

FRANCE - LOIRE VALLEY



Fresh Aire Adventures

BIKE TOUR



FRANCE

LOIRE VALLEY

Bike the most scenic routes in the Loire Valley and savour its elegance, history and natural beauty. Our carefully selected beautiful authentic hotels provide the perfect setting for an elegant evening after your day in the saddle, while you savour a crisp Cremenent de Loire as you watch the gracious hot air balloons float by. History, Kings, wines, cheese, sunflowers, strawberries, asparagus, gardens, troglodytes, chateau after chateau after chateau...the Loire Valley has it all and epitomises quintessential France. Located an hour south-west of Paris by TGV, this is an ideal trip especially for those folks who'd like to spend time in the real French countryside while being close to Paris and other regions worthy of a quick visit (such as Champagne, for example) after their bike trip.

On our first morning, we'll meet at 10am in the centre of Blois and transfer to the first of our included chateaux visits; the unmissable Chambord with its 365 chimneys and stunning royal hunting grounds



Day 1, Sunday

Your Fresh Eire Adventures craic commando team will meet you at either Blois train station or at your hotel in Blois (I recommend that you spend Saturday night in Blois). Please be dressed ready for biking (padded bike shorts are a great idea all the time – but especially on the first day) when we meet.

We'll take care of your luggage (sending it on to your hotel) and then we'll transfer to our first chateau of the week; the spectacular Chambord.

While you stroll around the chateau your bike will be prepared and then we'll meet for a light picnic lunch in front of the chateau.

You'll sample your first Cremant de Loire (sparkling wine) while being fitted to your bike. After a review of bicycling safety, we'll introduce you to your bikes (Trek FX 7.2 hybrids or, for an extra fee, Cube Peloton road bikes or similar), show you how to change gears & use the brakes (please, humour us – it's always best to go over everything as every bike is different), and make some micro adjustments to ensure a comfortable ride for the week ahead and then we'll set off.

Today we'll stick to the Voie Verts (Green Ways) which are a mix of bike paths and less travelled public roads. We'll ride out of the estate and pass through rural farmland so expect to see strawberry and asparagus beds, sunflower fields following the direction of the Loire. Once in Cande-sur-Beuvron we'll cross the mighty river and enter the village of Onzain. You'll check into your first hotel, either the fabulous Hôtel Domaine Hauts des Loire (Deluxe) or Auberge de la Caillere (Classic) where we'll stay for two nights. You'll have ample time to relax and change for dinner. Tonight we'll dine at the restaurant in Auberge de Calliere where Erik will cook up a spectacular 5 course tasting menu for us. Expect to be wowed with the finest of what the Loire has to offer.

Here, [read a TripAdvisor review](#) of dinner at Auberge de la Caillère:

"We were booked into his hotel on our bike trip thru the Loire Valley. The tour company, Fresh Eire Adventures did a fantastic job finding classic places to stay and amazing food experiences for our group.



Our room was in the older classic section of the hotel and reminded us of some other pleasurable B&Bs we encountered in France. The room perhaps needed some tweaking to bring it up to a high standard but none the less was comfortable, quite and had most everything we wanted. The grounds and common hotel area are very nice and the staff outstanding. The real treasure at this hotel is the restaurant. We were treated to one of the best meals we've ever encountered. The chef here will someday be famous. Our 6? 7 course dinner blew us all away.

Absolutely beautiful in presentation and perhaps even better in taste, whatever you do, don't miss this place for dinner."

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Classic Hotel: Auberge de Caillere (3 star)

Deluxe Hotel: Domiane Hauts de Loire (4 star)

Day 2, Monday

After breakfast at our hotel (served from 8am) we'll meet in the lobby and have a brief meeting discussing the day ahead's route and highlights. The Deluxe group will take off first at 9.15am and will meet the Classic group at 9.45 near their hotel. We'll then take off altogether on our bikes.

On our second day we ride together to Chateau Cheverny; the inspiration for Captain Haddock's home in the TinTin comic strips (now a Spielberg movie). You'll have an open lunch there in the Couer Cheverny (lots of options; my favourite is the creperie) before visiting Alain Cherey, a local wine maker and his authentic vineyard.

