



General Travel Information & Rider's Guide

Updated October 2024

Welcome:

It is truly a personal privilege to share the roads of Europe with enthusiastic cyclists each season. I know that you will enjoy the routes selected for you as we at VéloSki Sports—Cycle Tours guide you on an exploration that will reward those who linger to embrace the vast scenery or revel in the thrill of a screaming descent from a high mountain pass. The roads, the food and the friends invigorate us as we prepare the route information each winter for the following summer of amazing cycle tours.

All of us at VéloSki Sports are passionate about riding with you as our special guests to ensure a great experience for each of you every day. Each of us cycles for the sheer delight of seeing the world from two-wheels, while breathing in lung-fulls of invigorating fresh air. The endorphins will lift your spirits causing spontaneous outbursts of laughter and euphoria as you encounter breathtaking vistas and roadways climbing high mountains or following cascading mountain streams. We call this “cycle-therapy” in motion.

On the following pages we share some of the things learned after many seasons cycling and traveling in Europe. Everyone has their own personal style and the VéloSki Sports style is one of elegant-simplicity. We hope you learn to travel with us in the simple elegance of cycling splendor, where the riding, dining and laughing are natural outcomes for each of you.

We encourage everyone to sit with local folks in cafés to sip fresh pressed coffee with a tasty pastry. We invite you to relish a lunch special (plat du jour), or wander street markets sampling local cheeses or wines. And we hope you enjoy simply pedaling to your heart’s content listening only to the rhythm of your breathing and the spinning of your wheels over special roadways seemingly made solely for cycling.

Above all, enjoy a cycling adventure that will expand your view of our wonderful world of diverse cultures, customs and creations.

Happy cycling....Larry Smith and Davey Engstrom

Meeting you at the airport

International arrival:

International airports do not allow relatives/friends to meet arriving travelers inside the baggage claim area. We will meet you near the exit from baggage claim and customs control for your arriving flight. Bicycles are usually too large to be placed on the normal luggage carousel for retrieval, but can be found in an oversized luggage pick up area. Ask an attendant at the airport for directions to the oversized luggage pickup if needed, as sometimes it is not immediately recognizable.

Travel Details:

Guests are asked to provide flight travel details well in advance to ensure adequate transportation to/from our start/finish hotels. Please update us with any changes.

Lost luggage claim:

If you must file a lost luggage claim (we hope you do not have this experience), please take a moment to alert our staff about the situation. Send text to Larry at (541) 953-8937. Remember to have a copy of the hotel itinerary in your carryon, so that you can notify lost luggage where to have your luggage delivered. Depending on the airport, filing a claim may be done with an attendant or by entering the information at a kiosk. After your claim is filed, we will meet you outside of baggage claim. We highly recommend placing an Apple AirTag or similar device into your luggage so you can track it even if the airlines cannot.

Airport and hotel transfers:

We organize transfers to/from our start/finish hotel on designated arrival or departure days. Other days are at your own expense, unless prior arrangement is confirmed with us 14 days prior to your arrival.

Flight delays, cancellations or changes:

Please contact Larry by cell phone (text or voice (541) 953-8937) or e-mail (tours@veloski.com) any time with questions or travel updates that differ from your original itinerary.

Route Maps and Route Notes

About the routes:

The routes provide a framework for in-depth cultural, gastronomical, historical, scenic, enoteca and sporting exploration. We search for the quietest and most scenic roads that connect our nightly stops. Quiet roads, cycle paths, occasional busier roads, tunnels and ferries are all part of the mix for our cycle tours.

Route Maps:

Several navigational aids for our daily routes will be provided.

- We will send you a link to a Dropbox containing the GPS based files (.gpx .tcx and .fit) of the daily routes for you to load on your personal GPS device in advance of the trip. There are many options to choose from like Garmin, Wahoo and Hammerhead. **Please be familiar with your chosen device so you know how to navigate using your device prior to the start of your trip.**

Please note that creating these route files is sometimes very tricky and occasionally the route on your device will direct you in the wrong direction or some other oddity. So, please use common sense, look ahead and override your GPS device when it is clearly heading you on the wrong course.

