

CLASSIC
EDELWEISS TOURS

TOUR OF THE PYRENEES

100% riding fun, little traffic and stunning landscapes –
these are the Pyrenees!

RIDING DAY 1 : CASTELLDEFELS - PERAMOLA

Standard Route (195 km / 121 miles)

Leaving Castelldefels on nice backcountry roads and later on the convenient A2, we can comfortably approach this day's highlight, the most famous place in Catalunya, the mountain range and monastery of Montserrat.

Sweeping back roads wind their way up into the bizarre rock formations of Catalunya's holy mountain. Visit the world famous "Morenata," the black Madonna and enjoy the stunning views.

Thereafter, we continue through the Pyrenean foothills, the area around the impressive castle of the dukes of Cardona, where we will have lunch, enjoying beautiful views over the salt mines of "Montana de Sal". Hidden and beautiful side roads will take us to Bassella, where you get the chance to visit a museum of historic motorcycles. Our hotel is only a stone throw's away from here.

Highlights:

#1: Abbey Santa Maria de Montserrat



The "sawed mountain" which reaches up to 4,000 ft., makes a magnificent setting for Catalonia's holiest location, the monastery of Montserrat. Surrounded by chapels and eremite caves, it dates back to the 9th century. After Napoleon's troops destroyed it in 1811, the main complex was rebuilt in 1844. Under Franco it was a bastion of the Catalanian resistance. Today the monastery is inhabited by

monks of the Benedictine order. Most famous for this area is the black Madonna, which was supposedly made by the evangelist Luke, and brought here by St. Peter.

#2: Parador de Cardona



Would you like to travel back in time to the Middle Ages? At the Parador de Cardona, you will feel as if that is just what you've done. The parador is a beautiful medieval castle with centuries of history, standing high atop a promontory and watching over the charming town of Cardona. On this 9th-century fortified site, you can also visit Minyona Tower and a lovely church, both dating from the

11th century. We have taken great care with the décor to ensure that the castle retains all of its charm and so that the fosses, towers, walls and gothic elements can be seen in all their glory. Panoramic views of the town and the lands along the Cardoner River are visible from anywhere you look out.

#3: Bassella Motorcycle Museum



Recognized as one of the best museums in Europe, it has become an icon for all motorsport fans and an obligatory stop in the route to Andorra. A trip across the 20th century on two wheels. This is the proposal of the Bassella Motorcycle Museum, an interesting route starting with the most rudimentary models from the very beginning of the motorcycle until nowadays, through a selection of the main

national and international brands of every speciality.

In the center of the museum is the original workshop where Mario Soler refurbished the majority of motorcycles that shape the present collection. Everything was carefully transported piece by piece from its former location in Bassella, keeping all elements and original details which constitute one of the most remarkable areas in the museum, where time stopped more than 20 years ago.

RIDING DAY 2 : PERAMOLA

Standard Route (195 km / 121 miles)

Two choices today:

Have a real rest day; sleep in and visit a very nice motorcycle museum near Oliana with an excellent private collection of vintage bikes (unless you have done that on the previous day). In the afternoon you could go for a little hike, right from our hotel, up a mountain to enjoy the amazing views from the top. After that you can sit back and relax at the pool of our beautiful hotel. After all, this is a rest day!

If you want to ride your bike this loop here would be a recommendation: leave the main road in Coll de Nargó and you're smack in the middle of a motorcycle dream of twists and turns. Coll de Bóixol is the name of the pass and people on this tour sometimes spend all day here, riding up and down and up and down, searching for the perfect line. Simply one of the most awesome roads of the Pyrenees. In Tremp we turn north, follow the road through a narrow gorge to Sort and then turn towards our next pass, Coll de Canto. Another spectacular road that you just want to take home with you.

The ancient town of La Seu d'Urgell is worth a little stroll along the narrow alleyways and to the cathedral. Or why don't you go and race a go-cart around? Oh, so many options...

Highlights:

#1: Coll de Boixols (1380 m)



At about 1,380 m (4,150 ft.) elevation, the Coll de Boixols is not one of the really high pass roads in the Pyrenees, but it is one of the best as far as the riding is concerned. Excellent road conditions and hardly any other vehicles on the road make this pass an outstanding riding experience.

