

# French Alps Classic Cols



The Tour de France is the most iconic race in cycling. Join us for the trip of a lifetime, tackling some of the Tour's Classic Cols, while exploring some of France's most spectacular scenery.

We begin in Annecy, finding our climbing legs with an ascent of the Col de Semnoz, before dropping down to the valley for a lap of the beautiful lake. Two shorter climbs on Day 2, the Col de la Forclaz de Montmin and Col de Tamié, continue to warm us up for what is to come: an ascent of the Col de la Madeleine on Day 3. This iconic climb, is a serious test for any rider, but the beautiful woodland, cascading waterfalls, stone bridges and finally the spectacular summit is well worth the effort. Day 4 sees us following conquer the Col du Glandon and the Col de la Croix de Fer, which both featured in the Tour de France as early as 1947. The fourth highest summit of all of the climbs the TdF has ever visited, the Col du Galibier at 2642m awaits on Day 5, after we have made our way over the Col du Télégraphe. We end a superb week with the mighty iconic Alpe d'Huez.

Covering a total of 254 miles this exciting and challenging tour provides a rewarding experience in the high mountains of the Alps with superb scenery. Your bags will be transported for you each day and we will be having some fantastic lunches along with our famous 'brew stops' twice a day providing you with everything you need to keep you going - you certainly won't go hungry!

## Highlights

- Enjoy the challenge of some of the most challenging and iconic climbs in cycling history
- Stunning Alpine scenery, villages and towns
- Enjoy Annecy, famed for its lake and medieval town

## What's included?

7 nights' accommodation, 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches

Refreshment stops with our famous red brew vans

Mechanical support including spare bikes and equipment

GPS files and route notes

Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers

2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group

Pick up from Geneva airport / station on arrival day (Saturday) and transfer to Geneva airport at the end of the tour (Saturday).

Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate

Lots of fun!



# Itinerary

## Saturday: Non-riding day

Arrival day – welcome to the tour!

## Sunday: Day 1 Semnoz and Lake Annecy

Distance: 37 / 46 miles or 50 / 72 km  
Elevation: 4524 / 5302ft or 1378 / 1616m  
5302ft

Our first ride is a loop which takes you up to the summit of Mount Semnoz which last featured on the penultimate day of the 2013 Tour de France and on a clear day you may be able to make out to Mont Blanc in the distance.

Continuing down to the lake for lunch you can take the shorter route back to Annecy or our longer route around the eastern side of the lake.

Nestled on the banks of Lake Annecy, with a backdrop of spectacular mountains, Annecy also boasts a perfectly preserved medieval old town which makes a fantastic place to explore after a day of riding.

## Monday: Day 2 Annecy to La Léchère

Distance: 49 miles / 78 km  
Elevation: 5100ft / 1554m

Travelling alongside the eastern shore of the lake we then climb up over the Col de la Forclaz de Montmin, featured in the 2023 Tour de France.

If you choose to, you can miss the climb and continue along the lake to meet back up with the route before the Col de Tamié and the descent down to Albertville.

A very gentle climb takes you to La Léchère to be in place to start the climb up the Madeleine tomorrow.

## Tuesday: Day 3 La Léchère to St Jean du Maurienne

Distance: 37 miles / 60 km  
Elevation: 7191ft / 2191m

Not long after leaving La Léchère and the valley floor, we start to ascend one of the toughest climbs of the tour, the Col de la Madeleine. With over 1500m of climbing over 16 miles, the Madeleine is a serious test for any rider.

The beauty of the climb through forested woodland, cascading waterfalls, stone bridges and finally the spectacular summit is well worth the effort and amazing sense of achievement when you reach the top.

You will also be rewarded with a fantastic descent down to the lovely town of St Jean du Maurienne. You also have the option of riding the Lacets de Montvernier if you want to extend the ride further.

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## Wednesday: Day 4 Glandon and Croix de Fer Loop

Distance: 39 miles / 62 km  
Elevation: 7600ft / 2300m

Today we tackle another two of the Tour de France's most classic climbs with the Col du Glandon and the Croix de Fer. Essentially the Col du Glandon is the beast to conquer with the Croix de Fer only another few miles or so to the summit after the Glandon.

This spectacular climb has featured in the TdF many times as far back as 1947.

Once again the views are sublime and you have another winding descent back down to the valley below.



