

## France Bike & River Cruise: Lyon to Nice

### Bike Vacation Only

The Saône and Rhône rivers of France and their vineyard-laden banks beg to be explored by bicycle. To help you uncover every last bend along these scenic waterways, we invite you on a luxury river cruise that's equal parts bicycling vacation. From the culinary capital of Lyon to historic Avignon and the artistic haven of Arles on this France bike and boat adventure, you'll enjoy lavish amenities aboard a finely appointed river ship, disembarking each day to cycle into the heart of Burgundy and Provence. Join walking tours of medieval riverside treasures and cultural centers. Follow the scenic Via Rhône bike trail as the river flows alongside you. And pause to tour an olive oil farm, sample wines at fertile vineyards, and savor a French picnic alongside the magnificent Pont du Gard.

### Cultural Highlights

- Admire the magnificent vistas of France's most renowned wine regions by river and by bicycle.
- Enjoy the best of both worlds: an all-inclusive river ship cruise and a VBT Bicycling Vacation.
- Ride among the lush, fertile vineyards of Burgundy and Provence, pausing at your leisure for wine tastings and tours.
- Savor a delicious picnic lunch before learning the history of the magnificent Pont du Gard at the renowned Roman aqueduct and UNESCO World Heritage site's museum.
- Walk the cobbled and historic streets of Lyon and Avignon as a local guide brings them alive with history and lore.

### What to Expect

**On Shore:** This tour offers easy riverside terrain, with a few climbs to reach riverside towns. Riding is primarily on bike paths of both pavement and packed gravel, with some road riding through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

**Onboard Ship:** Our group of up to 24 VBT guests will be part of a larger group on board our 132-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join others. While in port our ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means we

may walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

**Average Daily Mileage:** 7 - 41 miles

## 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: Lyon / Embark ship / Warm-up ride Lyon / Embark ship / Warm-up ride

You are responsible for making your own way to Lyon, France, to meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers. Please note that you cannot embark before 12:30 p.m. as the ship is being prepared for you. If you fly to Lyon Airport, the flight arrival must be no later than 4:30 p.m., as the ship leaves Lyon at 7:00 p.m.

The ship will be docked at Quai Claude Bernard, between the bridges Pont Gallieni and Pont de l'Université, along the left bank of the Rhône River.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to enjoy lunch on board, served between 12:30 and 3:30 p.m., relax in the ship's common areas, stretch your legs, or explore town.

At 2:30 p.m., meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride on local bike paths along the Rhône. Later, enjoy dinner on board. The ship sails for Chalon-sur-Saône this evening.

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Please note regarding WiFi on board the ship: Due to the nature of the ship movements, Internet access is not always available. If stable Internet access is critical to you, VBT recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: There is limited WiFi on board. If you wish to use Ride with GPS on your smartphone, VBT recommends that you download your VBT Maps & Route Notes from a WiFi zone prior to arrival on the ship. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. As always, VBT also provides our traditional printed maps and route notes during the tour.

Please note regarding 'Discover More' tours: Emerald Cruises offers three optional tours during your cruise at an additional cost. Your VBT trip leaders will be able to answer questions about scheduling and can connect you with Emerald staff onboard to make bookings. We recommend that you book as soon as practical once onboard, as the tours are capacity restricted.

#### Visit to Perouges

When: Day 3 (Lyon), 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Includes: Coach transportation, local guide

Note: Passengers doing this tour will not be able to participate in the VBT ride

Price: €39.00 per person

#### Fishing class on the Rhône

When: Day 5 (Viviers), 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Includes: Fishing gear, fishing license, professional guide

Note: Passengers doing this tour will not be able to participate in VBT ride

Price: €56.00 per person

#### Classical concert in Avignon

When: Day 6 (Avignon), 9:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Includes: Classical trio concert

Note: Passengers walk to Chapelle de L'Oratoire and back to ship

Price: €65.00 per person

Excursion to Camargue

When: Day 7 (Arles), 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Includes: Coach transportation, visit at a local farm, hot drinks and cake

Note: Passengers doing this tour will not be able to participate in VBT ride

Price: €68.00 per person

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Lyon Warm-up Loop – 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

The ride from our ship is on local, paved bike paths in Lyon. Get acquainted with your route notes, Ride with GPS, your bicycle, and the locals. Check your brakes and play with shifting your full range of gears.

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Chalon-sur-Saône / Burgundy vineyards / Visit Beaune**

After cruising north along the picturesque Saône River, dock at Chalon-sur-Saône, where the river meets the Canal du Centre. You are in the heart of Burgundy, where more than 4,500 family-run wineries produce world-renowned wines in the Côtes de Beaune. Disembark to ride a scenic bike route among the most famous vineyards in the world, passing vast expanses of arbor-laid grapes and fine wineries. Coast through charming wine-making villages that lend Burgundy its distinctive character, from Puligny-Montrachet to Pommard, and produce some of the finest Grand Cru vintages. You pause in Mersault for photos and perhaps a glass of wine.

