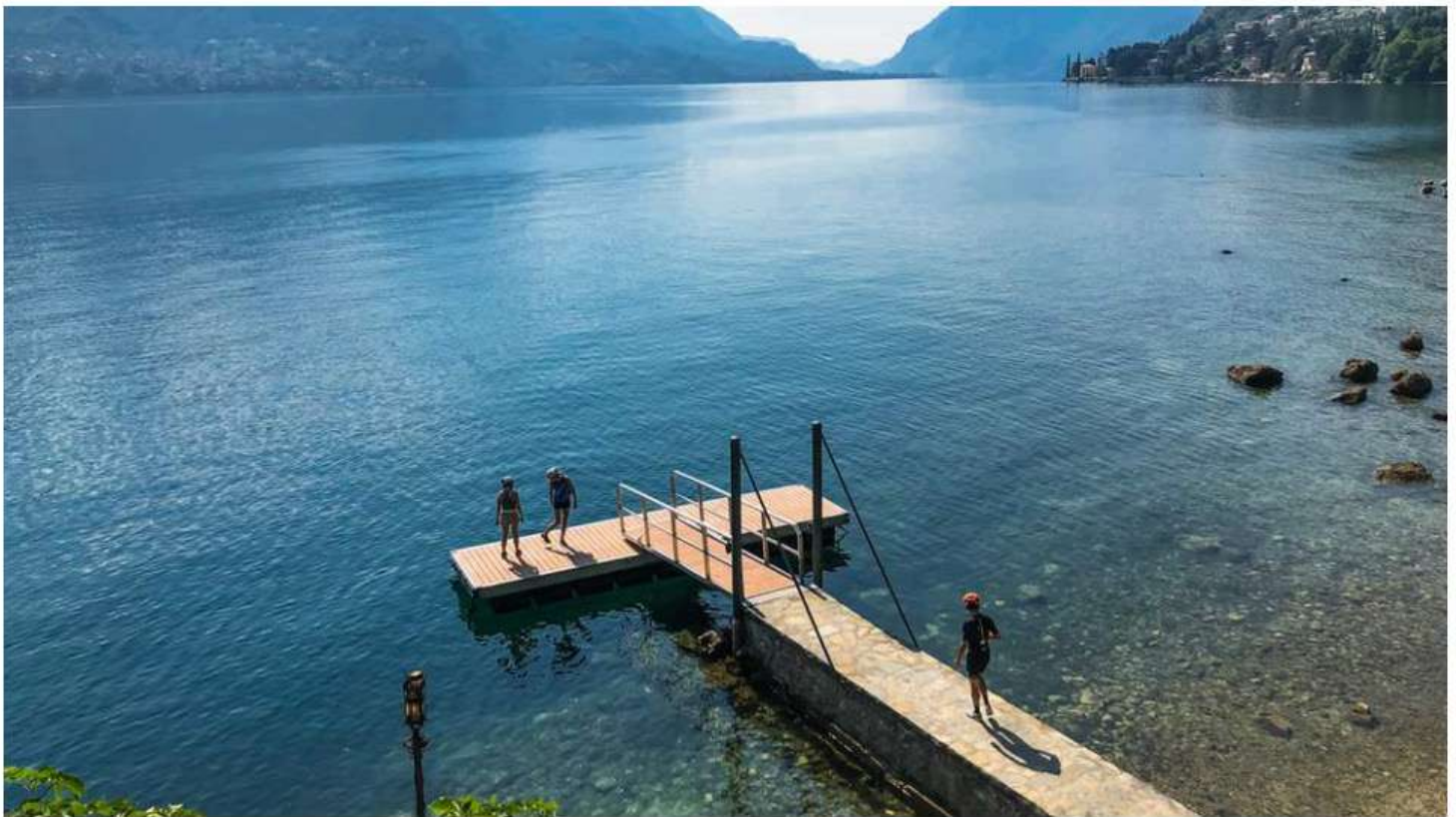




ON THE ROAD

THE WORLD'S BEST HOTELS FOR CYCLISTS

Seven bike-trip stopovers that are worthy destinations in themselves



Bellagio, Italy. Photograph courtesy of Hotel Il Perlo

Words by Mr Jim Merrett, Chief Sub-Editor, MR PORTER

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike," said President John F Kennedy – and an increasing number of us are inclined to agree. Not only are our city centres being slowly opened up with cycle lanes and bike hire schemes, specialist operators such as Wheel2Wheel Holidays are also developing [cycling](#) tourism. Indeed, industry trade show World Travel Market reports that the bike trip has replaced the [golfing](#) break as the middle-aged bonding getaway of choice.

For cyclists, the lure is obvious: pop your gear in a pannier or strongarm a support car and you and a bunch of mates can turn the journey *into* the holiday. Get your peloton going and rack up the clicks, or take your time and see the countryside at a more leisurely pace. It makes for one of the best ways to see countries such as France, Italy and Spain, not just nations with an illustrious cycling pedigree and the backdrop to the

three fabled Grand Tours, but also home to vineyards and [restaurants](#) catering to weary travellers on two wheels. Of course, you could embark upon such trips in a simple or lavish frame of mind. If you're leaning towards the latter, these bike-friendly hotels offer a loftier level of refinement than your average B&B.

01. CHÂTEAU ST PIERRE DE SERJAC, LANGUEDOC, FRANCE



Puissalicon. Photograph courtesy of Château St Pierre de Serjac.

As part of the inaugural Tour de France in 1903, competitors were expected to ride across 423km of Languedoc – essentially traversing the entire département – in a single day. The scramble to power through this sizable swathe of southwest France was more to do with its location between the nation's two mountain ranges, the Alps and the Pyrenees, than any slight at this landscape itself. More than a century on, you can sample the region at a decidedly more leisurely pace. And with Château St Pierre de Serjac as your base, enjoy life in the lap of luxury as well as a lap of the countryside. Between now and October, the 19th-century manor-turned-hotel is running weekend bike tours. This service includes bike hire from local firm [VeloRoo](#) and can be tailored to the abilities of guests, from beginners to more challenging routes for advanced riders, and taking in a range of terrains, smooth, empty roads and stunning scenery. Most importantly, there's the opportunity to road-test the lavish spa facilities upon your return, with a hammam, treatments and in-room massage available. Not to mention the three-course dinners, with wine from the hotel's own estate, to help fuel you for the next day's ride.

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