



## Mediterranean Canals & Beaches Tour 4-Day Version

### Tour Overview

**Tour Dates:** You may begin this tour on any day. See Schedule for blackout dates and additional tour scheduling details.

**Location:** The Languedoc Region of France. Near the border with Spain, this is coastal Mediterranean France at its best. This tour features 4 nights in Narbonne, and includes visits to at least 2 golden Mediterranean beaches. It also includes cycling along the Canal du Midi, a 17th century engineering marvel constructed to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. The route along the Canal du Midi's towpath affords the opportunity to experience some of the canal's most magnificent engineering feats, including the Malpas Tunnel; the Foncerannes Locks, a veritable ladder of water comprised of eight consecutive locks; and the Pont-Canal sur l'Orb, a stunningly beautiful bridge by which the canal crosses the wide River Orb. The canal is a United Nations World Heritage Site.

The train trip between Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport and Narbonne takes 5 - 5.5 hours.

**Tour Type:** Hub & Spoke Tour

**Terrain:** Easy, on bike paths with virtually no climbs; mostly off-road cycling on the shaded shore of the canal; some stretches of the path are rugged. Optional rides can add distance and challenge to the tour's itinerary.

**Length:** 4 days / 4 nights

**Distance:** Choose from 3 day-trips ranging from 26 - 34 miles (42 - 55 km) in length.

### Highlights:

**The technological marvel** of a canal constructed in 1680.

**The many pont-canals** (water bridges) which span the canal to cross intersecting rivers.

**The flamencos** and the savage beauty of the Mediterranean wetlands south of Narbonne.

**The wide, golden** sand beaches outside of Narbonne.

**Vineyards** and opportunities for wine-tastings everywhere.

**Days of shaded cycling** along the canal's towpath.

## **Narbonne, your Base**

Set in the heart of a countryside rich in vineyards, Narbonne is a typical Mediterranean city with tiny streets, avenues bordered plane trees, and grand buildings the color of blond stone. The lovely Canal de la Robine running through the center of the city adds to the city's Eden-like feel. With its many flowers and flowering trees crowding the banks of the canals, Narbonne is an incredibly beautiful city. Principle sights include the Archbishop's Palace, a palace built in two parts and housing the Museum of Art and History and the Museum of Archeology, and the Cathédrale de St. Just. In the main square that borders the palace a portion of the Via Domitia, the ancient Roman road connecting Spain with the Alps, has been excavated.

## **Day Trip Descriptions**

### **Spoke 1: Ile Ste. Lucie Wetlands & the Beach at Port-la-Nouvelle**

**Route:** Begins and ends in Narbonne. Easy, flat cycling along the Canal de la Robine.

**Distance:** 44 km / 28 miles

**Description:** This day-trip takes you to the wetlands (shallow, salt-water lagoons) via a bike path that parallels the Canal de la Robine for the 22 km from Narbonne to Port-la-Nouvelle on the Mediterranean Sea. This is an area where sea and land, salt and freshwater mix freely creating a unique ecosystem constantly affected by wind and sea currents. This fragile wetland, which supports an incredible variety of flora and fauna, is a major stop for migratory birds and is home to large colonies of pink flamencos.

### **Spoke 2: Narbonne Beach & the Mountains of the Clape**

**Route:** Begins and ends in Narbonne. Easy, flat cycling to the ocean. The return trip requires a tough climb that affords incredible views of the surrounding countryside and the Mediterranean Sea.

**Distance:** 42 km / 26 miles

**Description:** This day-trip begins with an easy ride to Narbonne Plage, often on off-road bicycle paths. On your return to Narbonne, you'll cycle on-road through the Mountains of the Clape climbing to several magnificent vistas. Parts of this landscape are lush and pine-clad, others rugged and desolate, all reminiscent of a Greek island. On the lower slopes are vineyards, and everywhere there is the scent of Mediterranean sunshine. Your ride atop the mountains affords classic views of the sea; in the distance you can even see the Pyrenees as they tumble down to meet the deep blue of the Mediterranean. The area is crisscrossed by a series of hiking trails, temptation to linger even longer in this unique setting.

### **Spoke 3: The Canal du Midi & Béziers**

**Route:** Begins in Narbonne and ends in Béziers, from which you will return to Narbonne by train. The route is largely flat, following the shaded towpaths of the Canal de la Robine and the Canal du Midi.

**Distance:** 55 km / 34 miles

**Description:** This day-trip provides the opportunity to enjoy serene cycling as you explore the technological marvels of the Canal du Midi. As you cycle the route, the surrounding hills encroach closer and closer until the canal is forced to tunnel beneath a mountain. And just before you reach Béziers you pass one of the monumental achievements of the canal: the Foncerannes Locks, a veritable ladder of water comprised of eight consecutive locks. Just beyond you cross the Pont-Canal sur

l'Orb, a stunningly beautiful bridge by which the canal crosses the wide River Orb.

Béziers, at the end of the route, is a bustling city built on the hills overlooking the surrounding Mediterranean countryside. With Roman origins, Béziers features tiny medieval streets, fine monuments and museums, and grand boulevards. And should you need a break from your explorations, you can relax in the Allés Paul Riquet, a wide pedestrian boulevard lined with cafes, restaurants, and shops. The boulevard is so densely lined with trees that it feels dark and cool even in the hottest of afternoon suns. Paul Riquet, the creator of the Canal du Midi, was born in Béziers.

## **Tour Price: US \$325.00 per person**

**Children's Price - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$150.00 per child.**

**Discounts are available for parties of 5 or more adults.**

### **The tour price includes:**

- Tour Documentation: Route instructions, map, Pre-trip Preparation Guide, On-Road Quick Reference Guide, and Sights Guide.
- Bike Rental for 3 Days: Excellent quality hybrid with handlebar bag, map carrier, cyclometer, water bottle cage, rear rack, lock, repair kit, and helmet. Optional pedal cages.
- Delivery and Pick-up of your Rental Bike
- English-Speaking Support Staff
- Reservation of your Accommodations
- Shipping and Handling Charges for US customers
- Basic SAG Support: If you choose not to cycle on one or more days due to weather, illness, etc., AND you notify your Diverse Directions support representative in advance so that you and your bikes can be transported along with your luggage, no additional charges will apply.

### **The tour price does NOT include:**

- Hotels: Because you are free to select from a wide range of hotels -- from charming and basic 2-star to 4-star luxury (where available) -- the cost of your hotel accommodations is not bundled into the tour package price. See our Accommodations Options page for the price ranges of each category of hotel. A list of accommodations options for this tour, with website links, is available upon request.
- Meals: You are free to determine your own budget for meals. A wide variety of options are available -- from creating a picnic from provisions obtained at a boulangerie / patisserie, to dining at bistros and restaurants, or taking meals at your hotel (where available.) Please note that breakfasts are NOT included in France hotel rates. However, hotels with restaurants often offer a demi-pension option, which includes the cost of your room, breakfast, and dinner at a reasonable price.
- Transportation from your home to Narbonne and from Narbonne to your home.
- Personal expenses & Insurance
- Shipping and Handling Charges for non-US customers. A shipping & handling charge of US \$15.00 will be added to tour package orders outside the US.

For Diverse Directions' payment terms, cancellation policy, and all terms & conditions, please see [Terms & Conditions](#).