

# Spain & France

**POLKA**  
**DOT** CYCLING  
HOLIDAYS

*Immerse yourself in the cycling, culture, cuisine of Girona, Catalonia before the experience of a lifetime riding the famous Tour de France cols of the Pyrenees*



## TOUR OVERVIEW

We're thrilled to present you this cycling holiday through the incredibly peaceful French Pyrenees and region of Catalonia in Spain.

This tour has been designed to capture the very best roads in the Pyrenees including the many cols made famous by the Tour de France.

But first, the tour will begin in Girona, one of Spains hidden gems where it's as much about the cultural experience and lifestyle as it is the cycling. There is a reason why so many Pro Tour riders base themselves in this region and we'll be sure to meet a few at a café or out on the road!

Hi-lights in Catalonia will include our ride along the Costa Brava, taking in the sights and smells of the Mediterranean, together with time spent in the medieval Jewish quarter, particular when the sun goes down. Tour de France cols in the Pyrenees include Col du Soulor, Aubisque, Hautacam, Luz Ardiden, Peyresourde and the Queen of them all, Col du Tourmalet, among others!

We hope you enjoy reading on and getting a taste on what to expect carefully prepared and delivered by Steve Cunningham and the Polka Dot Team.

**DATES:**

**28<sup>th</sup> July - 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017** (10 days)

**SPECIAL PRICE:**

**\$6,290**

**START / FINISH:**

**Girona** (Spain) / **Toulouse** (France)

**CONTACT:**

**steve@polkadotcycling.com**



Taking the rail or plane into the easily accessed Girona, you will be met by your friendly guide team and transferred to central Girona where we will stay tonight, or you may choose to arrive a day or two earlier where we can arrange your accommodation if required.

Girona is sure to please, a beautiful historic medieval quarter less frequented by tourists than it's larger cousin Barcelona and our 4 star hotel is situated on the edge of the old town, a stones throw to many tapas bars, restaurants and shops.



Once settled into the hotel we will provide assistance unpacking your bike or introducing you to your hire bike. We will put on a ride or two during the day so to loosen the legs off from the transfer. This afternoon you will have a chance to explore the Old Town, steeped in history and full wonderful architecture, colour and of course the tapas bars!

We will enjoy our welcome dinner this evening.



**DINNER** welcome dinner

**RIDE** up to 50km

**STAY** Girona 4\*

**OPTION** pre tour accommodation can be arranged



This morning, we will ride to one of the jewels of Spain, that of the Costa Brava.

We will take in the climb of Saint Grau on our way to the Costa Brava (coastline). With lush vegetation against the blue immensity of the Mediterranean, the Costa Brava is one of Spain's most popular destinations, especially on a road bike.

We'll ride to the coastal ancient village of Tossa de Mar before riding north along the coast. To Saint Feliu.



After enjoying lunch along the coast, those who would like to take in a 2<sup>nd</sup> category climb back to Girona have something to sink their teeth into! Girona - others may like a flatter option or return by vans and spend the exploring the many historic sites of Girona.

Enjoy a great night in one of the many fine restaurants tonight.



**DINNER**

**at your leisure**

**REST DAY**

**up to 120km & 1300vm**

**STAY**

**Girona 4\***

## DAY 3

## Volcanica de la Garrotxa

30<sup>th</sup> July



A magnificent day on the bike today, heading north-east into the foothills of Pyrenees, and the unique Volcanic region of Garrotxa.

An area used by many of the pros, so don't be surprised to see a few training in the area today. Who knows, we may even be invited to ride alongside for a while, especially the very welcoming Aussies!

Stunning roads with the climbs averaging around 4% gradient in most parts, making for a really enjoyable rolling day on the bike.

Have time this afternoon to explore Girona, walk around the historic wall and visit the many beautiful attractions.

Tonight, after some tapas, we'll enjoy our farewell dinner in a fine restaurant in the old quarter with local wines.



