

### France: Biking Through Burgundy

Tour code: CBG

This tour through the famous wine-growing region starts and finishes in the beautiful town of Beaune, with many parts of the itinerary reading like a wine list! However, there is more to Burgundy than fine wines: there is also excellent food, harmonious landscapes and a variety of delightful towns and villages with attractive and welcoming accommodation. The best-known Bourgogne vintages are grown on the great southeast-facing escarpment known as the Cote d'Or or 'Golden Hillside', which overlooks the historic towns of Beaune, Nuits-St Georges and Meursault. There is however, another Burgundy, that of its hills, rivers, lakes and broadleaf forests of oak, beech, hornbeam and birch as well as conifers. Our itinerary explores the Auxois region and follows the Canal de Bourgogne with opportunity to visit castles, chateaux and historic sites along the way.

Beaune is the hub of Burgundy's wine industry, at the heart of a cluster of prestigious vineyards. There is plenty of time to look around the major sites such as the imposing mansion of the Dukes of Burgundy, the basilica of Notre Dame and the most famous of all the sights in Beaune, the steep pitched patterned roofs of the Hotel Dieu. Just a gentle 30km in the saddle will see you arrive in Rully having passed through prime chardonnay country on the way. A choice of routes for the second ride takes in more rolling landscapes via the hamlets of the Cotes Chalonnaises and the village of Mercurey where one of the best examples of the pinot noir appellation is produced. The destination for the day is the pretty village of Buxy, which will be home for two nights. From Buxy you can make the 70km round trip to visit the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny. Founded in 910 the Abbey was the center of a major monastic reform movement in the Middle Ages and its church was the largest Christian building in the world until St. Peter's Basilica was built in Rome. Today, one transept of the 12th-century abbey church, the 15th-century abbots' residences, the 18th-century convent buildings, gardens and museum make for an interesting visit.

Moving on, we reach Nolay, a village of fine mediaeval buildings, narrow streets and half-timbered houses. The ride takes us away from the vineyards through oak woods and prime cattle rearing countryside. Next day completes the full circle back to Beaune via some canal side cycling, forests and the vineyards of Aloxe Corton. The final day is an optional loop to the Abbey of Citeaux (built 1140-1193) and the vineyards of Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits-Saint-Georges, arguably some of the best pinot noir vineyards of Burgundy; a fitting end indeed!

#### Season

March to October. Departures are possible on any day except Mondays and Tuesdays.

#### Duration

8 days (7 nights).

#### Terrain & Difficulty

We grade the tour as moderate; standard day stages between hotels vary from 30km to 55km. Two days are loops returning to the same hotel, the first from Buxy is a 70km loop with great sightseeing at the furthest point; you may need an early start. The second loop is from Beaune and covers 55 or 70kms depending on the option you choose.

The terrain is mostly flat through the vineyards but there are moderate up hill sections and undulating countryside on the route.

#### The Bikes

18 - 21 gear hybrid bikes that come with handlebar bag (to contain maps, fruit, cheese, wine etc), rear carrier with panniers, spare inner tube, repair kit, tools and pump.

Cycle hire fee is 85 Euros for 6 days, payable in France when your bikes are delivered to the hotel. They will arrive at 9am on day 2 and the technician who delivers the bike will make sure it is adjusted to fit and will answer any of your questions about the bikes.

Helmets and water bottles are not provided so please take your own. We highly recommend the wearing of a good fitting helmet whenever you are cycling.

#### General Information

**Baths:** it is not normal for rooms to have a baths, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but generally expect showers.

**Breakfast:** in countries such as France breakfast is usually coffee and toast/croissant, if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room,

however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

**Luggage:** When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take up to your room.

## Accommodation

Half board on 4 nights, bed and breakfast on 3 nights. Accommodation is in a mixture of 2\* and 3\* hotels.

□ **Nights 1, 6 & 7.** Start and end in Beaune at a 3\* hotel full of character just five minutes walk from the centre of town. The hotel is booked on a B&B basis so you can choose from the wide selection of excellent restaurants nearby, (evening meals **not** included in Beaune).

□ **Night 2:** In Rully you should try the Cotes Chalonnaises wines whilst staying on a half board basis, in our 2\* hotel; it will complement the traditional menus provided by the hotelier. Our hotel is in the center of the village of Rully and the restaurant is excellent.