# Itinerary

## Thursday: Day 5 St Jean du Maurienne to Le Grave via Col du Galibier

Distance: 42 miles / 68 km  
Elevation: 2350m / 7700ft

This is our longest day in the saddle as we tackle the mighty Galibier.

After a flat start we first tackle the Col du Télégraphe through Alpine woodland. The road descends to Valloire before you tackle the mighty Galibier.

After lunch at the top of the mountain you have a fantastic descent down to the attractive little village of La Grave, situated in the most spectacular setting.

## Friday: Day 6 Alpe d'Huez

Distance: 36 miles / 59 km  
Elevation: 6700 ft / 1980 m

We leave La Grave and continue towards Bourg-d'Oisans cycling past the turquoise blue Lac du Chambon. Just away from Bourg, we start our climb up the Alpe d'Huez, which must be one of the TDF's most iconic mountains. After your triumphant climb at the top, you will descend back down to Bourg-d'Oisans where you will have lunch and a chance to wonder around this lovely town before your final meal at the hotel.

*"Great scenery, mainly great weather, hard cycling and the feeling of exhilaration when you reach the top of a famous climb. All of this accompanied by the usual Peak Tours package of excellent guides, organisation and the informal but professional approach which makes the tour a great experience for everyone." Graham*



# Tour Logistics

## The start of the tour

The tour starts in Annecy on the first Saturday. There are two main options for arriving into Annecy:

**Train:** Annecy can be reached from Paris directly, in just under 4hrs. Paris direct from London St Pancras takes between 2hrs – 3hrs 20 mins on the Eurostar.

Alternatively, you could get the train to Geneva airport from Paris (3hrs 35 mins with one change) and get the transfer from Geneva to Annecy with the people who have arrived by plane. Paris direct from London St Pancras takes between 2hrs – 3hrs 20 mins on the Eurostar.

Some customers choose to arrive in Annecy a day before the tour starts and have a day to explore and enjoy the various different activities on offer (lots of watersports at the lake!). This can be a great way to extend your holiday at either end to combine tourism with your cycling.

**Plane:** Geneva airport can be reached from lots of different UK airports.

Whether you arrive at Geneva Airport by train or by plane, we will have a guide to meet you and a coach is booked for 17.00, Geneva to Annecy takes around 45 minutes.

If you are arriving earlier then you can leave your bags with our guides if you want to have a look around Geneva (you would need to get from the airport to the city) before the coach arrives at 17:00.

If you arrive after this, then you will need to arrange your own transfer from the airport to the accommodation. There is a taxi rank directly outside the airport if you need to use this option.

We have a group meal at 19:30 on Saturday night and then the cycling starts on Sunday.

## The end of the tour

The tour ends on Friday where we will stay for the final celebratory meal. The following morning, a coach will arrive early and take us to Geneva and you will then be dropped at either the airport or the train station around 11.00 for your onward travel.

If you are flying with your bike then you will need to box your bike or put it in a bike bag before you board the plane. Please see FAQ for further information or call us in the office should you have any questions.

We can take your bike back to our HQ in Glosop for you to collect at a later date.

If you choose the 'return transport' option then your bikes will be packed & couriered back to your address for you.

## Support

Usually each tour has 3 guides:

- One driving the 'brew van' – each day will usually have a morning and afternoon 'brew stop,' with a table full of snacks and drinks. You will also bring a small bag/rucksack to the morning brief and leave this in the 'brew van' which can be accessed throughout the day.
- One driving the 'luggage / lunch van' – transporting your luggage from hotel to hotel, as well as setting up your lunches
- One riding at the back of the group – you will have detailed route notes so that you can go slower or faster than the leader if you prefer or you can cycle with the tour guide at the back so that you don't have to navigate at all
- Mechanical support: we carry a range of spare parts so that repairs can be made en route and we also have spare bikes available in the event that your bike has a serious breakdown. If we can't fix your bike then we will get it to the nearest bike shop
- Each guide will be contactable by phone during the day so if you have any issues you can get straight in touch with them
- For smaller groups you might only have one guide that cycles with the group and one back up driver or for groups of 12 or less just one tour leader will provide back-up for you.

## What's Included?

- 7 nights accommodation, 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches
- Refreshments from the brew van
- Mechanical support including spare bikes should these be needed
- GPS files and route notes
- Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers
- 2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group
- Pick up from airport / station on arrival day (Saturday) and transfer to the airport at the end of the tour
- A Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate
- Luggage transfer each day
- Lots of fun!