We return to our hotel by bike and, around 8pm, we'll transfer to the village to have a wonderful dinner together in La Charbonette - one of the finest authentic restaurants in the region; Nathalie takes excellent care of us and always ensures we have the very best of the best especially when it comes to the



cheese chariot! Expect a fine dining experience in a casual family run restaurant. Nothing stuffy here; just outstanding food paired with excellent Loire wines. Tonight will be our final night in Onzain; tomorrow morning you'll be checking out of your hotel after breakfast.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Classic Hotel: Auberge de Calliere (3 star)

Deluxe Hotel: Domiane Hauts de Loire (4 star)





Day 3, Tuesday

We'll be checking out this morning so please make sure your luggage is ready for transportation (and please look under the bed to make sure your favourite pair of socks has been packed – we won't go back for them regardless of how much they caress your piggies. We might make an exception for a passport...but the drinks are on you if we do!) following breakfast.

This morning the Classic group will depart their hotel at 9.15am and will cycle to the Deluxe hotel where we'll all congregate and take off on our ride together at 9.45am.

While this morning's ride is short, it is beautiful; we'll be riding through some of the most famous vineyards in the region as we pass through Mesland. We'll also pass through a small village renowned for its cave dwellings; these much sought after homes are easily missed; your guides will be sure to point them out to you. We'll also stop off at a small friendly market to see the fine array of local produce on offer; an opportunity to practice your French! Know your "apples" from your "apples of the soil" and you'll be fine!

We continue on our ride to Amboise; a spectacular medieval town blessed with two significant chateaux of Francois 1st. While historic marvels await,

I prioritise a visit to Madame Bigot's chocolate store for a mandatory tasting on every Fresh Eire Adventure!

Most folks flock in their masses to the main chateau while, instead, we visit the wonderfully quirky, and final home of Leonard da Vinci, Clos Luce. Here we can explore not only the museum but actually the gardens where you can see some replicas of da Vinci's early inventions such as the water cannon and helicopter. This quirky attraction makes for a welcome change from the formal daily chateaux. After our visit we shall have an informal lunch in the centre of town overlooking the chateau; my favourite is a creperie where you can sample the best Breton galletes, crepes and cider. Our hotel is in the centre of town is a real treat dating from the time of Napoleon Complete with all the expected modern facilities of a 4 star hotel, this bohemian property boasts a lovely terrace. You will be free in the afternoon to explore the chateau there and check out this buzzing market town right on the banks of the Loire. There is also a highly recommended visit to an amazing wine producer a few miles away. You can ride or transfer. Totally memorable, the cave is kind of unmissable. Dinner tonight will be on your own - there are many, many options here and a few fun bars overlooking the chateau and its ramps (my favourite is actually mid way across the river on the island – a raucous good time to be had there along with marvellous night time views of the castle!).

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Hotel: Pavilion de Lys (4 star: Classic and Deluxe) or Chateau du Pray (Deluxe)



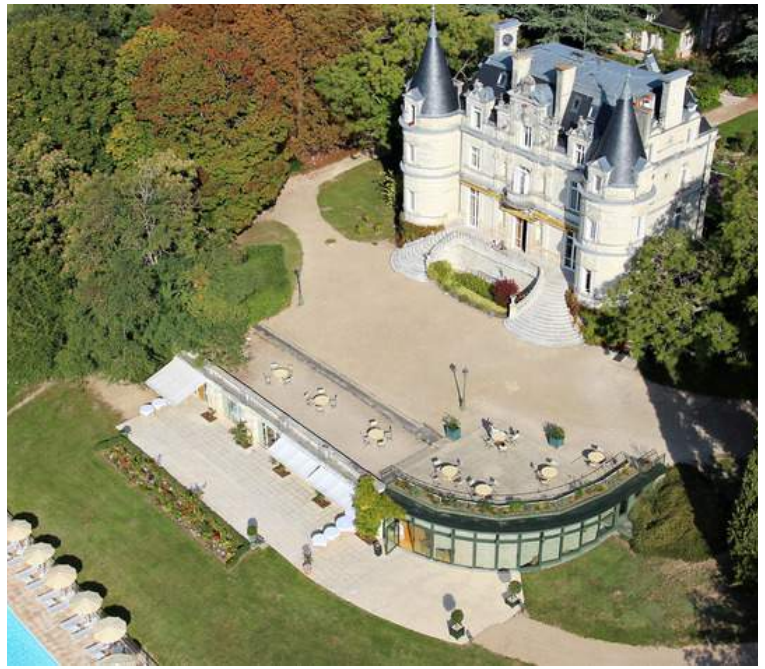


Day 4, Wednesday

This morning is another moving day. After breakfast (more croissants! – eat early, eat often!) we'll check out of the hotel. Our fourth day sees us leave Amboise and progress in the direction of the largest town in the area; Tours.

