

# General Destination Cycling Trip Information

*This page includes all the necessary information for those people looking to book a trip, find out more information on preparing for their trip and also for those guests who have already booked a trip.*

## What is included on our trips?

All accommodations, all meals other than lunches and one evening meal, snacks and drinks for each days ride, the knowledge, support, and coaching of the guides; daily route support with our vans, all transportation during the trip, comprehensive trip literature, pre-departure information (how to prepare, information on the race and or trip, our hotels and our visits) as well as some complimentary sponsor merchandise and swag. Please read on for further details. If you have any questions feel free to contact us.

- Riding days with opportunities to ride parts of the course on race day whenever this is possible.
- Visits to the races including starts, finishes, roadside viewing and climbs.
- Transport and SAG wagon available each day including drinks and on the bike fuel.
- Bike guides available for each organized daily ride.
- Mechanical assistance from pro mechanics.
- Masseurs will be available (first massage is gratis).
- Newsletters from ITT with tips and advice on training for your trip.
- A roadbook containing color route maps for each day that will include hotel details and a timetable.
- Guest Pack: Info on how to prepare for your trip and what to take.

**1) Accommodations:** We have hand picked the accommodations on our route. While organizing our itinerary, we have located our evening accommodations as close as possible to the race itinerary while maintaining "the best available" hotels. In keeping with luxury accommodations and moving with the race, it is necessary to do some transfers by van. In each of our unique destinations, we choose accommodations that are not only superior in comfort and quality, but that represent the regions true flavor through food and spirits. Most hotels have a pool, so be sure to take swimwear along.

We know you will relish the elegance and comfort of our chosen hotels each night of your stay. All trip prices are based on double occupancy. We do our best to place you with a roommate of similar age/likes and of course sex. If you make the request over 60 days before the trip start and there is no roommate available, we will place you in your own room with no additional cost. If you sign up within 60 days of the trip start, and request a roommate, and there is no roommate available, we will place you in your own room and charge the single supplement fee. We will do our best to accommodate your dietary requests. Just inform us of your needs when you sign up for your trip. Destination Cycling does not provide alcohol at meals. Please see each trips detailed itineraries for further information and some pictures on where we will be staying. As a rule of thumb, we stay in luxury accommodations—generally three- and four-star hotels or relais chateaux. We use best hand selected lodging available. Prices are based on double occupancy.

The Tour de France will attract a record number of visitors from around the world and therefore we may not always be able to include a first choice accommodation in some remote areas.

**2) Dining:** We will include all breakfasts and dinners (except for one evening) on the trip. A quality trip means having adapted meals to your personal diet. By dining at some excellent restaurants and we want you to experience the fine European cuisine. We will be sure to emphasize fine food but also a "proper" meal for active people has been requested. We will also include complimentary wine on our first and last group dinners. You can have one or more dinners on your own if you desire. This is not included in the cost of the trip. If you have any special dietary requirements, please let us know when filing out your reservation form so that we may accommodate your needs. All breakfasts and dinners except for one evening. Gratuities and taxes on meals. Fruit and nutritious snacks, energy bars and cold bottled water.

**3) Transportation:** From the starting point of each trip to the drop off point, transportation is provided in comfortable minivans. We usually have "smaller passenger" vans that can comfortably seat 8 people plus one other "support vehicle" for your luggage and bike bag that will be waiting for you at the hotel. A large percentage of our staff live year round in Europe. They are fluent in the following languages: French/English/Spanish/Italian and have excellent knowledge of the areas we will be traveling to. All ground transfers for you, your bicycle and your luggage during the trip. Support Vehicles for daily cycling itineraries, luggage transfers, bicycle mechanical equipment, first aid, cell phone communications are located in each van in the event of an emergency.

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**4) Briefings:** Daily route descriptions, mapped itineraries. Map with location of sag vehicles and hotel. Briefing each evening for the following days route. Views on and analysis of the days stage (when applicable).

**5) Guiding & Coaching:** Is offered and available any time during the trip. Our cycling guides ride with the group at all times. Guidance and tips are available any time, we also offer some specialized training camps.

**6) Ride Support:** Each trip includes a professional mechanic offering technical support with a fully equipped repair kit and tools at your disposal. Please make certain your bike comes ready to ride and is in perfect working order.

Our team of soigneurs are available for your daily massage and other health needs.

**7) Meet the Riders:** During most trips, you may have the opportunity to meet professional cyclists, including our own Tyler Hamilton.

**8) Destination Cycling cycling jersey:** Please be sure to give us your size! (check the appropriate box on the booking form)

**9) Riding Distances:** As in the past, we always try to ride on the race course where ever possible. This really gives you a good feel for what the riders endure during the race. Our support guides and vans will do their best to provide support and flexibility for our travelers in choosing their daily cycling distance. Each cyclist will be given an evening briefing as well as a map to better plan their daily ride. Most of our trips offer different organized group ride levels to better accommodate you. You will always have the choice of riding with a group or you can explore on your own. Should you choose not to cycle on any given day, you may stay with the passenger van. Please understand that if we are riding the race course, particularly on the mountain passes, it may be impossible for a van to be with the cyclists at all times. However, we will always give you the daily cycling itinerary map and location of the sag vehicle. We will always try to seek the best balance between race course itinerary and logistical support.

