



### **Tour de France Road Cycling Special 2008**

We will be able to announce our 2009 itinerary once the Tour de France route is revealed in October 2008. The route outlined below is the 2008 basic route. We also include options for people who want to cycle more each day. Whatever you choose to do, we encourage you to be in a bar / cafe from 4pm to catch 'Le Tour' on TV.

#### **Day 1: (Transfer Day)**

Transfer from Toulouse airport to our tour start point at Lannemezan - 1hr 30mins. Assemble bikes

#### **Day 2: Lannemezan to St Lizier (87km with 200m of ascent)**

We start our Tour with a long section of stage 11 which gives us a great warm up to our trip (and the mountains). The route is gently undulating in the foothills north of the Pyrenees. We pass through many picturesque French villages, following the river Salat. Our accommodation lies just outside the mediaeval city of St Lizier, formerly a Gallo-Roman town, perched on top of a hill over the river. The former cathedral (11th - 14th century) with its Roman frescoes, and the remains of the Roman town walls are worth seeing.

#### **Day 3: Saint Lizier to Bagneres de Luchon via Portet D'Aspet and Col de Mente (79km with 1585km ascent. Optional extras: Super Bagneres (1200m climb from Luchon)**

Road Cycling does not get better than this!. From St Lizier we head through St Girons and start with a long but gentle climb up the Bouigane valley to our first col, the Portet d'Aspet (1075m, 2nd category climb). The descent is steep and the memorial to Fabio Casartelli is a reminder of the risks taken by Tour de France riders. The Col du Mente (1345m, 1st category climb) is quiet and the descent is one of the best, with a great series of switchbacks. The swooping descent takes us down and towards Bagneres de Luchon, still a popular spa town, nestled in the mountains..

#### **Day 4: Circular route from Luchon incl Port de Bales (70km with 1300m ascent). Optional extras: Col du Portillon (1293m)**

The Port de Bales (1775m, 1st category climb) was a new Col for the Tour de France 2007 route and was only surfaced in 2006! It has stunning views and tight hairpin bends that take us up into the high mountain pastures where transhumance farming is still practiced. You are likely to spot a Griffon Vulture or 2 from the top (hopefully you are not in a condition that they will be interested in you!)

#### **Day 5: Luchon to Argeles Gazost via the Peyresourde and watch the Tour on the Col d'Aspin (106km with 1900m ascent). Optional transfer to the end from the 64km mark)**

On our toughest day of our trip, we follow the Tours route for stage 9, climbing up from Luchon to the top of the Peyresourde (1565m, 1 category climb). If you are in need of refuelling at the top, the cafe does 12 pancakes for 4E! A beautiful descent into the market town of Arreau follows before the classic climb up the Col d'Aspin (1490m, 1st category climb). We will stop somewhere near the top to wait for the pro's to come through - the big views mean we will see them coming from several kilometres away. Once the madness of the peloton passing us has gone, we will make



our way down to Bagnères de Bigorre, where stage 9 will have just ended. You have the option of a lift here to our end point of Argeles Gazost, or if you are loving the cycling, it is a further 42kms (included in the total above).

**Day 6: Circular route from Argeles Gazost to climb the Hautacam and watch ending of Stage 10 (32km with 1185m ascent). Optional extra: The Aubisque (1709m ascent)**

After the epic day 5 we have a more leisurely pace this morning, though not necessarily a leisurely climb, as we make it up the HC Col of Hautacam (1535m) to our reserved Marmot Tours spot on the mountain. We will have the satellite television set up so that when you arrive you can keep in touch with how the Tour are progressing before they arrive with us in the afternoon. Marmot Tours will put on a picnic lunch, so all you have to do is relax and enjoy yourselves before rolling back down the hill to Argeles after the excitement is over. The 14th is Bastide Day in France, so there will be more festivities this evening in the small historic town of Argeles (fireworks are a sure thing).

**Day 7: Argeles Gazost to Lannemezan via the Tourmalet. (93km with 1975m of ascent)**

Today's ride takes us on the route of Stage 10, over one of the most famous Pyrenean cols, The Tourmalet (2115m, HC climb). It is a punishing ride, of that there is no doubt, but it is worth it when you get to the top - make sure you get a photo as evidence! The cafe at the top has a lot of Tour de France memorabilia so is well worth a stop. The descent takes us down to St Marie de Campan where in 1913 Tour rider Eugene Christophe had to single handedly mend his bike in the old forge before continuing on his way. The repair took 3hrs and he was penalised a further 10 mins for letting a 7 year old boy pump the bellows! From here we head to Lannemezan, a lovely ride on small country roads through undulating countryside.

**Day 8 Lannemezan: Watch the stage 11 start before transferring to Toulouse Airport (1hr 30)**

Normally the last day of our trip only holds an airport transfer in store, but not this one! We have found a hotel in Lannemezan so that after packing up our bikes in the morning, we have plenty of time to get a front line spot to watch the stage 11 start. We will arrive in plenty of time to wander the streets and watch the team mechanics and competitors preparing for the race. A stage start is a real buzz and we will have the opportunity of getting within arms reach of the competitors as they come to the stage to sign the day's log. Once they have headed off, after lunch, we will reluctantly head back to Toulouse Airport.