This morning we will transfer you to the magical Chenonceaux chateau with its famous duelling gardens of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici. After our visit we'll have an authentic lunch in the village and then continue on our ride to our final hotels; either the Deluxe Domaine de Chateau de Tortiniere in Montbazou or the Classic Cedre et Charme in nearby Saint Branches.

Built by the Dalloz family during France's Second Empire, the Deluxe Domaine de la Tortinière is a charming family-owned château at the heart of a magnificent wooded park overlooking the Indre valley. The Classic Cedre et Charme is a very unique proposition for our guests; the owners recently quit their corporate jobs in IT and Education leaving Paris behind and brought their family to the Loire Valley where they have lovingly and meticulously restored this 17th century manor house. No expense has been spared in its restoration and they have succeeded in balancing contemporary functionality with original features and antique furnishings. The gardens are wonderful and will be complete with a brand new swimming pool ready on time for the 2015 season. And yes, there is a very old cedar tree on the grounds!



Tonight's dinner is in Tours, in the old part of town, in the buzzing square surrounded by Flemish buildings leaning precariously outwards. Expect to see plenty of the classic French dishes from other region on the menu tonight; Bouef Bourignonn, Escargots and even Frogs Legs! Your guide will of course offer suggestions and assist when making your choices.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.
Classic Hotel: Cedre et Charme (TBA)
Deluxe Hotel: Domaine de Chateau de Tortiniere (4 star)





Day 5, Thursday

Our fifth day's ride sees us cycle towards the Chateau Villandry with its marvellous gardens.

Here's you'll take your time to explore the geometric designs best viewed from the upper floors of the chateau itself. Today's ride, our final full ride of the week, is one you take entirely at your own pace and we encourage you to stop and take those final photos, pat down those horses in the fields and practice your "Salut! Comment allez vous?" with the locals.

Dinner tonight is at a local Michelin star restaurant in Montbazou, Le Chancelliere Olivier Arlot.

Tonight's dinner is in a formal setting and is a feast for the senses. We'll toast our week together with a fine Vouvray. Bon Appetit!

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Classic Hotel: Cedre et Charme (TBA)

Deluxe Hotel: Domaine de Chateau de Tortiniere (4 star)



Day 6, Friday

This morning we'll transfer you to Tours where you are free to explore the Musee des Beaux Arts (and marvel at its ancient Cypress tree in front) at approximately 9am. If you'd like to take a final early morning bike ride – please let your guides know the night before and your bike will be ready for you at 7.30am! We will shuttle you to nearby St Pierre des Corps TGV station (Tours) where you can return to Paris or the airport, or make any number of rail connections to other regions, or pick up a rental car.

There are many fast trains (TGV) to Paris from Tours station (actually called St Pierre des Corps - Tours Centre station does not have TGV facilities). Most folks like to get a train that leaves around 10.30am so they arrive in Paris on time for lunch but rest assured your guides are available to you in Tours until midday. Pedal on!

Included Meals: Breakfast

"EVERY TIME I SEE AN ADULT ON A BICYCLE, I NO LONGER
DESPAIR FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE."

H. G. Wells

FRANCE - LOIRE VALLEY



Included Loire Valley

- Use of Trek Hybrid bike, Bell or Giro Helmet, handlebar bag, route notes & maps
- Fresh Eire Adventures water bottle
- Transfers from Blois centre (Hotel or SNCF station) on start day
- Transfers to Tours centre (Hotel, SNCF / TGV station) on end day
- 4 exquisite dinners & wine
- 3 gourmet lunches & wines
- Admissions to all included attractions & tastings
- Baggage transfers
- Tips for hotels/restaurants
- Healthy snacks, water, full guiding services, support vehicle.
- 5 nights B&B in 3 & 4 star hotels (Classic) & 4 star hotels (Luxury), with continental breakfast

Extras Loire Valley

- Upgrade to a Cube Peloton Race (or similar) alu-road bike (available at extra cost)
- Upgrade to an electric hybrid bike if you think the effort might be too much for you but you want to bike all the way (available at extra cost)
- Self-Guided Extension packages available in Paris (3 nights, 4 star from \$1,295 pps)
- Guided Extension packages available in Paris (3 nights, 2 days Guided Tour, 1 free day from \$1,695pps)

Fresh Eire Adventures

Hobartstown
Castledermot

Co. Kildare R14 F243

Ireland

+353 (0) 87 6169798

www.fresheireadventures.com

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I contact Fresh Eire Adventures?

