



# Cyclists Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	409
Business Hours	412
Children	412
Climate	413
Customs	413
Dangers & Annoyances	413
Discount Cards	415
Embassies & Consulates	416
Festivals & Events	416
Food	418
Holidays	420
Insurance	421
Internet Access	421
Legal Matters	421
Maps	422
Money	422
Photography & Video	424
Time	426
Toilets	426
Tourist Information	426
Visas	426

## ACCOMMODATION

Be it a fairytale château, an urban boutique hideaway, a village hostelry or a mountain refuge, France has accommodation to suit every taste and pocket.

In general 'budget' doubles with private bathroom will cost up to €60 (€70 in Paris); 'midrange' hotels charge €61 to €140 (€160 in Paris); and top-end rooms cost anything upwards from €141 (€161 in Paris). Some hotels offer inexpensive rooms with a *lavabo* (washbasin), ie with a hall shower (free unless otherwise noted) and/or a hall toilet.

During periods of heavy domestic or foreign tourism (around Easter, Christmas to New Year and in July and August), popular destinations are packed out and accommodation prices soar. At these times – but really at *all* times – advance reservations avoid on-the-spot search hassles, especially as cyclists rarely arrive in the morning. In high season having a reservation can mean the difference between finding a room in your price range and cycling to the next town. That said, some tourist offices can help make room reserva-

tions, often for a fee of about €5; many will only do so if you stop by the office in person for a same-day booking.

If you're running late, call to let the hotel proprietor know you're on a bicycle so your room isn't given away; also call if you need to cancel.

Some places will have a secure garage for your bike; others will squeeze it into a wine cellar or may let you take it into your room. Paris is the only place where hotel owners may not accept bicycles at all. Always check first.

## Camping & Caravan Parks

France has thousands of campgrounds, most near rivers, lakes or the sea. They range from full-service and superluxurious to small and quiet, often municipal, with only basic facilities. Few are in city centres – you may have to cycle up to 5km to reach them – although they're often within 1km or 2km of the action in rural towns.

The vast majority of campgrounds open from March or April to September or October. In July and especially August, when they're packed and you're likely to arrive late in the day, a spot for a small tent can still usually be found, especially if they see you've arrived by bicycle. It's still best to reserve ahead. Hostels sometimes let travellers pitch tents in the back garden.

**The Camping Card International** ([www.campingcardinternational.com](http://www.campingcardinternational.com)), when used at sign-in instead of a passport, includes third-party liability insurance. As a result, many campgrounds offer a

## BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, Check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

## CAMPING IN THE WILD

Camping in non-designated spots (*camping sauvage*) is illegal in France though often tolerated. Except in Corsica, you probably won't have problems if you're discreet, stay only one or two nights, dismantle the tent during the day, never light fires and are at least 1500m from a campground (or, in a national park, at least an hour's walk from a road). Always ask permission before camping on private land.

5% to 20% discount. CCIs are issued by automobile associations, camping federations and, sometimes, on the spot at campgrounds. Even without the CCI, children under 13 enjoy significant discounts.

Gîtes de France (see below) and Bienvenue à la Ferme (see to the right) coordinate camping on farms; the former publishes an annual guide: *Camping à la Ferme*. If you'll be pitching your tent often, get a copy of the *Guide Officiel Camping-Caravaning en France* (€16.30; [www.fcc.fr](http://www.fcc.fr), in French). The largest listing of campgrounds on the internet is [www.campingfrance.com](http://www.campingfrance.com).

In recent years, creative camping options have propagated. A *cabane dans les arbres* (aka *cabane perchée*) is a Robinson Crusoe-style tree house. If you prefer your feet on the ground, look for places that rent *tipis* (tepees) or let you snooze in giant hammocks.

## Gîtes & Chambres d'Hôtes

The term *gîtes*, which means 'resting place', covers a wide range of accommodation in rural areas, from B&Bs to furnished country cottages for rent. The **Fédération Nationale des Gîtes de France** (☎01 49 70 75 75; [www.gites-de-france.fr](http://www.gites-de-france.fr); 59 rue St-Lazare, 9e, Paris) oversees all the *gîtes* in France. Drool over the best in the annual *Gîtes de Charme* catalogue (€20) or at [www.gites-de-france-charme.com](http://www.gites-de-france-charme.com).

Each department has a Gîtes de France *antenne* (branch, addresses are listed on the website) that publishes a roster of local adherents. Some branches can handle English-language bookings through their service de réservation. Otherwise just contact the *gîte* owners directly. During holiday periods in some areas, reserving well

in advance is required. Most owners will ask for a deposit.

*Gîtes d'étape* and *de séjour* are dormitory-style accommodation (some supply sheets), many of which have hot showers, a common room and cooking facilities (although some hosts offer meals). They cater to walkers and cyclists, are particularly well suited to families and often booked by groups (call ahead to check on availability). Reservations must be made directly with owners; information about local properties is usually available at tourist offices. *Gîtes Panda* are environmentally conscious and lie within registered regional nature parks. All are listed in the annual *Gîtes d'Étape et de Séjour* (€10), published by Gîtes de France.

**Rando Accueil** (☎05 62 90 09 92, [www.rando-accueil.com](http://www.rando-accueil.com), in French) is a separate label that recognises more than 250 lodgings, including *gîtes*, specialising in outdoor and adventure holidays.

A *gîte rural* – of which France has 35,000 – is a holiday cottage (or part of a house) in a village or on a farm. Amenities always include a kitchenette and bathroom. There is usually a minimum rental period – often one week, but sometimes only a few days. A list can be found in the book *Nouveaux Gîtes Ruraux* (€20).

A *chambre d'hôte*, basically a bed and breakfast (B&B), is a room attached to a private house rented to travellers by the night. France has about 15,000 *chambres d'hôtes*, many of which also host homemade evening meals (*tables d'hôtes*) for an extra charge (usually €25-25). Tourist offices have lists of local *chambres d'hôtes*. Gîtes de France (see Gîtes & Chambres d'Hôtes) also acts as an umbrella organisation for B&B properties, while **Bienvenue à la Ferme** (☎01 53 57 11 44; [www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com](http://www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com); 9 av George V, 8e, Paris) lists dreamy farm-based *chambres*.

Other useful websites include: *Flours de Soleil* (<http://fleursdesoleil.fr>, in French), *Samedi Midi Éditions* ([www.samedimidi.com](http://www.samedimidi.com)) and *...en France* ([www.bbfrance.com](http://www.bbfrance.com)).

## Hostels

A dormitory bed in an *auberge de jeunesse* (youth hostel) costs about €25 in Paris, and anything from €10.30 to €28 in the provinces, depending on location, amenities and facilities; sheets are included and breakfast