FRANCE – FRENCH ALPS & LAKES FROM GENEVA TO ANNECY

6-days / 5-nights moderate inn-to-inn SELF-GUIDED cycling taking in three iconic French lakes

From Lake Geneva with its distinctive fountain to Lake Annecy at the foot of the Alps, this unique cycling holiday encourages those looking for a leisurely relaxed ride and those experienced riders wanting a start in the French Alps without climbing serious mountains or conquering Classic Cols of the Tour de France. Starting across the Swiss border in the city of Geneva, our cycling route threads its way between the mountains, following the scenic river valleys to the spectacular French lakeside town of Annecy. Your hotels are pre-booked and your luggage has been transported ahead and on most days we have a choice of riding distance depending on your abilities and interests.

The French Alps were formed around 35 million years ago when the tectonic plates of Africa and Eurasia collided – causing the earth to be forced upwards towards the sky creating colossal peaks of up to 1000km high. Although a seriously dramatic region, we focus on using the diversity of the French Alps as a backdrop, weaving between the peaks, linking the three major lakes of the area (Lake Geneva, Lake Bourget, and reputedly Europe's cleanest lake, Lake Annecy). Following the paths along the Rhône and Isère rivers, we take in historic villages, stunning natural scenery, lush meadows and valleys, and picturesque peaks along the way. Pack your swimsuit in case you can't resist the call of the lake (or all three lakes) and the thermal baths of Aix-les-Bains!

Departs: **Fridays and Sundays** from April to mid-October 2023

Other start days may be available on request, subject to a minimum of 4 people.

Cost from: **$1610** per person twin share.   Single room supplement if required from $495

Also available: Accommodation upgrade to mainly 3-star hotels from $490 per person.
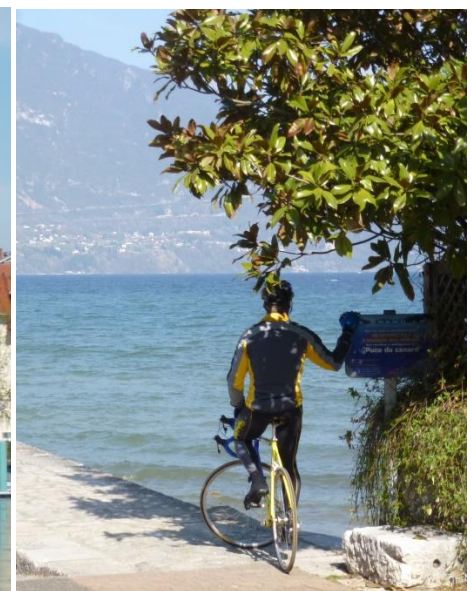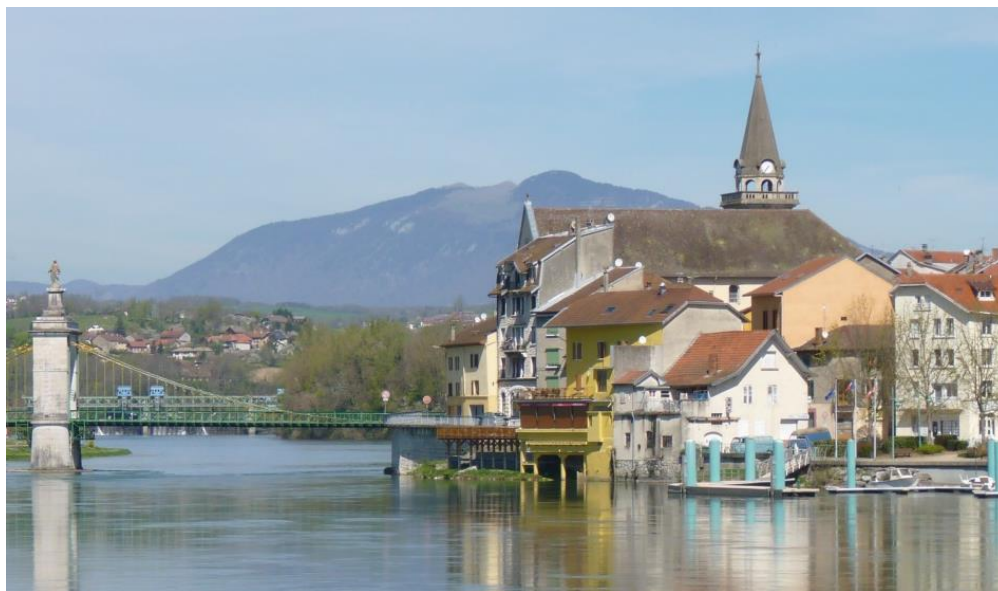
Inclusions: Accommodation with ensuite bathrooms in mainly 2-star hotels and guesthouses; buffet breakfast each day; 2 dinners; luggage transfers from hotel to hotel; welcome briefing, multi-geared hybrid bike hire with rear pack-rack, helmet, water bottle, repair kit & lock; detailed travel notes and route maps; pre-loaded GPS (subject to availability); emergency service telephone hotline; all taxes and service charges.