- Free membership in our RidewithGPS VeloSki Club account, including the premium RidewithGPS subscription feature of “off-line” map navigation.

Route Notes:

The “*VeloSki difference*” for our tours is the ability to “customize” our routes almost daily based upon group or individual interests and the weather. Points of interest and navigation notes are integrated with the RWGPS files. If on any day you wish to shorten or lengthen the ride, please ask as we can always give you an alternate route to satisfy your needs.

Food is a big part of every cyclist’s life, so we also include information about a great café or nice restaurant that is along the route. Or perhaps you are interested in collecting some cycling memorabilia, we include local shops too.


Local information about the history of the region, cultural perspectives or special products are highlighted to enhance your discovery of the rich heritages we encounter. And of course, if you desire additional information; just ask one of us during the day or during our evening meetings.

Van & Mechanical Support

Van Support: — the “VeloSki Difference”:

The support van serves many purposes during each day. The primary mission of Davey, our number one van driver, is to provide on the road assistance for you and your bike. He will attempt to “leap-frog” with the entire group throughout the day to provide the following services:

- Clothing changes, “van snacks” and water, sherpa for shopping purchases, mechanical support, repair tools, tires, tubes, pump

If you have an iPhone activate “Find My” . This app allows other iPhone

users to see your location and is also used to find your devices and items such as the Airtags. Use of this feature is super helpful for Davey to track you and aide in his leap frogging for the day. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work with android phones.

Davey learns the tempo of our groups and magically appears at just the right spots during the day — the “*VeloSki Difference*”.

Luggage Considerations:

We want everyone to be prepared for the vagaries of the weather, yet not be over-burdened with unnecessary extra clothing or gear. Please keep in mind the following guidelines as you prepare for the tour.

- 1 “hotel/main bag” — not to exceed 23 kilo (50lb) less is best and due to overall van luggage capacity, compact is greatly appreciated. These bags are loaded first and are not easily accessible during the day.
- 1 “day bag” — containing spare clothes, sunscreen, energy drink mix or bars for quick access during the day. These bags are placed to be easily accessible from the van during the day.
- 1 “bike box/bag” — The “bike box/bag” will not be available during the cycle tour. For point-to-point tours, the box/bag will be delivered to the finish hotel for departure packing. For tours starting and finishing at same hotel, the box/bag will remain at that start/finish hotel for the entire tour.

Luggage loading:

Luggage will be collected at a place designated by Davey after breakfast (8:30-9am) on transfer days. Davey will usually have a preferred sequence of loading, so just relax and let Davey take care of luggage placement. Generally large bags are loaded first and smaller “day bags” are loaded last, with “computer bags” placed in a more secure area.

Luggage Delivery:

Luggage delivery at the hotel occurs after 2-3pm normal check-in with “the reception”. The priority is taking care of everyone on the road before delivery of luggage. There will be times when faster riders arrive well ahead of their luggage, so we will deliver to your room or let you know when the van arrives with the luggage for you to pick up yourself. If you use the “find friends” we will share our location so you can usually see where the van is en route.

B&Bs, Pensions, Hotels**Check-in:**

Generally, our rooms will be available after 2 or 3pm. If you anticipate arriving after 6pm please call/text our cellphone to give us a heads up. Many hotels require passport information — it is simplest to carry a laminated copy of your passport to present at check-in. Increasingly our hosts will be fine with a saved image from your smartphone. Keep your original passport buried deep within your main bag, which will be secure in the depths of the van.

Room Keys:

Depending on the hotel, when leaving the premises, sometimes you are expected to leave your room key at the front desk. These hotels will usually have very large keys which are awkward to carry around. Other hotels have card keys which you carry with you. There also may be a code to open the hotel doors if you return after the reception has closed for the night. We will try to alert you to the proper hotel etiquette, if we forget, please ask.

