



FRENCH DIVIDE

2025 Participant's Guide

The French Divide spirit

The organization wants to remind you that the French Divide is an endurance trail, a brevet that can be ridden by many types of bikes (mountain bike, cyclo-cross, gravel bike). It is a long-distance challenging trip, a personal challenge.

The french law is strict: the FRENCH DIVIDE IS NOT A RACE.

In order to avoid asking for impossible authorizations for such a long distance:

- the French Divide is a brevet (a cycling adventure with no assistance) for the members of its organization,
- each participant has to sign a membership to Lille VTT, the official organizer,
- the signatory becomes a member of Lille VTT until 12.31.2025,
- the 10€ subscription fees are included in the registration fees,
- the French Divide is limited to 100 participants,
- no ranking will be published.

Mandatory documents

These documents will be provided to us by email:

- your **Insurance Certificate**, from your liability insurance. Ask a certificate to your insurance for personal responsibility. It often is included in Home Insurance.
*"Many of the public and product liability risks are often covered together under a general liability policy. These risks may include bodily injury or property damage caused by direct or indirect actions of the insured. General liability insurance coverage most often appears in the Commercial General Liability policies obtained by businesses, and in **home insurance policies obtained by individual homeowners.**" - Wikipedia*

- your **Signed agreement**

Before the start

The French Divide Team will welcome you in Strasbourg, 10 AM to 4PM on Friday .

French divide pack:

We will give you your rider pack : tracker, 4 batteries AAA lithium, cycling cap with your name, goodies, patches, stickers and brevet card

The Spot tracker will be given to you against a Deposit (200 euros cash)

You can also pick up your jersey for those who ordered it

We will have a few jerseys for sale (limited stock)

Briefing

This year, a briefing will take place at 6 p.m.,

We will be there to answer all your last minute questions.

It will be a reminder of the rules but also a way of presenting

A welcome drink will be offered at the end of the briefing.

Start

French Divide brevet will start in Strasbourg.

If you wish to leave with another participant, after your scheduled departure time, it is up to you to turn around after crossing the starting line.

ATTENTION: You must be on the starting line 10 minutes before your departure time.

Start Saturday 5th August 10AM-9PM

Start location : Starsbourg

Finish

The finish of this 8 edition will take place in Mendionde (64240) a small village of 800 souls. We will be waiting for you at Restaurant Etchebarne: www.restaurantetchebarne.fr

There is wifi, snacks and food available anytime.

The village does not have an official camping but they offer the possibility to plant your tent for free on a field next to the school with showers and toilets.

Practical info about the finish location:

- Mendionde: the village has 2 restaurants but no food stores.
- Food stores in Hasparren 8km
- Train station in Cambo-les-Bains (regional lines) 15km
- Bayonne train station (national lines, high speed train) 33km

Finishers Party

At the time of writing this participant guide, we are not sure if a closing party will be able to take place on Saturday June the 14th

Mandatory equipment

- **1 bike equipped according to the french law** and in perfect mechanical conditions
MANDATORY
- **1 bell** MANDATORY
- **1 whistle** MANDATORY
- **1 GPS** to follow the gpx track MANDATORY
- **1 yellow (or pink or orange) high visibility vest** MANDATORY

Night cycling recommandations

Each participant is free to ride whenever he/she wants. But riding at night is quite dangerous so we recommend that you stop for a few hours to get some rest.

MANDATORY equipment according to french traffic laws:

- front lighting: 1 white or yellow light (Art R195),
- rear lighting: 1 still red light (Art R195),
- one or more red reflective elements visible from the behind. Orange reflective elements on the sides. Reflectors on wheels and pedals. (Art R196)
- **Without these, we won't let you ride the FRENCH DIVIDE.**

Note : Regarding the reflectors, we just informed you about the french law. There won't be any control about these from us. We perfectly know it is impossible to have reflectors on automatic pedals...

Accessories highly recommended by the organization:

- 1 headlamp MANDATORY
- 1 yellow high visibility vest (jacket, gilet, tabard) MANDATORY with reflective stripes, optional during the day but still recommended for more visibility mostly off road, out of towns. (it can also be orange, pink, it has t be visible at night)
- Any reflective apparel: leggings, ankle bands, leg warmers, etc.
- 1 additional rear red light on batteries.
- **“At night, see and be seen.”**

Mandatory helmet

You have to wear your helmet during the whole time on your bike. Any transgressor will be excluded from the brevet.

Respect the french traffic laws

Cyclists riding on open roads must respect the french traffic laws and any local regulations in regions and municipalities they ride across.

Please note that in France, if there are no road signs, it is always **PRIORITY TO THE RIGHT.**

Notifications and security

Cyclists must:

- notify themselves cordially before passing other users on the road (hikers for instance),
- pass with care any pedestrian or equestrian hiker that always has priority,
- ride without endangering their own safety or from any other road user,
- be polite to other road users and stay discreet,
- do not take useless risks.

Environment

We ask all the participants to respect the environment of all the areas and their surroundings that they will pass during the French Divide.