Your bike ride will finish in Beaune, the center of Burgundy wine production and home to the Hospices of

Beaune. After lunch in a lovely, local restaurant, you will visit this finely preserved sample of 15<sup>th</sup>-century Burgundian architecture renowned for its polychrome roof and its annual wine auction. Following the visit to the Hospices and some free time, a shuttle will take you back to the ship.

This evening on board, enjoy a Captain's Welcome Cocktail and Gala Dinner as you sail back to Lyon.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Chalon-sur-Saône to Puligny-Montrachet — 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon Puligny-Montrachet to Beaune — 16 km (10 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Cycle on a beautiful paved path along the Canal du Centre to Santenay. Then, continue on a bike route through the vineyards of the Côtes de Beaune, passing world-famous villages such as Puligny-Montrachet, Meursault, and Pommard. Continue cycling, or board the shuttle to Beaune after a snack stop. If you prefer, our longer cycling option leads you through vineyards on the prestigious Route des Grand Crus, with wine-tasting opportunities all the way to Beaune.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 — 50 km (21 — 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 3: Lyon city walking / Afternoon loop to nature reserve**

Arrive back in Lyon this morning as you're enjoying breakfast on board. Then disembark for a city tour of France's gastronomic capital renowned for its *coq au vin*, or chicken with wine, and *quenelles de brochet*, or mousse of pike. The heart of the 2,000-year-old city lies on a thin peninsula between the Rhône and Saône Rivers. It's easy to imagine *canuts*, or silk merchants of old, zigzagging through the maze of old-world streets, cutting through the purpose-built narrow passageways known as *traboules*. Much of the city is a UNESCO World Heritage site, renowned as an urban "site of great commercial and strategic significance." You will also ascend Fourvière Hill, where the splendid Basilique de Notre Dame gazes out over the city. You can also take in some of the city from a cyclist's perspective, gaining a more intimate view of its riverbanks and Old City on an optional bike loop before lunch.

After lunch on board, head out on the bikes again to the Grand Parc de Miribel-Jonage on the outskirts of Lyon beyond its city gates. This 5,400-acre parkland blankets most of the Rhône's Miribel-Jonage island, created in the 1800s when the Miribel and Jonage canals were dredged. Today, it is a pleasure park for city dwellers and a wildlife preserve. After time enjoying its flat bike paths through forests and past a lake, you may shuttle or ride back to the ship and enjoy the remainder of the day exploring on your own or relaxing on deck or in the ship's lounge. After dinner, you sail toward Tournon for another memorable day of riding.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Optional Loop in Lyon — 5

Afternoon Lyon to Grand Parc — 14 | Grand Parc to Lyon — 9

### What to Expect:

The optional morning's ride loops you through an attractive urban area of Lyon, partly on bike trails along the river. In the afternoon, you ride through an urban area to the outskirts of Lyon and the Grand Parc de Miribel-Jonage, a nature park where bike paths pass lakes and follow small canals. In the nature reserve, some of our bike route follows packed gravel roads. You may return to the ship either by shuttle or by bicycle.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9 — 46 km (5 — 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4: Tournon / Valence

Begin today with a ride along the Rhône, following the renowned Via Rhône bike trail. When complete, this remarkable pathway will take cyclists from Geneva, Switzerland, all the way to the Mediterranean Sea, passing spectacular riverscapes, pretty villages in the typical style of southern France, and expansive vineyards along the way.

With a detour along the Isère River, your scenic loop will finish at the ship just before lunch. In the afternoon take a short walk in the charming little town of Tournon, nestled between the river and vineyard-laden slopes that produce some of the region's finest wines. As you explore, an ancient castle oversees your progress from high upon a promontory. Your trip leaders will take you to a local chocolate

manufacturer to savor some local delicacies. Later, enjoy a wine tasting of local vintages on board, following another delicious, thoughtfully prepared meal. This evening, you sail towards Viviers.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Tournon to Beaumont — 24 km (15 miles) | Beaumont to Tournon — 14 km (9 miles)

#### What to Expect:

This morning's ride follows easy bike trails along the river, partly on packed gravel bike paths past highly scenic vistas. After a van snack stop in Beaumont, you return to the ship via your choice of shuttle or bicycle. The riding route back to our mooring partly follows a main road that you share with cars.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 — 38 km (15 — 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### DAY 5: Viviers

Disembark for a guided visit of Viviers, one of the more unique towns on the Rhône. Settled by Romans, the small village was forced to erect walls when conflicts of the ensuing centuries arrived. The Renaissance period was kinder and more peaceful; the stunning Maison des Chevaliers still stands as a testament to that creative era. A stroll through Viviers' cobbled streets is a journey back in time. You may also choose to cycle a nice out and back ride along the Rhône, instead of the guided walking tour.

