

# The Bridge In The Sky (Gorges Du Tarn) Tour

## The Bridge In The Sky Tour - Intermediate

Come and join us on one of our most popular tours to the spectacular Bridge over the River Tarn in Southern France. The bridge designed by Norman Foster is the tallest suspension bridge in the world (1,132 ft.) - taller than the Eiffel Tower!

Our route to the Gorges Du Tarn will take us through fantastic scenery, historic and beautiful towns and villages and National Parks. Due to a complete hatred of motorways and trunk roads the route is designed to use only small 'D' roads which will not only enable you to experience terrific biking roads but will fully immerse you in the delights of rural France.

All routes and hotels have been fully researched and you will be accompanied by an experienced guide. There are regular rest stops for coffee, photos, etc. however, it is a motorcycle holiday so you will be spending a good 6hrs in the saddle each day. There will be a cross section of riders ranging from the vastly experienced to newcomers. We will encourage all participants to ride within their own comfort zone and limits. The emphasis is on enjoying the roads, scenery and comradeship, not on seeing who can get to the destination quickest! Therefore if you are new to biking don't be shy or intimidated - come and join us - you won't regret it.

An outline itinerary is listed below :-

### **Day 1: Dover - Bagnoles de L'Orne - (270 miles approx).**

The tour will begin at the port of Dover where you will be met by a British Bike Tour representative and we will board the ferry to Calais. We will cover approximately 140 miles on the motorway before heading across country and onto some more interesting roads. We will pass through the Falais gap and head for the twisty roads of the River Orne valley. These roads represent a good taste of things to come and will enable you to acclimatise to the lack of traffic, lack of speed cameras, and considerate drivers! We will be staying in one of our favourite hotels in the lovely Spa town of

Bagnoles.

### **Day 2: Bagnoles - Poitiers - (200 miles approx).**

Up early to enjoy breakfast and then we are off, traveling deep into the Loire valley. A UNESCO world heritage site, this region is world renowned for its sophisticated cities, luxuriant landscape and magnificent food and wine. We will take the opportunity to stop off at beautiful Saumur, renowned for wine, chateau, troglodyte dwellings, and mushroom caves! There will be plenty of stops for coffee and lunch as we spend time enjoying this unspoiled area of France.

### **Day 3: Chateauroux - Brive-La-Gaillarde - (220 miles approx).**

Ok, by now we should be well used to riding on the wrong side of the road and French highway rules!! Now the roads become even more challenging as we follow the River Creuse through the gorges south of Argenton-sur-Creuse and onto Lac Chambon. We then climb up into the Plateau de Millevaches (known as the plateau of a thousand springs). This is a step on the Northern edge of the Massif Central and is wide and sparsely populated landscape. The roads will be deserted and will take us past the stunning Lac de Vassiviere and through beautiful tree plantations - just watch out for the logging lorries which don't leave you much room!

#### **Day 4: Brive - Rodez - (220 miles approx).**

We are now in the heart of the Massif Central, in the Auvergne region. We will take the single track road into the centre of the Monts du Cantal alongside the valley du Falgoux and then up to a height of nearly 6000 ft. at Puy Mary. It is hard to believe that all these mountains were once part of the largest volcano in the whole of Europe. The energetic amongst us may wish to climb the summit of Puy Mary which takes about 25 minutes. Riding on these narrow roads is a real thrill, enhanced by the fabulous views around every bend. In the evening you can have a dip in the outdoor pool before dinner or just settle in for a few beers at the friendly hotel bar.

#### **Day 5: Rodez - Millau - (200 miles approx).**

This is the day that we reach our destination. All things being equal we should arrive at the bridge midmorning. The bridge was built as part of a by-pass of the village of Millau which is a major bottleneck in the summer. It is estimated that the bridge takes at least 2hrs off a journey during the summertime! It is a stunning creation and does not appear as eyesore in what must be one of the most scenic parts of the world. Having fully appreciated the bridge it is time to head off along one of Europe's most spectacular gorges, the Gorges du Tarn. The gorge is 15 miles long and 1300ft deep, is flanked by rocky bluffs and is scaled by roads with dizzying bends and panoramic views. Once out of the gorge we will move onto the dramatic Corniche des Cevennes made famous by Robert Louis Stevenson and his 'Travels with a donkey'. I wonder what Mr Stevenson would make of my 150 horses! In the evening, we have a tradition of going and playing 10 pin bowling - always a good laugh.

#### **Day 6: Millau - La Bourboule - (270 miles approx).**

We are now heading back northwards. My preferred route northwards is across the bleak but beautiful Monts d'Aubrac and Monts Dore. If we are lucky the road race track up Mont Dore will be open and we can fully exploit the grippy tarmac. The road is used for hill climbs and speed trials. Pity that there is traffic going in both directions!! Our usual hotel has the benefit of a heated indoor pool - what a marvellous way to relax after a long days ride.

#### **Day 7: La Bourboule - Chinon - (250 miles approx).**

Today we will be moving out of the Massif Central and back up to the Touraine region of the Loire. In the morning we will head up Puy Dome - an extinct volcano which offers fantastic 360 degree views. Then in the afternoon, the roads will be a mixture of fast long straights and twisty bends running through the Parc Naturel Regional Du Livradois-Forez before heading down into the plains of Berry. From there we head towards the medieval town of Loches and our hotel in the historic city of Chinon. It is a bit of a tradition to have a late night in Chinon - there is an excellent live music venue in the town!

#### **Day 8: Chinon - Bagnoles - (120 miles approx).**

A short day today, so we can have a bit of a lie-in. The journey north takes us back over the Loire river and into the Northern Loire for our last night together. We will journey up the famous Mulsanne straight and then through the beautiful region of the Alpes-Mancelles before heading back to our lovely hotel in Bagnoles.

#### **Day 9: Bagnoles - Calais (260 miles approx). -**

Time to leave to catch your afternoon ferry from Calais.