



RIDE4FUN

EDELWEISS TOURS

DESTINATION YAMAHA - ITALIAN & FRENCH MARITIME ALPS

” Exploring Europe's highest passes: a five-day Yamaha adventure “

www.edelweissbike.com

RIDING DAY 1 : TURIN - BARCELONNETTE

Standard Route (240 km / 149 miles)

We set off from our base hotel just outside the metropolitan area of Turin, or Torino as the Italians call it. Did you know the T in the legendary little Fiat-cars actually stands for Torino? The city has almost 2 million inhabitants and is the beating heart of the economy (and the capital) of the Piemonte region.

Piemonte... the name immediately evokes some of the finest food in the world, but is also home to some of the least known, hidden corners of the Alps. We will soon discover those on our first riding day, but heading South from Turin you wonder where those mountain roads actually are. In fact, we follow the still young river Po upstream, but can already see here how the longest river in Italy makes for some of the flattest areas anywhere in Europe.

Not for long though, because once we start heading West, the Cottian Alps start to reveal all their splendor. Think of hidden little villages along tiny roads, leading up into mountains to simply spectacular vistas at Colle di Sampeyre, Colle d'Esischie, and Colle dei Morti. The names don't sound familiar? That's precisely why we go and explore these off-the-beaten-path corners of the Alps, which we'll only share with enthusiastically driving locals and courageous cyclists. Mind the Italian-style traffic, but enjoy the views!

Dizzy from countless corners we reach the valley that leads us further West up the Colle della Maddalena. And when our final mountain pass of the day changes names into Col de Larche, we know we have crossed the border into France and the Alpes de Hautes Provence region. Bienvenue!

Highlights:

#1: Colle di Sampeyre (2,284 m)



The 2,284 m (7,493 ft) Colle di Sampéyre represents the westernmost connection between the Valle Maira and the Valle Varaita. The SP335 is a twisty road leading you up to the top of the pass, and then turning into a 3 km (2 mi) panoramic road with amazing views. Over a narrow, paved forest road you will reach the village of Sampéyre. This description fits a ride from south to north, but the road is equally stunning when going the other direction.

#2: Colle d'Esischie (2,366 m)



Colle d'Esischie is part of a chain of mountain passes, starting in Ponte Marmora in the valley of Maira. Over some longer sections the road only allows single-lane traffic with only a few possibilities to give way to oncoming vehicles. Shortly after the top of Colle d'Esischie the road connects to Colle Fauniera, or Colle dei Morti and then descends via Colle Valcavera down to Demonte in the valley of Stura.

#3: Col de Larche / Colle della Maddalena



Col de Larche (Italian: Colle della Maddalena) crosses the border between France and Italy. The pass road has two faces: whereas the Northwestern (i.e. French) ramp shows a fairly open and quick outlay with good tarmac, the Italian part is narrower, more challenging and includes 14 switchbacks. Hence, on this one you can enjoy both the tight curves as well as sweeping sections. Under its earlier name - "Col de l'Argentière" - it historically linked Lyon with Italy. The Col de l'Argentière was in the possession of the house of Savoy from 1388 to 1713, offering an easy route between Piedmont and its outlying valley of Barcelonnette. This gave the pass an important economic role at the time.

RIDING DAY 2 : BARCELONNETTE

Standard Route (190 km / 118 miles)

There are places far worse for spending a day than picturesque Barcelonnette with its crisp mountain air. Those who prefer to enjoy this rest day can relax at will, but for those in need of twisties: there are some of the Alps' very best roads on offer!

A counterclockwise lap around the Mercantour National Park starts with the Col de la Cayolle, a classic from the old days of the Tour de France and still popular with amateur cyclists today. Endless twisties, a fine cup of espresso, and some cozy hidden villages bring us to the central area of the national park, where different options for lunch are to be found in the ski area of Valberg.

After the refreshing stop, we start heading North again for one of the absolute riding highlights of the tour: the Col de la Bonette. Is it, or is it not, the highest paved mountain pass in Europe? The semantic discussion remains, but the breathtaking views over the Alps leave none in doubt: this is landscape (and motorcycling) heaven! On the way down towards Barcelonnette, some more picture-perfect riding awaits before we return to our hotel and enjoy a typical French Alps evening. There may be some cheese involved...

Highlights:

#1: Col de la Cayolle (2326m)



Despite the partly poor surface conditions and narrow sections, the Col de la Cayolle is one of the most beautiful and varied pass roads in the Western Alps in terms of landscape. Just South of Barcelonnette, the road takes you through the Gorges du Bachelard, a tight canyon. Higher up, the scenery changes, first into a surrounding with alpine forest and rivers coming down on both sides, then near the top, into a rocky high-alpine setting. In the early 1900s, for military reasons, the old mule trail over Cayolle was the first to be turned into a road.

