



RIDE WORLD WIDE

FRANCE

DORDOGNE & GIRONDE RIDES 2024

RIDE INFORMATION

These rides explore the Gironde, Lot and Dordogne in south-west France, some of the most historically interesting areas in the whole country. The region boasts some 1,200 chateaux, is steeped with Anglo French history dating back to the Huguenot era and has a landscape of beautiful oak forests, river valleys and rolling hills. Rides are organised with a bi-lingual French guide, Michel Amat, who has many years' experience and is extremely well versed on local history, culture, food, wine and all this lovely part of France has to offer. Exploring peaceful, unspoilt countryside, riding days are interspersed with visits to hilltop bastide towns, imposing castles and fairy-tale chateau; evenings are a chance to enjoy the superb local cuisine and wonderful Cahors and Bordeaux wines that have made the area famous. Michel's preferred Western style riding is relaxed and fun, he takes huge pleasure in sharing the area's gourmet food and drink, is a knowledgeable and genial host, always making each trip highly personal. A great way to explore this part of France.

DATES

6 night trips are run from set dates between April and October, with other dates for groups sometimes possible on request. Please see the set departure dates overleaf and call us to check availability.



HORSES

The horses used are owned by Michel, your guide, and are locally bred French saddle horses of mixed blood. They are between about 14.2hh and 15.2hh and are of a medium build. They are well schooled, good-natured and sensible but also forward going, responsive and enjoyable to ride. They are ridden western style and are used to neck reining, going best when ridden with a loose contact with the mouth.

TACK

Saddles are English endurance style with 'Maclellans' or Western saddles available on request - please let us know when you book if you prefer western tack. Saddle bags are provided.

RIDING

A number of different 6 night itineraries / routes are offered which include between 4 and 5 days riding combined with sightseeing. The number of days riding and riding hours each day varies with the itinerary chosen but full riding days usually include 4 to 6 hours in the saddle and half days around 3 hours. Please see the itineraries at the end of this information sheet for more information. Riding is broken up with rest stops and a long break for lunch. Rides are run for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 7 riders and are lead personally by Michel, who speaks fluent English and is an experienced guide with a real interest in local history and culture. He generally tacks up and un-tacks the horses for you each day (you may help if you wish!) and luggage is transported between hotels by a back-up vehicle which meets riders at lunch stops some days. .

WEIGHT LIMIT

There is a rider weight limit of 86kgs although occasionally, by prior arrangement, heavier riders who are experienced and fit may be taken - please call us to discuss.

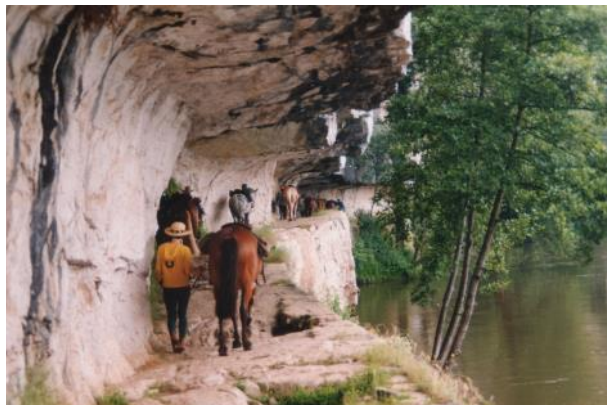


PACE

Riding is at a relaxed pace, slow to moderate overall and largely governed by the terrain. In places on all routes you follow narrow winding tracks, riding through forests and descending into, or climbing out of, valleys where you need to ride slowly or may be asked to dismount and lead your horse. In other places routes cross open fields and follow wide forest tracks that offer good chances to canter. Routes are carefully planned and there are usually chances for trots and canters on most days, if weather conditions allow. The Castles & Caves of Malbec and Vineyards of Bordeaux have the most riding (5 days), with the Bordeaux Ride offering a few more chances for longer canters, particularly on the beach day. Terrain on the former requires a generally slower pace. All routes take you from village to village and there will be some road work every day in the vicinity of local villages.

