

Mediterranean to the Balkans: 19 Days

Information Kit

Discover the French island of Corsica, ride Tuscany and explore the stunning Balkans on this exciting six country ride

Explore the lesser known side of Europe and discover the coastal villages, monasteries & mountains of the stunning Balkans.



From the must see, European cities of Venice and Rome to the French owned, mountainous island of Corsica, this is a unique 3-week ride that explores the legendary but also unknown parts of the Mediterranean and Adriatic regions of south east Europe. Visiting the incredible Balkans offers an idyllic collection of countries hugging the pebbled shores of the Adriatic Coast; home to sleepy villages, turquoise waters and impossibly mountainous regions dotted with stunning monasteries and historic villages. Visit eight countries as we explore the Med, Adriatic and Balkans all in one ride.

Itinerary

Joining Day: Venice

Your Venice airport transfer will take you directly to our joining hotel, ready for an early start tomorrow. Today you will meet your crew for your tour briefing and welcome dinner.

Day One: Pisa

Leaving the city of marble palaces, canals and gondolas we enter renowned Tuscany on our way to the amazing Leaning Tower of Pisa. We ride the spectacular twisties of the SS12, a road that features heavily in the Ferrari marketing material. We visit the remarkable Leaning Tower of Pisa that took two centuries to build and leans at a 5.5-degree angle due to unstable foundations.

Day Two: Calvi

A short ride today as we catch the ferry across to the French controlled, and birthplace of Napoleon, island of Corsica that rise from the Mediterranean. Corsica is a wildly beautiful island of alpine mountains, sandy beaches, rustic mountain villages and stunning riding. We ride the breathtaking D71 through northern Corsica for our beachside stop at Calvi.



Day Three: Poggiolo

We spend the day exploring Europe's most mountainous region, discovering its stunning coast roads and narrow winding mountain roads. More endless twisties today as we ride south including the breathtaking UNESCO Calanques de Piana one of the most dramatic roads in Europe, an almost surreal landscape of wind-eroded granite cliffs that drop vertically into the gulf below. Turning inland we overnight at the glorious Poggiolo, a village immersed amongst a rugged landscape of valleys and gorges.

Day Four: Bastia

Turning north we ride the interior of Corsica through the Parc Naturel Regional de Corse on our way to the wonders of Cape Corse in the far north east corner of Corsica. We circumnavigate Cape Corse with 120km of twisties with dramatic drop offs into the Mediterranean far below. It's another day of twisties and superb coastal scenery dotted with wonderful ancient ports and villages.

Day Five: Sienna

Back on the ferry we cross back into stunning Tuscany to overnight in the jewel in the Tuscan crown, the magnificent medieval town of Sienna. Reputed to be the most beautiful medieval city in all of Italy. We arrive early enough to absorb some of this magnificent city and explore the Piazza Del Campo, Duomo and Torre del Mangia or simply sip coffee on the Piazza and watch the Italians go about their lives.

Day Six: Rome

Moving south we ride the ancient Roman road known as the Via Cassia, through the UNESCO listed Val d'Orcia. This is Tuscany at its finest, golden fields and green rolling hills extend far as the eye can see only to be interrupted by ancient traditional villages. Tonight, we reach the legendary Rome.

Day Seven: Rome

We spend a day exploring this mighty city, visiting the incomparable St Peters Basilica, Pantheon, Colosseum, Trevi Fountain and much more, it's a walk through the pages of history today where you can still see the wheel tracks of chariots on some ancient cobblestoned streets.

Day Eight: Conca Dei Marini

Back on the road we continue south passing through Naples, under the shadows of Mt Vesuvius, before entering the UNESCO listed Amalfi Coast, a storied landscape of breathtaking coastal scenery and pastel coloured villages full of cliffside villas, a coastline scattered with terraced vineyards and orchards and of course endless twisties. We overnight at our hotel near Conca Dei Marini that affords incredible views across the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Day Nine: Overnight Ferry – Bari to Dubrovnik

Turning east we enter a rarely visited region of Italy known as Puglia and stop off at Albarello to view the unique Trulli Villages before reaching the port city of Bari and catching the overnight ferry to stunning Dubrovnik. We have cabins booked for our overnight ferry ride.

