

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

## Bike Vacation Only

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:** 7 Days

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

**Average Cycling Time:** 01:00 - 04:00

**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: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Badenweiler

At 12:30 p.m., meet one of your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group in the lobby of The Passage Urban & Lifestyle hotel (Steinengraben 51, 4051 Basel, Switzerland, telephone +41 61 631 51 51). Please come 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 your 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 Park Hotel & Spa Katharina 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. This evening, savor a special welcome dinner of local specialties prepared by the chef.

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 (809-hectare) 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: Dinner

## **DAY 2: 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 (929 square meters) 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 – 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Staufen to Badenweiler – 18 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.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

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

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, then 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 Colmar — 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 4: 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 Alsatian wine country, you have the possibility of independently visiting wine cellars and then lunching 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 — 16 km (9 miles) | Colmar to Eguisheim PLUS — 21 km (12 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.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 5: 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 PLUS – 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.

Today may offer an additional independent ride 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 / 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 – 22 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 miles). You leave the canal after about 10 km (6 miles) and loop back through small villages and typical farmland on paved bike paths and roads.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 53 km (15 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 7: VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Strasbourg**

Your tour culminates with a hearty breakfast. You'll say so-long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, and au revoir to our trip leaders and take a short train ride into Strasbourg. A local city guide meets you at the train station for a stroll and orientation through Strasbourg.

After the walking tour finishes at the Hotel Regent Contades (where your luggage awaits) 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).

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### 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 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.

### 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.