#2: La Seu d'Urgell



The beginnings of the town just 10 km south of Andorra are shrouded in the mist of history. It is known that the Romans were there and, after them, the Moors. Seu's history really started in the 9th century, when the Franks evicted the Muslims from this area and turned the town into a bishopric and the regional capital.

The Romanesque Cathedral de Santa Maria was built in the 12th century and is one of the oldest ones in Catalonia. It is well worth a visit, just like all the old town with its narrow alleyways and arcades. There are many good restaurants to choose from if you are hungry.

RIDING DAY 3 : PERAMOLA - CARCASSONNE

Standard Route (265 km / 165 miles)

Today we ride from Spain to France - but not directly! Wedged in between, high up in the mountains, is another country: Andorra, a micro-state 2 1/2 times the size of Washington, D.C. Due to its duty-free status the country is essentially a giant shopping mall, with prices for alcohol, tobacco, perfume, gasoline, electronics and many other things much lower than in the neighboring countries. The shopping and skiing infrastructure makes Andorra quite ugly, at least the built-up areas, while the surrounding mountains are beautiful. We climb up to a viewpoint, then leave Andorra towards the North, across a pass named Porta d'Envalira, at 2,408 m (7,900 ft) the highest one in the Pyrenees. The roads in France are not as well maintained as the ones in Spain, but passes like the Port de Pailhères are still awesome rides. On tiny, twisty roads we head North until we reach the fabled old town of Carcassonne.

Highlights:

#1: Andorra la Vella



Covering only 170 square miles, Andorra is one of the smallest countries in Europe. From 1279 onwards, it was reigned by two rulers, the Spanish Bishop of Seu d'Urgell and the French Duke of Foix - later the French President. Even though Andorra became independent in 1993, both are formally still principals of this state. Being a tax free area, Andorra today looks like an oversized shopping mall.

#2: Ax-les-Thermes



Ax (from Latin Aquae – water; French Thermes – hot springs), is well known for its sulphurous hot springs (77 - 172 °F), of which there are about sixty. The waters, which were used by the Romans, are claimed to treat rheumatism, skin diseases and other maladies. The springs were developed in the medieval period on the orders of Saint Louis to treat soldiers returning from the Crusades afflicted with leprosy. From the 19th century, a spa tourism industry developed. The Bassin des Ladres (Lepers' Pond), in the center of the town, is fed by hot springs supplying water from the ground at a temperature of 170 °F. The pond was built in 1260 by Roger IV, Count of Foix, during the reign of Saint Louis. Every year on St John's Day (June 24), the Axéens, having been daubed with ashes, bathe in the Lepers' Pond for fun.

#3: Port de Pailhères (2,001m)



The Port de Pailhères or Col de Pailhères is a pass in the Ariège department of the French Pyrenees and known from the Tour de France. The summit is at an altitude of 6,560 ft., so it is one of the few pass roads over 6,000 ft. in the Pyrenees. It is located on the D25 between Mijanès and Ax-Les-Thermes. From Mijanes to Ax-Les-Thermes, the Col de Pailhères is 18.1 miles long. Over this distance, the climb is 2,860 ft. on one side and 4,200 ft. on the other side with a maximum gradient of 10.4%. The climb has been used in four stages of the Tour de France cycle race in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2010.

RIDING DAY 4 : CARCASSONNE

Standard Route (155 km / 96 miles)

Welcome to Carcassonne! Some people describe this city in the following way: “Nowhere in Europe exists such a complete and such a formidable whole of defense of the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, such an interesting subject of study and a more picturesque landscape.”

Obviously, we should not miss out this place! Walk around this amazing town, take your time, sit down somewhere and enjoy this perfectly restored medieval jewel!

Just a few things for you to discover:

- Walk around the ancient La Cité, discover highlights such as the castle and ramparts as well as the Basilica St. Nazaire.
- Don't miss the stunning old bridge (pont vieux) with the most beautiful view on the cité.
- Learn about the impressive history of the Cathars.
- Discover the Canal du Midi, built as early as in 1681, now UNESCO World Heritage (by boat or by bicycle).
- Taste regional wines in a beautifully located wine estate nearby.

