

# WINE, CASTLES, & CAVE PAINTINGS

## BY DIVERSE DIRECTIONS: SELF-GUIDED BICYCLE TOURS

### Tour Overview

**Tour Dates** See the Schedule page on our website.

**Location** The Périgord Region of France. Overnight destinations include St. Emilion, Bergerac, Limeuil, Montignac, and Sarlat. The train trip from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport to Libourne requires about 4 hours. Because of the time required to make the return trip to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport from Sarlat, plan to layover at least 1 night in Paris on the back-end of your tour.

**Type** Circuit Tour. This tour is available with standard support.

**Terrain** Variable. Long, relatively flat stretches as well as two to three climbs on most days (some challenging). Of course, following each climb, you'll be rewarded with a breathtaking vista and an exhilarating descent.

**Length** 7 days / 8 nights.

**Distance** Total: 157 miles / 254 km. Average per day: 31 miles / 50 km.

### Daily Itinerary

#### **Day 0: Train to Libourne and Cab to St. Emilion. Spend 2 nights in St. Emilion.**

We ask that all tour participants arrive in St. Emilion no later than the evening before the first day of the tour. This reduces any stress associated with travel delays, as no activities are required until Day 1 of your tour.

#### **Day 1: Free Day in St. Emilion.**

You have the entire day to explore this gem of a town, to savor its rich ambiance, and to recover from jet lag. You are sure to be awestruck by the beauty of this medieval village's unique setting, which is rather like a sunken amphitheater surrounded by some of the world's most exclusive vineyards. The narrow streets descend steeply past medieval stone buildings that change color with the time of day and the weather. As beautiful as this ancient stone is on a cloud-smattered day, against the clear deep blue southern France sky the light on these stones is breathtaking.

#### **Day 2: Bike from St. Emilion to Bergerac - 70 km / 43 miles. Spend 1 night in Bergerac.**

Your rental bike(s) will be delivered following breakfast. Your first day of cycling begins in the vineyards and takes you into the actual *Département* of the Dordogne. You reach the Dordogne River within the first hour of your ride and then continue following its course throughout the day. Enjoy peaceful traffic-free cycling through small villages until you arrive at Bergerac. Bergerac is a sizeable town with a beautifully restored medieval section where you will be staying amidst the half-timbered 14<sup>th</sup> century houses. Following your ride, enjoy the afternoon exploring this extremely friendly city on foot. You also have the option to visit the castle at nearby Montbazillac. In either of our two Bergerac hotels you will enjoy superb hospitality and wonderful meals.

#### **Day 3: Bike from Bergerac to Limeuil - 46 km / 29 miles. Spend 1 night in Limeuil.**

This relatively short day of cycling continues along the Dordogne River, through the lovely bastide (fortified medieval village) of Lalinde before reaching the *cingles*. The *cingles*, French for buckles, are loops in the river which you will view from two tremendous vantage points along today's route:

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the *Cingle de Trémolat* and the *Cingle de Limeuil*. Yes, there are some climbs today, but the total mileage is short. Stop for a snack in the lovely village of Trémolat before beginning your climbs. After you complete your three climbs, descend dramatically into Limeuil, located at the confluence of the Dordogne and Vézère Rivers. This is a gorgeous village set high above the river with outstanding views of the two rivers. You'll not want to leave this peaceful paradise. In either of our Limeuil hotels you will enjoy a scrumptious dinner.

### **Day 4: Limeuil to Montignac- 33.5 km / 21 miles. Spend 2 nights.**

From Limeuil you'll leave the banks of the Dordogne and begin following the Vézère River. We've kept this day's mileage fairly low to ensure you'll have plenty of time and energy to enjoy the many sights on your way to Montignac. If you're interested in things prehistoric, you'll want to spend some time in les Ezyies, where you can visit the Museum of Prehistory, a prehistoric cave shelter, and the *Grotte de Font-de-Gaume*, site of some of France's most famous prehistoric cave paintings.

After leaving les Ezyies, you'll enjoy particularly dramatic scenery along the cliff-studded banks of the Vézère River. These cliffs are full of caves that have been used as homes for millennia; many of these cave dwellings are open to the public. Your cycling day ends at your hotel on the forested bluffs overlooking the Vézère River and all of the surrounding splendor. From this central, but serene location you're just a short distance from a huge number of noteworthy sights, including Lascaux II. There are also several castles in the area to explore.

### **Day 5: Free Day in Montignac.**

### **Day 6: Montignac to Sarlat - 51 km / 32 miles. Spend 2 nights in Sarlat.**

From Montignac you make a challenging climb out of the river valley to visit a series of medieval villages -- St.-Armand-de-Coly, Coly, and St. Genies -- which can be explored at your leisure. Beyond St. Genies, you'll enjoy pastoral riding that becomes more wooded as you near Sarlat.

Sarlat's entire medieval core has been designated protected status. Wander the medieval streets of this living museum and consider taking one of the published walks on the hillsides surrounding Sarlat. The Tourist Information Office will provide you materials needed to do a self-guided tour walking tour of the old town as well as hillside walks, in English.

### **Day 7: Free Day in Sarlat. Explore, shop, or cycle the Dordogne Castle Circuit.**

The castles are numerous in this area and there is no better way to see them than to do this 53-km circuit on bike. Your circuit includes visits to the following castles: Château la Malartrie, Castelnaud, Château Milandes, Château Feyrac, Château de Beynac, and Château de Marqueyssac. Don't worry about touring all the castles you'll pass. Some are closed to the public altogether and thus can be only appreciated from afar; others only open their extraordinary gardens to the public. However, the interiors of at least three of castles are open to the public.

Along your route you will also pass through the riverside village of la Roque-Gageac which, due to its unique setting, enjoys a subtropical microclimate. If you need to rest awhile, you can hire a boat in la Roque-Gageac for more relaxed touring along the river. Finally, you'll visit the bastide of Domme, one of France's most formidably positioned, fortified medieval towns. We'll take you up the back way to avoid an even more severe climb, but the views from the top are definitely worth the effort.