Electricity in Rooms:

Electricity is very expensive in Europe. So, many hotels require you to place your room key into a slot for the electricity to come on in your room. Be aware that when you leave the room with your key, the electricity will go off and anything you think might be charging, will not charge.

Showers and Toilets:

There are a wide variety of plumbing fixtures in Europe and sometimes just turning on the shower or flushing a toilet is a puzzle. Do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Laundry Services:

We suggest that you plan on washing your cycling clothes in the sink each day; normally they will be dry by the next day. However, please wring-out your cloths in a towel and hang in an inconspicuous manner inside your room. Hanging clothes over balcony railing is usually not appreciated by hotel management, unless otherwise indicated. Some hotels offer laundry services free or for a fee; we will coordinate with hotel management when available.

Self-serve Laundromats are rather rare in the small villages where we travel.

However, we generally stay near a Laundromat 2-4 times during our tours.

Consolidating loads with other guests is often an efficient method for utilizing limited facilities. Please ask us if you have questions.

Wifi Internet:

The information cards in the hotel room generally explain all of these services.

Most of our accommodations have modern communications options, so you should have good access to your electronic world. We are happy to assist you in discerning how to obtain service; usually we know the nuances for each hotel where we stay.

Cellphone service:

Please check with your cellphone provider about European data plans for internet or text usage. We create a group text with everyone on tour for announcements or updates of daily plans and group meetings. So, it's best to have an unlimited text or data plan during the cycle tour.

Bar tab:

You are responsible for any bar charges assessed to your room and any other incidentals incurred.

Check-out:

Please check in with the front desk to pay for any charges made to your room.

And be sure to return key(s)...all keys, even card keys need to be returned. If you accidently take a key with you, Davey will have to go back to the hotel to return the key which could be disruptive to the group. We generally plan to leave between 9 and 9:30am on transfer days.

Café, Cuisine and Wine

Meals:

Breakfast-(Petite-dejuner-Fruhstuck-Primacolazione)

Breakfast generally starts at 7:30, however in some of the more remote regions it may not start until 8. All of the hotels we have chosen offer a wider variety of breakfast selections typically in a buffet style. Some hotels will bring you eggs to order and sometimes coffee is made to order as well. Other hotels are all self-service with super automatic espresso makers and egg cookers. Each hotel is different, so please respect the customs of the hotel.

Breakfast etiquette and attire:

Please refrain from making pocket sandwiches from the buffets, unless allowed by the hotel. If you choose to ignore this recommendation, please be very discreet. Sports casual attire —please no cycling “kits” worn at breakfast. There is plenty of time to change into your kit after breakfast.

Van snacking:

Davey has a system for storing and distributing snacks from the van. To minimize the spread of germs, Davey will serve you the snacks and water. So please don't go rummaging through the van, Davey will assist you with whatever you are needing.

Lunchtime: — 12—2pm

Sit down lunches are usually on your own. Be seated by 1:30 in restaurants and cafes as they generally close by 2pm.

Please do not place water bottles or snot laden gloves on the table

Bars tend to remain open all day — very limited cold snacks

Grocery stores, pastry shops—close at 12ish to 2 or 3pm

If you purchase food or drink, most bars, restaurants and cafes will fill your water bottles and allow you to use their restroom.

Dinner:

Dinner is served much later in Europe than in the U.S., so we suggest you purchase snacks during the trip to have in your room or plan ahead and have lunch on the road so you are not starving while waiting for dinner.

Happy hour — 6:30-7:00 at hotel or a location near hotel

Evening route briefing 7:15 quiet area near lobby/bar

Seating for dinner — 7:30 or 8

Menus — we choose half board meals when available at our hotel or book reservations at a nearby restaurant. Normally the chef proposes 2 or 3 options for each course and often we make selections in advance of dinner. Other times we simply order “a la carte” or *from the menu*. We want everyone to enjoy mealtime by choosing dishes of interest to their tastes. “Order what you will enjoy, eat what you order!! Let’s not waste good food!!” If you have any special food considerations, such as food allergies, vegetarian, gluten free etc. please let us know so we can advise our hosts/restaurants well in advance. We will do our best to accommodate everyone, but be prepared for there to be an occasional blip.

