



RIDE WORLD WIDE

FRANCE

DORDOGNE & GIRONDE RIDES 2025

RIDE INFORMATION

These rides explore the Gironde, Lot and Dordogne in south-west France, some of the most historically interesting areas of the whole country. Boasting some 1,200 chateaux, the region 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. Riding days explore peaceful, unspoilt countryside and are interspersed with visits to hilltop 'bastide' towns, imposing castles and fairy-tale chateau; evenings are a chance to enjoy delicious local cuisine as well as the Cahors and Bordeaux wines that have made the area famous. Michel's preferred riding is western style, relaxed and fun. He also takes huge pleasure in sharing the area's wonderful food and drink, is a knowledgeable and genial host and makes each trip highly personal - a great way to explore this lovely part of France.

DATES

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



HORSES

The horses used are owned by Michel and are locally bred French saddle horses of mixed blood. They are between about 14.2hh and 15.2hh and 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 where needed.

RIDING

A number of 6 night itineraries are offered, following different routes and including 4 or 5 days riding combined with sightseeing. The number of riding days and 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 details. Riding is broken up with rest stops, sightseeing visits and a long break for lunch. Rides are run for a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6 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. Michel sees to the horses personally, generally tacking-up and un-tacking 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

The rider weight limit is 86kgs although occasionally, by prior arrangement, fit and experienced heavier riders may be taken. However please call us to discuss - prior arrangements **must** be made to ensure suitable horses are available.



PACE

Riding is at a relaxed slow-to-moderate pace overall, largely governed by the terrain. In places on all routes riding is on narrow winding tracks, perhaps through forests or descending into, or climbing out of, valleys where the pace must be slow and you 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 short trots and canters on most days, if weather conditions allow. The Castles & Caves of Malbec and Vineyards of Bordeaux rides 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 Malbec Ride 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 several consecutive days in the saddle, 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.



ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation on the rides is in a variety of good quality hotels and typical 'chambres d'hotes'. On most itineraries, the hotels used are of a 3* (occasional 4*) standard, with grander 4* and 5* chateaux and chateaux hotels used on the Prestige Ride. All hotels are carefully chosen by Michel for their comfort, position and character. Most are small and personal, but the style varies from traditional village guesthouse hotels and a converted watermill to more imposing manor houses. Individual bedrooms also vary; they are generally 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 a swimming pool for a relaxing dip after the day's ride. Rates assume shared twin or double bedded rooms with single rooms available at a supplement.



MEALS

The food in this area of France is one of its highlights. Michel places great emphasis on introducing you to the area's wonderful food and wine and you will be extremely well fed with a chance to sample some of the many local specialities such as 'foie gras' and 'magret de canard', as well as the delicious local wines. Breakfast is usually simple in the French style and eaten at your hotel - coffee, tea or hot chocolate, with bread or croissants. Lunch is either a good, varied picnic, brought by the back-up vehicle to meet you out riding - perhaps fresh bread, salads, a selection of cheeses, 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 at your hotel, or at a carefully chosen local restaurant. Menus are varied and selected to include 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 there is a 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 itineraries offered are set out below, although please note these are only a guide as to what is planned and 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

6 nights with 4 ½ days riding with one morning sightseeing. You visit some of the Dordogne's most interesting historic sites and villages whilst taking the path less travelled, giving 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 1hr 20 minutes) to the first nights accommodation, a charming country hotel (with swimming pool) in the Lot Valley near the village of Maroux. Welcome dinner with the group and Michel and overnight Truffles de Combecave. (D)

Day 2 - Breakfast then meet the horses, and after allocation, you sent off on the morning ride which will give you a taste of local villages, vineyards, and farmland as you make your way to Bonaguil Castle - a medieval fortress built on a rock face during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries. Bonaguil, was classified as an historical monument in the 19th century and to this day remains a premier example of classic medieval architecture. After exploring the chateau enjoy a delicious picnic lunch. In the afternoon the ride will take you north, passing through some of the area's famous chestnut forests, to reach the stables where the horses will stay. From here you will be driven back to your accommodation. About 5 ½ hours riding. Dinner and night Truffles de Combecave. (B,L,D)



Day 3 - Breakfast and set off riding, continuing northward, to the medieval village of Villefranche du Périgord - a 13th century bastide built by Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of King St Louis. Traversing the Dordogne Forest, you stop for another picnic lunch at a quaint family run duck farm where you can taste the region's "foie gras" and local sweet white wine from Monbazillac. After lunch, set off again, trotting through the trees to the beautiful bastide of Belvès. Dinner tonight will be within the walls of this 11th century fortified village. About 5 hours riding. Night at Hotel le Boudoir, Belves. (B,L,D)

