

St Malo to Sète...



... the classic French End-to-End cycle ride

S*T MALO TO SÈTE* is the 'Grande Dame' of French cycle tours, taking you from the rocky coastline of Brittany to a Mediterranean bathed in sunshine.

This is a route for purists who want to ride quiet roads through stunning countryside. It is testing, and even the most regular of riders feel a sense of achievement on arrival. But despite the challenges facing you it is hugely rewarding as we take you to regions of France that you may never know existed.

Our ride follows an almost straight line down through France and the route is the result of weeks of painstaking research. We don't like white lines down the middle of the road and you won't see much traffic—the busiest parts are getting out of St Malo and into Sète.

If you want to just ride your bike for 10 days, marvel at some great scenery and enjoy some fine French food and wine, this is the trip for you!

At a glance.....

- 10 days' riding
- 702 miles (1,123km)
- 15,161m ascent
- Daily distances from 47 to 85 miles (76 to 136 km)
- 10 nights in comfortable 3*** family run hotels
- 9 dinners
- 1 night dinner not included
- 3 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, ten days after you turned your wheels away from the English Channel, the thin blue line of the Med will come into view. *Chapeau!**



THIS CLASSIC FRENCH END-TO-END is often regarded as the equivalent of Land's End - John O'Groats. A challenging ride with long days in the saddle and a fair quota of hills make this a tour for regular cyclists who will appreciate roads that are much quieter and better surfaced than those back home (those interested in a gentler French traverse should consider our Calais to Nice route over two weeks). From St Malo, the first couple of days across undulating countryside ease the legs into the tougher hills to come further south. After seeing Mont St Michel in the distance across the bay you turn your back on the sea - the next time you see it will be in ten days' time at journey's end! The first night is spent in the magnificent mediaeval town of Vitré, before heading south to Angers on day two.

Early the next morning, the first major milestone can be ticked off as you cross the mighty Loire river, then enjoy a lovely ride with frequent glimpses of the river to Saumur, with its famous chateau, and Chinon, before turning south across rolling country to the perfect

town of Richelieu, designed by Louis XIV's chancellor and Cardinal of the same name. No really big hills so far, but they are getting longer and a little more frequent!



Lunch in the square

Day 4 takes us south into the lovely Gartempe and Creuse region, with unspoilt river valleys and picture-postcard villages with cafés in the square under shady trees. You then follow the river Creuse all the way to Le Blanc, before striking out again through a patchwork of fields and an-

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

cient forests. Arriving in Argenton on evening four you will start to notice the limestone outcrops, and ahead of you in the distance the first signs of the Massif Central. After a good night's rest a hilly day awaits as you ride south to the halfway hotel in unspoilt Peyrat or Aubusson.

From here, you can get into a nice rhythm and soon you will be into the uplands of the Cantal, where little has

changed for centuries, except it would seem the road surfaces which are mostly billiard table smooth on the road to Riom-es-Montagnes. You may have guessed from the name that this is now hill country, right on the edge of the Auvergne national park.

Day 7 has the big hill - the Puy Mary (or Pas de Peyrol) rising to 1688m and a long climb. There's an excellent mountain restaurant at the top and the views are quite spectacular (see photo on page 1). Look back after the twelve mile descent and you can see the top far in the distance. Next is the Col d'Entremont - nothing too hard - and the descent into Murat, a climb out again and an evening stop in historic St. Flour which owes its prosperity to its location on the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela.



One of our family run hotels



Mediaeval Vitré

The next day starts with a lovely ride to the Chateau d'Alleuze with early morning mist rising off the lake it sits next to, then on to Fournels and a super road alongside a babbling brook. Crossing the motorway, looking down at the frustrated motorists, there's a fast and seemingly never-ending descent down into Marvejols where we spend the night. Day nine is a harder one, but the scenery makes up for the effort as you get into the country of the Tarn Gorges, where there

are longer climbs interspersed with long flatter sections. The scenery here is as dramatic as it is unforgettable.

The last day has a few climbs but nothing tortuous, and finally you look up and see the Mediterranean in the distance. A very emotional moment! A great descent into wine country once more, and then across the coastal strip to

the lighthouse in Sète. Enjoy a celebratory dinner on the harbour side near our centrally located hotel and reminisce with new friends about your fantastic achievement!