Beverages — European meals are primarily about being with friends and enjoying a variety of flavors; including mineral water, wine, beer and café. We include moderate consumption of all beverages with meals.

Attire — We dine in a variety of establishments, from Michelin star equivalent restaurants to pizzerias. We are often guests of the families and staff who own/operate our nightly lodgings. So out of respect for our chef, hosts and servers we ask that everyone dress appropriately for the setting. Be prepared with a sweater or light jacket for meals taken outside.

Miscellaneous musings

Passports and stuff:

Passports are generally only needed when entering /leaving a foreign country to/from the US. Occasionally when crossing the Swiss border we must present a passport, but never while riding a bike. In some hotels, it is customary for them to collect passport details. As stated previously, a laminated copy will generally suffice.

Group Communications:

We use group text messages during the trip to communicate things like meeting time and location for pre-dinner meetings or schedule changes.

Meal-time on your own

In Europe when eating at a restaurant or café you must ask the waiter for the bill. They will almost never present you with a bill until you ask for it; the table is yours for as long as you like to sit and talk, eat, laugh or drink. Phrases for asking for the bill:

France — l’addition s’il vous plait (lah-dee-see-ohn see voo play)

Italy — il conto per favore (eel **kohn**-toh pehr-fah-**voh**-ray)

Austria/Switzerland—Zahlen bitte (tsallen **bit**-the)

Tipping and such:

The service is generally included and listed separately on the bill. If it is not listed then a 10-15% tip is recommended. When in doubt ask a local. If you had particularly great service leaving a little extra is always appreciated. Hotel staff are very helpful and we (VéloSki) often leave a little extra for the wait-staff and housekeeping if they provide extra services for our group.

VéloSki Sports Cycle Tours staff enjoy sharing a great European cycling experience with all of our guests. Our staff appreciates the additional recognition for making your cycling vacation special, so tipping is certainly welcomed.

European Cycle Travel

The roadways of Europe can be traced to ancient trade routes, some dating to the days of the Roman Empire.

Today, Europe remains primarily an agrarian society, where all forms of transportation routinely share the roads each day carrying fresh produce, fresh bread and dry goods to market. As the European culture began to embrace the personal auto and the use of trucks to haul goods greater distances, a new network of “trade routes” emerged — the Autoroute, Autostrada or Autobahn. As a result, we now have a myriad of smaller roads that are pleasantly empty of cars on which to cycle.

The most important thing to remember when cycling in Europe, is that all transportation is expected to follow the same rules. In addition, most Europeans practice a sort of road chivalry; allowances are made for slower vehicles. In Europe it is expected that a faster vehicle will be allowed to overtake a slower vehicle; cars will actually pull over on a descent for faster moving bikes. One distinct difference between Europe and North America is that it is the law and the practice when overtaking another vehicle, you must pass on the left and never on the right. Another significant difference is that a red light means that you do not enter the intersection until the light changes to green or occasionally to an amber directional arrow; no free right-turn on red.

Perhaps as a result of roadways being built during the days of horse drawn wagons and carriages there are roundabouts instead of traffic lights; the right-of-way is always with the vehicle inside the roundabout. Imagine trying to stop a

team of horses already making a turn; it would be a disaster. So too, if as a cyclist you suddenly stop in a round-about the timing of the cars entering the round-about is a problem; just maintain your speed and your line and everything will be fine.

