

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

## Bike Vacation + Air Package

Experience a rich blend of French and German cultures as you criss cross borders and ride through quaint Alsatian towns, pause for wine tastings along the legendary Route des Vins, and wind along the canals of Colmar’s “Little Venice.” Pedal along well-marked bike routes, quiet country roads, and through rural paths open only to cyclists and farmers. Stroll cobbled pedestrian streets, passing charming half-timbered facades adorned with overflowing flower boxes, and perhaps pausing to bite into the famous Black Forest cake of a skilled pastry chef. Step back in time and enjoy a guided tour of 2,000-year-old Roman ruins in the spa town of Badenweiler. Throughout your adventure, stunning mountain ranges form the backdrop to your picturesque bike routes through France, Germany, and Switzerland.

## 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 countrysides as the Vosges Mountains rise in the distance, 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, with options for longer rides. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available for those who need 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:** 01:00 - 02:45

**Group size:** 22 max

## Climate Information

### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 60°/40°, May 69°/46°, Jun 74°/51°, Jul 78°/55°, Aug 77°/55°, Sep 71°/50°, Oct 59°/43°

### Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 1.7, May 2.2, Jun 2.6, Jul 2.6, Aug 2.8, Sep 2.4, Oct 1.8

## DAY 1: Depart from the United States or Canada

All you have to do is get to the airport. On our Air Packages, we'll take care of the rest, handling all the logistics, so you can travel with peace of mind. Spend your first night aloft and arrive refreshed for an unforgettable trip.

## DAY 2: Arrive in 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 3: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Badenweiler

After a leisurely included breakfast meet one of your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group in the lobby of our Basel hotel at 12:30 p.m. Your VBT trip leader will be holding a VBT sign and will be easy to recognize. Please arrive dressed for cycling (with your pedals or saddle if you use your own), as there will be no place to change into cycling clothes before beginning the warm-up ride. Please plan to have lunch or bring a packed lunch; quick options can be found in Barfüsserplatz, which is within walking distance (10 minutes) of the hotel.

From the hotel, you'll shuttle across the Swiss border and into France, where you'll meet your other trip leader and enjoy an orientation, safety briefing, and bike-fitting session. Your first day begins with a warm-up ride, cycling along the flat Grand Canal d'Alsace bike path. End your ride in the small Alsatian town of

Ottmarsheim. From here, you'll take a short 15-minute drive across the border to Badenweiler in Germany's Black Forest, your home for the next two nights.

You'll arrive at the Hotel zur Sonne in the afternoon. The hotel is centrally located in this pedestrian-friendly town. Badenweiler, or Spa-Hamlet, has been a popular destination since Roman times for travelers looking to relax in its natural hot springs. Our hosts and owners of the hotel, Mr. and Mrs. Esposito, await your arrival and have planned a special welcome dinner featuring local specialties. You'll dine al fresco on the hotel's terrace, weather permitting. As a special treat to end the evening, Mr. Esposito, a skilled pastry chef, will share some of his famous Black Forest cake with us.

Note: on tours staying at Park Hotel & Spa KATHARINA, dinner will be at this hotel.

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Warm-up – 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect: Follow the VV13 bike route on a mix of paths and small country roads and along waterways through a 2,000-acre nature preserve: La Petite Camargue Alsacienne, a popular recreation sanctuary on the former Rhine River floodplain. You will visit three countries today: Switzerland for breakfast, France for lunch and Germany for dinner!

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 km (14 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 4: Staufen / Badenweiler**

Enjoy a copious breakfast before embarking on your ride. Given Badenweiler's hillside location, you'll start today's ride with an exhilarating descent out of the village and down into the local vineyards. You'll ride through the Rhine River Valley along a combination of dedicated bike paths and paved vineyard roads open only to farmers and cyclists. Your route takes you toward the Kaiserstuhl region, renowned as the sunniest corner of Germany and the ideal terrain for growing Sylvaner, Pinot Noir, and Riesling grapes.

For lunch, your small group will convene in the traditional Black Forest town of Staufen, whose cobbled pedestrian streets and charming half-timbered facades make it ideal for a stroll. You'll enjoy a special lunch here in a local restaurant.

