



## Kate Maddison Cycling holiday operator

**OVER THE LAST** two years, 50% of our guests at Serre des Ormes have been women. Unfortunately, this figure is not the general trend across the UK.

In terms of advice for female cyclists, which they might not be given by a bike hire centre or shop, these are the things that I think make the most difference.

- Getting a good saddle and adjusting the height and angle to suit you is essential. We have a range of saddles for guests to try when they are here. The saddle is one of the main points of contact on a bike, and a single day on a hard, male-specific saddle can be agony. Many bike shops don't measure for saddle fit when women buy bikes, or even talk about it at all. I am amazed by how many women who have been cycling for a long time nevertheless assume saddle discomfort is unavoidable.
- Women's hands are generally smaller. Adjust the distance of brake levers from the handlebar so you can reach them easily while still gripping the bar. Most levers can be adjusted inwards, either with shims or by an adjustment screw,



depending on the type. Sore hands seem to be a common problem, too. Using the drops on a road bike gives much more control on the descents and makes braking easier.

- Believe in yourself and don't worry about holding other people up. We have noticed that, among men and women of the same ability, women are often less confident and more worried about holding up others. Yet they tend to be better at pacing themselves over the whole ride. 🌟

[serredesormes.co.uk](http://serredesormes.co.uk)

Photos: Serre des Ormes



**Clockwise from top left:** Kate (right) with Mo Howard on the climb to Col d'l'Homme Mort. The stunning village of Brantes. On top of the tower in the hilltop village of Upaix. The Internationelles, who dropped by for cake in 2019 when they rode the whole Tour de France route

## Ride guides

I asked some of our guests for their advice for other women cyclists. They said:

"Never let your gender define what you think you are capable of. I hear women saying all the time 'I'm not strong enough, I can't get up that hill.' Guess what? We are always strong enough! Believe! The best endurance athletes in the world are women."

– Lucy Ritchie

"Go commando. Don't wear pants under your Lycra shorts. Your shorts should fit well – slightly tight – and have a decent pad. It's not the most expensive that necessarily fit the best. They must not be baggy."

– Mo Howard

"Don't let anyone tell you, whether you are young or a senior citizen, that you can't do something. Get on a bike, ride and have fun."

– Elise Sheppard

"A cycle ride should always include coffee and cake. It's a great way to catch up with friends, and enjoy a good natter along the way."

– Jill Brown

"Cycling means freedom to me. Every ride is an adventure, a chance to enjoy the outdoors and the sense of accomplishment that comes with reaching new destinations."

– Laura Woods