**10) Our Group Size:** Your traveling companions will not exceed 3 groups or about 26 people. By limiting the number of our travelers we will ensure a detailed, well serviced, memorable cycling trip.

#### **OK, now what is not included?**

Airfare to and from the trip; lodging before and after the trip; personal items purchased during the trip. You always have the opportunity to explore regional cuisine on your own, if you desire but this is not included in the cost of the trip. Your guides will be happy to make recommendations if you wish. Any mechanical repairs and or parts that may be needed.

- Airfare
- Bicycles
- Any mechanical repairs and or parts.
- Lunches and one evening meal
- Drinks, alcoholic beverages and wine (we will include the wine for first and last group dinners)
- Meals outside of the group
- Travel and personal insurance
- Personal hotel expenses; mini bar, telephone, room service
- Pre- and post-trip itineraries

#### **Before you travel**

Determine your level to select the trip that is right for you. To Destination Cycling, every guest is an individual. We have designed our trips to accommodate most fitness levels and every unique type of traveler. Here are some guidelines to better help you choose your trip. We have listed an activity level for each trip that will help you decide if it is suitable for your fitness level. At Destination Cycling, we know there is no perfect method to rate the difficulty or ease of a route, as every rider will have their own opinion of that days ride. It is our aim to design a rating that takes into account the miles ridden, the amount of vertical elevation gained and finally the road quality.

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Based on our experience we can help you select a trip and or particular ride that is best suited to your individual needs. We have three different activity levels:

- performance
- sportive
- leisure

While most of our trips are geared for folks that are somewhere in the sportive-performance levels, we can accommodate both leisure cyclists and non-riding partners with a bit of advanced notice.

Review the descriptions below when assessing which trip best matches your fitness level. If you have any questions about which level is right for you, please ask our Travel Consultant.

**Performance:** Rides of 40-70+ miles per day and usually between 4 to 6 hours of riding depending how hard you push. The terrain is usually rolling with multiple climbs, some of which are the same as the race will follow. These rides are truly epic, and carefully planned by experienced riders who enjoy a steep climb as much as an exhilarating top-speed descent. Your mileage may vary as you like, you can stop at certain designated areas to "climb in the van" or for those that just can't get enough we offer extra mileage options whenever possible. Most of our trips are at this level and usually present no problem to seasoned cyclists.

**Sportive:** Rides of 30-50 miles per day and 3 to 5 hours riding at a comfortable pace. The terrain is often rolling with an occasional climb that offers great viewpoints, something special or a freewheeling downhill. You always have the option of taking a day off and traveling in the van or visiting the surrounding countryside. Nearly every trip we offer includes cycling at this level.

**Leisure:** Rides or less than 30 miles per day and from 2 to 3 hours of riding at your own pace. The terrain is relatively flat, sightseeing is more on the agenda, so take your time and enjoy the ride. Riding is optional on all days, but sightseeing on your bike is the best way to experience the unique culture of your trip.

### Getting prepared

Assess your own fitness level: Our goal is to introduce you to the culture, customs, and beauties of the destination of your choice, and to provide you with an experience that exceeds your expectations. So that you may enjoy the experience to its fullest, we recommend that you accurately assess your personal health and level of physical fitness with the help of a physician before signing up for a trip. Please try to be as honest as possible when filling out the booking form. This helps ensure you end with cyclists of a matched ability.

**Speak to Our Travel Consultant:** Our Travel Consultants have traveled the world over and know the details of each of our unique trips. When you call Destination Cycling, you will be assisted by a knowledgeable travel consultant and cyclist who will help you in determining the fit between you and the trip you are considering. Also, this person will assist you throughout the booking process, and will be your main contact for all of your questions and pre-trip concerns. Your travel consultant and Director Sportif is Joe Tonon.

### Training

The first step to a fun cycling vacation is to be in good shape. That said, you don't need to be a contender for the yellow jersey to join an Destination Cycling cycling vacation. You simply need to be in good physical condition, have a good sense of humor and enjoy meeting new people to have a great holiday. However, we ask that you assess and maintain your level of physical fitness to ensure that you get the most out of your experience and your cycling adventure with Destination Cycling. If you need help preparing for your trip, we would be pleased to assist you.

### Organization

To help make your trip go as smoothly as possible, it helps to be well organized in preparing yourself for travel and the trip. Here are a few things you need to prepare in advance for your trip:

Have a valid passport. This is mandatory for travel outside of the United States. If you do not have a passport you can obtain one with the help of your local town hall. You should probably allow for 6 weeks to receive your passport.

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Purchase your airline tickets as soon as you have decided on your destination. The designated airport pick up is listed for each trip. Please make certain you arrive on time. You can very often find a better rate with just a little advanced planning. Make certain you purchase travel insurance at the same time, this could save you money in the long run should something unexpected alter your travel plans.

