 4pm (exact time subject to 2018 timetables but it won't vary much). This will allow you to enjoy a stress free return to the UK on the train. If at all possible we will also take your main suitcase *subject to space in the van on the day*, £20 per item. Sometimes we can deliver to other places on our route home so just ask (the price will vary for this, typically £60 per bikes).

**TERRAIN:** This is a challenging ride and you should do as much preparation as possible. The daily distances are all achievable but you should realise that 16 days on a bike will cause most people to have a day or two when they feel tired. You get a real feel for France and the geography of the country and we pass through some simply stunning countryside with plenty of old villages, castles, lakes and mountains.

*Thanks for taking us on a fantastic trip from St Malo....It was a real cycling challenge, right up there with LEJOG. We passed through places I never dreamt of visiting on quiet roads, saw some amazing scenery and made new friends.*

The key to success on this ride is patience, and riding at your own pace. To get the most out of this ride you will enjoy the variety of terrain on offer. If you have never done a trip like this you will find some days harder than others – and not always the ones you expect to! On other days you will find your legs and enjoy blissful riding along some of the quietest and most beautiful roads you are ever likely to ride along. It's the closest you will become to riding like the pros—even in the Tour de France they don't do 16 days in a row!





## SUPPORT VEHICLES

**T**WO VANS operate on this trip to cater for all speeds of rider and are there to provide everything you need to make your trip easier, so that all you have to do is pedal. We provide a coffee stop in the morning and snacks throughout the day but you will see us far more frequently than that as we sit by the side of the road to see you all through a tricky junction or to dispense suntan lotion.

Everyone loves our homemade cake (you have to eat it all, because we get in trouble if we take any back at the end of the trip) and we also have a range of spares on board. You can leave a daybag in the van with waterproofs, gels, your iPad or whatever you may need to get at throughout the day—you will see us every hour on average and we are always only a phone call away. Various referred to by riders as 'the mothership', the 'kebab van' and 'ride HQ', our vans are all this and more (OK, no kebabs, but the Fortnum & Mason hamper does contain a lot of other goodies!).

## GROUP RIDING v SOLO RIDING

**YOU DO NOT NEED TO RIDE AS A GROUP** as our support vehicles will cater for everyone's speed. You will usually find someone else who rides at a pace that you are comfortable with, even if you did not know them before the holiday began. If you find yourself riding in a large group and are not familiar with group riding, ask us, or other riders, to explain about warning signals and how to pass information about hazards on the road between yourselves.

If you are a slower rider you can still complete the daily route at your own pace, although on longer days you may want to set off a little earlier – we always advise completing 60% of the daily distance by lunch time. It is important to ride at your pace, not someone else's.

Our group sizes vary from 4 up to 12. Sometimes we go to 14, but we are keen to keep the personal service that our returning customers love. On our feedback form a lot of people have told us that we should stress the benefits of small groups—so we have!

*'Of 6 companies that we have used for this format of holiday you are far and away the best.'*

## HOTELS

We use small family-run hotels wherever possible where a generous breakfast is offered. All have en suite facilities. The average rating is 3-star. Final confirmation of actual hotels is decided in January / February each year. If you have any dietary requirements please let us know in advance.





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## MEALS & DRINKS

Breakfast is included in the cost of your holiday as well as a drink each evening with the meal (glass of beer, wine or soft drink). Pre-dinner drinks, extra drinks with the meal and coffee afterwards are not included and you should pay for these yourself at the time.

Dinner is usually included and on the majority of nights there is a choice, although occasionally it is a set menu. On three nights dinner is not included and you are free to make your own choice.

For lunch, we will tell you where you will find places to eat / buy food. On several days on this tour we provide a picnic lunch (included in the cost of the holiday) where facilities are scarce due to the rural nature of our route.

## DATES & AVAILABILITY 2020/2021

Please check our website for our latest dates and availability.

We depart St Malo at approximately 9.30am on 'Day 1' and arrive in Nice on 'Day 17' afternoon (usually about 3—4pm). Riders depart on 'Day 18' although it would be possible to catch a evening flight on 'Day 17' if required.

## BESPOKE DATES

If you can rustle up a group of 8 or more we can put on a bespoke date just for your group.

## ABOUT US

**WE ARE A SPECIALIST FAMILY RUN COMPANY** and we care deeply that you have a good time. It's more than likely that one of the business owners will be leading your trip. This isn't just a livelihood for us, it's a vocation, so we'll do whatever we can to look after you and make sure you have fun! We're mad keen cyclists and want to pass on the joys of riding in France. This means is that if you want to ring us at 9pm on a Sunday with some questions, please do. If we can't come to the phone we will get back to you surprisingly quickly. You'll probably be speaking to the person who planned the route and has actually ridden it, or chose the hotels. If you have any questions at all, or wish to book, please call us on +44 (0)1300 350555 or email [info@greenjerseycycling.co.uk](mailto:info@greenjerseycycling.co.uk).

**TO BOOK:** <https://www.greenjerseycycling.co.uk/bookings.php>

Green Jersey French Cycling Tours, March 2020.