**DINNER**

provided

**RIDE**

100km & 1400m

**STAY**

Girona 4\*

## DAY 4

## Puymorens & Aix les Thermes

31<sup>st</sup> July



This morning we bid farewell to Girona and head deep into the Pyrenees, with our ride incorporating a cross over the French / Spanish Border.

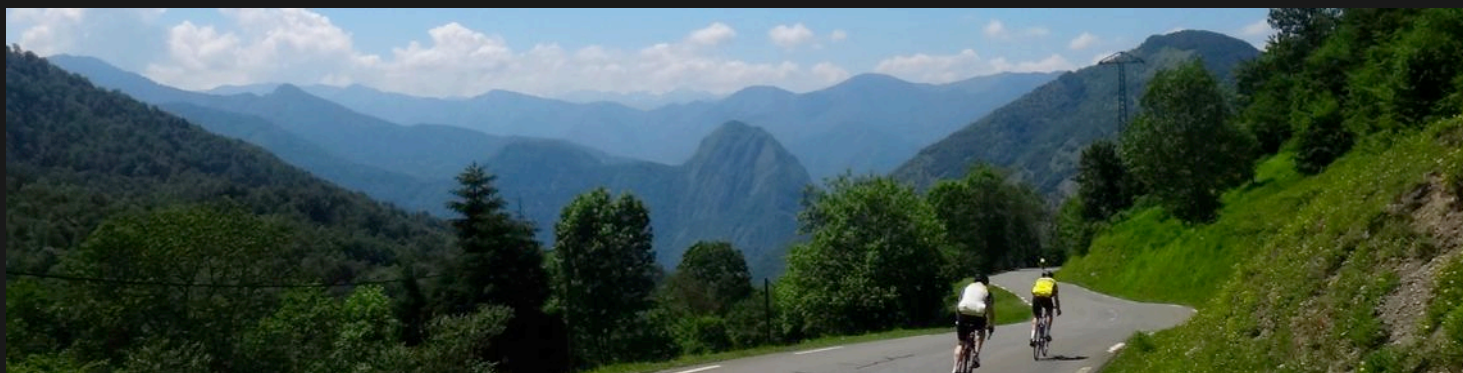
A short van transfer in the morning to our start village of Ripoll, we will then be greeted with dramatic mountain landscape as we brush by Andorra on route to our destination to the thermal village of Ax Les Thermes, set in one of the prettiest regions of the Pyrenees, the Ariège.



Ax les Thermes is strongly rumored to be hosting two stages at the 2017 Tour de France and we'll enjoy time there climbing the roads that were only just 'worn in' by the Pros a week prior!

But first, our ride today will include a great route taking in stunning views of the Spanish Pyrenees, riding through the ancient village of Puigcerdà, before riding into France and climbing the famous Col de Puymorens (1915m) via the Gorge de Fou.

A day to remember.



**DINNER**

at your leisure

**RIDE**

up to 110km & 2200m

**STAY**

Aix les Thermes

## DAY 5

## Exploring the Ariège

1<sup>st</sup> August



After some riding and climbing already in the legs, today is a perfect opportunity to relax and enjoy time in the Ariège.

It is a stunning area, visited by the French for a huge variety of outdoor activities as well as sightseeing and exploring Cathar History. Neil Lands, author of 'History, People and Places in the French Pyrenees' (1980), wrote that Ariège was probably his favourite region in the whole Pyrenees, "mainly because it is full of little hidden valleys with those castles and towers which I happen to like very much". We will offer a van tour today and explore the region, including a stop in at a local winery or visit the incredible Chateau de Foix.



For those who just can't say no to a ride today, take the opportunity to climb the Port de Paillieres, literally beginning from our hotel doorstep. But with many iconic climbs still ahead of us, today is a great opportunity to simply enjoy the Ariège.



**DINNER**

**provided**

**RIDE**

**REST DAY** (short ride optional)

**STAY**

**Aix les Thermes**

## DAY 6

Port de Bales and Col de Menté 2<sup>nd</sup> August



We head further west this morning before starting our ride in what is considered to be one of the prettiest ancient villages in France (we'll keep it a surprise!)

