



# CARCASSONNE TO BARCELONA CYCLE

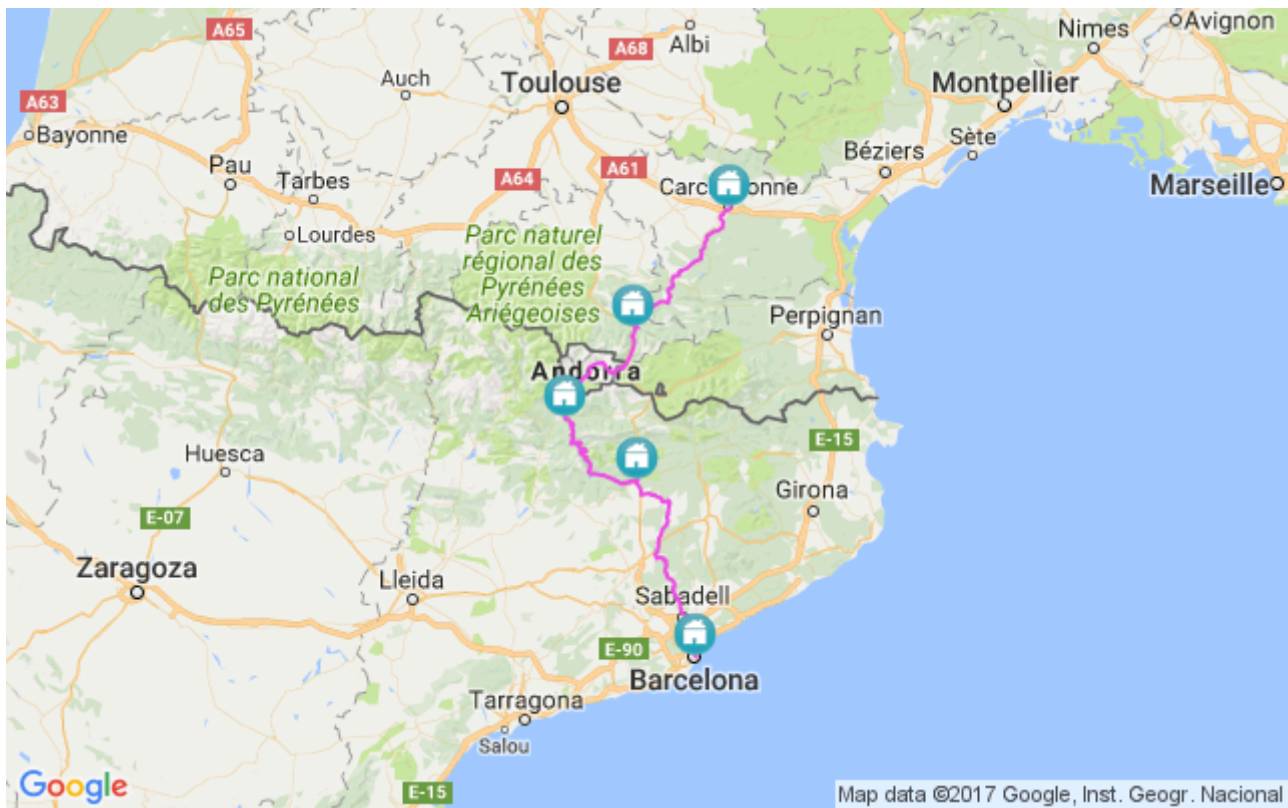
FRANCE, SPAIN • CYCLE • TOUGH

## ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

Our route takes us through the tiny mountainous country of Andorra, where our main challenge lies in the long twisting climb of the Port d'Envalira (2408m), which has featured several times in the Tour de France and Tour of Spain. From Andorra we cross into Spain, riding south through the beautiful Catalan Pyrenees to wonderful Barcelona.

This is a challenging ride over beautiful terrain and you'll be glad to reach Barcelona, an iconic city to celebrate your huge achievements.

**CARCASSONNE TO BARCELONA CYCLE** • 6 DAYS



### Day 1: Meet Toulouse; transfer to Carcassonne

Own arrangements to Toulouse, where we meet and transfer (approx one hour) to the ancient fortified city of Carcassonne. It's a fabulous sight and a wonderful place to start our challenging ride. We check into our hotel and spend some time ensuring all the bikes are properly assembled and comfortable. Dependent on flight-times, any free time can be spent exploring the castle and narrow streets of Carcassonne. We meet up in the evening for dinner and a detailed trip briefing before getting a good night's rest in preparation for tomorrow's efforts.

*(Lunch not included)*

### Day 2: Carcassonne – Ax-les-Thermes

An early start takes us south out of Carcassonne, and through the foothills of the Aude. This is countryside synonymous with the Cathars, and there are crumbling hill-top ruins scattered around this region, as well as ancient abbeys and churches. Our rolling roads give us a gentle warm-up, and it's beautiful countryside. This is wine country, and we pass photogenic vineyards as we head closer to the Pyrenees. Our terrain becomes hillier as we pass the halfway mark, culminating in the Col de Marmare, a gradual climb bringing us to 1361m. It's a gentle climb and shouldn't be too much for anyone, but it's long and a good benchmark for our first day. From here it's a wonderful descent on hair-pin bends down to the spa town of Ax-les-Thermes. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 115km (70 miles)**