The *STOP* sign ever so familiar to North Americans is used throughout continental Europe and the world—and it even reads "STOP" in English. (In the UK, however, the ubiquitous roundabout obviates the need for widespread use of the STOP sign.) The world also uses the same *Yield* sign as North America. The *Red light = stop, green light = go* convention is used everywhere as well. A solid or flashing amber light precedes the red light *and* green light in most areas. This light signals that a red or green light is imminent. If you have the option to eventually turn right at a stop, a green arrow that points right may light simultaneously with the main red light that's stopping traffic from moving straight ahead. This green arrow means you can make a yielding right turn. Turning right when both these lights show red is against the law. In other words, *no right turn on red*. A *protected* left turn is indicated only when on the left side of the intersection a green signal arrow points left; a green arrow pointing left on the right side of the intersection signals a *yielding* left turn is permitted. In many areas traffic signals are turned off or flash yellow at night. Usually in such cases signs are in place next to the signals and these then control the situation. While fully operating, however, traffic signals override signs.

The same set of standardized road signs are used all over Europe. These signs are essentially graphic rather than linguistic in nature. As such, their meaning tends to be easy to understand. Of course, the meaning of some signs is less obvious than the meaning of others. Diamond signs indicate priority. Red triangles are warnings. Red circles are restrictions. Blue circles are requirements. Squares and rectangles give guidance. Note the signs which show two arrows pointing in opposite directions. If one of these arrows is red, it means the traffic traveling in that direction must yield to traffic traveling in the other direction. The color red on a European road sign signals negative information such as a warning or prohibition. For another instance check out the sign that means *No bicycles*. You may encounter a similar circular sign showing a bicycle on a *blue* background. This sign designates a bicycle path. As used on the road signs the color blue is positive in that it signals an obligatory action or some feature—such as a bicycle lane, a rest stop or a parking garage—that you can take advantage of; simply put it says *do* rather than *don't*.

As in North America, dashed center lines mark passing zones while solid center lines denote no-passing zones. But in Europe white lines are used in both cases. Fat arrows which curve slightly and point toward one lane while otherwise pointing almost straight ahead in the direction of that same lane tell vehicles traveling in that lane that their passing zone will soon come to an end. A thick white orthogonal line at an intersection indicates where you must stop when you are in fact required to stop; a thinner dashed version indicates where you must yield when in fact you must yield. Diagonal white lines filling a space outlined in white indicate a portion of the street where vehicles are prohibited.

Cities usually post street name signs not on poles at the corners but on placards attached one story up on buildings. Note that street names in some areas are apt to change frequently along an otherwise continuous avenue of concrete, and main routes may go unsigned while the intersecting and relatively minor cross streets are fastidiously labeled.

Some common signs:



Expressway



Expressway Ends



Bike Lane



Bike Lane Ends



Priority Road



Priority Road



Crossroads



Roundabout



Priority over
Opposing Traffic



Yield to Oncoming
Traffic



Entering Two-way
Street



Roadway narrows



No vehicles



No motor vehicles



No Bicycles



No Entry



No Passing



No stopping



No Parking



Dead-end

Bicycle Preparation - Spare Parts

Pre-trip service:

- Clean drive train (chain, cassette, dérailleurs)
- Lube hubs as necessary
- Check or replace shift/brake cables
- Install new tires 23-32c (the first 35 miles/60k on new tires should not be in the rain- the protective coating of new tires can be slippery on wet surfaces)
- Check your cleats (replace if worn or bring spares)
- Check your brakes (replace if worn and & bring spares)

Spare Parts to bring:

- 1 spare folding tire (steep climbs may wear-out tires faster)
- 2 spare tubes (puncture flats are rare in Europe)
- If using, traditional brake pads (replace if worn in Europe)
- A few work rags (can be used for packing bike)
- 2-4 sets disc brake pads Note: Disc brake pads typically wear out every week of riding in the Alps or mountains of Europe.

Spare Parts we have --road bikes

- Limited to 23-25c butyl tubes
- Campy hydraulic brake fluid
- Tubeless sealant

Tools we have

- Workstand
- Floor pump
- All assembly/repair tools (pedal wrenches, BB tools, spoke wrenches, etc)
- Screw drivers, Vise-grips, wrenches, hammer
- Truing stand, dishing tool and hanger alignment tool
- Duct tape, zip-ties and bailing wire
- We have the main tools listed above; however, we do not have every tool that a full bike shop has. If you have a unique tool, please bring that tool with you.