RIDING EXPERIENCE

To join these rides you should have a reasonable amount of riding experience. You do not need to be an expert rider, but should be comfortable, balanced and secure in the saddle at a walk, trot and canter and able to control a well-schooled horse outside in open country at all these paces. You should also be used to riding over different, sometimes rough, terrain. The rides are aimed at reasonably competent riders but as the horses are sensible and well mannered and the rides are not fast, they are well suited to confident riders of an intermediate ability. As you will be spending quite a time in the saddle each day, you will enjoy your holiday much more if you are reasonably riding fit and we recommend regular riding practice in the months before you go. This is particularly important if you choose one of the place-to-place rides; the Kings Trail, where you stay at the same base each night, can be more flexible.



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation on the rides is in a variety of good quality hotels and typical 'chambres d'hotels'. Hotels are 3* (occasional 4*) on most itineraries with luxury 4* and 5* hotels and chateaux on the Prestige Ride. All hotels are carefully chosen by Michel for comfort, position and character. Most are small and personal and they include traditional village hotels, a converted watermill and imposing manor houses. Individual bedrooms will be quite simple but all are comfortable with their own private bathroom, with loo and shower or bath. Many of the hotels have excellent restaurants and several also have their own swimming pool for a relaxing dip after the day's ride. Rates assume shared accommodation in twin / double bedded rooms but single rooms are available at a supplement.



MEALS

The food in this area of France is a highlight and Michel places great emphasis on both food and wine so you be extremely well fed and able to sample some of the many wonderful local specialities such as 'foie gras' and 'magret de canard', as well as the delicious local wines. Breakfast is usually French style and eaten at your hotel - coffee, tea or hot chocolate and croissants. Lunch is a varied and delicious picnic, brought by the back-up vehicle to meet you when you are out riding - perhaps fresh bread, salads, a selection of cheese, pate, cold meat or quiche, followed by fruit and with wine and coffee included - or you may stop at a local restaurant, depending on the route. In the evening, a three course dinner is eaten as a group with your host at your hotel, or at one of the excellent local restaurants. Menus are varied and carefully chosen for you to include some of the different local dishes. Half a bottle of wine per person is included with lunch and dinner and extra drinks and spirits are available and will be charged to your bar bill. On the Prestige Ride dinner is at gourmet restaurants, several of which are Michelin starred, and you will have the chance to try some of the best wines of the region. Vegetarians can be well catered for, but if you have any special dietary requirements please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made.



WEATHER

The weather in the Dordogne is mild with daytime temperatures in April, May, September and October usually between 15 and 25 degrees C and from June to August usually between 20 and 35 degrees C, July and August being the hottest months. In spring and early summer there are many wild flowers and fresh leaves on the vines are a wonderful bright new green. Temperatures in November, February and March average around 10 degrees C during the day. Rain is possible year round, but showers are most likely during spring and autumn months (October, November & December have the highest rainfall statistically).

WHAT TO BRING

We will send you a list when you book.

ITINERARIES

Itinerary Examples of the set date itineraries are set out below, although please note that these itineraries are only a guide as to what is planned and the day-by-day arrangements, riding route and accommodation may be altered by your guide at his discretion if the weather, local conditions or any other unforeseen events require.

Fortresses & Forests of the Dordogne - Example itinerary

A 6 night trip with 4 ½ days riding and a morning sightseeing allowing you to see some of the Dordogne's most interesting historic sites and villages whilst also taking the path less travelled - to give a real feeling for the region and its people.

Day 1 - You will be met by a driver or your host Michel at Bergerac train station or airport (usually at around 15.30) and driven (about 50 minutes) to a country hotel, converted from an old watermill and set in its own grounds (with swimming pool) in lovely rolling countryside where the first night is spent. Welcome dinner with the group and Michel and overnight Domaine du Moulin de Labique. (D)

Day 2 - After breakfast meet the horses, mount up and set off riding, following one of the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostella until you arrive at Chateau de Biron at about midday. This chateau's architecture spans eight centuries and it is one of the best preserved castles in Europe. A picnic lunch followed by a visit to the chateau for those who wish. In the afternoon, ride on into the Dordogne and to Monpazier, a lovely, well preserved bastide town founded in 1284 by Edward I of England and famous for its architecture. Time to look around the town, perhaps stopping in the square for a drink, before dinner and the night at the atmospheric Hotel Edward 1st (or similar). (B,L,D)



