

France: The Burgundy Wine Region & Dijon

Bike Vacation Only

In Burgundy, France bike routes traverse some of the world's most famous vineyards. Spinning from Lyon to Dijon—two UNESCO-designated urban showpieces—you'll cycle mellow hills bursting with grapes cultivated for the region's celebrated wines. Pause at charming stone towns imbued with wine and gastronomic tradition. Explore the 15th-century Hospices de Beaune, a masterpiece of flamboyant Gothic art and architecture and Burgundy's most visited site. In Dijon museums, browse fine arts and sacred artifacts. Follow bike paths along canals and into wine villages with thriving local markets. The bucolic scenery here has made this route a favorite among travelers for its lush, unspoiled countryside.

Cultural Highlights

- Pass renowned wine villages rolling through the world-famous vineyards of the Côte de Beaune and UNESCO World Heritage Route des Grands Crus.
- Visit the 15th-century Hospices de Beaune, a masterpiece of flamboyant Gothic art and architecture.
- Enjoy a guided tour and tasting at an authentic wine cellar in the heart of Beaune.
- Engage with a local family during a game of *pétanque* and a picnic lunch at their charming summer home.
- Discover Dijon with its protected historic city center that has inspired musicians, artists, and writers for centuries, and browse its wealth of fascinating—and free—museums.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. Ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists alike.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 16 - 35 miles

Average Cycling Time: 00:30 - 03:00

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 67°/50°, Jun 73°/57°, Jul 80°/61°, Aug 79°/60°, Sep 72°/54°, Oct 61°/47°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 3, Jun 3.1, Jul 2.6, Aug 3.1, Sep 3, Oct 3.4

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Travel to hotel via Cluny / Warm-up ride

Meet one of your trip leaders, in VBT staff garments, in the lobby of the Hotel Carlton Lyon MGallery by Sofitel at 9:00 a.m.

You will travel by bus via Cluny to the hotel in Tournus. Cluny, the former Benedictine abbey and home of an early pope around AD 910, was larger than St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in its heyday. It was later dynamited, and its richly carved stones were sold off. You'll stroll along the ancient stone streets of Cluny with a local guide. VBT has timed your visit to fall on a market day, so you'll have the opportunity to buy some local specialties for lunch on your own.

Arrive at your Tournus hotel, meet your second trip leader, and have free time to settle in. Before your bike tour begins, partake in a safety and bike-fitting session. A brief warm-up ride leads you through the countryside and on a bike path along the Saône River.

After some time to freshen up, meet for a welcome cocktail reception and dinner in your hotel. Dine in its excellent restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up Loop – 7 km (4 miles)

What to Expect:

An easy loop from your hotel takes you past Saint-Philibert de Tournus, a medieval church and former Benedictine abbey, and through the town of Tournus, then along a bike route on the Saône River back to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 km (4 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Chardonnay Loop

This morning's spin takes you on the flat Voie Bleue bike path along the tranquil banks of the Saône River. Keep your eyes open for the varied birdlife along your route.

Leaving the river, you'll enter rolling wine country, where the dry white wine of the Chardonnay grape is produced. Roll into the wine village of Viré, home to a recent success story in France's wine world. In the latter part of the 20th century, the villages of Viré and Clessé realized that they had a high-quality wine that could rival the older appellation of Pouilly-Fuissé, so they applied for a separate status. This was finally granted in 1999, and the Viré-Clessé appellation emerged.

Continue cycling to a small village with a name that is synonymous with dry white wine—Chardonnay—and which recently celebrated its thousandth anniversary. Its name comes from *cardonnacum* or the "place full of thistles." Chardonnay grapes most likely originated here and were then shared and distributed throughout France by monks. The earliest recorded reference to Chardonnay appeared in 1330. It was around this time that Cistercian monks built stone walls around their *Clos de Vougeot* vineyard exclusively planted with Chardonnay grapes. The village of stone houses grew up around the *lavoir*, a stream-fed community wash-house, and several *domaines* (wine producers). You'll stop in this charming spot for lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, continue through the peaceful rural countryside before rejoining the Voie Bleue bike path along the river and following it back into Tournus.