□ **Nights 3 & 4:** The two nights in Buxy are spent in a 2\* hotel with a pool, evening meals are taken at the hotel.

□ **Night 5:** One night is spent in the 2\* hotel on the old market square in Nolay. Dinner is included here and is taken at a rustic restaurant owned by the hotelier 200m across the street.

## Baggage Transfers

Your baggage (please not more than 20kg per person) is moved between hotels on days 2, 3, 5 and 6.

## Maps & Route Notes

Daily cycling routes, detailed maps, biking route notes as well as suggested restaurants, tasting and sightseeing will be provided a few weeks before departure.

## Arrival

The starting point of the tour is Beaune. On weekdays there are convenient TGV train services from Paris Gare de Lyon (dep. 12.58, 14.28 & 15.58) via Dijon to Beaune(arr. 15.53, 16.47 & 18.03). There are many other trains on this route, although the local service between Dijon and Beaune is less frequent on Sundays and holidays. Consult [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr) for the day you plan to travel.

## Itinerary Guide

□ **Day 1:** Arrive Beaune. There is lots to see and do in Beaune if you arrive reasonably early. If you arrive later then there is time on the morning of day 2 and later in the week to visit all the sights.

□ **Day 2:** The hire bikes are delivered to you at the hotel after breakfast. Details of exact times will be given in the route notes and can be confirmed at the hotel. You can spend time in Beaune before starting your ride or just take it easy, as the first day's ride is fairly short and easy (30kms) through Chardonnay land. The villages of Pommard, Meursault and Santenay will be a great introduction to the Province and good options for morning coffee and/or lunch and/or afternoon tea.

If you fancy a little longer in the saddle then a slightly longer route will take you up to the village of Saint-Romain before rejoining the normal route.

**Day 3:** We carry on south through the Côtes Chalonnaises. The village of Mercurey produces one of the best examples of the pinot noir appellation. The route is a bit more testing passing over rolling hills with a succession of hamlets, creeks, woods and of course vineyards.

We will stay in the pretty village of Buxy for 2 nights where we meet the very friendly hoteliers and make the most of the hotel swimming pool (open in season).

There is a choice of longer or shorter routes, 35kms or 50kms.

**Day 4:** The optional ride from Buxy is a loop south to the great Abbey of Cluny. As on previous days the day is punctuated with numerous villages and lovely and varied countryside but this time there are even gallo-roman ruins on the way. After a good break in the village of Cluny visit one of the most prestigious abbey complexes in France. You can cycle back to Buxy by the traffic free cycle path. 70kms

**Day 5:** From Buxy, ride northwest to the country town of Couches after crossing the Canal du Centre. The day's cycle is definitely a good contrast to the wine making lands you have seen so far; this is a land of isolated cattle farms and oak woods. This ride ends in the old market town of Nolay. 55kms

**Day 6:** The ride from Nolay goes to the old market town of Bligny sur Ouche and to the Canal de Bourgogne at Pont d'Ouche. After riding along the peaceful canal using the old towpath, we cycle back to Beaune. The last 15kms is a smooth downhill through lovely forest then the great vineyard of Aloxe Corton. There are two route options for this ride back to Beaune, one of 45kms and the other of 60kms.

**Day 7:** The last ride is a loop from Beaune to the Abbey of Citeaux. The route takes you through the famous vineyards of the Cote de Beaune with numerous ancient churches, chateaux and charming villages along the way. There are a few interesting sights to see in Nuits St George including the 13th century church and the museum. From the Abbey, the return route passes through the best Pinot noir vineyards of Burgundy with Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits-Saint-Georges among them. There are again two route options, this time of 55 or 70kms. Whichever option you choose there is much to see and of course opportunities to taste some of the local produce!

**Day 8:** The tour ends in Beaune after breakfast.

## End of Tour

An example of a convenient train services is as follows on a weekday:

Beaune dep.	11.11
Dijon arr.	11.39
Dijon dep. (TGV)	11.52
Paris Gare de Lyon arr.	13.31

There are earlier and later trains. Reservations are compulsory on TGV trains. TGV trains departing Dijon before 12.00 on weekdays are likely to be heavily booked. Local trains are less frequent at weekends and public holidays.

For more details consult the French railways website: [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr).