



Epic Cycling Climbs

Epic Cycling Climbs Route 13: Seven-Day loop route from Toulon through the Provence via Mont Ventoux - France



In the traditional heart of Provence, the foothills of the Alps gradually spill westwards from the high mountains towards the Rhône Valley and south to the Mediterranean coast around Marseille. This is a landscape of extraordinary variety, where lavender fields give way to fragrant garrigue, rolling hills, deep gorges and dramatic limestone cliffs. Historic towns and villages are woven into the countryside, none more evocative than Avignon, whose medieval streets and imposing papal palace reflect the rich history of the region.

Watching over it all is **Mont Ventoux**, the great solitary mountain that has become the guardian of Provence and one of cycling's most iconic climbs. This route takes in the full variety of the Provençal landscape, winding through lavender fields and vineyards, crossing minor passes and rivers, and threading its way through spectacular gorges before tackling the summit of Mont Ventoux. Along the way, it visits sleepy provincial towns and characterful villages, as well as historic Avignon, situated at the heart of Provence and serving as an important cultural and historic gateway to the region.

The journey begins and ends in **Toulon**, on the Mediterranean coast, although it can equally be started from Avignon. Both cities are easily accessible by train, making the route straightforward to reach without a car.

Over seven days, the route covers **706 km and 12,470 metres of climbing**, taking in some of the finest scenery in southern France. Highlights include the spectacular **Gorges du Verdon**, the challenge and majesty of **Mont Ventoux**, a memorable stop in **Avignon**, and the rolling hills and numerous minor passes of the Provençal interior. The final stages descend through the vineyards of southern France towards the warmth and blue waters of the Mediterranean, providing a fitting finish to a journey through one of France's most beautiful cycling regions.

A truly wonderful ride, with stages between 67 and 118km in length and 820 to 2,200m of climbing, allowing plenty of time to appreciate the lovely surroundings.

[You can check out the route on Komoot here.](#)



Stage 1 - 118km, 1,800m elevation gain:

The route begins in **Toulon**, leaving the Mediterranean coast behind as it heads inland towards **Brignoles** and the rolling hills of the Provençal hinterland. As the urban landscape of the Toulon metropolitan area gradually fades, the roads become quieter and smaller, while the terrain begins to rise and undulate. The landscape quickly takes on a distinctly Provençal character, with fragrant forests interspersed with vineyards, olive groves and picturesque hillside villages.

The further inland you travel, the more peaceful the roads become, offering a gentle introduction to the journey before the route reaches **Aiguines**, perched at the entrance to the spectacular **Gorges du Verdon**.

Stage 2 - 67km, 2,200m elevation gain (ride total 185 km, 4,000 m elevation gain):

From **Aiguines**, the route spends the day exploring the spectacular **Gorges du Verdon**, before descending deep into the canyon to spend the night at the **Chalet de la Maline**. Although relatively short in distance, this is a demanding stage, with an average gradient of 3.2% across the ride making it surprisingly tiring. The Gorges du Verdon is a landscape of extraordinary beauty, with sheer limestone cliffs rising dramatically above the turquoise waters of the Verdon River.

The highlight is the **Route des Crêtes**, which traces the northern rim of the gorge, delivering spectacular views deep into the canyon and across the surrounding Provençal mountains. The day finishes at the Chalet de la Maline, perched right inside the gorge. As the road drops away and the cliffs close in around you, the sense of remoteness is extraordinary. Spending the night here, surrounded by the walls of the canyon, is a truly magical experience.

Stage 3 - 115km, 1,950m elevation gain (ride total 300km, 5,950m elevation gain):

Stage 3 begins with the remaining section of the **Route des Crêtes**, following the northern rim of the **Gorges du Verdon** before gradually leaving the dramatic canyon country behind. From here, the route settles into the quintessential landscapes of Provence, winding through rolling hills, fragrant countryside and quiet roads towards **Simiane-la-Rotonde**.