Our ride today takes in 2 famous climbs in the central Pyrenees both frequently used by Tour de France, the Port de Bales and Col de Menté.

The Bales is a challenging climb with gradients in the double digit figures over the dying kilometres, but you are well rewarded with sublime scenery at the summit. The Menté, more a forest climb which was made famous by the accident between Eddy Merckx and Louis Ocarana in the 1971 TDF and where a memorial plaque now sits at the scene of the accident.

Tonight we will relax in our overnight stay in Bagnères du Luchon before heading further west tomorrow.



**DINNER**

at your leisure

**RIDE**

up to 80km & 2000m

**STAY**

Bagnères du Luchon

## DAY 7

Peyresourde, Aspin, Tourmalet 3<sup>rd</sup> August



A day many of you will be waiting for, riding one of THE most iconic ride routes in the Pyrenees, ending with the ascent of the Col du Tourmalet 2115m. This is a ride not too dissimilar to that featured in a Tour de France stage, 3 passes through some incredible landscape.

Starting with the Col du Peyresourde, with its gradual gradients it's a perfect warm up climb. The majestic Col d'Aspin then awaits before we recharge our batteries to climb the Tourmalet.



With the use of vans and support, for those that want to climb 2 passes or save their legs purely for the Tourmalet, that's indeed an option.

This route features in the Tour de France more often than not and the Tourmalet will once again show its face in 2017.

We will enjoy the next 2 nights in the pretty ski village of Luz Saint Sauveur located at the foot of the Tourmalet and Luz Ardiden.



**DINNER**

provided

**RIDE**

up to 110km & 2200m

**STAY**

Luz Saint Sauveur





Today we ride two of the iconic Tour de France climbs in the Pyrenees. Luz Ardiden last featured in The Tour in 2013 seeing Froome take a stranglehold on GC. It is rumored to again feature as the deciding climb in the 2017 edition.

The lower slopes were also made famous by the incident which saw Lance Armstrong be taken down by a spectator handbag. His rivals slowing to wait for his recovery, only to be blown away by an unforgiving attack that saw Lance win the stage. It's a 15km climb from Luz Saint Sauveur and often referred to as the Alpe d'Huez of the Pyrenees.



The Hautacam last featured in the 2014 Tour de France, seeing Nibali win the Tour de France in fine style. With sections averaging some 10%, this one will test you a little, but the views are well worth it. Of course you have the option to ride just one of the climbs today and Steve will be on hand to recommend which will suit you best. As always, the van will always be on hand in the event of fatigue, mishap or changes in weather conditions.



**DINNER** at your leisure

**RIDE** up to 80km & 1800vm

**STAY** Luz Saint Sauveur



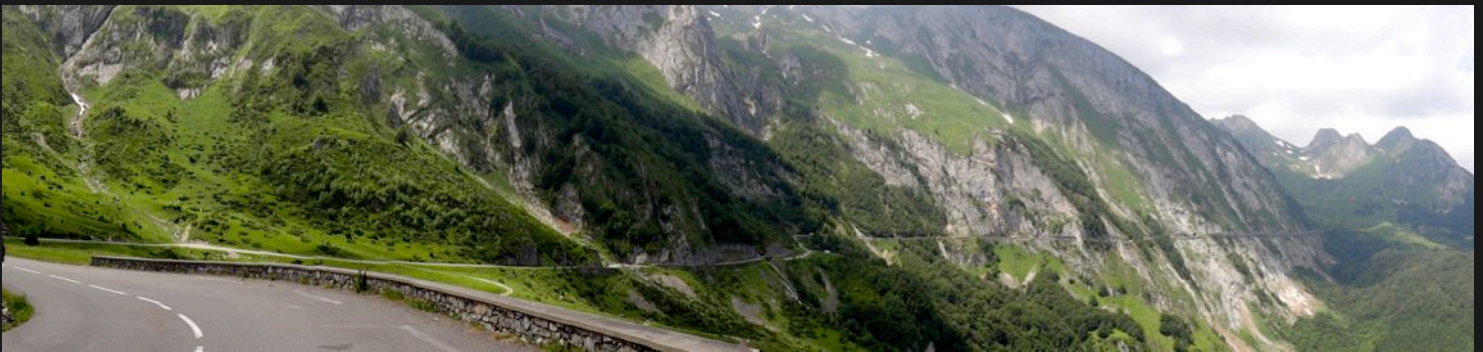
Our final day in the Pyrenees and some would say we have saved the best until last. The famous double of the Col du Soulor and Aubisque, featuring one of the most photoed roads in the Pyrenees.

