FRENCH BIKE TOURS

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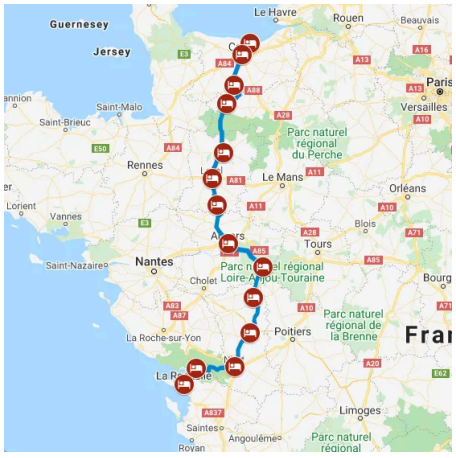


type :	Linear cycle routes Classic Cycle Routes of France Electric bike option
hybrid :	●●◐○○
e-bike :	●●○○○
duration :	14 days
comfort :	●●◐○○
period:	Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct
code:	FRSB920

Full Vélo Francette - from Ouistreham to La Rochelle

14 days, ***€ 2050***

Introduction



Unique about this trip

- Easy to moderate well-marked cycle route
- Through 3 different regions & 7 different 'départments'
- Mostly along winding rivers and canals
- Crossing 3 regional nature parks
- Along 25 historical towns and villages

More than 600 km/375 mi long, mainly along rivers

The 'Vélo Francette': a new, uninterrupted bike route in West France. The route is completely marked and follows the rivers and other waterways for the greater part. Cycling is going to be lovely along beautiful towns and picturesque villages through an unspoiled part of France, following the five divers stages. This is 'slow travel', in its literal sense!

Stage 1: The Orne Valley from Ouistreham to Domfort (126 km)

The 'Vélo Francette' starts from the Norman D-Day beaches of WW II via **Caen** and Flers to **Domfrontais.** In the hills, jokingly called 'La Suisse Normande' (Norman Switzerland), you follow the winding valleys of the rivers Orne, Noireau and la Varenne and you pass the iconic 'Roche d'Oetre'. The tracks and deserted country roads often offer a 360 degree view of the typically Norman landscape

Stage 2: The Mayenne Valley from Domfort to Angers via Laval (174 km)

This longer route follows no less than four different, lovely meandering rivers: The Varenne, Mayenne, Oudon and Maine. These confluent rivers take you, via different branches, to the most natural and beautiful river, the royal Loire. All this is a superior chance to enjoy, to your heart's content, the magnificence and beauty of this lovely landscape of river banks North France has to offer you.

Stage 3: The Loire valley from Angers to Saumur (58 km/39 mi)

A beautiful part of the Loire Valley is included too. Here you enjoy the clear, natural light on the impressive heritage in this exceptionally beautiful region. From the village of Gennes you go to lively **Saumur**. You can choose whether you take the north- or south bank of the Loire.Which ever you take both routes offer lovely views and many cultural surprises (on the way).

Stage 4: The river Thouet from Saumur to Niort (166km /103 mi)

From Saumur you cycle south and follow the 'Thouet á Vélo'route. The Thouet is your guide on this trip to Parthenay. Discover on the way through the valley the fortified towns and admire the rich heritage along the river: old castles, bridges, mills and also a subterranean well…moreover on your way south the climate becomes milder and the rhythm of life calmer and more relaxed.

Stage 5: From Niort to La Rochelle – (90 km/56 mi)

On the way to the Atlantic Ocean you cycle through a magnificent maze of green- and blue coloured canals. You cycle along umbrageous waterways through a breathtaking swamp, called La Venise Verte"(Green Venice). After that 'La Belle d'Aunis takes you, via broader and more open canals, to **La Rochelle** situated on the coast; an appropriate and fantastic end of this new bike tour

Day to Day

Day 1 **Arrival in Ouistreham / Caen**

You individually travel to the point of departure: Ouistreham or Caen. The sea side resort Ouistreham, situated on the Channel and well known for its D-Day beach 'Sword' of WW II, is the official start of the 'Vélo Francette'. The choice of historic Caen, situated more than 10 km inland, is rather practical: easier to reach by train and a shorter route the next day.

Day 2 **Ouistreham / Caen - Clécy**

First follow the old tow path along the canal de l'Orne that connects the coast with Caen. On the way admire the Pegasus bridge, a historic place in WW II. A track takes you, along the marina, to the town of which the history goes back to the time of William The Conqueror. Caen is well known for its castle, abbeys and 'Mémorial', the important war museum. After that you follow a track to the south along the L'Orne that leads you into the green hills of 'Suisse Normande'. You follow a deserted railway, an Eldorado for nature lovers. After Thury-Harcourt you reach Clécy on the banks of the river L'Orne. When staying in Caen, todays tour is 41 km.

Challenge : 55.8km or 41km, 681m ascent, 648m descent.

Day 3 **Clécy – Flers**

On the way to Flers you follow a beautiful country route straight across the hilly 'Suisse Normande'. The route first leads you along the winding river L'Orne that later on makes way for the Noireau. Until the Condé-sur-Noirreau the river valley is surrounded by steep hills. You have to climb considerably when you leave the valley. When however the Mont de Cerise comes into sight the route shows more mercy for the calves and you reach Flers with its beautiful castle. 2 options for today.

*Challenge : 45.5km, 562m ascent, 409m descent **OR** 43km, 495m ascent, 347m descent.*

Day 4 **Flers – Mayenne**

As soon as you leave Flers the route leads you via a relaxed descent to the valley of the river Varenne. You can still see that besides agriculture there used to be mining. A wonderful track, often quite close to the river, takes you along historic places like Moulin de Varenne, Moulin d'Amboise and Pont des Planches. This cyclists' paradise is heaven. In Ambrière-les-Vallées you take a last look at the Varenne and you continue your way along the bank of the Mayenne to the town of the same name.