You can reach us through our CONTACT PAGE on our website, by phone, Skype, email or even snail mail! We're also available through our social media pages; Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Do I need to be very fit to enjoy a Fresh Eire Adventures tour?

Not at all! This is not bootcamp - this is an active vacation! We offer a wide variety of tours to suit all abilities. Most of our tours can be easily adapted to facilitate more energetic riders as well as novices; our expert local knowledge and resourceful guides know when to add in an extra loop ride or climb to satisfy even the most athletic of riders on our easiest tours. We also offer electric-assist bikes. If you are used to staying fit through enjoying walking, cycling, golfing or any other light aerobic activity then you'll be in fine fettle for our trips. You always have options with Fresh Eire Adventures; bike only part of the day, take a shuttle ride back to the hotel pool for a Margarita; you set the pace, not us! Remember the support vehicle is always nearby and the guide on the bike is always in touch with the driver.

What should I pack for a Fresh Eire Adventures tour?

We encourage our guests to approach packing with care. Airlines charge more for checked luggage now than ever before so it might be sensible to try travel with carry on luggage only. We have a comprehensive Bike Tour Packing list in our Blogs.

Which kind of tours does Fresh Eire Adventures offer? Are they fully guided?

We offer a boutique bike tour experience; small groups (8 people or less typically) to ensure the best customer service and attention to detail in the industry, beautifully curated hotels (two categories; Classic 3 & 4 star properties and Deluxe 4 & 5 star properties) and outstanding meals including top quality wines, beers and soft drinks. We strive for authenticity in every experience.

All our scheduled tours are fully guided and supported by expert local guides who have the knowledge, expertise and training to ensure your trip is flawless. While we can facilitate self-guided requests we specialise in sharing our local knowledge and introducing our guests to local contacts and our friends.

Remember the support vehicle is there to offer fresh water, offer local tastings, to repair the rare puncture (we haven't had a puncture since 2015), carry your sweater if it gets warm, pick up your purchases should you indulge in some shopping at a winery or a market, as well as offering some respite from the occasional drizzle or searing heat. The van is there to sweep; go from the front to the back of the group checking in with our riders at all times and, on smaller roads, positions itself at strategic rendezvous points to check in with guests. The van is also used for setting up tastings, picnics. On a guided tour you have the assurance of knowing your guides are only a phone call away at worst, a shoulder tap at best.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is a typical Fresh Eire Adventures guest?

Fresh Eire Adventures attracts guests from all walks of life; from teachers and CEOs, lawyers and doctors, students to retirees. While over 90% of our guests are from North America we are seeing an increasing number of guests from Brazil and Australia. While some of our guests are new to bike tours, we see over 85% of our guests return for another Fresh Eire Adventure within 2 years. We have several guests who have booked every year with us since we began operations. Another 40% of our guests are referred to us by their friends and colleagues.

Typically our guests have an average age of 60 years, are moderately fit, are interested in food, wine, culture, history and are seeking an active, authentic vacation with an independently owned and run boutique outfit knowing that they are supporting local industry and small business.

At Fresh Eire Adventures we have been charmed by guests as old as 18 months to Silver Cyclists as young as 82. We do not age-discriminate; we ran a tour once for a lady whose trip was cancelled by her first choice operator; they chose to “not run the tour” after she revealed her age.

We appeal to singles, couples and families. We have run multi-generational family trips, themed Mother & Daughter / Father & Son trips, gay interest trips, Jewish heritage trips, literary interest trips, Genealogy trips, College Reunions trips, Corporate trips, and even Biking & Sailing trips. We are very flexible and open to suggestion - let us know what your dream trip would be and we'll do our very best to make it happen.

What experience do you have with guided bike tours?

