

# Switzerland, Germany & France: The Black Forest & the Alsace Wine Route

## Bike Vacation + Air Package

The borders of Alsace have changed throughout history—so why limit your exploration to just one country? Join VBT on this epic cycling adventure through the Alsace regions of France, Germany, and Switzerland—discovering its complex history from three national perspectives. Our innovative itinerary lets you traverse borders with ease—heading from Switzerland into France to pedal the Grand Canal d'Alsace bike path, then into Germany's Black Forest where you'll enjoy a delightful stay in a 19th century villa. Pedal along the banks of the Rhine on low-traffic paths, discovering the superlative local vineyards of the famous Route de Vins along the way. As you cycle through colorful villages, passing half-timbered homes bursting with cheerful blossoms, you may feel as if you're spinning through Europe's most charming fairytale.

## Cultural Highlights

- Explore three countries on a single journey—on one memorable day you eat breakfast in Switzerland, lunch in France, and dinner in Germany.
- Cycle through idyllic countryside, framed by the Vosges Mountains, providing a stunning backdrop for your adventure.
- Immerse yourself in the dual French and German culture of Alsace, and learn about the region's history as a hotly contested territory.
- Behold Eguisheim, one of the most beautiful villages in France. It's even won awards for its overflowing flower boxes decorating the half-timbered buildings and cobblestone streets!
- Stroll through the cobbled streets of Colmar's old town and embark on a "floating tour" of *La Petite Venise* (Little Venice) aboard a small boat.
- Cycle some of the most scenic stretches of the *Route des Vins*—the Wine Route. Pause along the way to taste some of the world-class wines produced here.

## What to Expect

This tour features easy to moderate terrain on many paved bike lanes, with options for longer rides. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. This tour is ideal for both enthusiastic beginners and experienced cyclists.

**Tour Duration:** 10 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 12-40 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 2-6 hours

**Group size:** 14-22 max

## Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

April 60°/40°, May 69°/46°, June 74°/51°, July 78°/55°, August 77°/55°, September 71°/50°, October 59°/43°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

April 1.7, May 2.2, June 2.6, July 2.6, August 2.8, September 2.4, October 1.8

## FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

## ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Basel / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Basel

Start off your first day in Basel right by having a VBT representative greet you at the airport. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

## DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Grand Canal d'Alsace Warm-Up Ride

After a leisurely breakfast, at 11:00 a.m., meet one of your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group in the lobby of The Passage Urban & Lifestyle Hotel. Your VBT trip leader will be holding a VBT sign and will be easy to identify. Please arrive dressed for cycling (and bring your pedals or saddle if using your own), as there will be no opportunity to change into cycling clothes before the warm-up ride begins.

From the hotel, you'll shuttle across the Swiss border into France, where you'll meet your second trip leader and enjoy an included lunch, followed by an orientation, safety briefing, and bike fitting session.

Your first ride is a warm-up ride along the flat and scenic Grand Canal d'Alsace bike path, ending in the quaint Alsatian town of Ottmarsheim. From there, enjoy a short 30-minute drive across the border into Germany and arrive in Badenweiler, in the heart of the Black Forest—your home for the next two nights.

In the afternoon, you'll check in at the Park Hotel & Spa Katharina, centrally located in this pedestrian-friendly spa town. Badenweiler, sometimes referred to as *Spa-Hamlet*, has been a destination for relaxation since Roman times, famed for its natural hot springs.

This evening, enjoy a special welcome dinner featuring local specialties prepared by the hotel's chef.

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 14 km (8 miles)

### What to Expect:

Follow the VV13 bike route along a mix of scenic paths, small country roads, and waterways through the 2,000-acre (809-hectare) La Petite Camargue Alsacienne nature preserve—a beloved recreational sanctuary located on the former floodplain of the Rhine River. Today, you'll visit three countries: Switzerland for breakfast, France for lunch, and Germany for dinner!

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (8 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch

## DAY 2: Staufen / Badenweiler

Enjoy a hearty breakfast before setting out on today's ride. Thanks to Badenweiler's hillside location, your morning begins with an exhilarating descent out of the village and into the surrounding vineyards. You'll cycle through the Rhine River Valley along a mix of dedicated bike paths and paved vineyard roads, which are open only to farmers and cyclists. Your route leads you toward the Kaiserstuhl region, known as the sunniest corner of Germany and ideal for cultivating Sylvaner, Pinot Noir, and Riesling grapes.

Stop for lunch on your own in the traditional Black Forest town of Staufen, where cobbled pedestrian streets and charming half-timbered facades invite a relaxed stroll.

In the afternoon, your ride takes you closer to the mountains and into hillier terrain as you return to Badenweiler. Sweeping views over the Rhine River and across to the Vosges Mountains in France offer a preview of the scenic beauty ahead in the days to come.

Prefer a more relaxed afternoon? Transportation has been arranged for guests who wish to return to

Badenweiler early and enjoy everything this historic spa town has to offer.