Tonight, take a short walk to a nearby wine purveyor for an introduction and tasting of the incredible depth of Burgundy's wines. Afterward, you are free to enjoy dinner on your own in one of the local restaurants, or you may choose to eat in the hotel's excellent restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Tournus to Chardonnay with Shuttle – 20 km (12 miles) OR Tournus to Chardonnay – 29 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Chardonnay to Tournus – 41 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

Depart the hotel in the morning and roll through Tournus, then follow La Voie Bleue bike path along the Saône River to the wine-making town of Viré. You will then board the support vehicle or continue cycling through rolling vineyards into the town of Chardonnay. The afternoon ride returns to Tournus along a northerly route.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 61 km (12 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Cycle through the Côte de Beaune

This morning, hop a shuttle to your starting point. Get underway rolling through the vineyards of the Côte Chalonnaise. At the town of Chalon sur Saône, pedal along the Voie Verte bike path, following the Canal du Centre to Santenay. Afterward, continue on small roads through the world-famous vineyards of the Côte de Beaune, passing renowned villages such as Puligny Montrachet and Meursault—considered the mecca of Chardonnay production by many oenophiles.

This afternoon, there'll be time for lunch on your own before you continue your ride into Beaune, the elegant town that is imbued with wine traditions—and your next accommodation. After time to relax, walk through its charming pedestrian center for dinner in a restaurant that has been recognized by the Maître Restaurateur association in Franceval!

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Chalon to Santenay – 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Santenay to Beaune – 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Cycle on beautiful paved path along the Canal du Centre to Santenay. Then, continue on a bike route through the vineyards of the Côte de Beaune, passing world-famous villages such as Puligny-Montrachet, Meursault and Pommard. Board the van shuttle to Beaune, or embark on the longer option, riding through vineyards on the prestigious Route des Grand Crus, with wine-tasting opportunities all the way to your hotel in Beaune.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 47 km (14 – 29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Hospices de Beaune / Home-hosted lunch

After an elaborate breakfast (including wine and cheese, of course, for those who are so inclined), a five-minute walk takes you to the 15th-century Hospices de Beaune (also known as the Hotel Dieu), the epicenter of Beaune. This perfectly preserved historic treasure was the recipient of Europe's earliest philanthropic endeavors and today is still entirely financed by private donations. This masterpiece of flamboyant Gothic art and architecture is Burgundy's single most-visited site; you will understand why after setting foot inside the stunning courtyard. Visit the Hospice, then cycle out into wine country on narrow, quiet roads to the small hamlet of Cussigny. As lunch nears, your small group is invited into an old mill converted into the summer home of a local family. Here, participate in a game of *pétanque* before a picnic prepared by your trip leaders. Conclude this pleasant visit with homemade dessert and coffee or tea with your generous hosts.

Afterward, ride back to Beaune through forests, villages and—depending on the time of year—sunflower or canola fields. On return to your hotel, perhaps relax in the spa, then walk together to a wine cellar for a tour and tasting. Then, stroll through the town's narrow medieval center to enjoy dinner on your own in one of the fine restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Beaune to Cussigny – 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Cussigny to Beaune – 15 km (10 miles) OR Cussigny to Beaune Plus – 29 km (18 miles)

What to Expect:

Cycle on country roads to Cussigny for a memorable lunch in a local family's summer home. From here, you may hop in the support vehicle or pedal back to Beaune. Another option is to cycle an extra loop through the Hautes Côtes de Beaune vineyards before returning to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 49 km (10 – 30 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Routes des Grands Crus / Dijon

Your cycle route today takes you through some of the most famous vineyards in the world, en route to Dijon, the beautiful capital of the Burgundy region. You'll wind your way to Nuits-Saint-Georges, the region where famed Côte de Nuits red wines are produced. Here, stop to choose from different lunch options on your own before cycling along the narrow lanes used as access routes by local vineyard workers. In this area, monks toiled for centuries making wine for religious services.