Make sure your bike and equipment are ready to ride. Try not to make any drastic changes to your bike or shoes just before the trip. A well maintained bike will make your trip go that much smoother.

Remember that your bike is an expensive piece of machinery. Buy a good travel case to protect it. For more information or to purchase cases, contact us.

It is also a good idea to bring along travelers checks for the odd expenditures you will encounter on the trip. You can often get a better rate through your personal bank rather than abroad and it is often better paying in cash rather than plastic in many places.

### **Travel**

When arranging your travel/flight schedules, please do so with the following in mind: we will pick you up at the airport listed on the itinerary on the day the tour you have selected to attend starts. You may want to give yourself some extra time between the tour start date and your arrival to get over jet lag.

### **Guest Pack**

Due to great demand, we have decided to include our guest pack (or at least the major parts of it) online. It is easier to retrieve anywhere and hopefully will save everyone some paper and time. You are certain to find the information you need below. If you have further questions, you may contact us any time, we would be glad to assist you. You will also mailed the following information:

- Confirmation of your booking request once we have received your deposit or full payment
- An invoice stating your present balance and next installment (if applicable)
- A release of liability form
- An autographed postcard from Tyler Hamilton
- Each Destination Cycling guest will also receive a complimentary cycling jersey at the start of each trip
- Each guest will also receive a hard copy of each days itinerary upon arrival.
- Travel/flight information on group meeting and drop off points

### **Scheduling your flights**

Try to arrive on the first date of the trip at the scheduled airport if possible in the late morning. Most flights leaving from the US are usually scheduled to arrive in the morning. We will pick you up and get you to our starting hotel in most cases by early afternoon.

For the return, we will drive you to scheduled airport on morning of the last date of the trip for the early flights. (No flights before 7:30am please).

On all European tours, you will need to depart a day earlier to arrive on time. For example, on a trip where the scheduled arrival day is July 9th, you would need to depart from the USA on July 8th as you will be flying during the night on the transatlantic portion of your flight. However, when you depart to go back home, you will arrive on the same day that you left Europe. For example, if the departure date is July 25th, you will arrive back in the States on the 25th as well.

Please see each trip itinerary for details on where to arrive/departure and the exact times and dates.

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### **Packing list**

- valid passport and plane tickets, travelers' checks and or credit cards
- your bike well maintained in a sturdy case for traveling
- cycling clothes - we suggest taking 4 changes of clothing if you are good at keeping up with laundry
- cycling shoes and helmet
- some lightweight gloves
- casual clothes for before and after the rides and for dinner
- toiletry items
- swim suit
- sunglasses, baseball cap and lots of sunblock
- camera
- small day pack you use to leave a change of clothes and footwear in for after the ride
- special energy drinks/snacks you are accustomed to

### **Transporting your bike**

Our guests bring their own bikes with them and we assemble them for you once you have arrived. Since many of the programs involve mountainous terrain, our guests prefer to have their own bikes with them because they are comfortable with it and fits them properly. There is nothing more frustrating than being on a dream trip and not having a bike that fits you properly.

To transport your bike, we recommend the Iron Case. This is a great product which is certain to last you a lifetime. Additionally, on international flights, your bike will normally fly free if you bring it along as your second piece of luggage. Please call your airline in advance to confirm this as some have changed their policies since 9/11. Upon your arrival and departure, our professional mechanics will help you assemble your bike at the beginning or help you repack it after the tour is finished. Sorry, but we don't offer rental bikes as they don't fit nearly as well as the bike you are used to riding back home.

### **Some tips for packing your bike**

When packing your bike, if you have a hard case such the one listed above it is pretty straightforward. However, if you have a soft case, we recommend you completely disassemble your machine and wrap the tubes using pipe insulation (you can buy this in a hardware store). Next wrap your all your components that you have removed from the frame and secure them with duct tape inside the rear triangle of the frame. The handlebars and stem can also be taped to the top tube of the frame. Finally remove the rear cluster and skewers from your wheels and place the wheels (preferably in padded wheel covers) on each side of the frame and tape these to the bike itself. Check to make sure the whole package fits inside the bag and...zip it up!

### **Gearing and bike setup**

This is one of the most often asked questions we get. Our answer is simple; we have never had anyone regret using a triple chain ring setup. Many of the climbs and passes are much longer and harder than one imagines. It is always better to have that extra low gear just in case. For numbers try a 52/42/30 set up with a 12-24 or 26 rear cluster.

Newer, more efficient (and less expensive) are the new "compact" cranksets. These allow you to use your existing front and rear derailleurs and obtain an efficient gearing setup. Our guides use a 52/36 chainrings with a 12-27 freewheel. This is the same crankset that Tyler Hamilton made famous when he won stage 16 during the 2003 Tour de France made by FSA. That should get you to the top of any hill or mountain pass. We also suggest a slightly higher than normal stem/handlebar setup with bars as wide as 42-44cm being quite common among the guys. Having a slightly more "upright" position will allow you breath better and have a more comfortable position when climbing.

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