E-bike hire is available from $170 per bike per tour

Not Included: Other meals, drinks, sightseeing, bike or travel insurance; local ferry tickets; personal expenses.

Cycling Route: Moderate - on bike paths and tarmac roads. There may be some traffic closer to towns. Undulating and at times hilly terrain with intermediate ascents and downhills. Total distance @ 245km.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested Itinerary:

DAY 1: Arrive in Geneva (Switzerland) / Gaillard (France)
Arrive in Geneva mid-afternoon and check into your hotel in Gaillard, on the Swiss border about 7km from central Geneva (we can offer pre-booked hotel upgrades closer to the centre of Geneva). Allow time to discover the stylish city of Geneva, a hub for international administrations, finance, and culture, a mixture of the old world with new. Crescent-shaped Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) is the largest lake in Western Europe. Geneva itself is the culinary capital of Switzerland with a variety of restaurants and eateries sure to please every palate.

DAY 2: Geneva / Gaillard – Seyssel   **Cycling @ 63 or 70km**
Meet our local representative in the morning for a bike fitting and route briefing. The route today takes you along the Rhône River with views of the charming wine-making villages, Dardagny and Satigny. Ride to the western-most point of Switzerland in the village of Chancy before crossing the border into France. Discover Fort de l'Ecluse near Collonges, an elevated fortification founded by the Duke of Savoy, built into the side of the mountain in a striking rock formation. There is a natural entrance in the rock which acts as a door to the Rhône Valley and into France between the Vauche hills and the Jura region. Continue on to Seyssel, a small "*double-town*" located in both the Ain and Haute-Savoie (Upper Savoy) regions and between two dams on the Rhône River.

DAY 3: Seyssel – Aix-les-Bains   **Cycling @ 46km**
After breakfast take in the views over the 14 summits of the Bauges Mountain Range, Mont de la Charvaz and Col-du-Chat. Sheer cliffs rise from the water. Lake Bourget (Lac du Bourget) is the largest natural glacial lake of and one of the deepest in France. It was home to the now extinct Bezoule, a freshwater whitefish that lived at muddy depths of 70 to 80 meters and which unfortunately disappeared in the 1960's.

Ride past the impressive Château de Montverran in Culoz, built on a rock in 1316, which inspired the likes of the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev. Pedal on to the spa town of Aix-les-Bains, known for its thermal baths in Roman times. There are still numerous Roman ruins here. Why not plan to take a thermal bath in one of the many spa centres here or take a "*bikeboat*" - a boat with space for bikes - across the Lake from Conjux to Aix-les-Bains.

DAY 4: Aix-les-Bains – Tournon or Coise-Saint-Jean-Pied-Gauthier   **Cycling @ 53 or 66km**
Pedal through the heart of Savoy to Chambery, a town of art and history located in a wide valley between the Bauges and Chartreuse mountain ranges. Chambery is at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, the old-town is one of the most remarkable in France. Take in the ruins of the 10th Century fortress, Chateau de Miolans, overlooking the rich wine-growing region of the Combe de Savoie valley - including the village of Chignin where you can see the remains of an 8th Century Sarasin stronghold with 6 huge towers. The Isère River guides the route to Grésy-sur-Isère, a largely agricultural community inhabited since the Neolithic Age. End today in Tournon on the standard tour or for the upgraded hotels end in Coise-Saint-Jean-Pied-Gauthier.