Celebrating arrival in Sète

‘The most enjoyable cycling holiday I’ve been on in 15 years - quiet but well-maintained roads, beautiful and occasionally stunning scenery, overnight stops in hotels and towns with character, and even bags carried up to rooms.’

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.

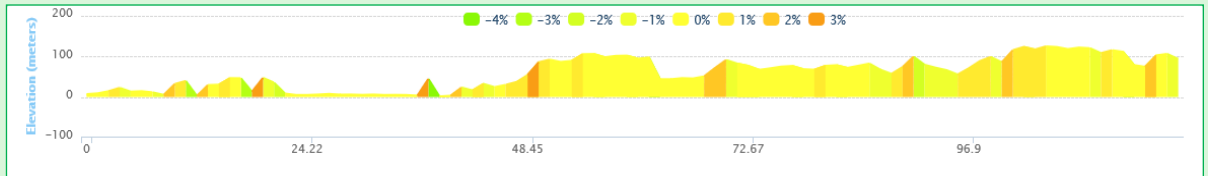
We send you out a kit list in advance of your holiday so you know what to pack.



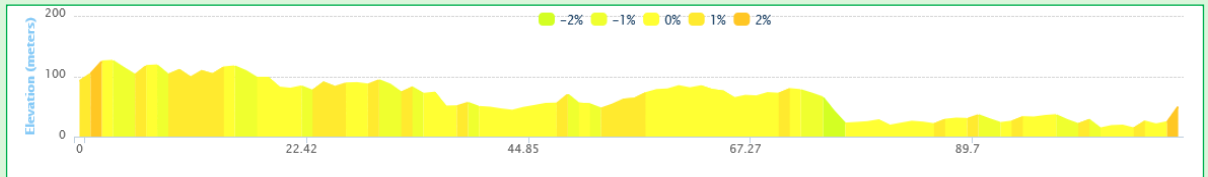
Summitting the Puy Mary

Elevation Charts

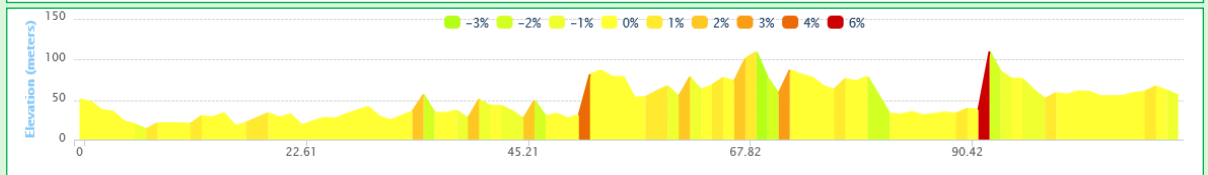
1
75 miles
1,222m