Day Ten: Dubrovnik

We awake early as we disembark in Dubrovnik, Croatia, the jewel in the Croatian crown with its UNESCO listed 16th century old town. We spend the day exploring this beautiful ancient walled city fronting the Adriatic, visiting sights such as Rectors Palace, Church of St Ignatius of Loyola or relaxing off the bikes in the main square.

Day Eleven: Dubrovnik

We spend another day to explore the awe-inspiring Dubrovnik, perhaps take the cable car for epic views of the city and Adriatic or visit Fort Lovrijenac where some scenes from the Game of Thrones were filmed.

Day Twelve: Kotor

It's only 95 km / 60 mi to Kotor, however our route takes the long way round, crossing into Montenegro, and onto the stunning switchbacks of the epic Kotor Serpentine Road, a series of 16 hairpin bends over 8.3 km on mostly single lane road with jagged mountain walls on one side and huge drop offs on the other, it's epic stuff. We continue onto Cetinje before riding onto breathtaking Kotor, stunningly located on the shores of Kotor Bay, for our overnight stay.

Day Thirteen: Mostar

Leaving Montenegro, we enter Bosnia-Herzegovina, an amazing country that has gone ahead since the devastating war in the 90's. We again take the road less travelled and arrive early into beautiful Mostar, famous for its 16th Century bridge built by the Ottomans and still bearing the scars from the war. This bridge made international headlines after it was destroyed by Bosnian Croats and rebuilt by the Turks, today Mostar is a magnificent place full of antiquities and history.

Day Fourteen: Split

Turning west we return to Croatia, via the beautiful village of Konjic and the Blidinje National Park that form part of the Dinaric Alps. Turning west we return to the Adriatic Coast and ride the wonderful coast road to the renowned city of Split, spectacularly wedged between the coastal mountains on one side and the Adriatic on the other. We arrive early enough to explore this beautiful Adriatic coastal city in the region of Dalmatia, perhaps visit the beautiful Diocletian's Palace that became Daenerys's throne in the HBO hit Game of Thrones or perhaps visit Klis which was the city of Meereen in the series.

Day Fifteen: Zadar

It's only a short ride today as we follow the old coastal road along the Adriatic Coast north, before reaching Zadar for lunch. From here it's a half day excursion out to the UNESCO listed Kornati Islands National Park, a magnificent island archipelago of 140 islands, islets and reefs set amongst the deep blue waters of the Adriatic. We return to Zadar where we can explore the historic Roman and Venetian old town and our overnight stop. With luck we may see the sunset, something which the city is famous for, and so beautiful Alfred Hitchcock called it "the most beautiful sunset in the world".

Day Sixteen: Plitvice Lakes National Park

A magnificent ride today as we ride the Adriatic Highway following the coast passing through endless coastal villages before taking a series of wonderful twisties inland through the Velebit National Park before arriving at the utterly spectacular, UNESCO listed, Plitvice Lakes National Park for our overnight stay. Plitvice Lakes National Park is renowned for its stunning 16 turquoise terraced lakes all joined by waterfalls. After check-in we shall have the chance to explore this area of exceptional beauty.

Day Seventeen: Porec

Leaving the national park behind we ride west, on some great country roads eventually reaching the Adriatic once more before riding the coast road and crossing onto the Istrian Peninsular. We arrive into the beautiful old Roman town of Porec, our overnight stay, early enough to explore the ancient UNESCO listed basilica, remains of Roman temples, renaissance palaces, fortification walls and towers.

Day Eighteen: Lake Bled

Leaving the Istria we leave Croatia and cross into our last country on this ride, Slovenia, the hidden gem of Europe, a country of towering granite peaks, emerald rivers and lakes, and impossibly beautiful autumnal views. We take the wonderful Rt 103 and enter Triglav National Park before crossing the highest pass in Slovenia, Vrsic Pass. Continuing on we arrive at the awe-inspiring Lake Bled stunningly located in the Julian Alps and overnight at our hotel with views across Lake Bled.



Day Nineteen: Ljubljana

On our final day we will spend the morning exploring the beauty that is Lake Bled before riding the short distance to the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana. We will enjoy our last dinner together and reminisce on what has been an amazing, diverse, scenic and culturally rich ride from the Med to the Balkans.

