

CYCLE CHEEKY COLS OF COSTA BLANCA



A one-week road cycling holiday in an area popular with the pro teams

- Classic Vuelta Espana passes - Puerto Tudons, Port de Benifallin, Coll de Rates
- Enjoy the relaxed Mediterranean atmosphere of Altea and Denia
- Early and late in the season, Costa Blanca is perfect for road cycling
- Budget flights to Alicante and excellent bike hire



HOLIDAY CODE CBMB



Spain, Cycling, 8 Days

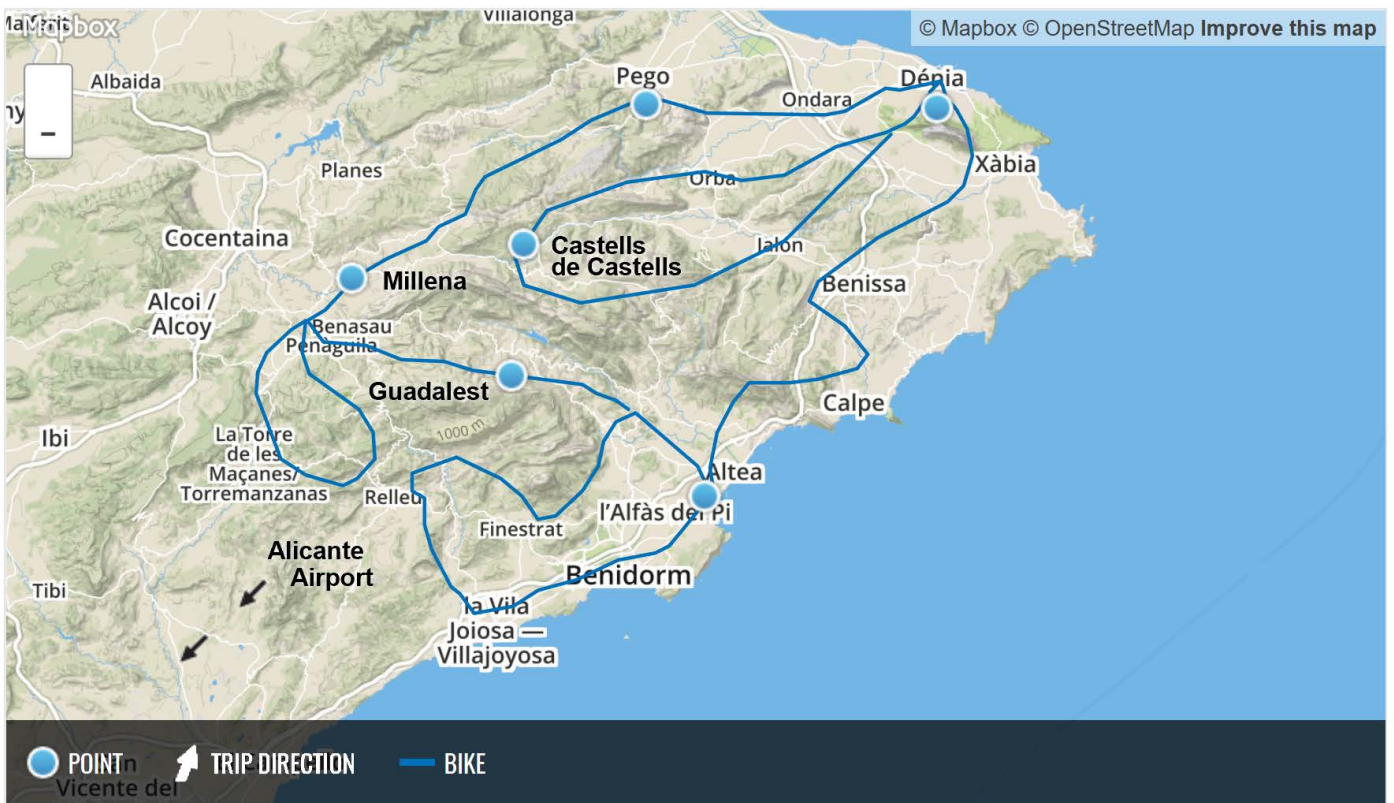
2 nights gite / hostel, 5 nights hotel, 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 7 dinners, max group size: 15, 6 days biking, 448 kilometres (280 miles), 100% road, 100% vehicle supported, max altitude 1020 metres



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THE ROUTE



Holiday Itinerary

Day 1: Meet at the group hotel in Altea. Two transfers from Alicante Airport are provided.

Arriving at Alicante International Airport, there will be 2 complimentary timed transfers, where you will be met by our local guide and transferred to the group hotel on the seafront in Altea, approximately 45 minutes drive away. Altea is a small and peaceful town in the centre of a wide bay, overlooked by an amphitheatre of limestone mountains. The town has managed to preserve a traditional and authentic feel, in contrast to the big resorts like Benidorm and Calpe. Whilst there are no soft sandy beaches, Altea is devoid of a single tower block and in winter you will enjoy drinks and 'cafes con leches' with the locals in any of its terraced cafes and bars. Those bringing their own bikes will need to make sure they are reassembled today. KE Land Only package services begin with dinner and overnight at the group hotel.










ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL



MEALS D

Day 2: Ride a warm-up loop inland, via Finestrat and the Puig Campana. A second night in Altea.

A day to stretch our legs, test our bikes and become acquainted with the local terrain. From our hotel in Altea, we'll head along the coast towards the futuristic skyline of Benidorm, a quite surreal sight surrounded by dramatic mountains. In total contrast to peaceful Altea, Benidorm is Spain's biggest holiday resort and attracts more than 5 million visitors every year. Leaving Benidorm, we continue along the coast to the smaller resort of Villajoyosa, before turning inland. Arriving at the village of Finestrat, the vibe is already totally different, with many walkers and climbers drawn to the village and the impressive Puig Campana (1410) which dominates the entire area and overshadows any mighty tower block of Benidorm. The 'Puig' is an interesting mountain with a missing 'window' from its southern profile, which has given rise to many local legends and challenged many a climber. After a stop in Finestrat, we'll continue on rolling roads to Callosa de Sarria, before dropping down to Altea for a drink on the seafront with the locals. There will be chance to explore the narrow and hilly streets of this pretty old town and relax next to the sea at our hotel.

	ACCOMMODATION HOTEL		ASCENT 840M 2,755 feet		DISTANCE 69KM 43 miles		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 840M 2,755 feet		TIME 3 - 4 HRS CYCLING HOURS		

Day 3: Cycle to Guadalest and across the Puerto De Confrides (966m) to Millena.








Time to leave the coast and venture into the mountainous interior. Soon we are on the main climb of the day, zig zagging through pine trees to the stunning village of Guadalest. Dramatically situated amongst the mountains of the Aitana, Serella and Xorta, the village was a military stronghold dating back to 715AD and the Moorish occupation of Spain. We'll have time to explore the castle ruins of San Jose, literally hanging off the edge of a cliff and offering spectacular views of the fortress of Alcazaba, the mountains and azure blue waters of the huge lake below. We'll have chance to wander the quaint streets of the Arrabal where most of the village's 200 inhabitants live in the present day. As we leave the village, we'll break our ties with mainstream tourism and continue climbing up to the pass of Puerto De Confrides (966m). In stark contrast to Guadalest, this is a lonely and wild spot, surrounded by the stunning peaks of the Serella and to the north the traditional rural heartland of the region. With most of the climbing metres in the bag, it's a fun descent amidst tiny mountain villages, encircled by olive terraces and almond-clad hillocks. The virgin olive oil produced in the area is one of the finest in Spain and said to contribute to the longevity of the local octogenarians. This area has been described by Spanish writers as 'el tiempo pasa de puntillas' which translated means, 'time goes by on tiptoe'. The region's charm is undoubtedly its tranquillity and serenity and we can expect to have the roads largely to ourselves - 50 kilometres and 50 years from Benidorm! We check into our hostel accommodation in the tiny village of Millena.

	ACCOMMODATION GITE / HOSTEL		ASCENT 1650M 5,412 feet		DISTANCE 75KM 47 miles		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 1050M 3,444 feet		TIME 4 - 5 HRS CYCLING HOURS		

Day 4: A loop ride across the Port of Benifallin and Port Tudons (1020m), returning to Millena via Alcoleja.





Today's ride from the hostel will test our strength and stamina, as we ride the 2 amazing passes of Port of Benifallim (1000m) and Port Tudons (1020m). Leaving our hostel, we cycle through remote villages typical of the area - this really is connoisseurs Spain. A series of short, tight and twisty hairpins bring us to the village of

Pengaula, perched on the slopes of the Sierra Aitana and surrounded by fruit and almond groves. Here, there are incredible views of the mountains stretching out like a rugged carpet. With only 350 inhabitants, the village has historical significance as it was granted the status of Royal Town. Crossing a deep ravine, we arrive at the village of Benafallim and then begins the first heart-pumping climb of the day, a steady 300 metre climb to the Port of Benifallim (1000m) a classic climb in the Tour of Spain. We are rewarded with a thrilling descent to the village of Torremanzanas and further down into a deep valley to the village of Rellu. Rolling terrain brings us to the village of Sella where we can refuel before the classic ride up Port Tudons. This ascent involves 20 kilometres of twisting mountain road and is one of the most famous passes in the whole of Spain. Arriving at the summit of Port Tudons (1020m) we can see a gated military road, which in the past has been opened up especially for the Tour of Spain. An exhilarating descent brings us the village of Alcoleja and then a final few clicks back to the tranquillity of our hostel in Millenna where our hosts may tempt us with one of the traditional farmer's dishes for dinner.

