

# Switzerland & France: Lake Geneva, Annecy & Valleys of the Alps

## Bike Vacation Only

This unique cycling vacation reveals a side of Switzerland and France you won't find anywhere else. Join local VBT trip leaders in a delightful spin along gentle lakeside bike paths far from tourist centers. Discover enchanting thermal pools springing from deep beneath Mont Blanc itself—creating the warmest geothermal waters in Switzerland. Our expert local leaders will guide you through the scenic Route du Rhône bike path towards Sion—an ancient city that time forgot. Here, you'll find incredible Grand Cru vintages and a charming 13th-century hilltop castle. Pedal the sapphire shores of Lake Annecy, discovering medieval canals and delightful cafés—returning to relax on the sunny veranda of your waterfront hotel.

## Cultural Highlights

- Cycle well-paved bike paths amid stunning alpine beauty in France and Switzerland.
- Pedal along three stunning lakes of the Rhône-Alpes region—Geneva, Annecy, and Saint-André—delighting in bike paths along the Rhône and Isère rivers.
- Savor Swiss and French cuisine and wine to fuel and enhance your journey, from fondues and Fendant to coq au vin and Pinot Noir.
- Stroll the atmospheric medieval Old Towns of Annecy and Chambéry, grand cultural capitals of once-mighty French kingdoms.
- Relax in the magical setting of a former abbaye, located on the shores of one of the most beautiful bays in the world.

## What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on well-paved bike paths and low-traffic country roads. Most paths follow rivers and lakes, with mountains far in the distance. It is ideal for beginning cyclists. Longer mileage options are offered on some days for more avid bikers.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 3-39 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-5 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

## Climate Information

**Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

May 67°/50°, June 73°/57°, September 72°/54°, October 61°/47°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

May 3.0, June 3.1, September 3.0, October 3.4

## **DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Travel to Switzerland / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception and Dinner**

Your tour begins at 12:00 p.m. at the pre-night hotel in Chamonix, or at 2:00 p.m. at the first hotel, the Hotel des Bains de Saillon, in Saillon, Switzerland. Your VBT Trip Leaders will meet you in the lobby of the Swiss hotel, wearing VBT staff apparel.

If you've chosen to meet the group in Chamonix, please be outside the designated hotel by 12:00 p.m. A VBT representative will be there to assist you. As VBT uses multiple hotels in Chamonix, please contact us in advance to confirm which property will serve as the meeting point for your departure.

Please ensure you have lunch before meeting your VBT Trip Leaders, as no meal will be provided before the group gathers.

VBT strongly recommends arriving in Switzerland or France at least one day prior to the start of the tour to allow time to rest and recover from jet lag before sightseeing and cycling.

All guests will gather at 2:00 p.m. in the lobby of Hotel des Bains de Saillon for a safety and bike-fitting session with your Trip Leaders. Later in the afternoon, enjoy a warm-up ride along scenic country roads through charming Swiss villages.

In the evening, gather for a welcome reception and dinner at the hotel restaurant, where a warm, family-style meal awaits—perfect for settling in and getting to know your fellow travelers.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 6 km (3 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

The warm-up ride offers a chance to get comfortable with your bike as you pedal along quiet country

roads. Expect occasional uphill climbs as the route takes you through several charming Swiss villages.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 km (3 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Route du Rhône Bike Path / Sion**

After a hearty European breakfast, set out on the tranquil Route du Rhône bike path, following the Rhône River downstream. As you begin your ride, you leave behind the jagged cliffs of the Dent de Morcles, dramatic rocky slopes that mark the westernmost reaches of the Bernese Alps, plunging steeply into the Rhône Valley. Ahead, the breathtaking vistas of Switzerland's majestic alpine range unfold.

Pedal into a valley blanketed with lush vineyards. The Valais is Switzerland's third-largest wine region, and some of the classified Grand Crus of Sion—such as Fendant and Syrah—may sound familiar.

Your ride along the river is leisurely yet rich with variety. You'll pass quaint villages tucked into the valley's gentle slopes and spin past farms and orchards bursting with apples, apricots, pears, cherries, strawberries, and raspberries. Even the legendary Valais headwind, which sweeps through the valley from late morning to evening on clear days, won't diminish the beauty of this scenic journey into a hidden gem of Switzerland.

