



Epic Cycling Climbs

Epic Cycling Climbs Route 2: Ride through the heartland of the Northern and Southern French Alps - 8 day ride



This is a **725km** route with **17,350m elevation gain**, possibly 8 days of riding. The ride starts in Val d'Iserre (taxi ride from Le Bourg Saint Maurice to save you from a busy 32 km ride on a

main road) and ends in La Chambre in the Maurienne valley. In between the route covers 12 climbs in the heartland of the Northern and Southern French Alps.

This is an incredible ride, defined by the sheer variety of mountain environments it traverses. It includes three of the highest passes in France, as well as iconic climbs from both the Northern and Southern Alps, with the Col de la Croix de Fer and the Col de la Couillole standing out in particular. Beyond steep ascents steeped in Tour de France heritage and folklore, the route features fast descents, quiet and often deserted roads, and a striking contrast of landscapes—ranging from desolate, barren high mountains to lush valleys and narrow gorges. Along the way, charming mountain towns and villages offer warm local hospitality. Above all, the ride delivers some of the most spectacular scenery France has to offer.

[See the complete route here](#)



[Day 1 \(105km, 2,140m climbing\)](#): The journey begins in Val d'Isère, with the first day ending in Valloire after crossing the Col de l'Iseran, the highest paved road pass in the Alps, followed by the [Col du Télégraphe](#).

[Day 2 \(105km, 2,620m climbing\)](#): Two bucket list climbs are on the programme today. The day starts early with the ascent of the legendary Col du Galibier, then descends to Briançon before tackling the Col d'Izoard, famed for its mythical landscape. The day concludes in Guillestre.

[Day 3 \(91km, 2,780m climbing\)](#) : A demanding day is in store today with the Col du Vars as a warm-up climb, followed after lunch by the magnificent Cime de la Bonnette. This stage is tough both in distance and elevation gain, the reward is crossing the highest through road in the Alps and the magical scenery of the Mercantour National Park. The day finishes in Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée halfway down the Tinee valley.

[Day 4 \(84km, 1,850m climbing\)](#): The route continues through the warmer, southern Tinée Valley, climbing the Col de la Couillole, with the dramatic Vionène River gorge as a highlight. It descends to Guillaume via Valberg and ends in Saint Martin d'Entraunes on the lower slopes of the Col de la Cayolle.

[Day 5 \(92km, 1,890m climbing\)](#): The route turns north again, reaching Lac de Serre-Ponçon via the beautiful Col de la Cayolle and the Ubaye Valley. A last climb of the day to Le Sauze-du-Lac, high above the lake provides great views.

[Day 6 \(90km 1,940m climbing\)](#): This stage features valley riding along the Durance Valley, punctuated by short climbs on quiet side roads, and ends on the slopes of the [Col du Lautaret](#). This is a persistent uphill effort passing towns of Embrun and Briançon.

[Day 7 \(87km, 2,140m climbing\)](#): The penultimate stage completes the ascent of the Lautaret, followed by a scenic route above the Romanche Valley and a climb through the famous switchbacks of Alpe d'Huez. The stage ends around Allemond in the d'Oisans valley after a crazy descent.

[Day 8 \(75km, 1,970m climbing\)](#): Finally, on the last day, the route returns to the Maurienne Valley via the legendary Col de la Croix de Fer, and descending to La Chambre via the Col du Glandon, with an additional bonus climb to the [Lacets de Montvernier](#) to bring the journey to a memorable close.

Climbs en route: Col de l'Iseran, Col du Telegraph, Col du Galibier, Col d'Izoard, Col du Vars, Cime de la Bonnette, Col de la Couillole, Col de la Cayolle, Col du Lautaret, Alpe d'Huez, Col de la Croix de Fer and Lacets des Montverniers.

The start at Bourg Saint Maurice and the end point of this route at La Chambre can be accessed by train which is a bonus. Alternatively, you could extend a further day to ride back to Bourg Saint Maurice via the [Col de la Madeleine](#) and the Tarentaise valley.

Cycle repair shops en route:

- Bourg Saint Maurice: Gravity Lab / Allez Café Velo ([more info here](#))
- Tignes: Bike Specialist ([more info here](#)), Val d'Isere: Intersport or Jean Sport
- Modane: Intersport Modane ([more info here](#))
- Saint Michele de Maurienne: La Marche du Velo - ([more info here](#))
- Valloire: Sport 2000 - Nagano ([more info here](#))
- Briancon: Giant Briancon ([more info here](#)), Atelier Cyclonique ([more info here](#))
- Guillestre: Cycl'Alpes 05 ([more info here](#))
- Jausiers: Technicienne du Sport ([more info here](#))
- Isola: Tinee Bike Pro ([more info here](#))
- Barcelonnette: Cycle Ubaye Sports ([more info here](#))
- Savines le Lac: RemCycle ([more info here](#))
- Embrun: Alpes2Routes ([more info here](#))
- Bourg d'Oisans: Cycle & Sport ([more info here](#)), Bleach Xtreme Sports ([more info here](#))
- Saint Jean de Maurienne: d'Velos ([more info here](#))
- Mobile workshops in the Alpes Maritimes operating between Nice and Barcelonnette: [Bike On mobile workshop](#), [Baous Cycles mobile workshop](#)

[You can look at the route here on Komoot or scan the QR code below:](#)

Check out this activity
French Alps Heartland:
From Val-d'Isère to La...



↔ 724 km ↗ 17,350 m



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