Day 3 - This morning's ride continues further north to the beautiful bastide of Montferrand-du-Perigord. Located on the Couze river, this listed site has preserved its authentic charm, with old houses that are beautiful examples of Perigord homes with Renaissance facades. The village is dominated by a half ruined chateau from the 12th C. Picnic lunch in the village, under the covered market and time to explore, before mounting up to continue riding further north through the farmlands and forests of the area, before arriving at the evening's accommodation just outside the village of Cadouin. An optional early evening visit to Cadouin, which has an abbey with 12th C Romanesque church and Gothic cloister that is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Return to the hotel for dinner and night. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - Today's ride continues through the Bessède forest to Belvès, another unique bastide classified as one of the most beautiful villages in France. In the afternoon there will be the opportunity of a drive to the Gouffre de Proumeyssac - known as 'The Crystal Cathedral'. The largest developed abyss in the Perigord, the Cavern of Proumeyssac is a beautiful underground vault decorated with a multitude of crystals. The visit includes a beautiful light show and guided tour (in English). After returning to Belvès, either relax at your hotel inside the walls of the 11th C fortified village (3* Le Clement V or similar), or explore the village on foot before dinner. Night Belves (B,L,D)

Day 5 - After breakfast ride south through the chestnut woods of the Dordogne. Lunch will be at a family run duck farm with a chance to taste some of the farms products, including 'foie gras' accompanied by a sweet wine from the Monbazillac vineyard near Bergerac. In the afternoon ride on to the medieval village of Villefranche du Perigord, a 13th C bastide built by Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of King Louis IX. Dinner and overnight at the 3* Hotel Restaurant La Bastide (or similar) in Villefranche du Perigord. (B,L,D)

FORTRESS & FORESTS OF THE DORDOGNE ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - Breakfast before re-joining the horses and riding through the forests to Chateau de Bonaguil, a 15th C medieval fortress, built on a rock face. A picnic lunch followed by a tour of this wonderful, imposing castle which was classified as a historic monument in the 19th C. Then mount up again to continue riding out of the forest past unspoilt villages and fields of wheat, maize and sunflowers, before crossing the Lot river into an area of orchards and vineyards. The ride ends at a charming country hotel. Dinner in the stone and timber dining room is a wonderful end to a great day of riding. (B,L,D)

Day 7 - After breakfast, morning transfer back to Bergerac railway station (about 1 ½ hours drive, usually arriving at about 12 noon) or to Bergerac airport. (B)

Vineyards of Bordeaux - Example itinerary

The Gironde region and its major port, Bordeaux, have a rich and varied cultural heritage and are re-known for their prestigious wine-producing chateaux and Romanesque and Gothic architecture. This 6 night trip, with 5 days riding, starts with a visit to the 12th C medieval and UIESCO listed town of St. Emilion. Then, crossing the Gironde estuary by ferry with the horses, the route continues through the Médoc vineyards with their famous chateaux - Latour, Pichon-Baron, and Lafite Rothschild amongst others, after which a landscape of marshland and pine forest ends with a wonderful finale on the sandy beaches of the Atlantic.

Day 1 - Met at Bordeaux train station (usually at 14.00) or Bordeaux airport and driven about 45 minutes to a hotel in St. Emilion for the afternoon / evening. Medieval f St. Emilion has one of the most important architectural heritages in Europe and it is listed world heritage by UNESCO. Standing proudly on the top of a hill overlooking the Dordogne valley, the town, with its sun baked, Roman tiled roofs, was built in the shape of an amphitheatre. Time to visit a unique monolithic (underground) church dating back to the 11th C and a cellar for your first wine tasting - a Grand Cru - before dinner at the hotel (D).



Day 2 - Breakfast at the hotel then you will be driven to meet the horses at a chateau near the village of Blaye. After a short wine tasting, and allocation of horses, you set off riding north along the Gironde River to the Citadelle de Blaye, built in 1689 by Vauban (military engineer of Louis XIV) and set with star-shaped bastions. Lunch within the Citadelle walls and in the afternoon both horses and riders board a ferry to cross the Gironde estuary (approx 30 minutes). Arriving at Port Lamarque, mount up and ride towards Chateau Meyre, an elegant 19th C mansion in the heart of the Médoc region. Dinner at a restaurant in Margaux and night Chateau Meyre. (B,L,D)