As you approach Sion, the capital of the Valais canton, two dramatic rock outcrops—Tourbillon and Valère—rise into view, crowned by their historic castles. There will be time to stroll the pedestrian streets of the Old Town, following a VBT optional walk prepared by your Trip Leaders. This charming area is rich in culture and history, adorned with stone fountains and lined with lively cafés.

After enjoying lunch on your own, return to your hotel, where you'll have time to relax or unwind in the thermal pools—your entry is included.

Tonight, enjoy dinner at the hotel's restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Saillon to Fully and Sion — 35 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Sion to Saillon — 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride is easy and mostly flat, following a well-paved bike path nearly the entire way. In good weather, a headwind typically begins blowing up the valley around mid-morning, which may slow your pace slightly. If you choose the longer route option, expect some traffic as you enter the city of Sion; however, local drivers are generally accustomed to cyclists and drive with care.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 — 55 km (12 — 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 3: Saint-Maurice to Villeneuve on Lake Geneva / Villeneuve to Montreux / Travel to France**

After breakfast, you cycle out of Saint-Maurice into the Chablais region, a spectacular alpine area that straddles Switzerland and France. Your route continues to follow the Rhône River, guiding you toward Lake Geneva. As you leave the village, you may catch glimpses of the sharp, soaring peaks of the Dents du Midi range. Despite the dramatic mountain backdrop, today's ride is relaxed, tracing a scenic valley along well-paved bike paths and passing traditional Swiss chalets, manicured gardens, and postcard-perfect ponds.

At Le Bouveret, just before the river empties into Lake Geneva, your route gently bends to the right, crossing the Rhône Bridge and leading into the shaded wetlands of Les Grangettes, a peaceful nature reserve teeming with biodiversity, including a variety of migratory birds. This morning's pleasant spin ends at the eastern tip of Lake Geneva in Villeneuve—or "New Town"—which actually boasts a charming Old Town, with cobbled streets and inviting cafés. It's an ideal place for a short stroll and a relaxing break. From here, you may choose to cycle or shuttle to Montreux.

If you opt to ride, follow a scenic lakeside route, passing the iconic Chillon Castle and continuing on to Montreux, a popular resort town along Lake Geneva's shores. Admire elegant villas, beautifully maintained gardens, and stop at Place du Marché, where a statue of Freddie Mercury gazes out over the lake. For fans of the band, Queen, a visit to the free Exhibition Space of the Mountain Studios, located inside the casino, may be a highlight of the day. The lake promenade is the perfect spot to enjoy lunch on your own.

Afterward, continue by private motorcoach into France and the picturesque village of Talloires, nestled along the shores of stunning Lake Annecy. Settle into your hotel, a hidden gem perched on the water's edge, offering magnificent views of the Massif des Bauges to the west and La Tournette and Col de Forclaz to the east. Once a centuries-old abbey, the hotel has hosted notable guests such as Mark Twain and Paul Cézanne. Look up to see the Saint Germain Abbey and Chapel, perched high on a distant hillside.

This evening, stroll into historic Talloires for dinner on your own. You might consider trying *raclette*, featuring the famed cheeses of the Haute-Savoie, paired with a local wine such as Chignin or Apremont.

Note: For the tour starting on May 22, 2026, you will stay at Hôtel Beau Site Talloires, a charming boutique property in the village of Talloires, located on the shores of Lac d'Annecy.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: St-Maurice to Villeneuve — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Villeneuve to Montreux — 7 km (4 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Today's ride is easy and mostly follows a flat, paved bike path until Villeneuve. In good weather, a headwind typically blows up the valley from mid-morning to evening, which may slow your pace. From Villeneuve to Montreux, the first two miles are along a bike lane shared with pedestrians, followed by a gently rolling road with regular traffic. Due to these conditions, this section of the route requires some caution and is therefore rated easy to moderate.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 — 38 km (4 — 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 4: Lake Annecy Loop / Paccard Bell Foundry / Medieval Annecy**

Begin your ride by cycling south from your hotel in the Haute-Savoie region. Today's focus is the breathtaking Lake Annecy—Europe's cleanest lake, thanks to environmental protection measures enacted in the 1960s—and its namesake city. Your loop follows a well-paved bike path past the staggering sheer

cliffs of the Bauges Mountains, which rise dramatically from the water.