Padraic, the founder and Managing Director of Fresh Eire Adventures, has been biking since he was a child. In the early 2000s, while a law student, he went to work for an American bike tour company as a guide and saw many ways in which the bike tour experience could be improved upon. He then went on to work with four other bike tour companies lending his expertise and know-how but saw that he needed to start his own company to offer guests true authenticity and unparalleled excellence. Padraic is very “hands on” and, when he is not in the office, he is found on nearly every bike trip ensuring guest experience is of the highest quality and guest expectation is exceeded. Local guides are trained to very high standards.

Does Fresh Eire Adventures accept kids on tour?

Yes! We encourage families with children under the age of 15 to consider a Family Tour; we adapt one of our regular tours and ensure that all activities are family friendly with less of a focus on late dinners, wine tours and instead offer multi activity features like movie nights, canoeing, falconry, water sports, high ropes courses, zip-lining, kayaking, fencing lessons, language lessons, art classes. We have all the required equipment; from child seats for the vehicles and bikes. tag-along bikes, bike trailers, kids helmets etc. We also can provide nanny services and babysitters. We also offer substantial discounts to families with small children especially where the parents are sharing family rooms and family suites with their children.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does Fresh Eire Adventures accept pets on tour?

We love pets at Fresh Eire Adventures. However, we can only accept pets on a private tour from our Bespoke programme - we very carefully consider your requirements and only reserve properties who accept pets, and we also have a pet sitter at your disposal to take excellent care of your pet while you enjoy our outstanding tour features. Unfortunately, we cannot accept pets on a scheduled, public bike tour owing to safety concerns, potential allergies of other guests and hotel policies. Sorry.

Which kind of documents are required for international travel? Do I need a Visa?

Every passenger should travel with a valid in date passport with an expiry date no sooner than 6 months from the date of the tour departure. It's a good idea to scan a copy of this and email it to yourself. Each country has different visa requirements so we advise our guests to check with the Embassy or Consulate of the country in which your bike tour is being run.

Why should I book a Fresh Eire Adventures tour and not one with another company?

We offer small groups, excellent customer service, stunning locations, carefully curated hotels and restaurants, a boutique experience and an unparalleled authenticity at a fair price (much lower than our competitors). Plus we offer wines with our meals; good wines, carefully paired. As a small operator we get to know all our guests preferences and frequently match up like-minded couples, singles and groups so they arrive on tour as adventurers and leave as life-long friends determined to ride together in a new destination the next year (and the year after that, and the year after that).

What's the difference between your Classic & Deluxe tours?

The only difference lies in the category of hotel. Classic offers 3 & 4 star properties while Deluxe offers 4 & 5 star properties. On most of our tours we can offer both Classic and Deluxe levels even on the same departure dates. Frequently we use the same hotels for both Classic and Deluxe tours; the difference then lies only in the room category.

We would like to do one of your tours but the dates are not corresponding to our availabilities; is it possible to request an unpublished date?

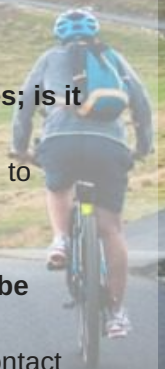
Yes, we can offer tours on most dates. Please contact us and let us know the destination you'd like to visit and on which date and we'll do our very best to run a trip for you.

We would like to do one of your tours but we don't know exactly which one; is it possible to be advised?

Of course. Please contact us to discuss your interests and we shall have one of our expert team contact you.

Is it possible to do a longer trip?

Yes. We offer organised trip extensions in exciting destinations to maximise your vacation time. We can also extend trips beyond the typical 5 nights / 6 days. We're very flexible in our approach.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I reserve a trip?

Unlike other bike tour companies we want to make sure that before committing to a bike trip, which we recognise as a considerable expense, you are purchasing the trip which is right for you. We communicate directly with our potential guests to make sure they are fully informed before signing on the dotted line.

While it has never happened on a Fresh Eire Adventure, it is Padraic's experience that where someone is having a below par trip it is frequently the case that they have been misinformed about the nuances of taking a bike trip in the first instance. This is why it is paramount that we communicate effectively and honestly with all our potential guests even if this means not getting the sale.

To book a tour, get in touch by email or through the Contact page and let us know if you'd like us to schedule a call, or we can answer any questions you might have through email. We also now have an Instant chat facility on our website.

Do you offer group discounts?

Yes. Any group booking of 6 persons or more qualifies for a group discount. With a group size of 8 we can make the trip private at no extra cost and remove it from general sale.

