



BY LARRY OLMSTED

# HIGH ROLLERS



Upscale bike tours offer serious adventure and civilized style.

**W**HEN MY 20TH wedding anniversary rolled around, I offered my wife three celebratory options: a posh escapist retreat to Bali, a vow renewal in Las Vegas — officiated by an Elvis impersonator — or a French cycling trip with Butterfield & Robinson through Burgundy. Not surprisingly, she chose the cycling trip. I say not surprisingly, because despite all of the wonderful experiences I've enjoyed in many years as a travel journalist, from African safaris to heli-skiing, when anyone asks me what my favorite all-time trip was, it always comes down to the B&R cycling journeys I've relished. If you haven't yet treated yourself to a premium bike-tour vacation, I highly suggest you do. It will likely rank as one of your most memorable and cherished trips. Each of these tour companies is unique and excels in a particular area. Select one — or more — and get rolling.

**OUTDOOR FUN:**

LEFT: Lucky cyclists tour through verdant pastures in South Island, New Zealand, with REI Adventures. ABOVE: A Butterfield & Robinson guest is fired up for fitness and luxury.

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## FRANCE

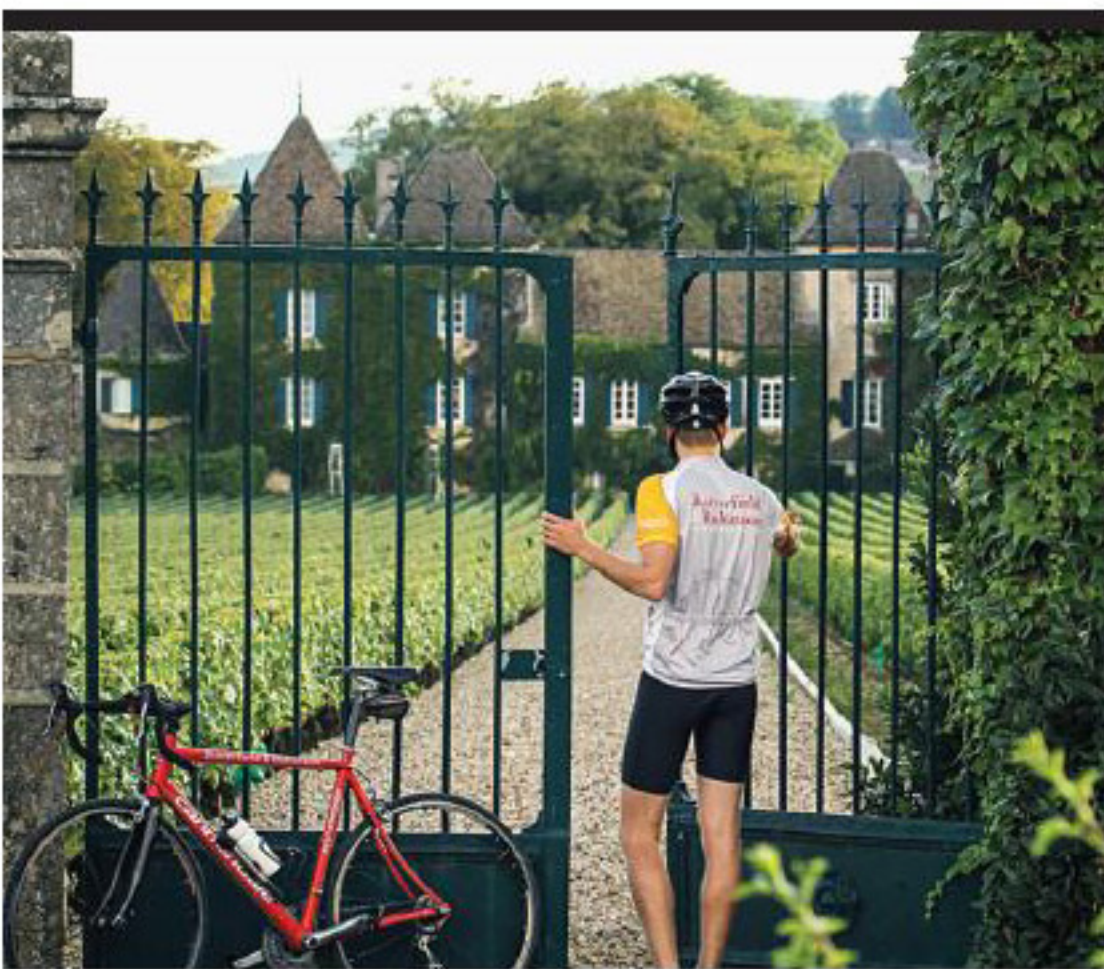
### BURGUNDY WITH BUTTERFIELD & ROBINSON

**BUTTERFIELD & ROBINSON** pioneered luxury escorted cycling vacations nearly half a century ago, and has since branched into hiking and multisport adventures across six continents, but cycling remains its heart and soul. The company now has plenty of worthy competition, but B&R still showcases the many key elements important in a truly luxurious guided

cycling trip: highly experienced guides — all multilingual and locally knowledgeable; support vehicles for roadside refreshments, repairs, or a lift when exhaustion or inclement weather sets in; extremely high-quality bicycles; impeccably researched routes with the most beauty and least traffic; various daily mileage options for different abilities; fantastic curated

hotels of the Relais & Châteaux variety; and a perfect mix of scheduled meals and on-your-own free time. Another highlight is the special VIP activities, such as private wine tastings at top vineyards not open to the public, cooking classes, museum tours after hours, and other truly exclusive extracurriculars. Many of the best companies, like Butterfield & Robinson, are run by a passionate owner/founder and offer a mix of “scheduled departures,” or small group tours listed in its catalog, along with pricier private bespoke trips to unique destinations or with a particular focus such as culinary, art, or history.

Burgundy is a classic road-cycling destination, thanks to its gorgeous chateaus, medieval walled towns, minimal traffic, and some of the most famous and prestigious vineyards on earth. We quietly pedaled past the precious vines of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti and La Tâche. B&R's routes showcased car-free vineyard work roads and nearly car-free country roads, where we would often ride for an hour at a time before a single car passed. Our trip was six days from Chambolle-Musigny to Dijon, rated “moderate” with featured rides of 25 to 30 miles daily, plus easier options or choices as long as 62 miles. Overnights were at exclusive lodgings such as the oenophile's choice, Château André Ziltener, and the romantic Abbaye de la Bussière, a former monastery on a 15-acre estate. Because George Butterfield has a residence in Beaune, also the company's main European office, the people of Butterfield & Robinson know this region like no one else, and just as it is the top choice for Burgundy, there are other great companies specializing in some of the world's classic cycling destinations. [butterfield.com](http://butterfield.com)



**EXCLUSIVELY BURGUNDY:**

Butterfield & Robinson's VIP activities include wine tastings at some of the most prestigious private vineyards, cooking classes, and museum tours after hours.