As you approach the city of Annecy, you may choose to follow signs to the Paccard Bell Foundry. Now in its seventh generation, this renowned family business has cast more than 120,000 bells for institutions worldwide—including those at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. In 1950–51, the foundry created 57 replicas of the Liberty Bell, one for each of the then 48 U.S. states, honoring America’s role in Europe’s liberation during World War II. Its largest creation, the 66,000-pound World Peace Bell, hangs in Newport, Kentucky, and rings daily at 12:05 p.m., just after the city’s other noontime bells.

Later, arrive in historic Annecy, often called the “Pearl of the French Alps” for its stunning location nestled between mountains and lake. You’ll have time to explore its pedestrian streets, lined with charming canals, stone bridges, and arched passageways that evoke the feel of Venice. The Old Town is filled with historic architecture and unique charm. Highlights include the Palais de l’Isle, a 12th-century prison set on an islet in the River Thiou; the Château d’Annecy; the 16th-century Cathedral of Saint-Pierre; and the romantic Pont des Amours (Lover’s Bridge). Enjoy lunch on your own at a local café—perhaps while watching swans glide by—and treat yourself to a locally made *crème glacée* for dessert.

Afterward, return to the hotel by shuttle, or continue riding on the longer option that completes a full loop around Lake Annecy. Along the way, you’ll pass a popular beach—perhaps stop to dip your toes in the crystal-clear water—and several picturesque lakeside villages. In the distance, catch a glimpse of the Aravis Mountains, known for their dramatic hairpin turns and steep climbs, often featured in the Tour de France.

Later, relax with a swim in the lake or unwind at the hotel spa. This evening, enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant, featuring a delightful menu of French specialties.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Talloires to Annecy — 26 km (16 miles) | Annecy to Talloires — 13 km (8 miles) | Annecy Walk — 2 km (1 mile)

### What to Expect:

Today’s ride follows a well-paved road and bike path. There is a steep downhill section shortly after Talloires, followed by a flat route all the way to Annecy. The area—especially the stretch before Annecy—is very popular, and cyclists may encounter skaters and pedestrians on the path. The afternoon ride is easy, though it does include one climb. Note: In summer, the route can be crowded with other

cyclists, and extra caution is needed when passing through villages due to car traffic. An optional independent ride may be available today for experienced cyclists—ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 –39 km (8 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 5: Cycle the Arly and Isère Rivers / Stroll the Cité de Conflans

After a hearty French breakfast, say goodbye to your hosts and set out on one of the most beautiful rides of the region. Leaving the southern tip of Lake Annecy, you'll cycle along a quiet, smooth bike path as the Bauges Range rises on one side and the Beaufortain Mountains soar on the other. Gorges and caves in the distance reveal that this area has been inhabited since the Neolithic Age.

After a gentle climb at Ugine, you leave the Haute-Savoie and meet the Arly River, which you follow to Albertville. A gateway to some of the finest international ski areas in the Alps, Albertville famously hosted the 1992 Winter Olympics. After your included lunch, take a short walk to the neighboring medieval City of Conflans. A designated French historic site and monument, the picturesque Cité de Conflans is enclosed by 14th-century walls and offers panoramic views of the Combe de Savoie Valley as well as the Bauges and Chartreuse Mountains.

In the afternoon, continue cycling along a newly paved bike path that follows the Isère River into fertile farmlands. It's common to see local farmers tending to their *pépinières*, or vine nurseries, along the way. Your ride ends in the tranquil pond district known as Lac de Carouge.

Later, settle into your hotel for the next two nights before enjoying an included dinner.

Note: For tours starting in May and June 2026, you will stay at Hotel Miura in Voglans, north of Chambéry. For tours starting in September and October 2026, you will stay at Domaine des Saints Pères in Montagnole, south of Chambéry.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Talloires to Cité de Conflans — 35 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Cité de Conflans to Lac de Carouge — 27 km (17 miles)

### What to Expect:

With the exception of a short climb into the City of Conflans, today's ride is very easy, following mostly bike paths along rivers and quiet country roads. All in all, it's a thoroughly enjoyable day of cycling.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 62 km (17 – 39 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Cycle to Lake of Saint-André / Stroll Chambéry / Wine Tasting**

Today promises another ride through stunning cultural and natural beauty. Departing from your hotel, you cycle along gently rolling, scenic country roads, winding through small, charming villages and vineyards. You skirt the base of Mont Granier, a towering crag and iconic landmark of the lush Chartreuse region, before reaching the peaceful Lake of Saint-André. From there, you follow the course of the small L'Albanne River into Chambéry, a picturesque city with a rich history as the capital of the Kingdom of Savoy from the 13th to the 16th centuries. The Château des Ducs de Savoie still dominates the skyline, nestled among a maze of medieval alleyways in the city center. Pause here for lunch on your own, and take time to admire the 15th- and 16th-century estates lining the shop-filled rue Croix-d'Or. After your independent exploration of Chambéry, rejoin your group for an included tasting of Savoie wines—either in town or, depending on the schedule, back at the hotel before dinner.