	ACCOMMODATION GITE / HOSTEL		ASCENT 1740M 5,707 feet		DISTANCE 75KM 47 miles		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 1740M 5,707 feet		TIME 4 - 5 HRS CYCLING HOURS		

Day 5: Cycle through the Vall de Gallinera and by way of the town of Pego to the quiet coastal resort of Denia.








After our 2 epic days of climbing, it's time for an easy day. Leaving our hostel, we cycle along the beautiful and narrow Vall de Gallinera. After the expulsion of the Moors in 1609, the valley became deserted and it was the Duke of Gandia who brought 150 families from Mallorca to repopulate the valley. Today amidst the almond, olive and cherry farming, their origins are easy to spot. The dialect of the local people still has a resemblance to that spoken on Mallorca. In this region, we are likely to see traditional methods of farming - the fruit, nut and olive crops are still collected centuries old methods. At the end of the valley is the small town of Pego, an interesting town whose medieval streets still retain much of their original charm. Pego celebrates several fiestas and festivals including the interestingly named 'Pinyata' - burial of the sardine! Beyond Pego, the landscape opens up to lush gardens and orange plantations and we are treated to a spell of gentle riding to the seafront at Denia. With its elegant Moorish style streets, 17th century castle, extensive marina, several beaches and working port, Denia has something to offer everybody and is still very Spanish.

	ACCOMMODATION HOTEL		ASCENT 550M 1,804 feet		DISTANCE 62KM 39 miles		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 1150M 3,772 feet		TIME 3 - 4 HRS CYCLING HOURS		

Day 6: Another great loop ride, including the Coll de Rates and the village of Castells de Castells.








Today is a classic day ride from Denia which will take us over the famous Coll de Rates, followed by an exhilarating descent to the mountain village of Castell de Castells to follow. We are likely to see many cyclists today, maybe even the odd pro team in this cycling paradise. As the rolling hills and mountains start to unfold, the small but beautiful Holy Virgin church in the village of Parcent heralds the arrival at the bottom of the climb. The Coll de Rates (780m) is the one everybody wants to ride. This 'God of Climbs' was a decisive climb on stage 9 of the 2010 Tour of Spain. For those who like to test themselves up the 7 kilometre - 370 metre climb, there is the 'stoppomat' at the bottom of the pass. Retrieving a card from the machine at the bottom, you then punch your card at the summit, where there is a similar machine. Cards are collected weekly and uploaded onto the Stoppomat website and riders can check out times compared to to other riders. Of course, Strava, is the modern version of this system. There is a welcome café at the summit and we can enjoy spectacular views of the mountains towards Benidorm. Another cheeky pass and a fast steep descent bring us to the lovely village of Castell de Castells,

surrounded by mountains, where olive and almond trees bathe on sundrenched terraces, intersected by ancient Mozarabic trails and dry river beds. With all the hard work done, we can relax and explore the village for a while before the return to Denia. During the mostly downhill return ride, we'll keep an eye out for golden eagles and wild boar.

 ACCOMMODATION HOTEL		ASCENT 1200M 3,936 feet		DISTANCE 90KM 56 miles	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD		DESCENT 1200M 3,936 feet		TIME 5 - 6 HRS CYCLING HOURS	

Day 7: Cycle to Altea via the Xalo Valley and the Bernia Pass (615m) with views of the Penon de Ifach.

Checking out of our hotel, we climb out of Denia over the mountain which dominates the area, Mongo (753m). We cross a relatively small coastal pass in the Natural Park of Cap San Antonio. This park covers an area of over 5000 acres and because of its extraordinary wealth of flora and fauna, became a protected area in 1987. After a short descent, we head inland again amongst the by now familiar almond, olive and citrus trees groves. Along the Xalo Valley, we'll also see vineyards with some very successful family run bodegas starting to emerge in this area. Beyond the village of Xalon, we start the 12 kilometre climb of the Bernia Pass (615m) another classic of the area. A quiet, almost deserted road, leads through forest initially and up to a high point on this rugged ridge, with a far-reaching view that is a fitting reward for our last 'cheeky pass' of the journey. The exhilarating, twisty descent will allow us to enjoy the views of the coast, of the town of Calpe and its bizarre rock outcrop, the Penon de Ifach. We may choose to stop at the tiny village of Pinos to have a café con leche and admire the 'vista'. The blue waters fringing the small bays of Moraira make a perfect lunch spot. The last few kilometres to Altea are gentle and allow us the opportunity to soak up indelible memories of this wonderful area.

 ACCOMMODATION HOTEL		ASCENT 1580M 5,182 feet		DISTANCE 96KM 60 miles	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD		DESCENT 1580M 5,182 feet		TIME 6 - 7 HRS CYCLING HOURS	

Day 8: Departure day. Two transfers to Alicante Airport are provided.

KE Land Only package services end after breakfast. 2 complimentary timed transfers to Alicante Airport are provided.

 MEALS B
