

France 2025 A culinary escape for cycling enthusiasts...



Wine, dine and cycle through the south of France!

HOSTED BY VETERAN TRAVELERS AND FRENCH FOODIES: JUDY WOOD (Executive Chef, Cooking Instructor) GAIL NORTON (The Cookbook Co. Cooks) and SUE WADE, with cycling guide JARRAD CONNOLLY.

We have been traveling the Languedoc since 2002, and we can think of no better holiday than to combine our passion for food and wine and with our friend Jarrad Connolly, adding another abiding love, cycling through this beautiful area!

Our home base for the week is the small village of Olonzac in the Languedoc, close to Narbonne and Carcassonne, in the midst of the wine region of Minervois. The area has many historic sites and wonderful food markets, vineyards, olive groves, and restaurants. For sun-lovers, the beaches of the Mediterranean and Spain are a short trip away.

From our charming bed and breakfast we will venture out to cycle and enjoy the scenic and historic views of the area along with visits to local food and wine highlights – wineries, restaurants, markets and related sites.

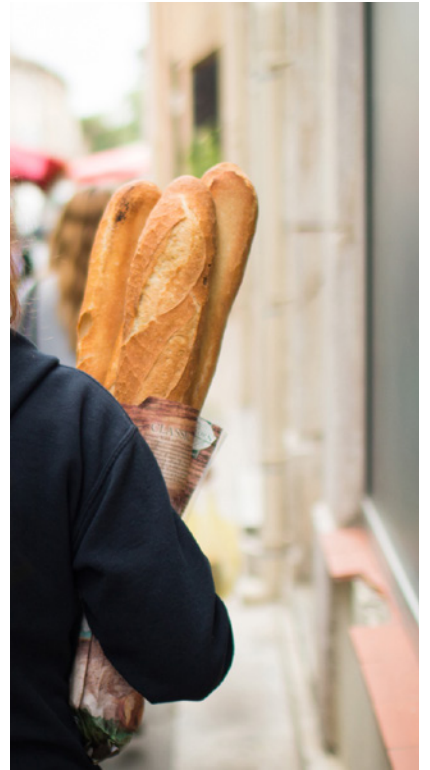
The area that surrounds Olonzac affords a great variety of cycling tours, from the difficult rides of the Black Mountains to the leisurely, beautiful rides along the Canal du Midi. Each day you can choose a more aggressive ride or a more leisurely pace, or you may just decide to stay and relax around the pool. There is also an option for electric bikes.

Our accommodations are at the Eloi Merle, in the heart of Olonzac. This “grande maison”, once owned by a vineyard magnate, has been converted into a charming bed and breakfast, with lovely gardens surrounding a swimming pool, and next door to the city park and tennis courts.

France 2025 Welcome to the village of Olonzac



Olonzac is a lush village in the Languedoc region, in the south of France, nestled amidst vineyards, olive groves and the rolling hills of the Aude. This charming village, population 1500, will be home for the week. The city of Narbonne is a half hour drive to the east on the Mediterranean coast, and the walled city of Carcassonne is a half hour to the west by car.



France 2025 The cycling...

From leisurely to aggressive – it's beautiful – no matter which route we choose.



France 2025 The work and the reward!

What better way to end a picturesque cycling tour than to stop in at a local vineyard wine tasting, or dine at a fabulous restaurant.



France 2025 Cooking demos and classes

Ah... French cuisine. Let us help you de-mystify this most legendary cooking technique. Chef Judy Wood and Gail Norton are veterans of traditional French cooking. Judy trained in Paris at La Varenne. This masterful teacher is only too happy to share her wealth of knowledge. Gail Norton has been teaching cooking classes for over 30 years and is well-known and respected for her vast culinary knowledge. The classes and demos are casual and fun and you certainly don't have to be an experienced cook to enjoy and appreciate it. From duck confit, to how to prepare an artichoke, to pastry-making, we'll show you why French food and wine is so coveted.

Did we mention the wine? The Languedoc is France's largest wine producing region, with many small vineyards producing award-winning vintages. We will be meeting some of the most passionate and accomplished winemakers, and tasting some of France's finest wines.



France 2025 The Canal du Midi



We are just minutes away from the Canal du Midi, one of the most famous water-ways in Europe, and one of the most beautiful, leisurely cycling routes you'll ever find.

This 360-km network of navigable water-ways linking the Mediterranean and the Atlantic through 328 structures (locks, aqueducts, bridges, tunnels) is one of the most remarkable feats of civil engineering in modern times. Built between 1667 and 1694, it paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. The care that its creator, Pierre-Paul Riquet, took in the design and the way it blends with its surroundings turned a technical achievement into a work of art. More than 250,000 plane trees (known as sycamore trees in North America) line the canal; the roots serve as natural levees, that stabilize the banks of the Canal.



France 2025 A day at the market in Olonzac

Tuesday is Market day in Olonzac. The streets come alive with friendly vendors selling fresh produce, meat, spices, breads, cheeses, linens, and clothing. Markets are a rich and vital part of the culture of this region.



France 2025 The medieval village of Minerve



Minerve was selected as one of Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (“The Most Beautiful Villages of France”). Perched on top of the gorge carved by the River Cesse before it disappears underground in a natural tunnel, this historical site is now filled with quiet shops and restaurants. The cycling to, and around, Minerve is stunning!



France 2025 Our itinerary for the week...