Day 3 - Today the ride continues through the Médoc region, passing many of the most prestigious and beautiful chateaux of the area - Chateau Lanessan, Beaucaillou, Pichon-Baron, Latour and Lafitte Rothschild, to name a few. Stop at Chateau Lanessan for a picnic lunch in the grounds and a chance to taste the chateau's wine. After lunch, take a moment to visit the horse museum before riding off again to the famous Chateau Pichon-Baron (Grand Cru Pauillac). A visit and winetasting, before transferring to a hotel nearby in the Saint Estephe appellation, where the next 2 nights are spent. A good dinner in a nearby restaurant. Night Chateau Tour Saint Fort. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - This morning's ride takes you through vineyards and along the river banks to Chateau Loudenne, a charming pink manor house from the 17th C with an 18th C Victorian cellar and lovely view over the Gironde estuary. A picnic lunch in the garden and in the afternoon ride back to your accommodation, passing Roman archaeological excavations and miles of marshland used primarily as pasture for horses and cattle. Dinner at a nearby gastronomic restaurant in the village of Pauillac and second night Chateau Tour Saint Fort. (B,L,D)

VINEYARDS OF BORDEAUX ITINERARY cont.

Day 5 - After breakfast there will be time to relax and also visit the cellar of Chateau Tour Saint Fort, followed by a tasting of their fine Crus Bourgeois. In the late morning transfer (with the horses), about 50 minutes to a 4* hotel and spa on the ocean. Lunch at the hotel and in the afternoon set off on a ride through pine forests and along the beach with a chance for some exhilarating canters. Return to the hotel where you relax by the heated pool before dinner (It is possible to arrange massages but usually by advance booking, at least 3 weeks ahead so please request well ahead). Dinner at a beach side restaurant and the night at the hotel. (B,L,D)



Day 6 - Breakfast and set off on the final day's ride, through pine forests where there are good chances for trots and canters before arriving at the sandy dunes that line this section of the Atlantic Coast. Stop for a last, delicious picnic lunch within the pine forests and dunes. Then after lunch, mount up to ride to the ocean and let the horses cool their legs in the water before a long canter on the beach. A short ride back through the dunes in the late afternoon, before saying goodbye to the horses. Farewell dinner and the night. (B,L,D)

Day 7 - After breakfast, transfer back to Bordeaux train station or airport (about 1 ½ hours drive) usually to arrive at 11.00am. (B)



Caves & Castles of Malbec - Example itinerary

Starting in the vineyards of Cahors with its famous Malbec grape, this route heads into more and more isolated country, with a visit to the famous prehistoric caves of Pech-Merle on the last riding day. 6 nights with 5 days riding, you will feel as though you have stepped through time, immersed in a world of rugged beauty, history and culture.

Day 1 - Met at Bergerac station (or airport) usually at 15.30 and driven about 1 ½ hours to the medieval village of Puy l'Eveque. After settling in, a classic French dinner coupled with excellent local wines. (D)

Day 2 - Breakfast, meet the horses and after all are settled, set off riding east, through the woods and many of the vineyards in this beautiful area. Stop at Chateau Chambert, an award-winning Cahors vineyard that has produced Malbec wine since the 12th C and time to visit the cellars and taste the Chateau's wines before lunch. In the afternoon mount up to ride on through vineyards and forests, stopping at a quiet field where you leave the horses for the night. A short drive back to Puy l'Eveque for dinner & the night. (B,L,D)

CAVES & CASTLES OF MALBEC ITINERARY cont.

Day 3 - After breakfast, drive back to meet the horses and set off riding across the calcareous and wild plateau of the Lot, stopping at midday in the small 13th C village of Le Montat. After a long morning ride, there is a marvellous lunch and then a shorter riding afternoon, continuing through varied countryside, valleys and oak woods to Chateau Hautes-Serres, another award-winning Malbec vineyard. After a visit and time to taste some wine, you will be taken to a nearby B&B in the centre of the Quercy black truffle region, where the night is spent. Dinner tonight is a chance to try the “Black Diamond” truffle, world renowned for its delicate and rich flavour and paired with local French wines, a wonderful dining experience! (B,L,D)

Day 4 - The day begins with a short morning ride to the small village of Cremps. There will be time to explore this quiet village with its 12th C church on foot before a picnic lunch. In the afternoon, ride north through Concots to the 13th C village of Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, perched on a cliff face with a commanding view of the Lot valley. After settling into your hotel, time to explore the village which is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the whole of France. Dinner at one of the local restaurants and night at the Auberge du Sombrol (or similar) in Saint-Cirq-Lapopie. (B,L,D)

