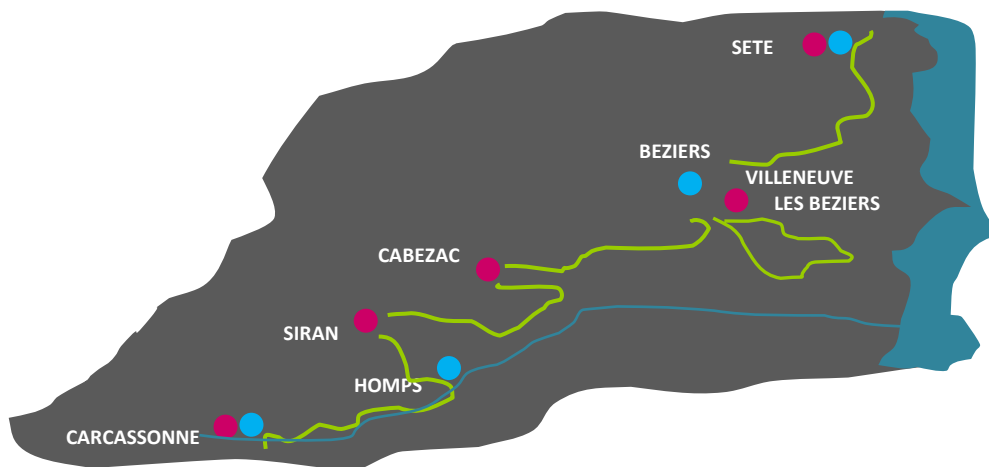




## COLOURS OF FRANCE THE CANAL DU MIDI

6 NIGHTS / 7 DAYS  
CARCASSONNE TO THE  
MEDITERRANEAN SEA



# EXPLORE

## CANAL DU MIDI AT YOUR OWN PACE



### Day 1 : Arrival in Carcassonne

It is hard to believe that Carcassonne is real, when you first approach it from afar. The ancient city, (a settlement here from as far back as 3500 BC), sits majestically high, is ringed completely by its castle-like ramparts. The city and its fortifications was rated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997. You'll soak up the view from your hotel, located by the medieval walls. You will have time to relax and read your package of trip information by the swimming pool, before wandering in to explore the cobblestoned streets.

### Day 2 : Carcassonne to Siran 45 km

You have a relaxing, easy ride today, as it leaves Carcassonne and follows the roads and bike paths along the Canal (flat!). Your route takes you through a mix of villages with odd names, stemming from the regional language, which for centuries was not French, but the local "Occitan": Marseillette, Puichéric (with its 13th century church and annual pig festival!) and La Redorte. You pass a first feat of canal engineering as well, the bridge of Orbiel, taking the canal over the Orbiel River! At the end of the day leave the canal bike path to ride through the tiny roads and villages of the picturesque Minervois vineyards – perhaps stop for a wine tasting, as your ride is almost finished! Your goal is the beautiful Chateau de Siran, in the heart of the village of the same name. Dinner at you hotel



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### Day 3 : Loop Ride into the Minervois 38 km

Your ride today takes a break from the Canal du Midi to take you into the lovely vineyards and villages of the Minervois. The scenery is really beautiful, and each of the towns you pass has its own unique personality. You'll arrive in Caunes Minervois in time to visit the stunning abbey there and to find some lunch. The abbey was originally founded in the year 780, though the buildings you see today are much more "modern" dating from the 11th to 14th centuries! The afternoon ride takes you past the site of the mysterious and surprisingly poignant dolmen of Saint Eugene, with its unusual covered passageways, thought to be a burial site. You can stop for a refreshment in Laure-Minervois before the final stretch back to your hotel in Siran for a second evening.

### Day 4 : Siran to Cabezac 40 km

Your ride today starts in the middle of a beautiful terrain of vineyards and small villages, before returning to the Canal bike path in Homps, an ancient commercial port, where the regional barrels of wine were loaded into boats for the journey to Bordeaux. The small village today is charming and quite tranquil, making it hard to imagine its busy past. You'll continue along the Canal bike path all the way to Le Somail, with its pretty bridges, at which point you leave the canal again to pedal through the olive groves, vineyards, and flowered fields of the scenic surrounding countryside. You are headed for the hamlet of Cabezac, sitting on the Cesse River, with its natural still pools. By the hotel, using the river for power, is a working olive mill, where you can stop for a taste of the production of the "eternal trees". Night in Cabezac itself, with dinner at the hotel's excellent restaurant. Dinner included tonight

### Day 5 : Cabezac to Beziers 42 km

The first half of today's ride is on small roads passing through several picturesque towns and villages such as Argeliers and Quarante, before returning to the canal path in Capetang. Be sure to stop and admire the "Tunnel de Malpas" which allowed barges to continue their route passing along its 165 metres of tunneled underground vaulting. No one believed that the canal's engineer, Pierre-Paul Riquet, could complete this feat, and in fact the King even ordered that he stop, and deviate the canal's route. He feigned obedience, but completed the tunnel in secrecy, unveiling it only after his project was done. Enjoy two other feats of canal engineering: the



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Fonserannes locks, and the Orb Aqueduct (in effect a bridge, carrying the waters - and traffic - of the Canal du Midi over the Orb River). At the end of the day, you arrive in Beziers. After settling in to your lovely hotel, take some time to explore – we provide a small walking tour to help. (please note the CLASSIC itinerary stays in Villeneuve-les-Beziers this evening just past Beziers).

### Day 6 : Beziers to Sete 49 km

You ride right to the end of the Canal de Midi today, saying good-bye to it, as it empties in to the sea at Agde, originally a Greek port town. Stop to admire the beautiful Renaissance buildings of this town, as well as the Saint Stephen's cathedral. Along the way, cross over the ingenious Libron locks system over the canal, and ride through the town of Vias, with its market square and Saint John the Baptist church, made entirely from the regional stone. From there, enjoy the luxury of the beautiful new bike path that follows the sandy Mediterranean beach for 12 kilometres before arriving in the lively port town of Sete itself. Be sure to pack your bathing suit today as you will want to jump into the waves! Final night and dinner in Sete.

### Day 7 : Departure - Bon Voyage!

After a final breakfast, the trip is over. You can catch the train from the Sete for your further travels



### What's included in your package

- 6 nights' accommodation in the comfort level of your choice CLASSIC or CLASSIC+
- All Hotel taxes
- All breakfasts, 4 dinners (drinks not included with dinners)
- Orientation with our Trip Manager at the start of the trip
- Fully equipped quality hybrid bike
- Detailed maps and step-by-step route notes
- Regional information and advice
- Luggage transfers from hotel to hotel
- Emergency phone call support 7 days a week