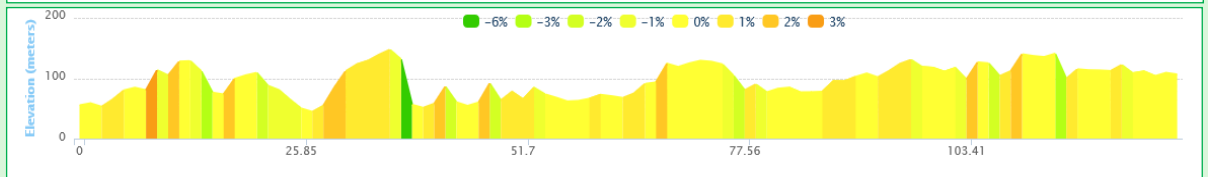
2
70 miles
918m



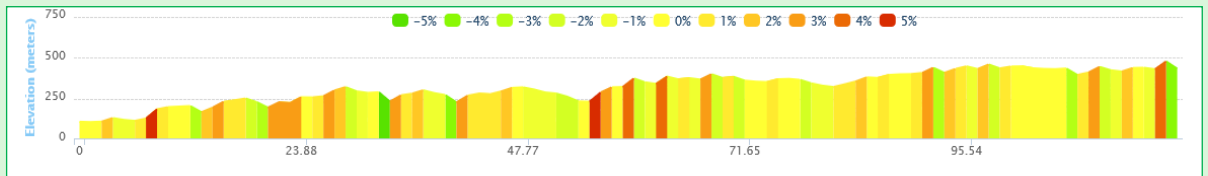
3
70 miles
808m



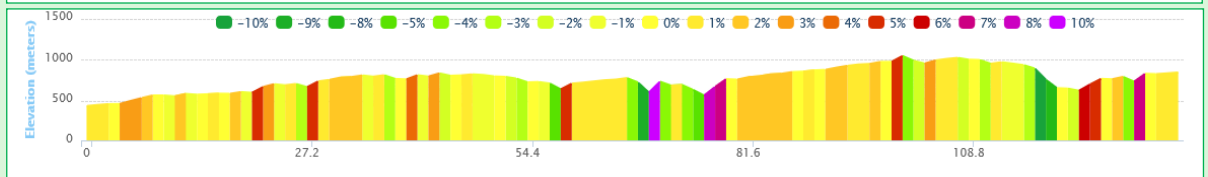
4
80 miles
1,366m



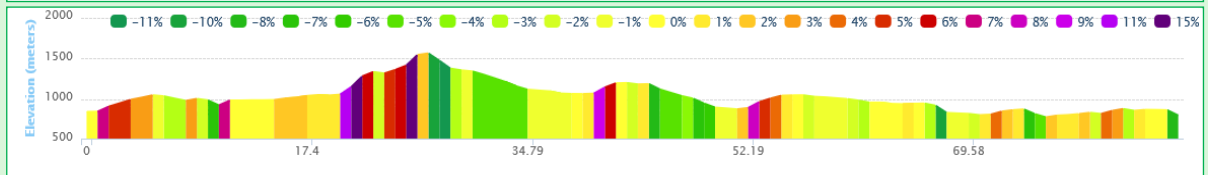
5
83 miles
2,313m



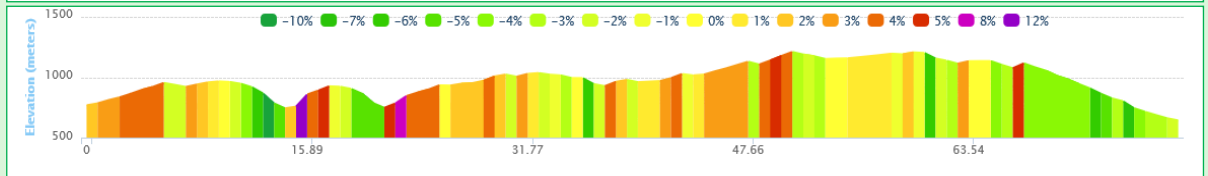
6
83 miles
2,514m



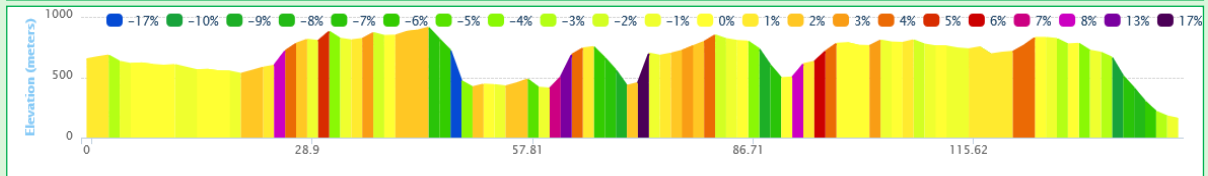
7
49 miles
1,478m



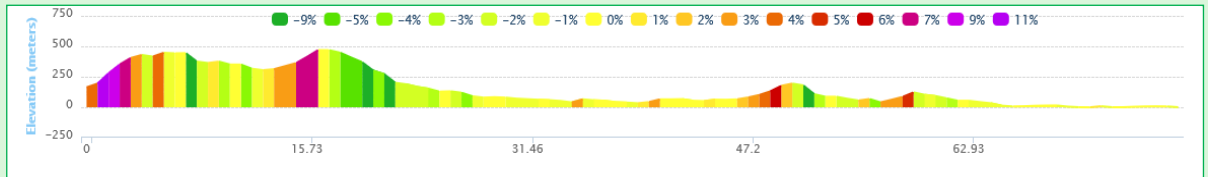
8
54 miles
1,509m



9
88 miles
2,071m



10
50 miles
962m



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 per bike / £80 per tandem) 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.