Energy Mixes & Bars

- Please bring what you need and double bag any powders.
- Bars, gels & drink mixes are getting easier to find in Europe, but may not be to your liking.
- Or act like a local and leave the bars/gels at home, stopping at boulangeries/pâtisseries/café's during your ride to try the local pastries and snacks they offer.

Bike and Gear Packing Tips

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Always check for the latest regulations with your air-carrier; they are all different and change frequently. Especially those related to bicycle transport.

Protect your vacation:

A cycling vacation without your cycling gear is not what anyone wants to experience. **We now recommend Apple Airtags or similar to put in your luggage so you can track it even if the airlines cannot.** TSA is currently very aggressive with checking bike boxes for all manner of “dangerous” items. The KISS principle applies here:

K—keep cycling shoes, pedals, shorts and helmet separate from bike

I— insert fork and drop-out protectors, insert seatcollar protector, insure headset bolts are tight, install chain and zip tie it in place to the large chain ring.

S— save weight and pack **only** your bike and wheels in your bike box

S— simplify packing with EagleCreek organizers or similar — they go back into “inspected” luggage with minimal disruption; less likely to lose things

Packing your luggage

Keep your luggage compact with soft items surrounding more fragile items. Resist the urge to “overstuff” your luggage capacity; seams and hinges pop when the baggage machines toss luggage. Forget about anything with aerosol in the name—CO2 cartridges are regularly confiscated. If you cannot lift your luggage up to waist-height with one arm, then it is probably too heavy.

Check-in time

Arrive at the airport a couple of hours early, relaxed and ready for a great flight to start your vacation.

Suggested European Packing List

Cycling Clothing

2-3 cycling shorts
2-3 short-sleeve jerseys
1 long-sleeve jersey
1pr leg or knee warmers (rain pants depending on trip)
1pr arm warmers
Lightweight wind jacket
Rain jacket (we sometimes ride in the rain)
Wind vest
2-3 pr cycling socks
1 under jersey
1pr short finger
1pr long fingered cycling gloves for cold weather/rain
Toe warmers and/or booties
Sunglasses
Road or MTB shoes
Helmet

Casual Clothing

Walking Shorts
Long pants
Skirt or casual dress(women)
1-2 collared shirts (short and/or long sleeves)
T-shirt
Sweater, pullover or light jacket (puffy coat if headed to the high mountains)
2-3 pr socks
Undergarments
Swimsuit
Sandals, casual shoes and or tennis shoes

Other Items

Laundry soap/sheets for handwashing clothing, clothes line & a few pins
US to Europe Plug Adapters
iPad, Notebook computer, Smartphone etc with chargers
Multi-port USB charger (hotel rooms usually have only 2 or 3 outlets)
Other items to suit your personal needs

Personal Toiletries – if you forget something, there are plenty of opportunities to purchase what is needed. Pharmacies are plentiful.

Documents

Passport and laminated copy of passport
Tickets or printed flight itineraries
Health Insurance card
Emergency contact numbers
Hotel itinerary

Bike Computer & Maps

Europe base maps installed on your Garmin, Wahoo, Hammerhead navigation device. We will be sending specific instructions for loading the routes to the devices.

Money

VISA/MC credit or ATM card – notify your bank you will be using your credit card and ATM card in Europe or they may block it!
Get local currency from ATM in Europe, no need to exchange currency in the US

Bike Stuff

Bike
2 Water Bottles
Rear light required (we do on some tours ride thru tunnels)
Front light (optional)
Spare tubes/tire/brake pads/cleats
Seat bag with typical stuff you carry like a multitool
Pump or CO2 cartridge adapter (we have 12oz & 16oz cartridges-you are prohibited from bringing them on the plane)
Patch kit (optional)
Bento box for carrying camera, gels, glasses etc. (optional)
Compact reading glasses for map navigation (if needed)
Unique tools specific to your bike
Small lock to carry on bike for locking up bike when site-seeing (optional)