The afternoon's ride takes you closer to the mountains and into hillier terrain as you make your way back

to Badenweiler. The views down to the Rhine and across to France's Vosges Mountains give you a taste of what's to come this week. For those preferring a more leisurely afternoon, transportation has been arranged to take you back to Badenweiler, where you will have more than enough time to take advantage of everything the spa town has to offer. Don't miss the Cassiopeia thermal baths with more than 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, baths and relaxation areas.

Join the group for a tour of the Roman spa ruins, largely intact after nearly 2,000 years—or simply choose to experience the spa for yourself!

The evening is yours to eat, explore, and relax at your leisure.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Badenweiler to Staufen — 22 km (13 miles)

Afternoon Staufen to Badenweiler Loop — 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect: Descend from your hilltop town on your morning ride through rolling vineyards on paved bike paths and small local roads with little traffic. Your ride culminates in a lunch stop in historic Staufen (Watch for vineyard vehicles!). If you continue your ride on the afternoon option, loop back to Badenweiler through more rolling vineyard roads and bike paths with a final ascent to your hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 41 km (12 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 5: Neuf-Brisach / Canal de Colmar**

Wake up with the sun at Hotel zur Sonne (which means "to the Sun Hotel"). Begin with a ride from Badenweiler and the Black Forest. Today's routes take you through France's famous Alsace region. For centuries, this region has been deeply coveted and hotly contested by both France and Germany, and the influence of both cultures gives Alsace its unique fascination. You'll see many examples of Alsace's tumultuous and multi-faceted past, and you'll also enjoy the hybrid cuisine and traditions with both French and German roots.

A well-marked bike route leads north and east to the fortified town of Neuf-Brisach, a UNESCO World Heritage site whose intact fortifications date to 1698, when King Louis XIV commissioned them as a protection against the Habsburg Empire. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant near the historic main square.

This afternoon, a combination of flat bike paths and roads takes you to your final destination, Colmar, the crown jewel of Alsace.

Your historic hotel lies in the heart of Colmar's old town, near its picturesque canals. Its location is ideal for exploring the historic center. After arriving and taking time to relax and settle in, you'll stroll into the old town of Colmar and through La Petite Venise, or "little Venice," named for the waterway that meanders through town. You'll board a small boat for a short floating tour of this neighborhood; and then you'll walk to a favorite local restaurant for dinner.

#### Today's Ride Choices

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

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

What to Expect: Ride from Germany to France today, crossing the Rhine, along a combination of paved bike paths, little-trafficked roads, and bike lanes, into the bike-friendly city of Colmar. You may choose all three legs of the ride or any combination thereof.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 6: La Route des Vins**

Begin cycling the Route des Vins—the Wine Route—on a southbound route out of Colmar. Departing Colmar, you'll follow a well-marked bike path through famous Alsatian wine towns such as Guebenschwihr, Obermorsschihr and Eguisheim.

In 2013, Eguisheim was nominated one of the "most beautiful villages in France" on a nationwide vote, and this pretty town has also won the "village fleuri" award for its overflowing flowerboxes decorating the half-timbered buildings and cobblestone streets. Here in the heart of the Alsatian wine country, you have the possibility of independently visiting wine cellars and then lunch on your own in town before winding back through the vineyard-covered hills to Colmar.

Tonight, you'll walk to a family-run wine cellar. The rest of the evening is yours to explore the many delights of Colmar, the "capital of Alsatian wine."

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning Colmar to Eguisheim – 15 km (9 miles) | Colmar to Eguisheim (Extra) – 15 km (9 miles)

Afternoon Eguisheim to Colmar – 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: Ride on a bike path, bike lanes, and country roads on your choice of routes to the charming flower-box wine villages south of Colmar this morning. If you choose, cycle back to Colmar in the afternoon.

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 – 31 km (7 – 19 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 7: Riquewihr / Ribeauvillé / Obernai**

You'll bid adieu to Colmar this morning 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 with some hilly sections heading north and west into vineyards and the wine route's scenic towns such as Riquewihr and Ribeauvillé. The well-marked European bike route offers spectacular cycling with the higher Vosges Mountains and medieval villages in the distance, punctuated by picturesque wine towns dotted with half-timbered homes where you can stop at your leisure for lunch. For those on the longest option, the terrain rises gradually before you descend into the charming town of Obernai and your hotel—the perfect stop after an unforgettable day of cycling.

Stroll into Obernai this evening and treat yourself to a sampling of some of the wines from the vineyards you passed today. You may also choose to take advantage of your hotel's pool and spa facilities.