Day 4 - The ride today explores the Bessède Forest, which offers some good opportunities for canters along the trails leading to Cadouin. This lovely village is home to the Abbey of Cadouin and is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here the horses will graze, while you have lunch and then visit to this 12th century Romanesque church and Gothic cloister. In the afternoon, there will be an opportunity to tour the Cavern of Proumeyssac (Gouffre de Proumeyssac) known as 'The Crystal Cathedral'. It is the largest developed abyss in the Dordogne, housing a beautiful underground vault filled with natural crystallization. The guided tour is available in English and includes a dazzling light show. Afterwards you will be driven back to the hotel in Belvès and can explore the village or relax at the hotel before dining at a nearby restaurant, offering many of the region's specialties. About 3 hours riding. Night at Hotel le Boudoir, Belves. (B,L,D)

Day 5 - Breakfast and set off riding to the medieval village of Saint Avit Senieur, built on a plateau, with a massive abbey dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries. The abbey, which is part of the Pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostella Trail (St. James' Way), is a classified historical monument as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Take a delightful walk through the abbey before stopping nearby for a picnic lunch. In the afternoon you traverse the picturesque forests en-route to the village of Monpazier. This bastide, famous for its superb architecture, was founded by Edward the 1st, King of England in 1284. Tme to explore the charming historic village, swim at the hotel pool, or relax before a delicious dinner (your hotel is listed in the prestigious Michelin Guide). About 5 hours riding. Dinner and the night at the atmospheric Hotel Edward 1st. (B,L,D)

FORTRESS & FORESTS OF THE DORDOGNE ITINERARY cont.

Day 6 - The last day's ride crosses over the famous Santiago de Compostela Pilgrimage Trail many times on the way to Chateau Biron. This chateau's architecture spans eight centuries and is one of the best-preserved castles in all of Europe. Lunch is followed by a visit to the castle. Then follow new set of varied trails on the return to your Chateau Hotel at Monpazier. End your fabulous week with another gourmet dining experience at this beautiful hotel. About 4 hours riding. Night at the Hotel Edward 1st. (B,L,D)

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

Vineyards of Bordeaux - Example itinerary

6 nights with 5 days riding. The Gironde region and its major port, Bordeaux, have a rich and varied cultural heritage and are renown for their prestigious wine-producing chateaux and Romanesque and Gothic architecture. This trip starts with a visit to the 12th C medieval and UNESCO 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 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, 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 wine-tasting, 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, time to relax and also visit the cellar of Chateau Tour Saint Fort, followed by a tasting of its 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 and time to relax by the heated pool before dinner (sometimes possible to arrange massages by advance booking – although these need to be requested at least 3 weeks ahead). Dinner at a beach side restaurant and 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. 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 90 minutes' drive) usually to arrive at 11.00am. (B)



Caves & Castles of Malbec - Example itinerary

6 nights with 5 days riding. Starting in the vineyards of Cahors, famous for their Malbec grape, the route then heads into more and more isolated country and ends with a visit to the famous prehistoric caves of Pech-Merle on the last riding day. You will feel you have stepped through time and become 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 woods and several 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 with 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, you will be driven 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. The long morning ride is followed by a marvellous lunch and a shorter riding afternoon, which continues 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, 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. After lunch, a guided tour of the chateau, 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, 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 Cahors. (B,L,D)

Day 7 - Breakfast at the 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 always 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 in 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 2025

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

1st to 7th June

29th June to 5th July *

5th to 11th October *

Rate: Euros 3550 per person; single supplement - Euros 460

Prestige Dordogne Ride (please ask for itinerary)

29th June to 5th July*

5th to 11th October *

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

NOTE these rides will be run with Fortresses & Forest OR Prestige Dordogne itinerary, according to first bookings

Vineyards of Bordeaux

11th to 17th May

14th to 20th September

18th to 24th May

21st to 27th September

Rate: Euros 4335 per person; single supplement - Euros 590

Caves & Castles of Malbec

27th April to 3rd May

15th to 21st June

31st August to 6th September

Rate: Euros 3290 per person; single supplement - Euros 450

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 and transfers at a fixed time on the first and last days at set meeting and departure points which vary as follows: -

Fortresses & Forest of Dordogne Rides - meeting and departure point is **Bergerac** airport or train station.

Beaches & Vineyards of Bordeaux Ride - meeting and departure point is **Bordeaux** airport or train station.

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).

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 £250-£300 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 France follows Schengen area rules. Holders of full UK passports do not need a visa to visit France as a tourist (or for certain other purposes) as long as all their visits to Schengen countries do not exceed 90 days in total in any period of 180 days. Holders of other passports should check requirements with the French Consulate.

Health No vaccinations are required by UK, USA or EU residents to enter France. Tetanus vaccination is recommended for all riders.

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