Departure Day: Ljubljana

Spend a couple more days in Slovenia or fly home, the choice is yours.

Ride Grade: 1

99% of this ride is on pavement; some sections of pavement can be potholed and narrow with tall and damaged shoulders. Some driving techniques in the Balkan countries might not be what you are used to at home.

1% of this ride will be on dirt. Most dirt is roadworks although with sections that can have loose gravel and can be rutted.

Distances

The biggest riding day is 350 km / 217 mi with the shortest being 60 km / 37 mi. Most riding days we average around 200 – 250 km / 125 – 160 mi with numerous rest days included where the bike is available for more riding if desired (subject to any maintenance requirements). The total distance is approximately 3,680 km / 2,300 mi, although not huge kilometres, there is LOTS to see on this tour!

Bikes

We operate a brand of bike that needs no introduction, the venerable BMW. Our fleet consists of BMW F750 GS, F850 GS and R1250 GS. All bikes come equipped with a top box.

Experience required

No off road experience is required as this is an all paved tour however, as mentioned, there is the possibility of some limited sections of dirt / gravel if road works are being undertaken, so any off road experience you might have can only help, but certainly not a requirement. This ride is completely suitable for 2-up riding.

All riders **must** have a valid motorcycle license.

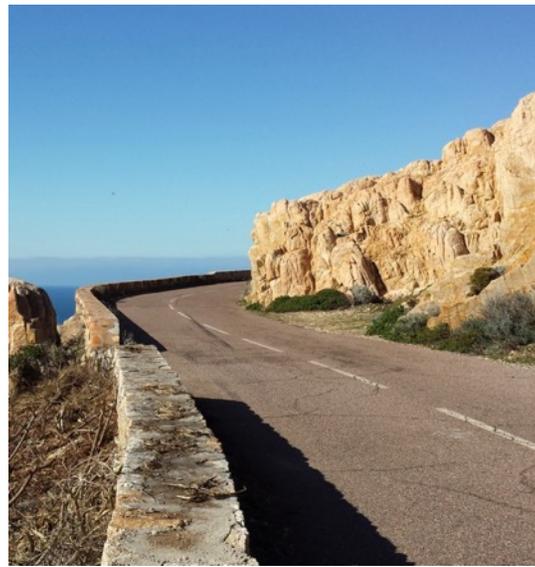
Weather

We can expect the weather to be warm in Venice as we will be coming to the end of summer with average day temperatures of 27.2°C (81°F). There is the possibility of the occasional rain, but sunny most of the time. As we head south towards Rome the temperatures could become warmer during August, but the beginning of the milder autumn season could see the average temperatures drop to the comfortable range of 15°C (59°F) to 26.7°C (80.1°F). Heading east should bring beautiful weather with long days and moderate temperatures ranging from 18.4°C (65.1°F) to 25.1°C (77.2°F).



Highlights

- Leaning tower of Pisa
- Riding the mountains of Corsica
- Taking in the views of Tuscany
- Renown Roman Colosseum
- Incomparable Amalfi Coast
- Stunning Kotor, Montenegro
 - Dubrovnik
- 16th Century Sari Most, in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina
 - Split
- Kornati Islands National Park, Croatia
- Plitvice Lakes National Park
- Porec on the Istria Peninsular
 - Lake Bled, Slovenia



Meals

The food of Italy requires no introduction, polenta, pasta, risotto, featuring fresh, seasonal and simply prepared ingredients.

The diversity of Balkan food can satisfy everyone's taste and typically includes hearty meals that are sure to fill, with a lot of grilled meats and prepared with seasonal produce. The cuisine of the region includes influences from a lot of surrounding cultures, including Mediterranean and the Middle East. Try cevapi, dolma or pljeskavica.

On ride days we include picnic lunches that are wholesome and filling and at night our selected restaurants offer tasty traditional meals. Of course, all breakfasts are included, some are more basic continental choices.

Breakfasts: **20**
Lunches: **14**
Dinners: **13**

Accommodation

Our hotels are generally 3 & 4 and are chosen for their location, cleanliness, suitability for motorcycle group and ambience. On a couple of nights, the accommodation will be more basic. Some hotels have restaurants & bars attached.

