

FRANCE – PARIS TO MONT ST MICHEL & THE SEA

10-day / 9-nights inn-to-inn **SELF-GUIDED** cycling through Normandy to UNESCO listed Mont St Michel



Take an unforgettable journey through the magical northwest of France, from the *City of Lights* to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Mont St Michel in Normandy. Ride the 'Veloscenic' cycle route, some 450 kilometres of cycle lanes, quiet country roads and greenways (dedicated cycle paths), passing by some of France's most iconic locales including the palace of Versailles and Chartres with its well-preserved Gothic cathedral. Ride too through forest, nature reserve and peaceful Norman countryside dotted with grazing sheep and apple orchards.

Inn-to-inn self-guided cycling holidays are perfect for exploring France's famous landscapes, giving you the freedom to stop and relax or explore, knowing that your room is waiting for you and your bags have gone ahead.

Departs: Saturdays, mid-March to late October 2024

Cost from: **\$2725** per person, twin-share, for 4 or more people
\$3460 per person, twin-share, for less than 4 people
 Single room supplement from **\$1040**

Solo traveller supplement from **\$1375**

Includes: 9 nights' accommodation in comfortable, carefully chosen 3 and 4-star hotels or guesthouses in ensuite rooms; breakfast daily; hire of multi-gear hybrid touring bike; luggage transfers; welcome briefing; detailed route notes with stage-by-stage route descriptions, maps and travel information; emergency telephone support; transfer from Mont St Michel / Pontorson to St Malo train station.

Not included: Other meals, drinks, personal expenses, optional visits or entry fees, local city taxes (paid locally), travel to the start / end of the tour. Bike helmets not included – we recommend you take your own or hire one for around \$25 when booking.

Extras: **E-bike hire and GPS hire** are available at extra cost - ask for details when you make a booking.

Grading: Moderate, with daily distances of up to 70km over flat to gently undulating terrain, with a few steeper climbs. Mostly on cycle paths and quiet back roads.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Paris

Arrive mid-afternoon at your 3-star hotel in Paris, close to Gare du Nord and Montmartre. In the evening meet our local representative for a briefing on your trip and receive your bicycles, maps and route information.

Day 2: Paris – Versailles

cycling @ 40km

Allow time for a ride around Paris, heading for Notre-Dame where the *Veloscenic* officially begins. Leave Paris through the outer arrondissements on a designated greenway cycle trail. Perhaps picnic in Parc de Sceaux, with its landscaped gardens, designed by Le Nôtre. Le Nôtre was Louis XIV's landscape architect, who designed the gardens of Versailles. Continue along quiet roads in the valley of the Bièvre to the royal city of Versailles.

Day 3: Versailles – Épernon / Hanches

cycling @ 70km

Today's route takes you through the picturesque Chevreuse valley and over undulating terrain in the regional nature park and the forest of Rambouillet, encountering chateaux, museums, charming villages and small farms offering local produce along the way. Rambouillet is home to the 14th Century Château de Rambouillet, once a royal residence, now the summer residence of the French president, sometimes hosting foreign heads of state. Continue along pleasant roads to Épernon. On occasion you may stay in Hanches, 3km from Épernon.

Day 4: Épernon / Hanches – Illiers-Combray

cycling @ 70km

Cycle back roads to Maintenon, to visit Château de Maintenon. There are extensive gardens and a 17th Century aqueduct, the only civilian project of the military engineer and architect Vauban. Cycle onwards through the Eure Valley to Chartres with its UNESCO World Heritage-listed Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture with its spectacular stained-glass windows. Leaving Chartres, cycle past wheat fields to Illiers-Combray, inspiration for Marcel Proust's epic novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*. 'Aunt Leonie's house' is now a Proust museum.

Day 5: Illiers-Combray – Condeau

cycling @ 60km

The route today takes you through the tranquil, green and undulating landscape of the National Park of Perche, where Percheron draught horses originated; there is an opportunity to visit a Percheron breeding centre and take a carriage ride. Then cycle on quiet country roads and greenway, entering Normandy, to Condeau.

Day 6: Condeau – Alençon

cycling @ 70km

From the National Park of Perche you enter the adjoining National Park of Normandie-Maine. Much of your ride is along cycle path and greenways, through forest and past old manor houses, apple and pear orchards, and grain mills. The lake at Le Mêle-sur-Sarthe is a pleasant stop for a picnic or a swim. Alençon, your destination for the day, is a pretty, atmospheric town with a cobblestone pedestrian area near its basilica. The town is known for its elaborate needlepoint lace, created by highly skilled lace makers in the 16th and 17th Centuries.

Day 7: Alençon – Bagnoles de l'Orne

cycling @ 55km

Quiet country roads through the Normandie-Maine Park to the challenging ascent to Carrouges, where you can visit the chateau, originally built in the 14th Century to defend against the English during the Hundred Years' War. From Carrouges the ride is largely downhill with some undulations to the spa town of Bagnoles de l'Orne. Devotees of art deco style and Belle Epoque architecture will find much to admire here. Perhaps end the day with soak in a thermal bath or a spa treatment.

Day 8: Bagnoles de l'Orne – St Hilaire du Harcouët

cycling @ 65km

You are surrounded by typical Norman countryside on your ride – hedgerows, orchards, forest, and pastures with grazing cows – to Domfront, a charming medieval town with narrow cobbled streets, half-timbered houses, café-lined squares, and the towers and ramparts which are all that remains of the town's fortifications. Not far from the town centre you will find the ruins of the 11th Century Norman keep. Roll downhill from Domfront and join a greenway near the peaceful Sélune River. End your day in Saint Hilaire du Harcouët, a small but lively town.

Day 9: St Hilaire du Harcouët – Mont St Michel

cycling @ 65km

The final stage today, passing through the small village of Ducey then riding on busier roads to Mont St Michel. Around every corner is a tantalising glimpse of your destination. However, many photographs you've seen of the abbey, whether it's your first or fifth visit, whether the weather is sunny or misty, the sun rising or setting, the view of Mont Saint Michel on its rugged rock outcrop is always awe-inspiring.

At high tide the bay surrounds the island, then at low tide the shifting sands of the channel are revealed, all of which adds to the magic. Make time to climb the ancient ramparts, visit the Abbey and its cloisters, and enjoy views of the bay and the many shops and café-restaurants on the road that winds up to the monastery. From Mont St Michel it's roughly ten kilometres further to your hotel in Pontorson.

Day 10: Departure day

After breakfast at your hotel in Pontorson a transfer to Saint Malo train station is available if required - ask for details - then onward travel arrangements.



Outdoor Travel offers many cycling holidays in Europe. Cycle from **Passau to Vienna** along the Danube or along the **Inn Bike Trail** from Switzerland to Austria or from **Vienna to Budapest** through Austria, Slovakia and Hungary. Consider the mountains near **Bolzano to Venice** in Italy, or in **Tuscany** or **Umbria**. Take a leisurely ride around **Lake Constance** in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, or for a challenge, take on the **Camino de Santiago** in Spain or the **Coast-to-Coast** crossing in England. **Outdoor Travel** offers rides in Spain, France, Holland, Ireland, England and Scotland, Poland, in the Czech Republic, Romania, China, Vietnam, Japan, North America, New Zealand and Australia. We also offer **Bike and Barge** cycling cruises in many destinations including along the canals & rivers of **France, Belgium, Holland and Germany**, the **Amalfi Coast** or **Venetian Lagoon** in Italy or the **Dalmatian Coast** of Croatia, the many beautiful islands of **Greece**, or in **Vietnam**.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

- Call Toll free: 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright 3741