

Cycling Europe

RHÔNE CYCLE ROUTE SWITZERLAND LAKE GENEVA AND BEYOND 2019 OBERWALD TO GENEVA

SELF-GUIDED CYCLE TOUR - 8 DAYS/7 NIGHTS 255 - 300 KMS



Cycle from Switzerland's alpine foothills through the Rhône Valley and the vineyard covered slopes around Montreux in the heart of the Vaud Riviera region to reach world-famous Geneva, with the mighty Mont Blanc, giant of the Alps, on the horizon. The fountain in Lake Geneva salutes you and bids farewell as you come to the end of a cycling tour which could not be more varied. Constantly accompanied by the Rhône River, the landscape is initially alpine and your route will offer mostly downhill rides with an occasional rise. In Brig the Rhône valley broadens and the region is favoured by a sunny climate. The scenery changes again in Villeneuve and you'll enjoy terraced landscapes, vineyards and breath-taking views across Lac Lemman.

- *Stunning views of Mont Blanc and the Savoy Alps*
- *Vineyards - Sion, Vevey and the Vaud region*
- *Castle of Aigle rises from the vineyards*
- *Chillon castle stands on a rocky island on Lake Geneva*
- *The famous water fountain in Geneva*
- *Towns of Lausanne and Montreux, known for its jazz festival in June/July*

GRADE- Moderate: *Hilly (but with plenty of descents) in the high valley of Goms, followed by flat sections from Brig. You may encounter some headwind from Sion. Undulating terrain along Lake Geneva. A highlight is the tour through the vineyards of Lavaux. In urban sections you will have to face some traffic and busier roads.*



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Oberwald or Ulrichen

Oberwald is the highest village in Switzerland's Goms region, the wide valley of the young Rhone River. The region is characterised by remarkable sunburnt wooden houses.

Oberwald, which lies close to the base of the Furka Tunnel, is a mecca for cross-country skiers in winter.



Ulrichen in Obergoms is not only on the route of the renowned Glacier Express but also on the ancient trading route over the Griespass. Today the sunny and rather sleepy village, with its well-tended farms and lush pastures, attracts hikers and bikers and skiers during the winter season.

You may have a chance to sample some of the products from the organic cheese dairy in Goms. The cows from this organic dairy graze at 1000m above sea level between Ulrichen and Fiesch.

Day 2: Oberwald/Ulrichen to Brig surrounding.

Cycling approx. 45 - 50 km/ Ascent 695m, Descent 1370m

In this part of Switzerland the Rhone is still called the Rotten. You will ride through the sunny high valley towards the alpine city of Brig, accompanied by the scent of fields of flowers and larch forests. It's worth stopping from time to time to visit places like Niederwald, which has one of the best preserved villagescapes in the whole of Valais. Afterwards, the scent of countless herbs hangs in the air. The route runs rapidly downhill through an enchanting, leafy forest to the Rotten with its refreshingly cool waters. In the evening you can visit the World Nature Forum in the neighbouring village of Naters and learn about the UNESCO World Heritage Jungfrau Aletsch glacier region.

Brig. The town of Brig with its historic old quarter and the Stockalper Palace lies in the sunny Upper Valais at the foot of the Simplon Pass. Situated at an important junction, Brig is an ideal starting point for excursions. It is close to hiking and ski regions on the Lötschberg and Simplon, and in the Aletsch. It also has its own thermal baths, making it an attractive holiday resort.

The lovely old town features stately houses, while the lively Bahnhofstrasse is great for shopping, and the Stockalper Palace in Brig is one of the most important Baroque palaces in Switzerland. The history of Brig is closely linked with the Simplon Pass, one of the most beautiful alpine passes which starts immediately beyond the city gates. Napoleon built a road through the Simplon Pass in the 19th century to move his armies, thus creating the first man-made road in the Alps.

Day 3: Brig surroundings to Sion/Sierre

Cycling approx. 40 - 60 km/ Ascent 160 - 190m, Descent 290- 375m

Leaving the traditional town of Brig, with its rich history, you will soon be riding again in natural surroundings. The main valley in the Valais widens and the sun warms the dry mountain slopes. Between Leuk and Sion/Sierre the route leads into an unruly part of the Rhone - the Pfywald, a nature reserve on a huge mound of glacial detritus; this natural park with its diverse flora and fauna also marks the borderline between German and French speaking Valais. Between Leuk and Martigny, vineyards stretch as far as the eye can see.

Leuk. In bygone days, Leuk was an important political centre, evidence of which is seen in the numerous impressive buildings. Leuk Castle, renovated by star architect Mario Botta, is now a cultural venue with a theatre and exhibitions. The castle was the scene of witch trials in the 17th century and consists of an early-Romanesque tower (11th-13th century), an attached dwelling house and a curtain wall.