While most approach the Soulor from Argeles, it's the north approaching climb where the magic really happens, with some of the finest valley views and narrow roads and we're thrilled to be showcasing this to you.

We'll then ride the famous Balcony Road (pictured left) An engineering marvel that will sure to please.

Horses, sheep, cows treat these roads as their own, so you'll have a chuckle having to give way from time to time. After a lazy lunch on the summit surrounded by the resident horses, cows and sheep, we'll descend back to Argeles

At the conclusion of the ride, while enjoying a beer in Argeles, the support staff will be packing the vans for our short transfer to Toulouse tonight.



**DINNER** farewell dinner

**RIDE** up to 100km & 2000vm

**STAY** Toulouse



Today we will bid you farewell to what is an amazing holiday.

But before doing so, for those that have time for an early morning pedal along the famous Canal du Midi and return by mid morning.

As on all Polka Dot Tours, we will provide any assistance you need in checking into the airport in Toulouse or TGV, which has connections to all major cities including Paris.

You may also like to spend a couple of extra days in Toulouse, take the opportunity to take the Airbus Factory Tour among many other wonderful activities in this thriving city.

Our team can also assist with any pre and post tour ideas for you, additional nights accommodation in our hotels and so on, so please ask if you would like further information.

We trust you have enjoyed skimming through the itinerary, have got excited about the chance to ride through the Pyrenees and Spain in fine style and with the very best support in the business. we

*"I trust you have enjoyed reading through the itinerary, are excited about the prospect of riding the most iconic climbs together with hidden gems through the Pyrenees and Spain. I look forward to leading this very special tour with the Polk Dot Team and taking you on an unforgettable journey."*

Steve Cunningham

**RIDE** morning flat ride

**STAY** Depart or option to extend your stay

## AM I FIT ENOUGH?

The Pyrenees are a beautiful mountain-scape with very dramatic profiles. The climbs are mostly at an average of between 6 & 8% but there are a few punchy climbs to offer a challenge, with plenty of flats and descents too. This means that a reasonable level of fitness would help you get the most enjoyment from this trip. If you have any concerns regarding your health please contact your physician and if you wish to talk to us about this issue, please call.

If you are struggling to handle the riding we will encourage you to make use of the minibus, that is what it is for. We reserve the right to make alterations to the route if we have concerns regarding your health and safety. During the week we are intending for you to have an enjoyable tour, not go home in a heap!

## NAVIGATION

Due to our insistence that our guides cycle on the road with our customers, offer support and advice, they are also able to help you navigate the routes. This means minimal effort on your part to stay on track.

We also make sure to provide the routes on downloadable Garmin files and we also have daily handouts with route profiles, maps and directions to help you, just in case. This also will have the lead guide's phone number so you can always contact them whilst out on the road, if needed.

## GUIDES & SUPPORT

Polka Dot has a high standard for our guides, meaning they must be experienced in the mountains but also approachable for you needs. We have a standard 1:4 guide client ratio which means you will always have someone available to help you; whether with technical help, advice or just an encouraging word.

We have support minibuses out on the road which is fully stocked with carb drink and energy food that will help you keep up your energy and also give you a lift if they need it. You will never be far from someone to look after you.