Accommodation is an important part of your ride experience and we believe we offer a superb mix of excellent boutique, family owned hotels.

Accommodation: **20 nights**

Tour Inclusions

- Airport Transfers
- Motorcycle rental as per your selection
- 20 nights' accommodation, in excellent small hotels
 - All meals mentioned in the itinerary
 - Fuel
- Support vehicle with passenger carrying ability
 - Services of ride leader and support vehicle driver
 - Access to Compass Expeditions App
 - Pre-departure material and route maps
 - Access to satellite phone, pay per minute
 - Compass Expeditions tour shirt
- Entrances to all attractions mentioned in the itinerary

Your Responsibilities

Riding equipment

You will need to bring the following riding gear:

Riding jacket and pants: A multi layer jacket / pants is essential. The jacket / pants ideally needs to have internal removable liners and have Kevlar crash protection and a waterproof pocket for your documents and small camera. Ideally your jacket / pants should be 100% waterproof or carry a set of waterproofs in your topbox.

Helmet: Your helmet should be full faced and of a good quality. Ensure you have a spare visor or replace before departing if scratched. Motocross style helmets are unsuitable for long distance rides, on what may be sometimes dusty surfaces, as you will experience considerable dust ingress. Internal drop down tinted visors are great, but not so if you need prescription sunglasses.

Boots: When choosing a boot, it is essential to choose a boot that offers the most rigid ankle protection possible; ankle injuries are the most common injuries we experience. Pack a set of walking boots in your top-box for those off bike excursions.

Gloves: We recommend the use of both summer and winter (ideally waterproof) gloves, as the weather can be changeable.

Additional items: Silk neck warmer, great for keeping the wind out. Earplugs, great for keeping the noise out.

Travel insurance

It is compulsory to have travel insurance to tour with us. It just makes sense! Your insurance must cover you for any incident you may have whilst riding a motorcycle 700 cc and over. We have negotiated a 10% discount with various insurance providers around the world, who WILL offer coverage for you, for the activity of riding a motorcycle 700cc and over in foreign lands. For more information return to the "tour page" and click on the "insurance" tab.

Passport & Visas

Your passport will need to be valid for at least six months **AFTER** completion of your ride. Your passport should have at least one full page available, for each country you will be visiting. Compass Expeditions has teamed up with the world leaders in visa procurement, CIBT, who have created a special Compass Expeditions visa application page. They have offices in Australia, USA, Canada, UK, Mexico, Brazil, Singapore and numerous European countries. Tour participants can obtain their own visas if preferred, however, for a small charge, CIBT can obtain your visa and negotiate any issues that might arise:

Australia: <https://visalink.com.au/compassexp>
Canada: <http://www.cibtvisas.ca/compass>
USA: <http://www.cibtvisas.com/compassexp>
France: <http://www.cibtvisas.fr/compassexp>
UK: <http://cibtvisas.co.uk/compassexp>

Most nationalities do not require a visa for the Mediterranean to the Balkans. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure they have any visas that may be required. This ride visits Italy, French Corsica, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia.

Vaccinations

We highly recommend that you speak with your doctor, and/or check out the World Health Organization website at www.who.int/country and have a look at their excellent International Travel and Health book, available online. In Australia, visit the Australian Medical Centre website at www.traveldoctor.com.au or phone 1300 65 88 44. For our U.S clients, visit www.cdc.gov/travel/ and for our U.K clients, go to www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/, for travel health recommendations in general, go to www.mdtravelhealth.com, now part of red travel.



You've made a booking, what happens next?

Once a booking has been made, you will receive an automated booking confirmation. Soon after, you will receive a "welcome" email, and then receive our comprehensive pre departure booklet via email. This booklet will prepare you for your adventure and has more details on what to bring and what to expect. We will send you a login for our Compass Travel App 90 days before departure; the app is full of information, including historical and country information. The more you read, the more you will get out of your ride.



Thanks for spending your time reading this information kit. We hope it has inspired you to challenge yourself, if not riding with us then just riding and enjoying this remarkable world that we live in.

If you have further questions, please contact us.

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