What is included in the price of my Fresh Eire Adventures cycling tour?

We offer unparalleled customer service, authentic experiences, top quality bicycles, exquisite meals, excellent wines, carefully curated hotels, all included itinerary visits and a boutique experience which ensures your Fresh Eire Adventures vacation is memorable for all the right reasons.

What is not included?

Very little; typically we allow for one dinner "on your own" so guests can have some private time away from the group or guides, and one or two lunches during the week. We try to include as much as possible so that guests know exactly how much their vacation will cost and budget accordingly. On each tour page we have a comprehensive list of what is included and what is not.

Which payment methods do you accept?

We prefer to accept payment by bank wire / transfer as it offers the best combination of security, speed and low cost. We can facilitate credit card payments subject to a 3.75% surcharge (4.5% American Express).

How much do people generally tip the tour guides?

We encourage guests to use their discretion and to tip their guides according to the level of service received. As a guideline we suggest \$100 per guest, per guide on a Classic level tour; \$150 per guest, per guide on a Deluxe or Private tour; or \$250 per guest, per guide on a Bespoke tour.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When do I have to pay for my tour?

We usually request a deposit at the time of reservation with the balance payment due three months before trip start date. Please see our Reservations Policies page for more information.

Will I have to carry my own luggage?

No. We take care of your luggage from day one; once you hand it over to our team you will only ever see it in your bedroom of each hotel. When checking out of each hotel, please leave your labelled bags in your room and our team will transport it to the next hotel - your luggage will be waiting for you when you arrive at the next hotel as if by some form of wizardry!

How far in advance do I need to make my reservation?

We can offer some discounts during traditional sales periods with the most attractive being available around US Thanksgiving (late November each year). We appreciate early bookings so we can plan our schedule around your needs.

Where can I find additional details & information for my airline luggage allowances?

Check with your airline for your included allowances. Fresh Eire Adventures is not licensed to arrange air travel so we cannot get involved in your airline reservations and allowances.

Do I need to pay a deposit when I book my tour with Fresh Eire Adventures?

Yes. To confirm your departure we require a small deposit with the balance falling due three months prior to trip start date. If your tour is booked within three months of the trip start date then we require full payment.

Is it possible to personalise a Fresh Eire Adventures tour?

Absolutely! This is something we specialize in; we get to know our guests interests in advance of the tour and, even on scheduled public tours, we can feature some personalised elements to meet your expectations.

Can I bring my own bike on tour?

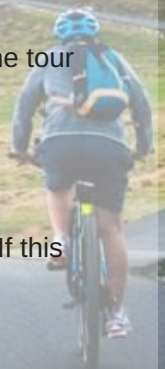
Yes, of course! This is a bike tour and we're here to make sure you have the best ride of your life! If this means riding your own gorgeous bike on one of our stunning rides then we are more than happy to facilitate you. Pedal on!

Can I bring my own pedals, saddle, GPS/Odometer and helmet on tour?

Yes, we encourage it in fact. While we provide everything necessary for a flawless tour, and offer top quality equipment, you might find that you prefer your own saddle or helmet. If you're used to riding with clip in pedals then we encourage folks to bring them along. Otherwise we offer flat or hard-cage (strapless) pedals.

How should I train for my bike tour?

We encourage guests to prepare for their bike tour according to their fitness level and the type of bike tour their reserve. A spin class is ideal if you can't get out during inclement weather.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should I purchase insurance for my tour?

We encourage folks to purchase trip insurance and to discuss with their insurer how to protect their trip in the event that they need to cancel.

How many people can I expect to be with on my tour?

We are proud to offer a maximum guest to guide ratio of 4:1 on our scheduled tours - the lowest in the industry. This is how we can offer such outstanding personal service.

What is the difference between Fresh Eire Adventures and other Bike tour companies?

We are a small boutique operator, privately owned and operated and, as such, we can personalise your experience with an attention to detail like no other company.

How many miles will I bike each day?

Each tour offers different routes and daily mileage. While our Holland tour offers an average daily mileage of 35 miles, the terrain is mostly quite flat so the rides are very easily accomplished. Our Costa Brava tour offers a daily mileage of 28 miles but the terrain is much more challenging. We rate our tours EASY, MODERATE and ADVANCED for clarity. Remember our support vehicle is always available and you can choose to ride only a portion of the day if you so desire.