The UNESCO World Heritage committee added the entire stretch of vineyards from Beaune to Dijon to its World Heritage List in July 2015. Along the Route des Grands Crus, you may wish to stop and explore old and charming villages such as Vosne-Romanée and Gevrey-Chambertin before continuing all the way to the outskirts of Dijon. As you enter the capital of Burgundy, marvel at the astonishingly well-preserved city center. Dijon, often called "Sleeping Beauty," is third in France for its number of preserved historic buildings, with more than 100 acres of the city center protected. This capital of the former ducal kingdom has attracted musicians, artists, and writers for centuries.

After checking into your luxurious hotel, set out on a walking tour with your trip leaders. This evening, venture out on your own to wander the medieval cobbled streets and find just the right place to enjoy an *apéro* (aperitif) and dinner on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Beaune to Nuits-St.-Georges — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Nuits-St.-Georges to Chenove — 22 km (14 miles) OR Nuits-St.-Georges to Dijon — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Follow the Route des Grands Crus through prestigious villages such as Aloxe-Corton, Nuits-Saint-Georges, Vosne-Romanée and Gevrey-Chambertin, all renowned for their wines. Those who desire a longer option can continue on to Chenove or all the way to Dijon.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 — 47 km (12 — 29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6: Dijon / Burgundy canal / Valley de L'Ouche

After breakfast, your bike tour concludes with a bike ride directly from the hotel to the Route des Jardins, Burgundy's beautiful Garden Route, and the pleasant byway along the Canal de Bourgogne to Pont de Pany.

A short option loops back to Dijon; longer options continue into the Valley de L'Ouche along the winding River L'Ouche and the canal. The bucolic scenery here has made this route a favorite of every traveler in France for its lush, peaceful and unspoiled countryside—the pastoral side of France at its most authentic.

Tonight, finish your week of cycling with a stroll through Dijon's pedestrian streets to a farewell dinner in a fine gourmet restaurant housed in a 15th-century building.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Dijon to Pont de Pany — 22 km (14 miles) OR Dijon to Pont de Pany Loop — 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Pont Pany to Dijon Plus — 34 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

Enjoy easy and pleasant cycling along the Canal de Bourgogne from Dijon to Pont de Pany on our shortest option. Those who wish to cycle back to Dijon can ride along the canal or choose the longer option, featuring more mileage and some rolling hills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 — 55 km (13 — 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Dijon railway station / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

Your tour ends after breakfast. It is an easy five-minute walk to the Dijon train station if you wish to take a train to the airport or your next destination.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Les Sept Fontaines (Days: 1,2)

Hotel les Sept Fontaines gets its name from the seven springs that run through the center of the town of Tournus. Occupying a beautifully renovated 16th-century building, this new four-star hotel and spa is located in the historic center. Light-filled, soundproof rooms offer stylish air-conditioned comfort. Spa access upon reservation provides access to indoor swimming pool, jacuzzi, and fitness center. Its restaurant specializes in the renowned cuisine and wines of Burgundy.

Hotel Le Cep (Days: 3,4)

Hotel Le Cep, tucked into the heart of medieval Beaune, was made for royalty. This was Louis XIV's favorite accommodation when he visited Burgundy. Constructed as a private home in the 16th century, its grounds include buildings dating from the 14th century, with its "newest" structures from the 18th century. The 1547 courtyard is overlooked by Italianate galleries and two lovely towers. With a renowned restaurant, whose wine list boasts 50 regional wines, the Hotel Le Cep is one of the "Small Luxury Hotels of the World" and was included in the 500 best hotels list from *Travel + Leisure* for 2013, demonstrating its excellence in quality.

Grand Hotel La Cloche Dijon - MGallery (Days: 5,6)

For nearly 600 years, the Grand Hotel La Cloche Dijon - MGallery has been welcoming visitors to the heart of Burgundy. Today, the hotel is set in a centrally located, 19th-century heritage building near the Old Town and a number of attractions, including museums and the Ducal Palace. Savor delicious gourmet French and international cuisine at the hotel's two restaurants and take advantage of the fitness center.