Sierre/ Siders is advantageously positioned on the border between Upper and Lower Valais and on the language border between French and German. The Romans called it "the town of a hundred hills". On some of these hills, castles and fortresses were built and settlements grew up round about them. Today, these settlements have joined together to form the little town of Siders. At its heart are the richly decorated Town Hall and the picturesque Rue du Bourg, lined with historic houses and the parish church of Ste-Catherine.

The area around Siders and Sitten is one of Switzerland's most important wine-growing regions. The Fendant, made of the Chasselas grape, is the most famous product of the Valais. The equivalent for red wines is the Dôle from Pinot Noir grapes. If you take the Vineyard Trail, (which links the two sites of the Valais Wine and Vineyard Museum), you will learn more about the region's fine wines.

Sion. Vineyards and castles are the landmarks of Sierre and Sion. The towers of the Tourbouillon Castle Ruin and the Valeria Fortress rising skywards make Sion recognisable from afar.

Day 4: Sion/Sierre to Martigny

Cycling approx. 30 – 50 km/ Ascent 120m, Descent 180m

Sion will delight with historic castles, churches and mansions. The lower Rhone valley is dominated by high alpine scenery of the Dents du Midi. Martigny, surrounded by vineyards and orchards, is famous for its gastronomy which is celebrated at many outstanding restaurants and guesthouses. Blessed with the warm Valais sunshine, the region is ideal for growing strawberries, apricots, grapes, asparagus etc.

Castle La Bâtiaz. La Bâtiaz Castle, its age-old silhouette proudly rising from its rock, inevitably attracts the attention of any visitor coming to Martigny. Don't miss seeing the inside of the Castle - visit its central courtyard, its large hall, and its chapel. You can also see the torture chamber and watch the 3D cartoon film that traces Martigny's history back to the Middle Ages. Finally, climb the keep and admire the view over the entire Rhône elbow.

Martigny.

Martigny's history stretches back two thousand years: Celtic tribes, the Romans and Napoleon's troupes have left behind traces. A restored amphitheatre, Roman thermal baths, temples and living quarters can be admired in Martigny today. Later Martigny became the first bishop's seat in Switzerland and nowadays is admired for the historical districts of La Bâtiaz and Vieux-Bourg featuring several churches and secular buildings worth seeing.

Day 5: Martigny - Montreux/ Vevey

Cycling approx. 50 -60 km/ Ascent approx. 200m, Descent 250m

Nestling between vineyards and forests, the little old town of Martigny marks the intersection of major roads: to Lake Geneva, the Simplon Pass, Savoy and Piedmont. It is also the home of «Barry», the St. Bernard rescue dog; this breed has its origins at the Great St. Bernard Pass. At the valley's narrowest point, St-Maurice guards golden church treasures. This stage features high mountains and lowlands, Lac Léman hidden behind reeds and defiant Schloss Chillon on the water.

St. Maurice. St-Maurice is a town full of art and history. A Roman officer by the name of Mauritius became a martyr here – he and his soldiers were executed for their Christian beliefs at the end of the 3rd century. This resulted in a place of pilgrimage on which Sigismund, King of the Burgundians eventually founded the Saint Maurice Abbey in 515. The town is of national importance and under a preservation order. An impressive number of religious buildings can be visited in and around the town e.g. the Chapel of Notre Dame du Scex, built 100 metres above the valley floor in the 18th century and containing a 13th century statue of the Virgin Mary.

Castle of Aigle. The imposing castle of Aigle rises out of the vineyards in the heart of the Lake Geneva Chablais Region. Built around the end of the 12th century by the Saillon family on behalf of the House of Savoy, the castle protected Aigle, controlled the Rhone valley and the access to Pays-d'Enhaut. On the initiative of Confrèrie du Guillon, Aigle Castle, which housed the Confederates' cellars, became the Museum of Vine, Wine and Labels in 1971.



Castle of Chillon. In Veytaux, near Montreux, Chillon Castle has stood proudly on its rocky island since the 12th century, appearing to float on the surface of Lake Geneva. Home to regular exhibitions and cultural events, it's the most visited historical monument in Switzerland. This idyllic setting has been a delight for all to see since the 12th century: with Lake Geneva and the Alps as its backdrop, the imposing fortified Chillon Castle is surrounded by the most beautiful scenery.

Montreux. The town of Montreux nestles in a sheltered Lake Geneva bay, surrounded by vineyards and against the breath-taking backdrop of snow-covered Alps. The Montreux Jazz Festival, which takes place in June/July and features concerts on a variety of stages and parks is very famous.

Because of the exceptionally mild climate Montreux is called the capital of the Vaud Riviera. Plants associated with the Mediterranean, such as pines, cypresses and palm trees grow here.

Vevey is one of the “Pearls of the Swiss Riviera”. Its lakeside location with breath-taking views of the Alpine panorama, its extraordinarily mild climate, the vineyards, numerous excursion destinations in the region and proud paddlewheel steamers on the lake characterise this town by Lake Geneva.

