



CYCLING IN THE MIDI-PYRÉNÉES: BETWEEN CITY AND COUNTRYSIDE BY BIKE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, NY, February 3, 2013 — With its towering mountains, wide plains and vineyards that stretch for miles, the Midi- Pyrénées is an ideal destination for cycling enthusiasts. From the heights of the Col du Tourmalet, a perennial stop on the Tour de France, to the Canal des Deux Mers, which follows the Canal du Midi to the magnificent Lot Valley, the region offers ideal routes for every level.

The Midi-Pyrénées has more than 20 easy *voies vertes*, which are traffic-free biking paths ranging between 10 to 90 miles long. Most notably, the Canal des Deux Mers is a route that combines the Canal du Midi voie verte and the voie verte along the Canal de Garonne, which together run for nearly 90 miles across the Midi-Pyrénées. The course follows the old towpaths alongside the Canal du Midi, a man-made structure unrivalled in Europe that was designed in the 16th century to connect the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. The Canal du Midi was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1996.

Other unforgettable cycling routes in the Midi-Pyrénées that feature stunning scenery and have historical interest are the Cathar Pyrenees voie verte, which wends through nearly 25 miles of countryside peppered with ruins of fortresses and castles, and the Haut Languedoc voie verte extending over 45 miles. There are approximately 80 prepared cycling routes in the Midi-Pyrénées, not including the mountain passes. Varying greatly in length, from 6 miles to over 370 miles and from easy to demanding, these routes are organized by the different departments in the Midi-Pyrénées and generally take the form of circuits, revolving around a particular theme.

The region also offers a multitude of *véloroutes*, long-distance cycle routes that are generally longer than the voies vertes, usually over 60 miles, but often are still appropriate for beginner and moderate levels. Combining beautiful scenery with cultural interest, the véloroutes often do not take the most direct route and are full of interesting detours and off the beaten path experiences. The picturesque véloroutes along the Lot Valley (100 miles) and Garonne (90 miles) are fantastic options for all levels.

Tour de France fans can follow in the paths of their favorite cycling stars by ascending the Col du Tourmalet, Col du Soudou, Col de Peyresourde, Col d'Agnes and more in the heart of the Pyrenees between France and Spain. The Col du Tourmalet is one of the most renowned routes in the region, with a steep uphill climb followed by the vertiginous descent into the Barèges Valley. With options for a ride lasting half a day, a whole day or longer, the constantly changing panoramic views are always spectacular. And riding in the mountains does not have to be reserved only to the champions. With a bit of training, the routes are feasible for experienced cyclists.

There are many enticing routes beyond the Pyrenees, such as the Aveyron route which is a 430-mile long route that weaves through the most beautiful villages of the area. Another recommended circuit is the Routes de Jalabert in Tarn, a 50-mile road racing circuit through the Montagne Noire put together by the French cycling legend Laurent Jalabert.

Many of the thermal spa towns in the Pyrenees have recently opened spas and wellness centers, offering a perfect place to relax and recuperate from bike rides.



Since 1910, the Tour de France has seen some of its finest hours in the Pyrenees, which have a reputation for its challenging mountain passes. From the Col du Tourmalet to the Plateau de Beille, a veritable cycling culture has taken root in the region. This can be seen in the warm reception that cyclists receive while en route, the celebrations and local races that are well-regarded in cycling circles and the extensive facilities at mountain passes along with other initiatives.

For more information about cycling in the Midi- Pyrénées, please click here: <http://goo.gl/FqhE4G>

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