- **It is strictly forbidden to dump any of your trash in nature.**
- The participants will be held responsible for any degradation and may receive penalties.
- It concerns the comfort of all and the reputation of the cycling community.
- Respect nature and private properties.

More info here:

<https://www.lecampingsauvage.fr/legislation-et-reglementation/camping-sauvage-bivouac>

- Wild camping and bivouac are forbidden in the “parc naturel régional de la Forêt d'Orient”. (Section 5 - De Vitry-le-François à Bar-sur-Seine)
- Parc naturel régional des Volcans d'Auvergne : do not bivouac on the hills or the top of the volcanos.

Track and checkpoints

After leaving the departure location, the participants must follow the track shared by the organization and ride through all the towns on the French Divide route. They must also validate their road book at the defined checkpoints. The last checkpoint will be at the finish.

- The checkpoints can be validated at any time of day and night. The opening hours of the checkpoints only match the organizers' presence on site.
- You can validate a checkpoint with a photo, a credit card bill, a regular bill.
- Secret checkpoints may be set up during the event without prior notice.
- Regarding the nature of this adventure, none of the volunteers at the checkpoints is allowed to give you any assistance.
- Find the detailed checkpoints and their opening hours in appendix 2.

Here is the procedure to adopt when arriving at a checkpoint :

- If the FD team or a volunteer is there you must show your roadbook to make it stamp with the date and time.
- Outside of opening hours and with no presence of FD team members or volunteers, you must ask a restaurant owner or a store owner near you to stamp your brevet or give you a proof like a credit card bill, or regular bill to show us later.
- If you arrive at night and the checkpoint is closed, mark your name, date and time of arrival on a board we will leave there for that purpose. We will validate your visit later on.

You can leave the track but you must come back to it at the same place you left it.

Important info about the trace:

Camping along the course:

There are campsites all along the route.

If you plan to stop there, please arrive during opening hours.

It is forbidden to use a campsite without registering at reception.

This information is being added this year, because we are receiving more and more complaints from campers.

If you arrive at a campsite after 8pm, you must ask for and keep proof of your check-in. Failure to do so may result in a 12-hour penalty.

Don't forget that, as participants, you represent not only the French Divide, but also bicycle travelers in general.

Your actions will have consequences for those who come after you.

In the past, we have already had to modify the route to avoid certain campsites.

Autonomy

The French Divide is a self-supported adventure starting with food and beverages. They must be taken from the start or bought in shops or restaurants on the way. Each cyclist also needs to be equipped to face any weather conditions or incident (flats, chain breaking, falls, etc.).

Each participant must be **INDEPENDENT** regarding:

- his/her bike, it's good condition for an endurance use on and off road, for maintenance and protection (included theft), before, during and at the finish of the adventure.
- his/her food and drinks supplies before, during and at the finish of the adventure.
- his/her route management, progression, sleep and safety.

Regarding food supplies, make sure to keep them at a good level. Indeed, on Sundays and Holidays many shops are closed.

Can I send a package on the way to friends/family or leave it in a french post office?

No. And if you do live next to the trace, it is obvious that you can't pass by your home after the start of the event. Sending a package and leaving it at a french post office is also forbidden because it would disadvantage non-french people.

Can I send a package at the finish location?

Yes, but we don't handle the logistics.

Can I find free shelter and food - in a family house/ friends or people I meet on the way?

Yes, you can accept shelter and food as long as you did not know these people before the start of the event.

Can I go to a hotel/hostel/lodge? And with a reservation?

Hotels/hostels/lodges are authorized as they are shops and accommodations you will find on the way. Any booking before the start of the event is forbidden. Once the French Divide started you can book on the way in any accommodation you want.

What do I do if I pass a stray dog?

You can try to sprint to lose it or get down from your bike and use it as a shield.

And what if I get bitten by that dog?

You are 100% autonomous so we won't come and rescue you. In case of a stray dog, try to find the owner to verify the rabies certificate of the animal. In any case get your wound healed by a medical person.

And besides dogs are there any dangerous animals in France?

Be careful not to bivouac on boars/wild pigs paths. In the forest beware the ticks that might give you Lyme diseases. Ticks do suck out the blood and need special care to be removed from your skin. There are also vipers but I personally only saw one once and it was running away.

Where can I get water?

The french law requires a sign that says "non potable" (meaning not drinkable) on any water source where water is not drinkable. So if there is no sign, you can drink it. You can easily find water in any cemetery.

No assistance vehicles

They are **FORBIDDEN**.

You can't ask for help on social media either.

And you can't ask for other participant's help!

Material exchange

The only help allowed between participants is a moral help. A water bottle or a tyre patch for instance can't be exchanged.

Peloton

Because you will be a packed group of cyclists at the start, peloton will be hard to avoid, so it will be allowed until the Cassel climb (23% slope) After that, peloton will be forbidden. Drafting is prohibited as well.

