



Ariegeoise Cyclo sportive 2009

From our base in Ax-les-Thermes at 720m there are numerous 'Tour de France' cols and stage endings within easy reach. The exact itinerary remains flexible to allow for the differing abilities and desires of the group. You can expect to be cycling anything from 50 to 150km with 800 to 3000m of ascent. Whatever the route choice, you can be assured of great cycling in fantastic scenery. The program below is indented to give you an idea of the kind of rides you can expect during the week.

On any day there is the chance of extending the ride by taking on the stage endings of Ax Bonascre (1380m) or the Plateau de Beille (1800m).

Sunday 21st June: (Transfer Day)

Transfer from Carcassonne airport to our tour start point at Ax-les-Thermes, near Andorra.

Monday 22nd June : Col du Pradel (1681m) / Col du Chioula (1431m). This is a beautiful ride from the door of our lodge on mostly quiet roads taking us through summer cow pastures, limestone gorges, alpine meadows and the medieval villages of the Plateaux de Sault. The ride culminates in a great view of the Pyrenees before a fantastic descent back into Ax. [57km with 1580m of ascent]

Tuesday 23rd June 2009: Col du Port (1250m) / Port de Lers (1517m). We take a lift to Tarascon (20 mins) to avoid the main road. This is a classic loop starting with the relatively gentle climb and sweeping descent of the Col du Port. We then join a quiet road which winds its way up through the forests to the high pastures. There is chance to enjoy a refreshing dip in the Etang de Lers before a great 26km descent back to Tarascon. The ride can be extended with a climb to the Col d'Agnes which has stunning views of the Ariège Pyrenees. [73km with 1650m of ascent]. On the way home there is the option of a lift or a the chance to ride the stunning route de Courniche (one of the most stunning roads in the Pyrenees)

Wednesday 24th June: Andorra! In the 2009 tour there is an epic stage from Barcelona to the ski station of Arcalis at a whopping 2240m, it is the highest ever TDF stage ending! Although Andorra is not famed for its cycling, the climb is on a quiet offshoot from the main valley and is a bit of an epic (although never too steep). I will take you upto the Col de Envalira (2408m) [40 mins drive] you then descend 19 km to Canillo (1520m) before turning off the main road and taking on the Col d'Ordino (1981m). You then join the Arcalis climb in Ordino (1298m) and enjoy the final 18km to the stage ending! After the climb you descend to Ordino for a transfer back to Ax (or you could get out and take on the 33km descent from the Col D'Envalira! [27km of climbing with 1403m ascent].

Thursday 25th June: Col du Pailheres 2001m. This is a classic climb used by the TDF fairly often. It is quiet road with great views. Rather than do a there and back it can be turned into a round trip with a lift upto the Col du Chioula in the morning (20 mins transfer). From here you descend over the Plateau du Sault to the Col du Sept Freres and down to Axiat through some fantastic limestone gorges (there is about 150m of climbing in this 45km!). In Axiat (400m) we start the 36km climb, which is fairly

gentle for the first 20km, but then becomes fairly savage! Once over the col it is downhill all the way to Ax. [Although this day is 100km day there is only(!) 40km of climbing with 1750m ascent].

Friday 26th June: It is advisable to take it easy today, however if you are keen to go out on the bike then there is a nice gentle climb (never gets steeper than 5%) up to the café on the Col du Chioula. Cycle from Ax to Luzanac, climb up the Col du Marmare and the Col du Chioula (1431m) and back to Ax. [18km of climbing, 830m ascent].

Alan will serve up a special pasta dinner.

Saturday 27th June: The Ariegoise Cyclo sportive

This is the big day of the event itself. After an early breakfast you will be transferred to the Tarascon for the start of the event at 0700.

L'Ariegeoise - 165km with 3344m of ascent.

La Mountagnole - 115km with 2392m of ascent.

At the end of the event in Auzat there is lunch provided by the organisers. When all the group have arrived (and recovered we will ride the 18km gentle downhill back to the van)

Sunday 28th June: (Transfer Day)

Time to leave. After breakfast we transfer back to Carcassonne trying to plan when you can come back for more!!