Once back, indulge in some pampering in the hotel's private gardens, with access to the outdoor pool, indoor pool, or spa facilities. You may also wish to visit the Cassiopeia thermal baths, boasting over 10,000 square feet (929 square meters) of indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, baths, and relaxation areas.

Later, join the group for a guided tour of the Roman spa ruins, remarkably well-preserved after nearly 2,000 years—or choose to spend more time relaxing at the spa.

The evening is yours to dine, explore, and unwind at your leisure.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Badenweiler to Staufen — 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Staufen to Badenweiler — 18 km (12 miles)

### What to Expect:

Descend from your hilltop town on a morning ride through rolling vineyards, following paved bike paths and quiet local roads with minimal traffic. Watch for occasional vineyard vehicles along the way. Your ride culminates with a lunch stop in historic Staufen, a charming town full of character. If you choose to continue with the afternoon ride option, you'll loop back to Badenweiler via more scenic vineyard roads and bike paths, finishing with a final ascent to your hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 39 km (12 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 3: Neuf-Brisach / Canal de Colmar

Begin your day with a ride departing from Badenweiler and the Black Forest. Today's route takes you into France's renowned Alsace region—a land that has been both deeply coveted and fiercely contested by France and Germany for centuries. The result is a captivating blend of cultures, reflected in Alsace's architecture, cuisine, and traditions. As you ride, you'll witness signs of this multi-layered history, and experience the region's unique fusion of French and German influences.

A well-marked bike route leads north and east to Neuf-Brisach, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where remarkably intact fortifications date back to 1698, commissioned by King Louis XIV as a defense against the Habsburg Empire. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant near the town's historic main square.

In the afternoon, a combination of flat bike paths and quiet roads brings you to your final destination: Colmar, often considered the crown jewel of Alsace.

Your historic hotel is ideally located in the heart of Colmar's Old Town, near its storybook canals—perfect for exploring the area on foot. After some time to relax and settle in, you'll take a leisurely stroll through the picturesque streets of La Petite Venise (or "Little Venice"), named for the waterway that winds through town.

You'll then board a small boat for a short guided cruise through this charming neighborhood, followed by a visit to a family-run wine cellar for a home-hosted dinner and wine tasting.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Badenweiler to Fessenheim — 27 km (17 miles) | Fessenheim to Neuf-Brisach — 16 km (10 miles)

Afternoon: Neuf-Brisach to Colmar — 17 km (11 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Today, ride from Germany into France, crossing the Rhine River via a combination of paved bike paths, quiet roads, and dedicated bike lanes leading into the bike-friendly city of Colmar. You may choose to complete all three legs of the ride, or opt for any combination that suits your preference.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 60 km (10 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4: La Route des Vins

This morning, begin cycling the famous *Route des Vins*—the Wine Route—on a southbound route out of Colmar. Departing the city, you'll follow a well-marked bike path through some of the region's most

renowned Alsatian wine towns, including Gueberschwihr, Obermorschwihr, and Eguisheim.

In 2013, Eguisheim was voted one of the “Most Beautiful Villages in France” in a nationwide poll. The town has also received the prestigious “Village Fleuri” award, thanks to its overflowing flowerboxes that decorate charming half-timbered buildings and cobblestone streets.

In the heart of Alsatian wine country, you’ll have the chance to visit local wine cellars independently, then enjoy lunch on your own in town before winding your way back through vineyard-covered hills to Colmar.

Tonight, dinner is on your own, and the evening is yours to explore the many charms of Colmar, known as the “Capital of Alsatian Wine.”

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Colmar to Eguisheim — 16 km (9 miles) | Colmar to Eguisheim PLUS — 21 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Eguisheim to Colmar — 11 km (7 miles)

#### What to Expect:

This morning, ride along a combination of bike paths, bike lanes, and quiet country roads on your choice of routes to the charming, flower-boxed wine villages south of Colmar. If you wish, you may cycle back to Colmar in the afternoon. For experienced cyclists, an additional independent ride may be available today. *Ask your trip leader for details.*

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 – 48 km (7 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 5: Riquewihr / Ribeauvillé / Obernai

This morning, you’ll bid *adieu* to Colmar and set out for one of the most scenic sections of the Wine Route.

Rolling hills reward adventurous riders with spectacular views and thrilling descents. The route leaves the plain and heads north and west into the vineyards, passing through some of the Wine Route’s most

picturesque towns, such as Riquewihr and Ribeauvillé. The well-marked European bike route offers exceptional cycling, with the Vosges Mountains rising in the distance and medieval villages dotting the landscape. Along the way, enjoy the freedom to stop at your leisure for lunch in charming wine towns filled with half-timbered homes.

For those choosing the longest ride option, the terrain gradually rises before a final descent into the delightful town of Obernai, where your hotel awaits—the perfect end to an unforgettable day of cycling.