If you still want to ride, we offer a fabulous ride to the Montagne Noir, just North of Carcassonne! Discover beautiful roads, some more open, some really tiny and hidden, like the one through the Gorge de la Clamoux. Stop at stunning places such as Minerve, one of the most beautiful villages of France. Ride all the way to the top of Pic de Nore to enjoy the stunning views. No doubt, this is a spectacular ride!

Highlights:

#1: Carcassonne



The city, nowadays separated into the fortified Cité de Carcassonne and the younger lower city, the ville basse, was founded as a roman settlement in the first century BC. The Cité, situated within the ramparts, has evolved into a tourist attraction of the first rank. The town surface of a mere 14 hectares hosted some 3000 to 4000 inhabitants in medieval times. Today, around 230 people permanently live inside the fortifications, all the rest residing outside and coming here to work in tourism. In the course of the 12th century, the city came to be a centre of the Cathar-movement and in further consequence an episcopal see for the Cathars. It won notoriety in 1209, when the Cathars were expelled and killed in the course of the Albigensian crusade. In the sequel, the castle accommodated the headquarters of inquisition in southern France. Whilst the lower city gained importance in the course of time, the formerly splendid Cité was left to decay. The fortress was thoroughly restored in the 19th century by the theorist and architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1997.

#2: Montagne Noir



This small range of mountains, rising 1,200 m from the Toulouse plain, has both rural charm and scenery to take your breath away – dappled forests and epic mountain lakes where the wooded slopes and pastures fall away to a sea of silver clouds in the valley below. The snowy peaks of the Pyrenees loom in pin-sharp focus from the other side of the plain. And yet the Montagne Noire seems to be forgotten, caught in a time warp, anachronistic even for rural France. A dwindling and ageing population live in stone-built villages that have stood since the time of the Cathars. There's a real sense of wilderness. Wild boar roam woodland. Farm dogs bark on chains. Buzzards wheel over hills and lakes. Deep in the forest, trout-filled streams course hurriedly over shale and granite to the wine-growing valleys on the dusty plain. It's hot in summer and cold in winter. Highest peak of the "Black Mountains" is Pic de Nore, 1211 m (just under 4,000 ft) tall. A paved road leads all the way to the top and offers sweeping 360° views.

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#3: Minerve



Surrounded by deep gorges cut where the Brian and Cesse meet and situated at the very end of a limestone plateau, Minerve is a stony village in the heart of the Languedoc hinterland. It was an old Cathar bastion that was destroyed by Simon de Montfort in 1210 and the village has a column in memory of a stake at which 140 Cathars were burnt at that time. Minerve is also famous for its wine that has been produced here by local winegrowers for centuries.

#4: Canal du Midi



The "Southern Canal" connects the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea across the South of France. It is 240 km (150 miles) long, reaches an elevation of 189 m (620 ft) above sea level, features 328 supporting constructions like bridges and locks and 45,000 trees along its course. This masterpiece of engineering was built between 1667 and 1681 by 15,000 workers.

Connecting the two oceans - and thus bypassing Spanish and Portuguese waters - had been a dream since the days of the Romans. Augustus and Nero fantasized about it as did Charlemagne and pretty much every French king during the Middle Ages. In 1516 even Leonardo DaVinci was brought in to help figure out a solution for the main problem: how to supply the summit of the canal - about halfway between Carcassonne and Toulouse - with enough water. Pierre-Paul Riquet, a wealthy collector of salt tax in Languedoc, suggested to collect water from the Montagne Noir, several tens of kms away. He gained the approval of the Sun King Louis XIV, a complicated funding system was drafted and the best architects and builders commissioned. The canal was a major economic success up until 1980, when only two operating barges were left. In 1996 the Unesco included it in their list of World Heritage Sites, hereby boosting tourism. Today the canal generates about 120 million Euros in revenue per year!

