

THE MAGICAL LOT TOUR

BY DIVERSE DIRECTIONS: SELF-GUIDED BICYCLE TOURS

Tour Overview

Tour Dates See the Schedule page on our website.

Location France's Quercy region, also known as the Lot. Overnight destinations include Sarlat, Creysse, St. Céré, Rocamadour, and Figeac. The train trip from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport to Sarlat requires about 7 hours. Because of the time required to make the return trip to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport from Figeac, 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.

Length 7 days / 8 nights.

Distance Total: 112 miles / 181 km. Average per day: 28 miles / 45 km.

Daily Itinerary

Day 0: Train to Sarlat. Spend 2 nights in Sarlat.

We ask that all tour participants arrive in Sarlat 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 Sarlat.

Sarlat is practically a living museum of the 15th century, Sarlat's Golden Age. In fact, its entire medieval center has been granted protected status to preserve its historical grandeur. Sarlat's tiny medieval streets are lined with a vast array of wonderful restaurants offering cuisines from around the world, laid back sidewalk cafés, lively bars and exciting galleries, boutiques and shops. Located in a valley amidst the splendor of the rolling hills of the Périgord countryside, a more appealing or wonderful base location could be hardly imagined.

Day 2: Sarlat to Creysse - 57 km / 35 miles. Spend 1 night in Creysse.

Today's ride begins in the thickly wooded region known as *Périgord Noir* (Black Dordogne) so named for the shadows cast by all those trees. After an enchanting ride through the dark forest you'll reach the Dordogne River, the course of which you'll follow the remainder of the day. Before crossing into the department of the Lot, you'll have the opportunity to visit at least two castles that continue to keep watch over the river. Beyond Souillac -- with its 12th century abbey dominating its medieval core -- the landscape changes rather dramatically, as the hills of the *Causse de Gramat* become drier and more rugged. And then for miles you'll cycle a road that is narrowly wedged between the towering cliffs and the lazy river. You'll spend the evening in the tiny medieval village of Creysse, in the heart of this splendid scenery.

Day 3: Creysse to St. Céré - 35 km / 22 miles. Spend 1 night in St. Céré.

Today's ride is shorter in distance, but offers so much in sights that you'll want to savor the ride as you follow the Dordogne the entire day to St. Céré. You will pass through the lovely medieval villages of Floirac and Carennac before reaching Castelnau, the largest fortified medieval castle

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in France. From Castelnau, it's just a short ride to St. Céré, one of France's most beautiful villages.

Stop into the St. Céré Tourist Information Office for a copy of the English self-guided walking tour with explanations of the historical sights and then, enjoy strolling the canal-lined streets. If you have the time and are so inclined, climb to the castle of St. Laurent les Tours to see the work of artist Jean Lurcat in this most unusual setting. Or make a visit to the Château de Montal, another beautiful castle just a few kilometers from your hotel. You will fall in love with St. Céré's setting, on the border of Cantal, a mountainous, thinly populated and little visited corner of France.

Day 4: St. Céré to Rocamadour - 34 km / 21 miles. Spend 2 nights in Rocamadour.

Today's ride is short, but try to get an early start as there is much to see on this gorgeous ride atop the *cause*. Early in your ride you'll pass through the beautiful village of Autoire, which is nestled in the last valley you'll see for a while. From Autoire, you'll climb to the top of the *cause* as you follow a cascading stream and enjoy stupendous views of the region. Not far beyond the end of your climb, you'll reach the village of Padirac and then, the *Gouffre de Padirac*.

A visit to this natural wonder is highly recommended; after all, how often do you have the opportunity to take a boat ride on a subterranean river? Following your visit, you'll continue your ride along the *cause*, with several ups-and-downs to Rocamadour, a holy pilgrimage sight for ten centuries. The beauty of Rocamadour simply cannot be conveyed by words. Upon your arrival, there'll be no need to worry about having spent so much time at the *Gouffre* because you'll have tomorrow to enjoy Rocamadour's sights, including the *Forêt des Singes* (the Forest of Monkeys). While in Rocamadour you must treat yourself to *cabécou*, a locally produced goat cheese; it's awesome.

Day 5: Free Day in Rocamadour.

Day 6: Rocamadour to Figeac - 54 km / 34 miles. Spend 2 nights in Figeac.

Today's route takes you across the lonely *Causse de Gramat* through tiny villages and past lots of meadows of grazing sheep to the lovely town of Figeac. Amidst the solitude of your day's ride, you'll have the opportunity to visit the *Parc Animalier*, a "cageless" zoo sheltering only animals native to the region, as well as the 16th century Château d'Assier.

Figeac is the largest town in this part of the Lot region. With a beautifully restored medieval core and a pretty location on the Célé River, you will have lots to explore. All of Figeac's historic sites are described in a detail, easy-to-follow self-guided walking tour of the old city available from the Tourist Information Office. Published in English, this publication provides a great introduction to the city.

Day 7: Free Day in Figeac.