This evening, stroll into Obernai and treat yourself to a tasting of wines from the very vineyards you passed today. Or, if you prefer to unwind, take advantage of your hotel's pool and spa facilities for a well-earned moment of relaxation.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Colmar to Ribeauvillé — 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Ribeauvillé to Dambach la Ville — 22 km (14 miles) | Ribeauvillé to Dambach la Ville to Obernai — 44 km (27 miles)

### What to Expect:

Cycle north along a combination of paved bike lanes, dedicated bike paths, and quiet country roads into the rolling wine country and picturesque villages linked by the Alsace Wine Bike Route. An optional independent ride may be available today for experienced cyclists. *Ask your trip leader for details.*

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 65 km (13 – 40 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 6: La Route des Vins / Bruche Canal / Obernai

Your small group's final ride together takes you toward the northern end of the Alsace Wine Route, where rolling hills gradually give way to the flat valley floor as you approach the Bruche Canal. This scenic bike path follows the canal toward Strasbourg, offering a peaceful and picturesque ride.

In the afternoon, you'll loop back along another bike path, passing through surrounding villages with

views of the Vosges Mountains to the west, returning to your hotel in Obernai.

This evening, gather with your group to enjoy a farewell Alsatian dinner at the hotel, celebrating the journey you've shared together.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Obernai to Entzheim — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Entzheim to Obernai — 23 km (14 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Riding north of Obernai along bike paths and quiet roads, you'll reach the Canal de la Bruche bike path at approximately 15 km (9 miles). After following the canal for about 10 km (6 miles), you'll leave the waterway and loop back through small villages and classic Alsatian farmland on a mix of paved bike paths and local roads. An optional independent ride may be available today for experienced cyclists. *Ask your trip leader for details.*

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 53 km (15 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Strasbourg Walking Tour / Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Strasbourg**

After breakfast, walk to the Obernai train station with your trip leaders. There, you'll say *so long*, *farewell*, *auf Wiedersehen*, and *au revoir* to your leaders and meet a local city guide, who will accompany you on a short train ride to Strasbourg.

Upon arrival, your guide will lead you on a walking tour and orientation through Strasbourg, concluding at our post-tour hotel, Hôtel Régent Contades, where your luggage will be waiting. You'll arrive at approximately 12:00 p.m., at which point your tour officially concludes.

The remainder of the day is yours to explore Strasbourg at your leisure. Please note that your hotel room may not be available until 3:00 p.m., but your luggage will be ready and waiting upon arrival.



From the picturesque Tanners' District and the Musée des Beaux-Arts to the stunning Notre-Dame Cathedral, Strasbourg offers a wealth of attractions. Your trip leaders and local city guide will be happy to provide personal recommendations.

Lunch and dinner are on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DEPARTURE DAY: Departure**

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation will be provided to Frankfurt Airport—a drive of approximately three hours, depending on traffic—for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **The Passage Urban & Lifestyle Hotel (Arrival Day)**

Built in 2014 atop Basel's ancient fortifications, this elegant 4-star hotel offers stylish contemporary conveniences just steps away from the Old Town. Enjoy a tranquil retreat from the bustle of downtown on the patio and inner courtyard, or savor beverages and tasty snacks at the café/bar. A commitment to wellness is reflected in the hotel's fitness center, Finnish sauna, and relaxation area. Your air-conditioned room features cable/satellite TV with an extra-large LED screen, an iPod dock, free WiFi, an in-room safe, telephone, mini-bar and coffeemaker, and triple-glazed windows for enhanced peace and quiet.

### **Park Hotel & Spa KATHARINA (Days 1-2)**

Set in the town of Badenweiler in Southern Bavaria and sunny Markgräflerland, Park Hotel & Spa KATHARINA, a 19-century villa, was lovingly renovated in 2017. The family-owned and -operated hotel offers 52 luxurious rooms, each unique and with air conditioning. Enjoy access to the spa, and unwind in the lobby bar. The central location of the hotel makes it easy to stroll through town and to the famous Cassiopeia thermal baths.

### **Hotel Le Colombier (Days 3-4)**

This beautifully renovated 16th-century hotel is set in the heart of Colmar's historic "Little Venice" district, with its narrow canals and cobbled streets. This location is ideal for strolling into the city's old town. Guest rooms, centered on a tranquil Renaissance courtyard, are modern with wood floors, soothing tones, and air conditioning. The lounge and bar areas on the ground floor are stylish and plush.

### **Hotel a la Cour d'Alsace (Days 5-6)**

In the cobblestone center of the charming Alsatian town of Obernai, this 4-star hotel is a historic manor house that was the residence of the "Court of Gail." Beautifully renovated historic spaces and guestrooms include exposed beams and half-timbered exteriors typical of Alsace, as also present in the fine-dining restaurant. The onsite spa contains an indoor pool, sauna, steam room, and Jacuzzi, along with spa treatments (available for booking). Some rooms have air conditioning.

### **Hôtel Regent Contades (Day 7)**

An upscale boutique hotel, the 4-star Hotel Regent Contades in Strasbourg is ideally located on the Ill River, near the iconic Strasbourg Notre Dame cathedral and within easy walking distance of numerous other architectural and cultural treasures. Enjoy a turn-of-the-century ambience with upscale modern amenities during your stay here.