Challenge : 65km, 249m ascent, 345m descent.

Day 5 **Mayenne – Laval**

After a visit to the historic town of Mayenne, with its castle, the history of which goes back to Carolingian times, you go through the Mayenne valley full of splendid scenery. It's a relaxed and umbrageous route that follows the former tow path along the river . You pass old, characteristic lock houses, monumental mansions and villas. The tour ends in Laval, a 'Ville d' Art et d' Histoire' where you have plenty of time left for a stroll along all the beautiful historic heritage.

Challenge : 35.2km, 180m ascent, 221m descent.

Day 6 **Laval – Chateau Gontier**

The start of this route offers amazing views of Laval with its two castles. The railway bridge with its nine arches, connecting the eastern Mayenne bank with the town centre and its port, has an separate track for cyclists and hikers. Before going further through the scenic beauty of the Mayenne Valley you should admire just south of town the well known Abbey of Port Salut, the name of which is linked to the creamy cheese of the same name.

Challenge : 34.8km, 235m ascent, 255m descent.

Day 7 **Chateau Gontier – Angers**

After each bend the Mayenne Valley surprises you again and again; a beautiful castle, somewhat further on an antique water mill. The village ports along the bank invite you to take a short break. Before Le Lion- d'Angers you cycle through the picturesque L 'Isle Briand with its castle and world

famous stud farm. After the confluence of the Mayenne and Oudon you cross a very special swamp. You reach the historic Anjou town Angers via Jean Moulin's bridge. The country atmosphere is still perceptible/tangible.

Challenge : 56.4km, 217m ascent, 223m descent.

Day 8 **Angers - Saumur**

ou leave Angers through a park along the Maine. Having arrived at Bouchemaine, with its pleasant restaurants, you follow the Loire eastward. After crossing the river a magnificent tour close to the royal river lies ahead of you. After Gennes you stay on the south bank of the Loire. Near Saint-Hillaire-Saint-Florent there is a moderate climb across the system of canals cut out of tuff stone where the 'Champignons de Paris' are cultivated. After this you enter Saumur, the pearl of Anjou.

Challenge : 67.1km, 313 m ascent, 305m descent

Day 9 **Saumur - Thouars**

From Saumur you follow a pleasant track along the river Thouet. Along quiet country roads you cycle among sloping vineyards to Montreuil-Bellay situated somewhat higher. This charming fortified little town rightly figures on the list of 'most beautiful villages of France'. In a very relaxed way you go via Taizon to Thouars, a 'Ville d'Art' where travellers once had to pay toll to cross the bridge. Nowadays nothing stands in your way to enter the town free and for nothing and look for a good (outdoor) café.

Challenge : 46.4km, 164m ascent, 95m descent

Day 10 **Thouars - Parthenay**

You leave town along the river bank and enjoy the splashing rapids, the closely wooded slopes and the picturesque, monumental buildings. You arrive via quiet tracks at the village of Airvault with its monastery, covered market and subterranean well. Somewhat further on you are surprised by St-Loup-sur-Thouet with its moated castle. On Lac du Cébron you can relax comfortably before going on along the river. After a railway viaduct you reach, higher up, the medieval fortified town of Parthenay.

Challenge : 66.8km, 588m ascent, 524m descent

Day 11 **Parthenay - Niort**

You travel south west through the somewhat hilly Pays Gatine. After many a bend you are rewarded by beautiful views of the original hedge country. Via quiet roads you go to the surprising Champdeniers-St-denis with its beautiful heritage and excellent facilities. You continue your way and near Ternanteuil you reach again the banks of the Sèvre Niortaise. There is one big bend before Niort comes into sight dominating the horizon with its donjon and two enormous towers.

Challenge : 54.1km, 555m ascent, 704m descent

Day 12 **Niort - Marans**

You stay close to the side of the winding Sèvre Niortaise, following alternatively footpaths and country roads. On the way Rousille and La Garette offer excellent possibilities to have a break. You can consider to take a somewhat longer break in Marais Poitevin: the beautiful riverside village Coulon, where you find several restaurants. After crossing the vast, surrounding swamp you get, after Irleau, to the river again canalized near Damvix. It's your guide to the Atlantic Ocean.

Challenge : 63.6km, 424m ascent, 436m descent

Day 13 **Marans - La Rochelle**

First, on the way to the ocean, you follow the canals of Marans and Rompsey. The destination is La Rochelle, the capital of Charente-Maritime energetic/vibrant and full of character, well known for its mild climate. This relaxed track of course deserves an appropriate grand finale: a dive into the Atlantic Ocean. After all there is enough time left for a walk to the lively Vieux Port full of outdoor cafés, busy shopping streets and many town monuments.

Challenge : 26.6km, 38m ascent, 41m descent

Day 14 **Departure from La Rochelle**

After breakfast, end of your cycling trip. Some time left? We advise you to extend your stay in order to take the time to visit the beautiful Île de Ré.

Prices, Data, Booking

Practical Info

13 Nights included

2/3 Star Hotels or 3/4 Star Hotels (supplement applied)

Breakfast included, Halfboard optional on request

Maps and tourist information on all the places of interest

24/7 Bilingual Emergency hotline

Luggage transport to your next accommodations. Luggage accepted per person: 1 suitcase or travel bag (15 kg maximum)

For time tables and further information check the **website of SNCF** or **rome2rio** for all French National trains (SNCF).
We strongly advise you to **download the sncf mobile app** prior to departure.
If you want to travel on a train with your bike, you can find more information **via this link**.

Parking informations on request

We will supply the directions of this trip with a personalized code which gives you access to our travel App.