### Day 3: Ax-les-Thermes – La Seu d'Argell (Spain)

Today is a day of two halves – up and down! – and three countries! We set off south from Ax, heading through a gently

rising valley; this is a nice warm-up, as the gradient ramps up a little as we near the border with Andorra. It's not until the second half of the climb that the gradient becomes more challenging, so it's all about pacing yourself. The views of the mountain scenery around us are spectacular, with high peaks visible ahead; you may still be able to see snow on their summits. The Port d'Envalira has featured in the Tour de France and Tour of Spain, and is the highest paved road in Europe. As we near the border with Andorra most of the traffic heads through the tunnel, leaving us to appreciate a largely traffic-free finale to our climb. It's a huge achievement as we reach the top, at 2408m. The rest of the day is downhill! We set off down sweeping hair-pin bends which soon settle into a steady descent, passing through small towns and villages as we cross Andorra. We cross into Catalan Spain; our hotel lies in the small town of La Seu d'Urgell, a short distance after the border. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 90km (55 miles)**

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### **Day 4: La Seu d'Argell – Berga**

Another mountainous day ahead of us, as we ride through the beautiful Catalan Pyrenees. On quiet roads, our surroundings are stunning, passing through shady pine forests and steep rocky mountain slopes – much of the area borders a Natural Reserve. We start heading uphill almost from the start, taking us up to our first col. It's a steep climb in places, but much shorter than yesterday's big effort. A gentle descent gives us some respite before the gradient ramps up again for our next climb – again, quite steep in places. We pass picturesque mountain villages, and there is plenty to take our minds off our legs! Reaching the day's highest point at 1671m, we enjoy an exhilarating descent to Sant Llorenç de Morunys, a lovely mountain town with its 11th-century church and monastery. Our route now rolls along over undulating roads, passing through wooden valleys; the most rugged part of the mountains is now behind us. A short climb throws a last challenge before we have a wonderful downhill ride into historic Berga. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 100km (63 miles)**

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### **Day 5: Berga – Barcelona**

Our last day brings us out of the mountains, on a diverse, undulating day through lovely rural scenery. We pass traditional Catalan villages and small towns with ancient churches as we ride through wooded valleys and farmland. It's a beautiful day and our spirits will be high with the mountains conquered and Barcelona ahead of us. As we approach the busy outskirts we regroup and ride together into this wonderful, vibrant city. Scattered with impressive and iconic buildings and monuments, it's one of Europe's most popular cities, with a cultural heritage including artists such as Dalí, Picasso, Miró and Gaudí. We see the iconic spires of Gaudí's Sagrada Família basilica on the skyline as we ride through the city, and finish on the beach at Barceloneta, one of the best urban beaches in the world. After time to freshen up at our hotel, we head out for an evening of celebrations to mark our monumental challenge. Night hotel.

**Cycle approx 130 km (80 miles)**

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### **Day 6: Depart Barcelona**

After a leisurely breakfast, we have time to relax or sightsee until it's time to transfer to the airport.

*(Lunch not included)*

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## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All meals except where specified and accommodation on a twin share basis
- Discover Adventure leaders / mechanics / drivers
- Full vehicle support throughout the trip
- Group transfer between Toulouse/ Barcelona airports and hotels
- Maps and route information
- Celebration meal in Barcelona

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Two meals as specified in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Flights to Toulouse and from Barcelona
- Bicycle
- Cycle helmet (compulsory) and water bottles
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

# CHALLENGE INFORMATION

## DETAILED INFORMATION

### Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful and will give you plenty of energy. Lunches are generally buffet-style while dinners are usually eaten at the hotel. Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat you may wish to bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply.

### Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders and support crew, including mechanics. Our leaders are selected for their knowledge and experience, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises; they are also trained in first aid. The crew will have mobile phones and/or radios where appropriate, medical kit and other safety apparatus where necessary.

The number of crew and support vehicles looking after you will depend on the final size of your group, but the team will be looking after every aspect of your trip whether that's transporting your luggage, ensuring your route is well-marked, making you lunch and sorting out any mechanical problems. Support vehicles are with the group all of the time, and carry all luggage and spares.



## **Trip Safety**

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

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## **PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE**

### **Clothing**

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, as well as details on useful discounts you are entitled to as a Discover Adventure customer. We are always available if you need advice.

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### **Fitness Levels**

This is designed to be a challenge, and it is vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. The more training that you do the more you will enjoy the experience! Our challenges attract people of all levels of experience and fitness, all ages and backgrounds. We expect all participants to train hard in advance, but we respect everyone's limits. We design our challenges so that everyone can go at their own pace: this is not a race. For logistical and safety reasons we sometimes need to re-group, so the front-runners may find themselves waiting for the slower ones. Please relax, and remember that this is a team effort that enables people to achieve their personal goals and earn sponsorship.

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### **Passport & Visa / Vaccinations**

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is up-to-date and any visas are obtained in good time. For further information please see our Factsheet and Visa information page.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend

you check Fit For Travel for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

## CYCLE TRAINING WEEKENDS

**£160 Special Offer - Only when you book at the same time as registering for your main challenge**

Discover Adventure Cycle Training Weekends take place in and around the valleys and ridges of the chalk downs around Salisbury. They are designed to gauge your fitness so that you can be confident you are well prepared for the challenge ahead!

## GRADE | TOUGH (3)

This trip involves more rigorous days; weather, altitude or basic living conditions will add to the challenge. We will supply you with a thorough training guide when you have registered. Training for the challenge is all part of the preparation and requires commitment! Without it, you will find the challenge less enjoyable - and we want you to have the time of your life!



Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 2 Mar 2017, and the challenge is subject to change.