RIDING DAY 5 : CARCASSONNE - MOLLÓ

Standard Route (230 km / 143 miles)

Today's destination, Mollo, is in Spain, but just behind the border, so we spend all day in France. It's a great place to spend a riding day, with beautiful scenery and very, very twisty roads. Lagrasse, a pretty little town with some lovely cafés invites us for our first break, but the major highlight of this route already beckons in the distance: Peyrepertuse, an ancient fortress high up on a rocky ridge. It's a bit of a climb to reach it, but the views from up there are simply breathtaking! Next on the list is the Galamus canyon. Imagine a very curvy 1 1/2 lane road along a deep gorge, with vertical rock walls on one side and a sheer drop on the other. Suffer from vertigo? Better close your eyes (passengers only!) or find a detour... After lunch we follow a road along the foothills of the Pyrenees, less curvy to allow faster progress in order to reach Mollo by five o'clock. If you like more curves and don't mind a later arrival you are welcome to switch to the optional route.

Highlights:

#1: Château de Peyrepertuse



Anchored into the cliff-tops of the Hautes Corbières, Peyrepertuse peaks at 800 meters altitude, surrounded by garrigue vegetation, and overlooks the small village of Duilhac. From the high headland, the view embraces the neighboring castle of Quéribus, 5 kilometers away. The site of Peyrepertuse was first occupied during the Roman period at the beginning of the 1st century B.C. Part of the

Marche d'Espagne (future Catalonia), the first mention of the castle goes back to 1020, a time when Pérapertusès was under the influence of the Catalan counts of Bésalu. After that, the sovereigns of Peyrepertuse were the Counts of Barcelona followed by the Kings of Aragon towards the middle of the 12th century. During the Crusade against the Albigensians, Guillaume de Peyrepertuse, because he refused to submit to the Catholic Crusaders, was excommunicated in 1224. Guillaume surrendered after the siege of Carcassonne and the castle became a French possession in 1240. In 1258, the Treaty of Corbeil defined the border between France and Aragon for four centuries: Peyrepertuse became a royal French fortress at the southern border of the kingdom. At the end of the 13th century, it was a very powerful stronghold with strong defenses.

The Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659), by moving the border further south to its present location, diminished the important strategic role of the castle. However, a small garrison was maintained until the French Revolution. In 1950, the first consolidation works started on the monument to secure it and open it for tourism. Visiting the castle requires a bit of extra breath: from the parking you climb for 15 minutes to reach the entrance, then you keep climbing inside the castle until you reach the highest parts. From there the views are literally breathtaking!

#2: Gorges de Galamus



The Gorges de Galamus is a system of bizarrely shaped canyons, formed by the river Agly and its numerous springs. The road cut out of bare rock will not fail to impress you. Have your cameras handy! It is a special experience to ride your bike through this narrow canyon. A short walk brings you to the bottom of the canyon, where you will find a unique hermitage and a chapel carved into the rock,

offering a very special atmosphere.

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RIDING DAY 6 : MOLLÓ - CASTELLDEFELS

Standard Route (301 km / 187 miles)

Today's route starts right out on a tight little narrow twisty road which works its way to the ancient town of Beget. Have a look around and take some pictures, the village is very, very pretty. Then we continue to Olot, situated in the hills which are actually dormant volcanoes. The town was totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1474, but today it is very lively. A twisty ride to Banyoles for our morning coffee break, then a short stint on an expressway-like road named C-66. Another couple of miles of twisties and then we're finally at the coast. Sant Feliu welcomes us with a beautiful beach and many nice restaurant options. Everybody's speciality is, of course, seafood!

But don't eat too much, you need to be wide awake for the next stretch of road: the 21 km from Sant Feliu to Tossa de Mar are one of the best coastal rides not only in Spain, but in all of Europe and even the world. Simply spectacular!

Then, unfortunately, it is time to say goodbye to the twisties and head up to the Autopista for a fast return to Barcelona and, eventually, Castelldefels.

Highlights:

#1: Beget




This remote mountain village has been restored in the last couple of years and gives you an impression of rural life 200 years ago. Stroll around the old cobblestone alleys and enjoy the medieval atmosphere.

#2: Route GI 682 Sant Feliu-Lloret de Mar



Located on the Costa Brava, this utterly scenic ride along the cliffs with perfect surface and incredible views is exhilarating but also dangerous. The 21.3 km (13.2 miles) long road between the towns of Tossa de Mar and Sant Feliu de Guixols offers sea, beaches, mountains, cliffs and forests mixed in an impressive drive. It's a rollercoaster road, uphill and downhill, and every new turn is a new

adventure. You have to focus on it because if you go off the road you fall down the cliff. For more information visit www.dangerousroads.org.



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