Physical difficulty

- Control your speed in any circumstances.
- Adapt your daily mileage in accordance with your physical capabilities.
- Any participant who meets or passes another french divider in physical difficulty or in a serious accident/injury must help him.
- Emergency number: 112

100% bike

The totality of the route between the town of departure to the finish must be ridden on a bike, with the strength of your legs, heart and mindset. The use of a car, bus, train, ship, private jet or any other transportation is forbidden.

Brevet Card

We will give you a brevet card before the start of the adventure. You must keep it with you at all times. You must show it personally at each checkpoint (official or secret CP). The loss of your brevet card or a missing checkpoint stamp will lead to the cancellation of your participation and brevet.

The brevet card measures 10x10.5 cm. You can easily slide it in your passport.

A checkbox will be added to the brevet card: self-supported approved This box will be checked if you have complied with all of the rules. If you have not respected one of the rules, it will be up to you to tell us, on the principle of the "gentleman racer" We are not here to police.

Tracker

We are using SPOT trackers.

We will deliver you one (1) tracker with four (4) new AAA Lithium batteries. But these batteries have a 8-day lifetime max. So think of having 4 spare LITHIUM batteries or to find some on the way.

If necessary, the volunteer teams will have batteries available at the price of 10€ for 4.

Delivery:

- We will give you a tracker after the checking of mandatory documents and equipment.
- There is a 200 EUROS deposit for each tracker. (to pay cash)
- For all non-french participants we require cash for the deposit or a bank transfer (before august 1st).

Follow up:

- All participants must keep their tracker during the whole adventure.
- There will be a webpage to follow all the trackers at once and each participant will also have his/her own tracker page to share with friends and family.
- Your friends and family will probably look at your tracker signal closely so tell them not to worry if they don't see any movement for some time. It happens that trackers lose their signal on some parts of the track or they sometimes have battery issues.
- The loss of the SPOT tracker will lead to the cancellation of your participation and brevet.

Return and deposit:

- Your tracker must be returned to the French Divide organization at the finish checkpoint.
- In case of withdrawal, or if you arrive after the closing of the finish checkpoint, you must return the tracker, at your charge, to the organization **before june 16th, 2025** to the following address : BECUWE Gauthier, 17 allée Chantecler 59650 Villeneuve d'Ascq. FRANCE
- You will be charged 20 euros/day. (off your deposit)

Validation

The French Divide is not a race but a brevet. There will be no rankings publication. In order to validate the French Divide Brevet, the organization might ask the participants for their GPS files of the entire trace. Files will be tested on Strava, on private segments, and will not be published.

Approval - Withdrawal

- Any participant who withdraws from the French Divide must notify the organization as soon as possible.
- If after 48h we notice that your position does not change and if we don't have any news from you (or via your family/friends) your participation will be canceled.
- If a participant leaves the trace to arrive faster at the finish, his entry will be canceled. He/she must then notify the organization about his/her mileage. The participant will not be able to validate future checkpoints.
- If a participant arrives at a checkpoint outside opening hours we will ask for a proof of presence (credit card bill, regular bill, photo, etc.)
- In case of withdrawal, or if you arrive after the closing of the finish checkpoint, you must return the tracker, at your charge, to the organization before June 16th 2025 to the following address : BECUWE Gauthier, 17 allée Chantecler 59650 Villeneuve d'Ascq.FRANCE
- In case of withdrawal contact Samuel Becuwe at +33(0)7 69 92 07 80

If you withdraw but still want to join us at the finish:

Let us know about your decision, where you left the trace and come join us on your own.

Once you declare your withdrawal, you won't be part of the event anymore. Your tracker will stay active but the color on the tracking website will change.

Penalty - Complaints

The organizers have the right to refuse a registration to the French Divide and to disqualify a participant in case of serious misconduct.

A single violation will not allow you to validate the box on your brevet card: self-supported approved

Violations of rules will be penalized according to the scale below:

Violations	Penalties
Passing/crossing of a hiker in a dangerous way	1 h
Lack of lighting, or not enough visibility	1 h
Non-respect of french highway code - phoning while riding	1 h

Drafting	1 h
Non-respect of the environment	DNL
Missing or hiding of a high-visibility apparel	2 h
Shortcut from the official trace (penalty by km)	1 h
Detour to avoid a path (penalty by km)	1 h
Misconduct to the volunteers of the french Divide	DNL
Assistance on the way or at checkpoints	5 h
Assistance on the way by friends, family or known people	DNL

- Insofar as possible, we will notify the participant of his penalties along the way and mention it on his road book. Penalties will be applied on the total riding time.
- In case of new violations, penalties will add up.
- No stop due to penalties will be asked during the event.
- You are under your own responsibility.
- Any participant lending his road book to a third party will be disqualified. This removes the responsibility of the organization in case of accident or injury of this third party during the event.
- beyond 24 hours of penalty, it is the disqualification (example: 25km off course)

Strava Club

We created a Strava Club for all the riders of the French Divide :

French Divide (official)

<https://www.strava.com/clubs/frenchdivide>

Join the club :)

Contact

Send an email at frenchdivide@gmail.com

Emergency phone : Samuel Becuwe at +33 (0)7 69 92 07 80