## Food

### Breakfast

Breakfast is included in the cost of the tour, and will vary slightly between the various hotels and B&Bs that we use, but you can usually expect have a choice of some cooked breakfast options, as well as toast, cereals, fruit juices, tea, coffee etc.

### Lunch

Lunches will be provided each day and will generally be at a local restaurant.

### Evening meals

Evening meals can be bought at your accommodation or in a nearby restaurant. On the first and final evenings of the tour we will have a group meal at the hotel.

### Dietary requirements

Please let us know of any dietary requirements you have and we will ensure that all lunch stops and places we eat evening meals are informed.

There will also be snacks on the 'brew van' to suit any and all dietary needs!

## Accommodation

You have a choice sharing a double or a twin room. If you would like your own space then you can choose the single room option, or sole occupancy of a double. Most of the rooms are en suite however there maybe a few nights where your room isn't en suite (Sole occupancy of a double room is guaranteed en suite). Generally on this tour we stay in hotels or smaller bed and breakfasts.

## What's not included?

- Evening meals / dinner
- Drinks at lunchtime
- Insurance
- Cycle hire (available for a fee)
- Garmin hire (available for a fee)
- Transport to the start and from at the end of the tour for you and your bike (available for a fee)

## Kit list

Clothing for all weathers is recommended so waterproofs are essential.

A full recommended kit list is provided and we are always happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can see details of a kit list [here](#).

Luggage is restricted to a maximum of 18kg per person—we have to look after our guides and their backs as they will be carrying your luggage in and out of the hotels!

## Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out adequate insurance for your tour which, as an absolute minimum should cover accident & medical expenses if you are travelling outside the UK, cover for your bike and belongings and cancellation cover in the event that you have to cancel your tour for unforeseen circumstances.

You should be aware that if you have an accident or fall ill while on the tour you will lose the money paid for the trip. A travel insurance policy would allow you to reclaim most of the money as well as providing insurance in case you lose your bags or if your bike is stolen, broken etc.

Your policy should also cover cancellation costs if you cancel the tour within 8 weeks of departure. If this happens we will try to fill your space and return your funds to you but if we are unable to fill your place you will lose the funds paid for the tour.

We have partnered with Yellow Jersey who provide Travel and Cycle insurance for UK residents. You can find further details [here](#).

# Am I fit enough?

## Difficulty

The French Alps Classic Cols tour is suitable for someone with a good level of fitness and who wants a notable challenge.

Generally you can cycle 45-50 miles each day with options to add more if you wish to explore the region further.

This tour is classed as a grade 8 tour. See details of difficulty rating [here](#).

Most people on the tour will be active cyclists, and cycling the above distances on consecutive days together with the climbing will not be too challenging for them.

## How fast do I need to be?

Generally, most cyclists completing this tour will be capable of cycling at 10 miles / 16-19 kmph over the whole day, keeping in mind that there is a considerable amount of climbing, and you will be stopping for breaks and lunches.

This tour really isn't about mileage but about conquering some truly majestic and iconic mountains.

Most days start at 8:30 / 9:00 and with mileages not being too long, generally there should be time for relaxation in the afternoon.

## Are there any hills on the tour?

The tour has an average of 2000 m climbing each day with the Classic Cols mentioned in the itinerary. It should be noted that these are long tough climbs and the tour is only suitable for those who are used to climbing.

## Training

The fitter you are and the more training that you do beforehand will add to the enjoyment of your tour and improve your chances of succeeding the challenge.

If you need any advice about fitness please contact us and we will be happy to discuss any questions and concerns that you may have.

We have a training document which has a suggested training programme, which you can access [here](#).

## Bikes

The French Alps tour can be completed by people on all types of bikes: it is important you ride on a bike on which you are most comfortable. Most people choose to ride on road bike for this tour.

You can transport your bike in the following ways:

- bringing your own - most people using this option will arrive by train.
- we can transport your bike for you if you can get your bike to us in Glossop in the Peak District.
- We can meet you en route to collect your bike at a convenient service station, on the Thursday before the tour starts as we drive down to Dover.

Please ensure that your bike is fully serviced and in good working order before the start of the trip. It is advisable to have your bike service a few weeks before the start of the tour. This will allow time to 'bed in' before you start your ride.

Alternatively you can hire a bike from us, please see our website for more information.