After lunch onboard the ship, you return to the scenic bike paths of the Via Rhône and cycle towards Bourg-Saint-Andéol, home to handsome patrician houses. The second part of the ride leads you past some of the Rhône's religious treasures, tracing lovely greenways and quiet roads along the way. Cathedrals, chapels, grand clerical residences, and the Iles des Dames islands mark your route on your way back to Viviers. A delicious dinner with your trip leaders and a music request evening onboard are still in store, as you sail to Avignon later in the evening.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Optional morning ride — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon Viviers to Bourg-Saint-Andéol — 17 km (11 miles) | Bourg-Saint-Andéol to Viviers — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows the easy, flat path along the Rhône River on dedicated bike trails to Bourg-Saint-Andéol. You pass various villages marked by cathedrals and chapels and ride along quiet branches of the river, traversing the Iles des Dames islands. The short option offers a shuttle from the small town of Bourg-Saint-Andéol back to the ship. The longer option leads you to Viviers on a different bike route.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 — 66 km (11 — 41 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Avignon / Bike to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon**

You dock early this morning in Avignon, the legendary City of Popes where the papacy was centered for 70 years in the 14th century. After breakfast on board, set out on a walking tour of this magnificent and historic city. Marvel at the mighty Palais des Papes, the Papal Palace, one of the great architectural wonders of France. View the adjacent historic Pont St. Bénézet reaching out into the river; only four of its original 22 arches remain. Then step through Avignon's gates to explore this fascinating UNESCO World Heritage site, its medieval walls enclosing a rich repository of architecture that spans the ages. There'll be free time here before lunch on board.

This afternoon, enjoy a short ride across the river to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, which once served as a resort of the French cardinals who resided at Avignon. You pass over the island Ile de Piot to reach the river's opposite bank. Quiet, scenic roads with minimal traffic lead to one of the oldest operating olive oil mills in Provence, founded in 1358. Enjoy a tour with your host to witness the production of one of the region's most prized products; perhaps you'll purchase some so you can take a taste of France home with you! You have free time here before returning to the ship by shuttle or bicycle. This evening, savor an authentic Provençal dinner, prepared and hosted by a local chef who we have invited on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Avignon to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon — 19 km (12 miles) | Villeneuve-lès-Avignon to ship — 5 km (3 miles)



What to Expect:

Ride across the Rhône River to Ile de Piot, a tranquil island, then continue to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon on the opposite bank. We ride on quiet roads with very limited traffic. After a tour at an olive oil mill, and free time in town, the optional ride back will follow a slightly different route.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 24 km (12 – 15 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Arles / Bike to Pont du Gard / Farewell Dinner**

Begin the day with a morning walk to the magnificent old town of Arles with your trip leaders. Then board a 45-minute shuttle to the spectacularly preserved Pont de Gard. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this 2,000-year-old Roman aqueduct once transported water 31 miles from Nimes. There'll be time to visit the enlightening museum, where you can learn how this towering structure was built without mortar. Feel free to stroll the pathways of the park that your route follows. For a shorter ride, you may stay on the shuttle until reaching Beaucaire and pick up an old, renovated rail trail instead.

Your trip leaders have arranged a savory picnic basket lunch to enjoy by the river, with a magnificent view of the aqueduct. After lunch your bike invites for a last, scenic ride of the week. The first part of your route follows an old, renovated rail trail to Beaucaire, where you can join a shuttle to Arles. If you choose cycling, you will follow quiet, paved country roads and leads you through the fertile farmlands that provide Provence with its rich bounty. Later join the Captain's Cocktail and Farewell Dinner with your trip leaders and raise your glasses for the unforgettable week.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Pont du Gard to Beaucaire — 20 km (12 miles) | Beaucaire to Arles — 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

You begin the day with a short walk in the historic center of Arles, followed by a 45-minute shuttle to Pont du Gard. You cycle in the afternoon on a beautifully renovated bike path along the rails of an old train line to Beaucaire. The second part of the bike ride follows paved, quiet country roads along flat terrain. As you are riding through open fields, you might experience some wind. For a shorter option, you can shuttle from Beaucaire to the ship.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 42 km (12 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DEPARTURE DAY: Disembark / Your France Bike & River Cruise: Lyon to Nice tour concludes**

After breakfast, say goodbye to your ship crew and trip leaders as your tour ends no later than 9 a.m. The Gare d'Arles train station is across the pier, a 3-minute walk or taxis are available for transportation to the closest international airport, Marseille Provence (MRS).

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **MS Emerald Liberté (Days: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)**

Cruise the Rhône river on MS Emerald Liberté, designed for luxury river cruising. Five cabin categories offer the amenities and contemporary style of a boutique hotel room. Enjoy full-service hospitality, comfortable social spaces, a golf putting green, walking tracks on the sun deck, pool, and cinema. Emerald Liberté is designed to provide the most efficient and comfortable journey during your seven nights on board. The 54 generously-proportioned suites and 14 staterooms feature all the amenities you need to begin and end each rewarding day, including a private bath with shower, hairdryer, bathrobes, and slippers. A mini-bar and complimentary bottled water are restocked daily and a safe protects your valuables. Complimentary WiFi and a flat-screen TV with infotainment system keep you plugged in. Onboard power is 220 volts; North American guests may require a power adapter. VBT offers two cabin types spread across five cabin categories: Emerald Stateroom (Categories D+E), or Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite (Categories A+B+C). VBT can also request additional cabin types based on availability.