Every morning we will begin our day with coffee and tea, along with fresh bread and pastries from the local wood-fired boulangerie, and market fresh fruit and cheese. From there we will venture out to our day's program.

1st evening: We gather everyone at Eloi Merle, for a light dinner to get to know one another and talk about how our adventure will unfold.

2nd day: We will ride to the winery L'hirondelle to meet Jennifer and Didier Buck at their lovely property in Douzen. Jennifer will take us on a vineyard walk, followed by a tasting of their range of wines. She is a passionate and articulate guide of the area. Then, we will have lunch at L'Art et Gourmand in Douzen. We will return to Olonzac for a cooking class and prepare ourselves a wonderful dinner.

3rd day: We will ride to Domaine Borie de Maurel located in Félines-Minervois for a tasting of their incredible wines. Then we will tootle down into the village to have an inspired lunch at the lovely Grand Café Occitan. Our next ride is up into the hills of the Black Mountains, and after a wonderful day of cycling, we will return to Olonzac for a cooking class and prepare another fantastic dinner.

4th day: We will ride to St. Jean de Minervois, home of muscat grape, to meet with John and Nicole Bojanowski, winemakers at Clos de Gravillas. John will guide us on a tasting of their impressive array of wines. Lunch is at Auberge L'Ecole to experience the best cassoulet of your life. Once back in Olonzac we will end the day with a group cooking class.

5th day: Today we will ride up through vineyards and ancient villages to arrive at a stunning panoramic view of the whole area. In the village of Minerve you will have free time to explore and shop and enjoy one of several restaurants and cafés for lunch. After lunch we will have a rosé tasting at Eloi Merle and end the day with a group cooking class.

6th day: Our cycle destination today is Trausse, to meet winemaker Charlotte Senat, where we will have a wine tasting in their vineyard. Another spectacular lunch will be had at L'Atelier in Caune Minervois. Once back in Olonzac, you will have a free night to explore the village, and have dinner on your own at one of the local restaurants.

7th day: The market comes to Olonzac, literally, right outside our door. We will stroll, talk to vendors, and buy our groceries for our lunch and dinner. We will ride to St. Chinian where we meet Michel and Dominique, who own a lovely olive grove. They will take us on a little tour of the property, followed by an olive oil tasting. Then, we will picnic overlooking the olive groves. We will spend the evening preparing a delicious dinner.

The last morning: We will drive you to the train station in Narbonne, and bid adieu.

Please note: Our itinerary is subject to change.



France 2025 Frequently asked questions...

Where do I plan my arrival to?

Narbonne, which is about a 1-1/2 hour train ride from Toulouse or Barcelona. We schedule pick ups in Narbonne on the day the camp starting at 16:00 at the train station. Drop-offs around noon on the last day of the camp are also scheduled.

Where is our home base?

It is in a small village called Olonzac, mid-way between Carcassonne and Narbonne in the Languedoc countryside. Olonzac is a beautiful lush village in the midst of vineyards and the rolling hills of Aude. The Black Mountains are nearby, and we are 20 minutes from the beach by vehicle and 45 minutes away from Spain (3 hrs from Barcelona). The Languedoc is the largest wine producing area in France.

Where are we staying?

A beautifully restored “grande maison” in Olonzac is home for the week. The house is a large, comfortable, charming bed and breakfast. It is centrally located in the middle of the village and has a lovely yard that includes a heated pool. The \$4600.00 cost is based on double occupancy. There is a \$500.00 single supplement for those not wanting to share a room. All rooms have their own bathroom.

How fit do I need to be for the trip? Can I opt out of cycling?

Foremost, this is a holiday for you! There will be three levels of effort offered a day – a more advanced ride (anywhere from 80-120 km a day), a mid-level (about 30-40 km a day) or you can opt to stay by the pool for the day.

What kind of bikes are provided?

Road bikes are provided. Electric assist bikes are available for an extra \$400.00 for the week.

What does the trip include?

Accommodation, most meals, wine, bike rentals, transportation during the week, cooking instruction, and all excursions.

Does the trip cost include gratuity?

The cost of the trip does not include gratuity. If your experience has been positive, we would suggest a tip of 10%.

What is the weather like?

In spring the weather is variable, but it's not usually “cold”. Bring layers and a wind proof jacket; be prepared for hot and chilly, and swimming in the pool!

What about money?

There are two ATMs available in the village. Debit cards work throughout France to get cash, but not for purchases. Cash (euros) is required for market purchases, otherwise credit cards can be used in most shops.

What is the booking procedure?

We take a deposit of \$1000.00 to secure your registration. Once the trip is full, the remaining balance is required. This deposit shows that you are committed to the trip and once the remainder is paid the cancellation policy is in effect. You will be required to sign a standard release form.

What is the cancellation policy?

60 days before, 50% refund. No refunds within 60 days before the trip leaves. You are encouraged to buy trip insurance for those unaccountable life circumstances that do not allow you to follow through with your plans. We will confirm that the trip is a go as soon as our minimum number of registrants have booked. In the event of pandemic issues that do not allow ease of travel we reserve the right to postpone the trip and your reservation will be forwarded to the new dates.



The address of our B&B

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France is 8 hours ahead
of Calgary.

A CULINARY ESCAPE FOR CYCLISTS TO THE SOUTH OF FRANCE  SPRING 2025: Week 1: May 19th - 26th /Week 2: May 28th - June 4th
Cost: \$4600+GST, single supplement \$500, excluding airfare. For more information please contact:

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