A highlight along the way is **Moustiers-Sainte-Marie**, one of the region's most beautiful villages. Dramatically perched beneath towering limestone cliffs, its narrow streets, stone houses and picturesque setting make it a great place to stop for a coffee and take in the atmosphere. Leaving Moustiers behind, the route continues through the peaceful Provençal countryside, with a succession of gentle climbs, open landscapes and charming villages before arriving at **Simiane-la-Rotonde**, a fitting destination for another day of exploring Provence by bike.

Stage 4 - 83km, 1,800m elevation gain (ride total 320km, 8,220m elevation gain):

Stage 4, from **Simiane-la-Rotonde to Beaumes-de-Venise**, brings the biggest cycling challenge of the journey and its most iconic climb: **Mont Ventoux**.

After leaving Simiane-la-Rotonde, the route winds through the Provençal countryside before reaching **Sault** after around 23 kilometres. Perched on a rocky hillside and surrounded by lavender fields, this charming village makes a perfect place to pause before the climb begins. From Sault, the road rises steadily towards **Mont Ventoux**, taking the gentlest of the three classic approaches to the summit. With an average gradient of around 5%, the lower slopes

are relatively forgiving, allowing you to settle into a steady rhythm as the landscape gradually changes from open Provençal countryside to the higher slopes of the mountain. The real challenge comes beyond **Chalet Reynard**, where the gradient steepens and the final third demands considerably more effort.

After reaching the summit, the reward is a long descent towards **Malaucène**, followed by quieter roads through the vineyards of the Rhône Valley. The stage finishes at **Beaumes-de-Venise**, a picturesque Provençal village surrounded by vineyards, perfectly positioned for the journey onwards towards the Rhône and historic **Avignon**.

Stage 5 - 117km, 820m elevation gain (ride total 500km, 8,570m elevation gain):

Today's route leaves the mountains behind, descending towards the **Rhône River** before following its broad valley northwards towards **Avignon**. After several days of climbing, the flatter roads provide a welcome change of pace.

Avignon is an unmissable stop, with time to explore its historic centre, the famous **Pont d'Avignon** and the magnificent **Palais des Papes**. From the city, the route crosses the fertile Rhône lowlands before gradually heading back into the hills.

The final part of the stage takes you through the **Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon**, one of Provence's most beautiful landscapes. Vineyards, forests and rolling hills accompany the road as it winds southwards towards **Lourmarin**, a charming Provençal village and a perfect place to end the day.

Stage 6 - 113km, 1,790m elevation gain (ride total 613 km, 10,360 m elevation gain):

This is one of the tougher stages of the journey, with a succession of passes and climbs through the Provençal mountains east of **Aix-en-Provence**. The riding is demanding, but the rewards are among the finest scenery of the route.

The landscape is dominated by the rugged limestone cliffs of the **Pic des Mouches**, rising dramatically above the surrounding hills and valleys. Quiet mountain roads wind through this beautiful and often wild corner of Provence, with each climb revealing new views across the rugged countryside.

After a challenging day in the saddle, the route eventually descends towards the small hamlet of **Saint-Zacharie**, where the peaceful setting provides a welcome end to the stage.

Stage 7 - 93km, 2,110m elevation gain (ride total 706km, 12,470 m elevation gain):

The final stage of the tour provides a fittingly challenging finale, with several substantial climbs along the way, including the **Col de l'Espigoulier**, before crossing the rugged mountains above Toulon.

Between the climbs, the route passes through the celebrated **vineyards of Bandol**, where the landscape softens into rolling hills and Mediterranean countryside. The final kilometres bring you back towards the coast and the city of **Toulon**, but there is one last climb to conquer: **Mont Faron**.

From the summit, the reward is a spectacular panorama across Toulon, its sweeping harbour and the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean. It is a memorable viewpoint from which to finish a journey through the varied landscapes of Provence.

[You can check out the route on Komoot here.](#)

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route from Toulon to Mo...**



↔ **706 km** ↗ **12,470 m**



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