#2: Cime de la Bonette



From the Col de la Bonette, the fourth-highest paved pass in the Alps, a loop leads around the Cime de la Bonette and rises to 2,802 meters. Many see it as the highest asphalt pass in the Alps, but this is not true as this loop is not a proper pass but a panoramic road. Also, among all paved roads of the Alps, including the non-passes, it "only" takes the second place, number one is in Austria and provides access to a glacier ski area. Tragic. Nevertheless, the short route around the summit and the viewpoint at the summit itself offer breathtaking views over the French Alps and the memorial stone at the highest point is a must for all selfie photographers.

RIDING DAY 3 : BARCELONNETTE - ALBERTVILLE

Standard Route (275 km / 171 miles)

The day the French would call "la pièce de résistance" of the tour. The masterpiece. The big one. Just short of 300 kilometers of epic riding link together some of the most legendary roads the Alps have to offer, with one of the most interesting cities in the Alps thrown in as a bonus!

Not many riders would call the spicy Col de Vars 'just a warm-up', but on this spectacular riding day, it is. It just falls short of the top 40 of the highest Alpine passes, but the Col de Vars will get us ready for the motorcycling nirvana that awaits.

Col de l'Izoard and Col du Galibier: whisper the names in any biker bar around the world and people will immediately pay attention. These iconic mountain giants bring us to some of the most amazing views of the Alps, and nestled in between the both of them is the city of Briançon. Already a fortified hub in Roman times, it is the second-highest city in Europe and boasts impressive architecture by the hands and master brain of Vauban.

After catching a glimpse (and maybe some extra gas) of Briançon, we continue further north and tackle yet another monument in the afternoon: the Col de la Madeleine may fall just short of the 2.000-meter mark but will make you look in wonder at the final mountain views of the day. What a riding day it was, and you'll have plenty of stories to tell at the 'apéritif' in Albertville.

Highlights:

#1: Col de Vars (2108m)



Col de Vars marks the border between the departments of Hautes-Alpes and Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, is part of the Route des Grandes Alpes, and is repeatedly featured in the Tour de France. Scenically, the pass doesn't belong to the crème de la crème of Alpine passes, but it offers a lot of riding fun, especially on the north side. The top of the pass is not very pronounced. At just over 2100 (6,900 ft) meters, the Col de Vars narrowly misses out on the list of the 40

highest Alpine passes.

#2: Col d'Izoard (2360m)



Rising up to 2,360 m (7,743 ft), Col d'Izoard is only open during the summer months. It is rated as one of the toughest climbs of the famous Tour de France as the rocky mountainsides that surround the pass are almost bare of vegetation, offering no protection from the searing sun that beats down on the cyclists as they make their way to the top. Good thing we've got a few extra horsepower.

#3: Route des Grandes Alpes



The Route des Grandes Alpes (Great Alpine Road) is a 684 km long route through the French Alps. This alpine road trip takes you from lake Geneva to the Mediterranean, including 21 of the most beautiful pass roads and perceived 20,000 curves. The construction of the route started in 1909 in order of the French Touring Club. In that period, the Alps still were an isolated region within France, with poor access possibilities. The construction of the route was not

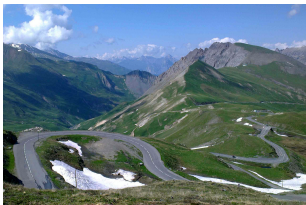
only an opening to the outside world for the mountain people, but also an opportunity for the upcoming tourism to discover this area with great cultural and natural heritage. The construction was finished in 1937, with the opening of the Col de l'Iseran.

#4: Briançon



After Davos, Briançon (4,334 ft.) is the second-highest city in Europe. Visiting Briançon's citadel is a must! From the terrace, you've got the best view over the area. Since ancient times, two great routes into Italy have met here, and so the town always played an important commercial and military role.

#5: Col du Galibier (2642m)



From the vista point of this pass at 2,642 m (8,688 ft.), you have a superb panoramic view of all the peaks reaching up to 3,000 m (13,000 ft) and more. Col du Galibier was first used in the Tour de France in 1911. The first rider over the summit was Emile Georget, who, together with Paul Duboc and Gustave Garrigou, were the only cyclists not to push their bicycles up the mountain. The original summit was at 2,556 m (8,385 ft) but with the closing of the tunnel in 1976, the tour route now goes over the pass closer to the mountain peak at 2,645 m (8,677 ft). At the south portal of the tunnel, at the edge of the road, there is a memorial to Henri Desgrange, initiator and first director of the Tour de France. Whenever the tour crosses Col du Galibier, a wreath is laid on the memorial. The "Souvenir Henri Desgrange" is awarded to the first rider, who crosses the summit of the highest mountain in each year's tour. Since 1947, Col de Galibier has been crossed 31 times by the Tour de France.