## INSURANCE

Travel and Medical insurance is not included, but is a condition of our booking terms and conditions. We want to make sure that no one has any issues that will cause them long term problems. And whilst we take every effort to make sure everyone is well taken care of, sometimes accidents do happen.

We would recommend an Insurance Group called World Nomad, that we like for their level of care and insurance. Visit their website using [this link](#) to get a quote.

## FINANCIAL PROTECTION

We take your financial protection very seriously. In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with Polka Dot Cycling Ltd are fully insured for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from the cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of Polka Dot Cycling Ltd.

We have full insurance for this arranged by Towergate Chapman Stevens through HCCI International Insurance Company PLC.

## TRAVEL

We ask that you all fly into Blagnac Airport Toulouse as this is closer to our starting point on this trip, or you can arrive by train. We also ask that you book your departure from Girona either by flight or train. We will arrange transfers to and from both airports and stations and local hotels.

For this trip, we ask that you arrive before 5:30 pm so that we can get you to the first hotel with enough time for bike set up, dinner and the briefing about the trip and next day.

## FOOD

On our trips you eat like the pros! With the constant use of energy, we know that the best way for people to be comfortable and keep their energy up; they must eat "little and often". This means no bloating, discomfort and losing energy. We carry a full range of snacks and energy drinks suitable for cyclists along with quiches, baguettes, fruit, cakes, sweets (like the infamous Haribo!), cereal bars, nuts, crisps and more.

## NON-RIDING GUESTS

On our trips we want to make sure that your guests have as much fun as you, without the cycling. We will have a guide on to take any of our non-riding guests on trips to places of interest, shopping excursions or sight-seeing along the route.

We can then arrange for either a lunch for the non-riders, separately, or we can reunite the whole group so they can eat together.

## ACCOMMODATION

We want our trip to be as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible which means using quality hotels. We use mainly 4\* and Superior 3\* accommodation.

We prefer to use more personal and authentic hotels on our trips, to give you a real feel for the area but we aim for comfort and quality above all else. We vet our accommodations very thoroughly before we use them on our trips. This means no nightmare hotels so you can get a good night sleep.

Please note all prices quoted are based on two people sharing a room. We can of course arrange single occupancy at an extra cost of **\$1500/person**.

## BIKE HIRE

If you would prefer to not go through the hassle of travelling with your bike, then we can arrange a hire bike for you for the supplement of **\$500**. There is also the possibility of upgrades. Please contact us for more information on the bikes available on your particular trip.

## EXTRAS & UPGRADES

- Single Room Supplement ... **\$1200**
- BMC or Giant Defy/Avail Bike Hire ... **\$500**

## INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE

- **12** spots available making for a personalised tour.
- All transfers including airport pickups and drop-offs.
- **8** nights in carefully selected **4** Star and Superior **3** Star hotels.
- Daily regional buffet breakfast.
- **5** nights of the finest cuisine including selected wines and beverages.
- **3** evening meals will be left open, giving you the freedom to explore local options that our local experts will recommend and make bookings for you.
- Full on-the-road support, using well-equipped vans to provide quality "ride food & drinks", mechanical support, first aid, shower, changing facilities and WiFi.
- Flexible lunch options with local cafes or Pro musette packed lunches.
- On and off the bike photography by the team, so you can take home those wonderful memories.
- A welcome pack including a Polka Dot Cycling kit, printed maps and profiles, local information and more.

## NOT INCLUDED

- Flights are not included in the price of the holiday, but we always happy to make recommendations.
- Travel, Medical or Bike Insurance

## FINALISE YOUR BOOKING

To assure your place on this tour, please contact Niamh via [niamh@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:niamh@polkadotcycling.com). We will send a pro-forma for you to complete and we will arrange to take a deposit of **\$1000 AUS** per person.

For any further questions about this tour, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Steve either by phone **0061 (0) 488 918 900** or email [steve@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:steve@polkadotcycling.com).

**We look forward to seeing you out on the Tour with us and creating some unforgettable memories!**