Your return ride varies depending on the season. For May and June tours, you'll follow an easy bike path north of Chambéry back to your hotel. For September and October tours, your return ride follows a bike lane heading south of Chambéry and continues onto narrow streets that ascend out of the city, offering sweeping views of the surrounding peaks and your hotel in the distance.

Back at your hotel, take time to relax by the swimming pool and prepare for a final festive dinner, featuring the delicious French specialties of the region.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Voglans to Lac Saint-André (May/June tours) – 22 km (14 miles) OR Montagnole to Lac Saint-André (September/October tours) – 17 km (11 miles)

Afternoon: Lac Saint-André to Chambéry (all tours) – 18 km (11 miles) | Chambéry to Voglans (May/June



tours) — 11 km (7 miles) OR Chambéry to Montagnole (September/October tours) — 5 km (3 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows easy, paved, rolling country roads to Lake of Saint-André, passing vineyards along the way. From there, a flat, paved bike path leads you through shaded parks into the historic center of Chambéry. As you enter the city, the path becomes a bike lane, and you'll briefly ride over a short stretch of cobblestone. Expect some traffic when entering and exiting Chambéry. In the afternoon, follow a mostly flat bike path back to the hotel if you're traveling in May or June; guests on September or October departures should expect an uphill ride to return to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: May/June tours: 11 — 51 km (7 — 32 miles); September/October tours: 5 — 40 km (3 — 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Travel to Lyon / Your VBT Vacation Ends**

After an included breakfast, travel by private motorcoach to our post-tour hotel in Lyon, arriving at approximately 10:30 a.m. Your vacation concludes here. The hotel is a 5-minute walk from the Metro Bellecour station, which provides easy access to Lyon's railway stations and Lyon–Saint Exupéry Airport.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Hotel les Bains de Saillon (Days 1-2)**

The Hotel les Bains de Saillon is conveniently nestled in the sunny Rhône River valley, with breathtaking views of the Alps. Natural underground thermal reservoirs feed the spa facility and hot spring pools and river—all complimentary to our guests. Rooms are modern and recently refurbished, with wood and local stone features. They have a lounge area and a balcony with view over the thermal park. The complex has three different restaurants, each one with a different character. The charming medieval village of Saillon

is within walking distance.

### **Abbaye de Talloires (Days 3-4)**

Centuries of history, a long list of celebrities who have stayed there such as Mark Twain, Paul Cézanne and Jean Reno amongst many others. Fine dining is assured with the gourmet restaurant and the light cuisine with the brasserie restaurant at lunch time during summer. The historical wine cellar is filled with hidden treasures. Rooms and suites, each one different from the other are offering breathtaking views. The completely renovated Spa of 200m<sup>2</sup> with domination of wood panelling and cosy atmosphere; the vaulted bar for romantic evenings; the pontoon equipped with beach beds to escape the everyday world, a wide choice of cultural and sporting activities and so many more. But, above all, it's the people who work here that make this hotel such a special place to stay, the Abbaye de Talloires is the only hotel in France to win twice ( 2009 and 2013 ) 4\* et 5\* Hotel Customers Trophy Award for its quality of service! L'Abbaye de Talloires is very proud to be awarded in January 2017 the 1st prize for the Best wine list in France in the category of Fine dining restaurants!

### **Hotel Miura (Days 5-6)**

Hotel Miura, a 4-star luxury boutique hotel, is close to Aix-les-Bains, Chambéry, and Lac-du-Bourget. Recently revamped, this updated establishment is surrounded by lush trees, mountain views, and breathtaking scenery. From the outdoor pool and sun terraces to the spa facilities and fully equipped fitness center, guests can enjoy the countless amenities with exceptional service. Zélie, the onsite gourmet restaurant, offers locally sourced cuisine and French wines from the fully glassed-in wine cellar. Tastefully designed rooms with streamlined features and charming decor offer complimentary WiFi, air-conditioning, a mini bar, and flat-screen TV.