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# MEN'S JOURNAL

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Ride the majestic Gorges de la Nesque — and sleep in the Marquis de Sade's château.



# Four Ways to Ride Europe

No matter how much you cycle, there's an epic tour that rewards with jaw-dropping sights — and even better chow.

## A MELLOWER TOUR DE FRANCE

**Trek Travel's Provence Explorer (6 days, 5 nights)**

Most cyclists know Mont Ventoux as the mountain climb in Provence that's ended many Tour de France bids. You can ride it when the pros come to town — there are dozens of companies that, for top dollar, give cyclists a firsthand view of the Tour route just as the crowds gather. But, as

Trek Travel's Provence Explorer tour taught us, Ventoux is best at the end of summer, when the spectators and the heat have dispersed, and a bed in a château is waiting for you after the ride.

Pampered bike tours are not uncommon, but this trip explores one of the most beautiful cycling regions in the world. Lodging (which includes two nights at the Marquis de Sade's château) is part of the package, as are support vans, guides, and top-of-the-line bikes; we rode D12 electronic-shifting Madones.

After an exhilarating descent of Ventoux, your reward is a meal that includes deep-fried oysters in a cauliflower crust over mashed parsnips. But in Provence, where cyclists are treated with respect by both cars and pedestrians, the spoils are endless.

The day after Ventoux, we rode along the Gorges de la Nesque, a narrow, rolling stretch that looms more than 1,000 feet above southern France's second-biggest canyon. We passed sheep and fields of lavender as we made our way to Saull, home to a shop that stuffs hot crepes with oozing slabs of chèvre and herbs. In the hill town of Gordes, the rosé was free-flowing, and we bought lavender oil from a grizzled man at a shabby stand in front of his château. Afterward, we hopped back on our bikes, anxious to see what was around the next bend.

**DIFFICULTY:** For weekend riders. *trektravel.com*; from \$2,799 — **TYGHE TRIMBLE**

## CYCLING

### A SWISS ADVENTURE

**DuVine Switzerland Bike Tour (6 days, 5 nights)**

Cycle the Alps without the pain. You'll still see plenty of snowy mountains and Alpine forests, but the hills on this trip are rolling. "We've specifically found the routes that are accessible to the average cyclist," says DuVine's marketing director Michelle Duffy. **BEST DAY:** After a spin through the medieval village of Rougemont, hang with cheesemonger Philippe "Pipo" Rosat, who makes the Gruyère-like L'Étivaz in a copper pot over an open fire of spruce logs. **DIFFICULTY:** For weekend riders. *duvine.com*; \$5,295 — **IAN LANDAU**

### WINE TOUR IN PORTUGAL

**Bike Tours Portugal Alentejo Heritage (8 days, 7 nights)**

Ride lazily through the southern Portuguese wine region of Alentejo. Tour manager André Martins romantically describes it as "a banquet to our senses," due to the fields of sunflowers, olive trees, eucalyptus plantations, and, of course, the many vineyards. **BEST DAY:** A pit stop in Évora includes a visit to the creepy Chapel of Bones, a 16th-century church decorated with human skulls. **DIFFICULTY:** For novice riders. *biketoursportugal.com*; \$4,900 — **I.L.**

### THE DOLOMITE CHALLENGE

**InGamba La Pinarello Gran Fondo & Dolomites (8 days, 7 nights)**

Impersonate a pro as you climb Italy's craggy Dolomites, including Passo di Giàu's 29 switchbacks. Luckily, pro perks — like Pinarello bikes and daily rubdowns — are included. **BEST DAY:** The trip kicks off with the 106-mile Gran Fondo Pinarello. You'll know you're in Italy when prosecco is the most popular energy drink at the rest stops. **DIFFICULTY:** For seasoned amateurs. *ingamba.pro*; \$6,750 — **I.L.**



One of many climbs in the quad-straining Dolomites

FROM TOP: MARCIA MCFADDEN; JERED GRUBER