Vevey experienced its first heyday in the belle époque period at the end of the 19th century. Even today, majestic hotels and a flower-bedecked lakeside promenade lined with palm trees continue to serve as reminders of this age. But Vevey is also a modern, regional centre which is headquarters to Nestlé, the international Food and Beverage Group – think chocolate!

Day 6: Montreux/Vevey to Morges/ Nyon surroundings **Cycling approx. 40 -65 km / Ascent 580m, Descent 580m**

Follow the shores of Lac Lemman (Lake Geneva), a small silver sea surrounded by snowy summits and vineyards. Pass through towns such as Vevey, Montreux and the metropolis of Lausanne, “Olympia City”, and nerve centre of the canton of Vaud.

After Vevey the cycle route constantly undulates on its way to the steep vineyards of Lavaux, one of the premier wine-growing areas in Switzerland. Lutry marks the end of the wine-road, a few kilometres short of Lausanne-Ouchy, which boasts a towering Gothic cathedral. A beautiful section follows between St-Sulpice and Prévêres – sandy beaches and sunbathing lawns tempt you to rest before tackling the final section to Morges. This small town features beautiful burgher houses from the 16th – 18th century and is a charming mass of blooming tulips in Spring.

The little town of Nyon is situated on Lake Geneva, mid-way between Geneva and Lausanne, surrounded by the vineyards of “La Côte”. Many excavations from the time of the Celtic Helvetians and the Romans, as well as from the Middle Ages, bear witness to its eventful history.



Day 7: Morges/ Nyon surroundings to Geneva **Cycling approx. 30 -60 km / Ascent 600m, Descent 600m**

Above stretch the terraced La Côte vineyards, while below, the market towns of Morges, Rolle and Nyon nestle along the lake shore. Open shoreland becomes scarcer, the villas and yachts are larger and soon cosmopolitan Geneva, brimming with art and vitality, greets you with its famous water fountain ‘Jet d’ Eau’ and the picturesque old part of town of the ‘smallest metropolis in the world’.

Genf/ Geneva. Embedded between nearby Alpine peaks and the hilly terrain of the Jura, the French-speaking city of Geneva lies in the bay where the Rhone leaves Lake Geneva. With its

humanitarian tradition and cosmopolitan flair, the European seat of the UNO and headquarters of the Red Cross is known as the "capital of peace".

The symbol of the «world's smallest metropolis» is the "Jet d'eau" – a fountain with a 140-metre-high water jet at the periphery of Lake Geneva. Most of the large hotels and many restaurants are situated on the right-hand shore of the lake. The old town, the heart of Geneva with the shopping and business quarter, holds sway over the left-hand shore. It is dominated by St. Peter's Cathedral, however the actual centre of the old town is the Place du Bourg-de-Four, which is the oldest square in the city. Quays, lakeside promenades, countless parks, lively side streets in the old town and elegant shops invite guests to stroll. One of the best-maintained streets is the Grand-Rue, where Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born. The «mouettes», a type of water taxi, enable crossings to be made from one lakeshore to the other, while larger vessels invite visitors to enjoy cruises on Lake Geneva.

Day 8: Departure or extension Tour ends after breakfast in Geneva.

You may like to consider the extension of the Rhone Route from Geneva to Lyon and beyond. Except for a few interruptions, the Rhône-cycle path is well constructed and it is a perfect example for signposting and routing.

SCHEDULE 2019

Start any day between 1 June and 13 October, 2019

Season 1: 23 September – 13 October

Season 2: 19 August - 22 September

Season 3: 01 June – 18 August

No minimum number of participants. Extra dates available for groups of 4 or more.

COST 2019: PER PERSON IN SWISS FRANCS (CHF)

| | category A Hotels | category B Hotels |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Share twin/double room/B&B season 1 | CHF 1019 | CHF 885 |
| Share twin/double room/B&B season 2 | CHF 1055 | CHF 909 |
| Share twin/double room/B&B season 3 | CHF 1095 | CHF 975 |
| Surcharge single room | CHF 345 | CHF 299 |
| Rental bike (21 or 7 gears) | CHF 99 | |
| Electric bike | CHF 215 | |

Cycle helmets are included in bike rental costs

Category A: Nice 4 star hotels and very neat 3 star hotels

Category B: Three star hotels

ADDITIONAL NIGHTS

| | | |
|---|--------|-------------------------------|
| Geneva - share twin/double per person B&B | CHF125 | Single room supplement CHF55 |
| Oberwald - share twin/double per person B&B | CHF 80 | Category A/ CHF 70 Category B |
| Single room supplement | CHF 40 | |

COST INCLUDES

- Accommodation 7 nights in the booked category (4*/3 * or 3 star hotels)
- Breakfast buffet
- Luggage transfer between the hotels
- Detailed travel documents (route maps, route description, important telephone numbers)
- Guide book
- GPS-data is available on request
- 7 day service hotline

GRADE / TERRAIN

Moderate: Some undulating hills as well as flatter sections. Mix of roads and cycle paths.

Book through:

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