

Hi Ian

I thought that club members might be interested if you could circulate.

A few weeks ago, a friend and I went to the Pyrenees to watch some of the Tour de France. The place where I stayed is currently offering 7 nights B&B for #99 per person for groups of 6-8 people, so I thought I would give you a taste of what is on offer and would be happy to organise a future trip for anyone who is interested. The guest house is a converted 18th century farm house run by a couple of British multisport enthusiasts (Lee and Julie) who have relocated to France. It is in a rural setting about 30km North of Luchon in the Haute Pyrenees region. There are a number of typical Pyrenean villages nearby which offer various eating options, but Julie is an excellent chef so we opted to eat in most nights. A 3 course meal including wine is 15 Euro. Make that 4 course: there were always 2 deserts on offer!

For those of you who watched the Pyrenean stages of this years Tour, the Col de Peyresourde and the Col du Portillon are within easy cycling distance. There are numerous other "hills" on the doorstep including a 1000m climb just at the end of the road which is rumoured to feature in next years Tour.

The format of our trip was to have one hard day of cycling (typically 100 miles or so involving one or two of the classic cols and lunch in a suitable cafe) followed by a "rest" day. Non cycling activities included canyoning, parapenting, lake swimming, trail running, relaxing in thermal baths and massage.

We had intended to attempt the 206km stage from Tarbes to Pla-de-Beret, but logistically it made more sense to do it in two days. Lee and Julie dropped us near Tarbes so we had the chance of a warm up before tackling the first climb of the day: the Col du Tourmalet. At this stage, we had been joined by a group of cyclists from Poole who for some reason had decided to race up the mountain. Fortunately their early enthusiasm soon faded and the more experienced climbers suitably paced themselves for a mountain top victory. After lunch, the ride continued along the route of the tour over the Col d'Aspin and Col de Peyresourde before a quick detour down the valley to the B&B. In true Tour style, at various times and for various reasons riders abandoned the route and were escorted home by the support crew.

The second half of the epic was on the actual day the Tour riders tackled the stage. The roads were closed to all traffic except bikes and with crowds gathered on the roadside it was an exhilarating ride over the Col du Portillon and into Spain. Unfortunately we timed our ride slightly wrong and were stopped 7km from the mountain top finish by the police who were closing the road in preparation for the promotional Tour caravan. Having cycled the route, watching the Tour riders at the end of the stage was truly inspirational. I was particularly heartened to see a rider crying after being dropped on the final ascent. They are human after all!

Once the Tour had finished, we retraced our steps down the mountain and formed our own peloton on the way back into France and to the guest house.

I would certainly recommend Lee and Julie to you. They are in the early stages of establishing their business and did everything they could to make our stay enjoyable. What's more their promotional offer is too good to miss.

So if you've ever had aspirations to cycle a stage of the tour, want some experience of classic Pyrenean climbs or just want to chill in typical French style, let me know and I would be happy to put a trip together.

For more information on Lee and Julie's guest house take a look at their web site:  
[velopyrenees.com](http://velopyrenees.com).

Happy cycling, best wishes, John