#6: Col de la Madeleine (1993m)



This mountain pass connects La Chambre in Maurienne with La Léchère in Tarentaise. It is usually closed from November to the beginning of June. The road across Col de la Madeleine (2.000m) with its average gradient of 8% is one of the toughest climbs of the Tour de France. It was a part of the route 25 times since 1969.

RIDING DAY 4 : ALBERTVILLE

Standard Route (188 km / 117 miles)

A swift and compact rest day loop allows us to relax after yesterday's mountain rollercoaster. Col du Marais in the morning and Crêt de Châtillon on the way back will still give us the chance to use some of the tires' sidewalls, but mostly this is a more easy-going ride to take in the beautiful rolling landscapes of the Savoie region.

And when you say 'easy-going', you also mean some interesting sightseeing and relaxing views. We find those in Annecy: the largest town of Haute-Savoie and steeped in history. A stroll through the old town of Annecy-le-Vieux? Or a gentle walk along the shoreline of Lake Annecy? It's all possible, and all up to your own taste for the day. That holiday feeling, you know!

Highlights:

#1: Albertville



The 1992 Winter Olympics took place in the Savoy region, with Albertville hosting it. Some of the sports venues were later adapted for other uses. But some sports venues such as the ice rink designed by the architect Jacques Kalisz are still in use. The city can't compete with the likes of Annecy or Chamonix when it comes to beauty or touristic value, but the historic old town with its medieval buildings is well

worth a closer look and waiting to be discovered.

#2: Annecy



Annecy is internationally known for the beauty of its harmonious landscapes, but also for the quality of the lake water, thanks to the conservation efforts for over 50 years, making it the cleanest lake in Europe. This pure, clear water escapes from the lake, and flows into the channels that run in the "old town" (historic center of Annecy), which gives it its picturesque nickname of "Venice of the Alps".

#3: Crêt de Châtillon



Mount Semnoz is part of the Massif des Bauges Regional Nature Park and dominates the western shore of Lake Annecy. It is 15 km long and reaches an altitude of 1699 m. Its two main peaks are the Crêt de l'Aigle and the Crêt de Châtillon.

A real balcony on the Alps, you can admire a 360° panorama of the surrounding mountains and even see Mont-Blanc on a clear day! Lake Annecy and Lake Bourget meander past in the distance...

RIDING DAY 5 : ALBERTVILLE - TURIN

Standard Route (245 km / 152 miles)

Go out with a bang! The last of our five riding days in the Alps is not just a fade-out. The good thing about heading back towards Italy is that there are quite a bit of Alps in the way!

Heading out of our hotel, the first twisties serve as a warm-up for the Cormet de Roselend. The name of this ancient road linking Albertville with Bourg-Saint-Maurice is just as poetic as the views over the ice-blue lake that sits on the top. The perfect place for morning coffee and a quiet moment to let it all sink in!

Down to Bourg-Saint-Maurice and straight up it goes again, as we head into the Vanoise National Park and follow the illustrious signs to the Col de l'Iseran. Another one of Tour de France legend status and Route des Grandes Alpes-fame and the views on top will certainly not disappoint. Hidden on the way down is the pretty little village of Bonneval-sur-Arc, where we'll grab our final lunch right by the ancient bridge. This pass, by the way, is officially the highest road pass in the Alps!

One final mountain pass then waits for us as we head over the final ridge of the Alps into Italy via the Col du Mont Cénis. The final pass, the final coffee with a view, and as we descend into the valley we rejoin Turin on a short stretch of main roads. Just the time to reflect on all the adventures we have experienced, and to prepare for a cosy farewell dinner, Piemonte style!

Highlights:

#1: Cormet de Roselend (1967 m)



Cormet de Roselend is a very scenic motorcycle road. For a while, it takes you along Lac de Roselend, a reservoir created by one of France's largest dams. It was completed in 1961 and today helps generate about 600 MW of hydroelectric energy. The road culminates at an elevation of 1,967 m (6,453 ft), offers many beautiful views, and even more beautiful curves!

#2: Col de l'Iseran (2764 m)




With an altitude of 2764 m (the sign even says 2,770 m), Col de l'Iseran is the highest motorable mountain pass in the Alps - the Col de la Bonette is 2715m high, the 2802m peak can be reached only via an additional loop, which is not a pass. The road is only passable in summer; in winter it is used as part of a ski slope of the Espace Killy ski area.

#3: Col du Mont Cenis (2084 m)



At an elevation of 2,084 m (6,830 ft) the Col de Mont Cenis doesn't rank among the lowest Alpine mountain passes, but, at the same time, doesn't necessarily make you feel euphoric because of high altitudes either. But since the road is so perfectly carved into the mountain, the ride itself will be an exhilaratingly flowing experience for you anyways. The most mind-blowing moment, however, will surely come up when the panoramic view over the

turquoise lake of the same name opens up before your eyes.



We wish you a wonderful tour.

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