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.

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.

TRAVEL HOME

Air: The nearest airport is Montpellier which is half an hour from Sète. Perpignan, Beziers or Marseille, are also within 2 hours by train, offering a greater choice of destinations. We can transport your bike box south but we do need AT LEAST 4 WEEKS notice.

Train: From Sète 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. There are some direct trains from Sète to Lille, otherwise change in Montpellier or Lyon Part Dieu. Fares and

timetables are released 3 months before travel and if you then, the fare from Sète 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 2018 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 Sète, 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.*



Arrival in Sète. You will notice our riders' dress sense has improved on the way south!

TERRAIN: This is a challenging ride and you should do as much preparation as possible. It is a straight line route – that is to say, it does not skirt round hills but goes over them. This way 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. The first three days are pretty innocuous but after that the hills come with increasing regularity. Days 7 and 8 are intentionally shorter to allow you some recovery time.

Thanks for taking us on a fantastic trip from St Malo to Sète. 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. All in all, it was an excellent 10 days cycling!

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 10 days in a row!

NAVIGATION

WE PROVIDE a printed route card with turn by turn instructions. We also provide .gpx and .tcx files, and if you do not already use a Garmin / GPS, we cannot recommend enough purchasing one in advance of the holiday and familiarising yourself with it. They really do make life so much easier and your trip that much more enjoyable.

SUPPORT VEHICLES



TWO 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

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.

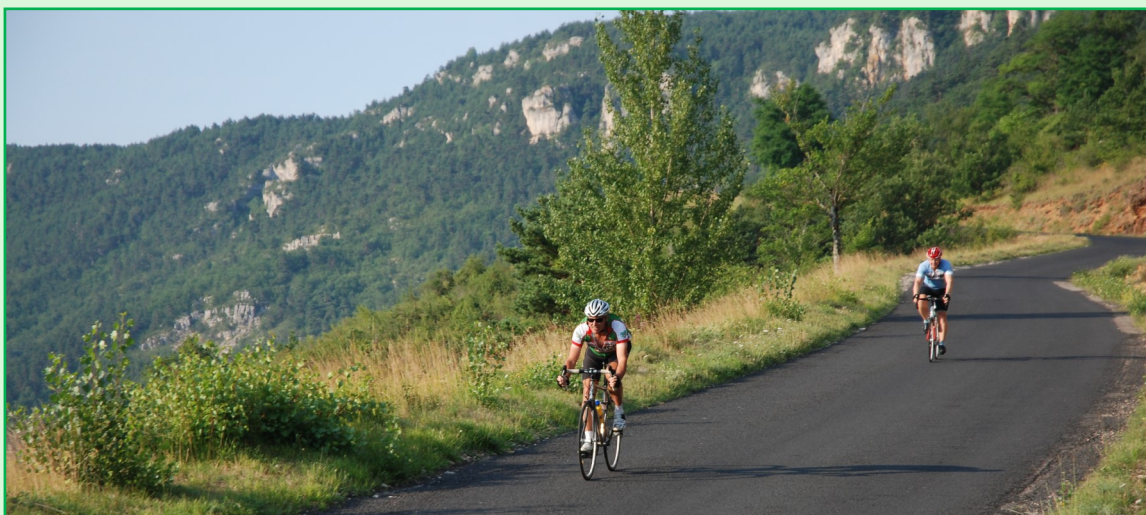
If you are a slower rider you can still complete the route at your own pace, although on longer days you may want to set off a little earlier – we always advise completing 60% of the daily distance by lunch time. It is important to ride at your pace, not someone else's.

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.'

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.



Descending into the Tarn Gorge

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. Accommodation is on a half board basis. If a hotel does not have a restaurant for dinner then we eat out (cost included in tour). We arrange tables together for the evening meals although you are of course free to come and go as you please. If you have any dietary requirements please let us know in advance. On two nights (your guides' nights off) dinner is not included and you are free to make your own choice.

MEALS & DRINKS

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

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 AND PRICES 2019

Please see our website.

We depart St Malo at approximately 9.30am on the Saturday morning and arrive in Sète on the Monday afternoon (usually about 3—4pm). Riders depart on the Tuesday.

BESPOKE DATES

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

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

Green Jersey French Cycling Tours, October 2018.