DAY 5: Tournon or Coise-Saint-Jean-Pied-Gauthier – Annecy   **Cycling @ 56 or 74km**
After breakfast a leisurely downhill ride through Albertville, situated on the Arly River close to the confluence of the Isere River, to Grésy-sur-Isère. Albertville hosted the 1992 Winter Olympics and has become quite prosperous with many industries here. Across the river, visit the medieval town of Conflans with buildings dating back to the 14th Century.
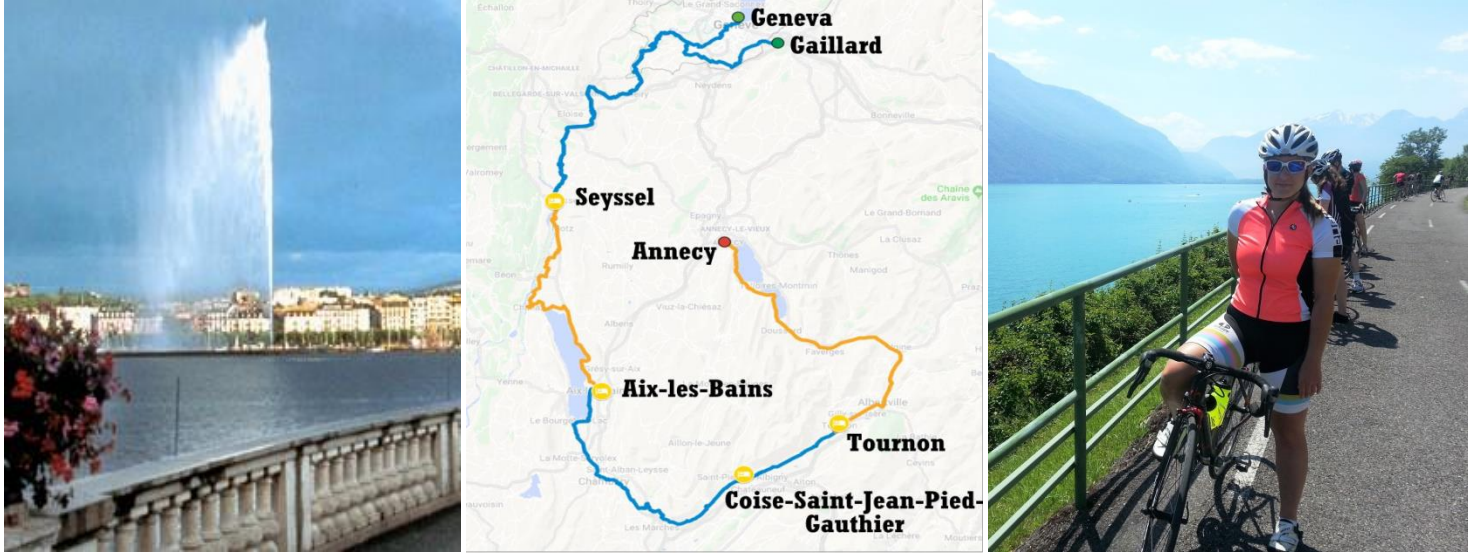
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Today you can see the Beaufortain and Bauges Mountain ranges as you cycle to the stunning Lake Annecy (Lac d'Annecy). The Aravis mountain range dominates Lake Annecy itself, with the exciting hairpin turns and steep downhill bends seen in the Tour de France. The town of Annecy itself, at the northern tip of the lake, reminds many of Venice with its canals cut through sections of an Alpine-style village. Allow time to see the *Palais de l'Isle, a* 12th Century prison, the *Chateau d'Annecy*, the 16th Century *Cathedral of Saint-Pierre,* and *Pont des Amours* (Lover's Bridge).

DAY 6: Tour ends in Annecy
Tour ends after breakfast. Ask about adding extra nights of accommodation to explore more of Annecy.

Outdoor Travel offer self-guided or small group inn-to-inn cycling tours in most areas of Europe. River rides include Passau to Vienna along the Danube or Vienna to Budapest. There are rides in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, England or Scotland, Hungary, in the Czech Republic and Romania. Outside Europe rides include New Zealand, China, Japan and South Africa. Bike & Barge cruises are available in France, Holland, Germany, Italy, Croatia, the islands of Greece and the Lycian coast of Turkey.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations

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