Day 5 - The ride today follows the course of the Lot River, heading for Chateau de Cénevières, a private 11th C chateau with impressive 14th C additions and renovations. The route takes you east, crossing plateaus above the valley before arriving at the chateau in time for lunch. A guided tour of the chateau after lunch, and then the ride continues along the river valley back to Saint-Cirq-Lapopie. (Those who wish can opt out of riding and spend the day in Saint-Cirq-Lapopie). Second night Saint-Cirq-Lapopie. (B,L,D)



Day 6 - Breakfast and a spectacular morning ride along the cliffs, crossing the Lot River, to the prehistoric caves of Pech-Merle which are decorated with Magdalenian rupestrine paintings. Visit the caves before a delicious picnic lunch. In the afternoon ride through the beautiful Célé valley, before stopping in Cabreret, a peaceful village built in the middle of a cirque of cliffs, with amazing troglodyte houses. In the evening you will be driven to Cahors for a farewell dinner and the final night at a hotel in Cahor. (B,L,D)

Day 7 - Breakfast at your hotel which is close to Cahors train station, so you may depart from there at any time - although leaving time to explore Cahors is highly recommended. Saturday is market day and there is plenty going on in the tiny streets of the medieval town; you might also like to visit the Valentré Bridge, a remarkable example of medieval architecture built on the Lot River at the 14th C and now registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela. (B)



DATES & RATES 2024

Please note that due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, ride rates are quoted in euros. The sterling price will be the equivalent sterling rate using the euro/sterling exchange rate in force when you book/pay.

Fortresses & Forests of the Dordogne

30th June to 6th July 6th to 12th October

Rate: Euros 3350 per person; single supplement - Euros 450

Prestige Dordogne Ride

2nd to 8th June (please ask for Prestige Dordogne itinerary)

Rate: Classic: Euros 7160 per person / Junior Suite: Euros 8535 per person;
single supplement: Classic Euros 1020 / Junior Suite Euros 1980

Vineyards of Bordeaux

12th to 18th May 15th to 21st September

19th to 25th May 22nd to 28th September

Rate: Euros 4035 per person; single supplement - Euros 550

Caves & Castles of Malbec

14th to 20th April 16th to 22nd June

28th April to 4th May 1st to 7th September

Rate: Euros 3250 per person; single supplement - Euros 440

Rates **INCLUDE** 6 nights twin accommodation, all riding, meals as indicated, wine with lunch and dinner (half a bottle per person at each meal) and transfers from / to Bergerac, Bordeaux or Cahors (depending on ride) at set times on the first and last days (see paragraph below re - travel arrangements).

They **EXCLUDE** international flights and taxes, travel between your arrival port in France and the set meeting / departure place, personal travel / medical insurance (which you must have), your bar bill for extra drinks, transfers outside the set times, any visa fees and any tips you might wish to leave.



FLIGHTS & TRAVEL INFORMATION

Travel arrangements - Ride costs include meeting / transfers at a set time on the first and last days at set meeting and departure points which vary: -

For the Fortresses & Forest of Dordogne Rides, meeting and departure point is Bergerac airport or train station.
For the Beaches & Vineyards of Bordeaux Ride meeting and departure point is Bordeaux airport or train station.
For the Caves & Castles in Malbec Ride meeting place is Bergerac airport or station; Departure point is Cahors train station (or Bergerac airport depending on group plans).

For the Prestige Dordogne Ride meeting and departure point is Brive la Gaillarde train station or airport.

Meeting times will vary a little depending on travel plans of the group or first bookings and will be confirmed at time of booking or closer to the departure date. Transfers can be arranged outside set times or taxis booked for an extra charge.

Flights and International Travel - Prices quoted above DO NOT include travel between your arrival port in France and the meeting point for the ride. For flights from London to Bergerac, Bordeaux or Toulouse budget around £200 economy return (varies with the airline and season). There are also trains to Bordeaux and Bergerac from Paris or London St. Pancras. Transfers outside set times and from / to alternative meeting or departure points can be arranged at extra cost (eg: transfers from Toulouse airport are between Euros 180 and 200 each way). Extra transfer costs are payable locally in cash.

GENERAL VISA & HEALTH INFORMATION

(NB this is a brief outline - further information will be sent to you if you make a confirmed booking)

Visas Holders of full UK passports do not need visas for visits to France whatever the length of stay, although for visits of over 90 days residence permits are required. Holders of other passports should check requirements with the French Consulate.

Health No vaccinations are needed by UK, USA or EU residents to enter France.

DRAFT 08/01/2024)