## 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 (Extra) – 44 km (27 miles)

What to Expect: Cycle north along paved bike lanes, dedicated bike paths, and small roads to the rolling wine country and picturesque villages connected by the Alsace Wine Bike Route.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 8: La Route des Vins / Rhine Canal / Obernai**

Your small group's final ride together takes you toward the northern end of the Alsace wine route. Here, rolling hills melt into the flat valley as you make your way to the Rhine Canal. This lovely bike path follows the canal toward Strasbourg. In the afternoon, you'll loop back along another bike path through surrounding villages with views of the Vosges to the west and back to your hotel in Obernai.

Tonight, enjoy an Alsatian farewell dinner at the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Obernai to Entzheim – 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon Entzheim to Obernai – 23 km (15 miles)

What to Expect: Riding north of Obernai along bike paths and small roads, meet the bike path that follows the Canal de la Bruche at about 15 km (9.3 miles). You leave the canal after about 10 km (6.2 miles) and loop back through small villages and typical farmland on paved bike paths and roads.

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 – 54 km (15 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 9: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Strasbourg**

Your tour culminates with a hearty breakfast. Say so-long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen and au revoir to your trip leaders and take a short train ride into Strasbourg. A local city guide walks you through Strasbourg's historic center, finishing at your hotel, the Regent Contades.

After the walking tour finishes at the Hotel Regent Contades at approximately 12:00 p.m., you are free to continue on your own. There are many train connections to other cities in France, Germany, and Switzerland. Or you might fly directly from the Strasbourg airport to your next destination. Your transportation from Strasbourg and beyond will be on your own. For travelers departing on Lufthansa from Frankfurt Airport, there are Lufthansa shuttles departing from the Strasbourg train station and from the Hilton Hotel (refer to Lufthansa for details on cost and schedules).

The remainder of the day is yours to make your own discoveries. Our rooms may not be ready until 3:00 p.m., but our luggage awaits our arrival at the hotel.

From the picturesque Tanners' District to the Musée des Beaux Arts to the lovely Notre Dame cathedral, Strasbourg offers a myriad of attraction to explore on your own, using our included city information packet to guide your discoveries.

Lunch and dinner are on your own.

If you have chosen the independent Post-Trip Extension, you will remain here for three nights.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 10: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Strasbourg**

After an included breakfast your tour concludes. Say so-long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen and au revoir to your trip leaders and take a short train ride into Strasbourg. A local city guide walks you through Strasbourg's historic center, finishing at your hotel, the Regent Contades.

The remainder of the day is yours to make your own discoveries. Our rooms may not be ready until 3:00 p.m., but our luggage awaits our arrival at the hotel.

From the picturesque Tanners' District to the Musée des Beaux Arts to the lovely Notre Dame cathedral, Strasbourg offers a myriad of attraction to explore on your own, using our included city information packet to guide your discoveries.

Lunch and dinner are on your own.

If you have chosen the independent Post-Trip Extension, you will remain here for three nights.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 11: Departure**

After breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Frankfurt airport will be provided (an approximately three-hour drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**



May vary depending on departure date.

### **Hotel Basel (Day: 2)**

Hotel Basel is the town's premier 4-star hotel, ideally located in the heart of the pedestrian old town, just steps from the Marktplatz. The hotel boasts several restaurants, including the outdoor Le Boulevard terrace, and you can enjoy breakfast in a remodeled wine cellar. A pass for the local tram and bus network is included in your stay.

### **Park Hotel & Spa KATHARINA (Day: 3)**

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 partial 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.

### **Romantik Hotel zur Sonne (Day: 4)**

At the edge of Germany's famous Black Forest lies the town of Badenweiler and the Romantikhôtel zur Sonne, or the hotel "to the sun." Badenweiler is famous for being Germany's sunniest town, with over 1,700 hours of sunshine annually, and you can enjoy some of it at the hotel's lovely terrace. The family-owned and -operated zur Sonne offers 35 rooms in several buildings. The central location of the hotel makes it easy to stroll through town and to the famous Cassiopeia thermal baths.

### **Le Colombier (Days: 5,6)**

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: 7,8)**

In the cobblestoned 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 well as in the fine-dining restaurant. The on-site spa contains an indoor pool, sauna, steam room, Jacuzzi along with spa treatments (available for booking).

## **Hotel Regent Contades (Days: 9,10)**

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