

Portugal & Spain Bike & River Cruise: Douro Valley

Bike Vacation + Air Package

If you're dreaming of a Douro Valley River cruise with a rich bouquet of cycling options and authentic Portuguese culture—this is the one! Our expert trip designers have uncovered picturesque and invigorating rides through historic fincas and small medieval villages—including Marialva, where you'll visit one of Portugal's oldest olive presses. Revel in a gentle spin along the storied shores of the Douro River, passing a landscape of chestnut trees, picturesque villages, and charming vineyards before pausing for a port wine tasting at an exclusive wine cellar in Vila Nova de Gaia. Cross the border into Spain and discover the "Golden City" of Salamanca with its stunning cathedrals and ancient bridges—or perhaps you'll choose to pedal into the scenic Spanish hills, pausing for rural lunch of local delicacies in a remote Spanish village. Along the way, you'll enjoy the luxurious amenities of your Emerald Cruises ship—dining on authentic Portuguese cuisine in its five-star restaurant and relaxing outdoors on the sun deck by the pool as the scenic vistas of the Douro drift by.

Cultural Highlights

- Unpack once and cruise the picturesque Douro River into wine country, disembarking to cycle the scenic back roads of Portugal and Spain.
- Luxuriate in the amenities of Emerald's most intimate river cruise ship, the MS Emerald Radiance.
- Pedal through the countryside, passing lush vineyards and rural landscapes, with time to soak in the charm of historic villages.
- Sample the renowned port wines of the Douro Valley during a private tasting with a local wine producer.
- Savor the distinctive flavors of Portuguese cuisine, from fresh seafood to farm-to-table produce and artisanal cured meats.

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour features moderate riverside terrain, with daily bus shuttles to the cycling routes. Rides are primarily on paved country roads with limited traffic, passing through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support vehicle is available each day at designated points for those who need assistance.

On Board Ship: Our group of up to 22 VBT guests will be part of a larger group aboard a 112-passenger river cruise ship. Each day includes a choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join other shipboard programs. While in port, the ship may be docked

alongside other vessels. As a result, you may need to walk through other ships to board or disembark, and some views may be obstructed while docked.

Tour Duration: 11 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 6-45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-5 hours

Group size: 14-22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 64°/49°, May 68°/53°, June 73°/58°, July 76°/60°, August 77°/60°, September 75°/58°, October 69°/55°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 2.5, May 1.7, June 0.5, July 0.2, August 0.3, September 1.0, October 3.8

FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Lisbon / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Lisbon

A VBT representative will greet you at the airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you're perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

Your accommodations for the next three nights are at the Sofitel Liberdade Lisbon, an elegant hotel located on Avenida da Liberdade, one of Lisbon's most prestigious and walkable boulevards. This is an ideal base for discovering the city's historic neighborhoods, iconic landmarks, and vibrant culinary scene. You're free to continue your journey independently and experience the charms of Lisbon at your own pace. VBT provides city information, including recommendations for local attractions, restaurants, and transportation to help you make the most of your stay.

DAY 1: Travel to Porto / Your VBT Vacation Begins / Embark Ship / Warm-Up Ride

After an included breakfast, meet your VBT representative in the hotel lobby for your transfer to Porto (approximately three hours). Along the way, you'll stop to stretch your legs and have the opportunity to purchase a coffee or water. Arrive at the dock in Porto around noon and board your Emerald Cruises ship.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to enjoy lunch on board, served between 12:30 and 3:00 p.m., relax in the ship's common areas, take a walk, or head into town to explore or enjoy a traditional *pastel de nata*, Portugal's famously delicious custard pastry, maybe with a coffee or a glass of port wine.

This afternoon, meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride in a nearby park. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner on board. Your river ship remains in Porto this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 5 km (3 miles)

What to Expect:

After a three-hour drive to Porto, you'll have a chance to stretch your legs upon arrival at the ship. Following lunch and an orientation meeting, begin a short warm-up ride on a bike path in a nearby park. This is a great opportunity to get acquainted with your bicycle, route notes, and Ride with GPS. Take time to check your brakes, practice shifting through the full range of gears, and perhaps even chat with a few friendly locals along the way.

Cumulative Distance Range: 5 km (3 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Peso da Régua / Cycle to Pinhão

This morning, sail upriver into the Douro Valley, Portugal's spectacularly scenic wine region, where terraced vineyards climb the hillsides along the riverbanks. As you cruise, enjoy breakfast in the ship's Reflection Restaurant, and perhaps take a stroll around the walking track on the Sun Deck, admiring the ever-changing views. After lunch on board, disembark in Peso da Régua, located at the

western edge of the demarcated port wine region.

Your afternoon ride follows the Douro River's banks along a picturesque roadway, leading you deeper into wine country. Gentle hills rise all around while the river winds peacefully to your left. Your destination is Pinhão, a charming town nestled on a graceful bend in the river and renowned for producing some of the world's finest ports. Don't miss a visit to its historic train station, decorated with *azulejos*—Portugal's iconic hand-painted tiles—depicting scenes of the grape harvest.

Upon arrival, pause to enjoy a glass of port wine in town. As you've been cycling, your ship has continued cruising upriver and will meet you in Pinhão. This evening, enjoy dinner on board, as you dock overnight in this delightful riverside town.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Peso da Régua to Pinhão — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

After lunch and disembarkation in Peso da Régua, begin your ride along the famed N-222, one of Portugal's most scenic national roads, en route to Pinhão. The section you'll cycle was awarded the title of "World's Best Road" in 2015 for its stunning views and graceful curves. Please be aware that car traffic can be expected, particularly near the Peso da Régua area.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 km (16 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Travel to Penedono / Cycle to Trancoso and Marialva / Sail to Vega de Terrón

Cycle to two of the region's most scenic villages today, both part of Portugal's network of Historic Villages. After breakfast on board, travel to Penedono, a 50-minute drive south of the Douro River. From here, begin your ride along a picturesque route lined with chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards, en route to Trancoso—a stunning hilltop town home to the

oldest documented rural market in Portugal. The 13th-century stone wall that encircles the cobbled streets of the Old Town and the prominent tower are reminders of the region's medieval and Moorish past. During a guided walk, you'll learn about Trancoso's rich Sephardic-Jewish heritage and its enduring cultural legacy.

After lunch in Trancoso, continue riding to Marialva, a tranquil village nestled beneath the remains of an imposing 12th-century castle. Here, take time to explore one of the oldest olive presses in Portugal and sample a selection of local products. Later, travel back to the Douro River, where your ship awaits in Pocinho. As you recount the day's adventures over dinner on board, you'll continue cruising upriver to Vega de Terrón, near the Spanish border, where you dock overnight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Penedono to Trancoso — 28 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Trancoso to Marialva — 33 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

After a 50-minute morning shuttle, cycle through the picturesque Portuguese countryside, passing chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards on your way to Trancoso. Following a guided walk and lunch, continue cycling to Marialva along rolling hills and quiet roads with minimal traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 – 61 km (18 – 39 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Tour Salamanca or Cycle Through Rustic Spanish Villages

Enjoy another abundant breakfast on board, then choose how you'd like to spend the day: join a full-day excursion to Salamanca, Spain, or cycle amid the gorgeous Spanish countryside. Salamanca is a rare gem among Spanish cities, known for its ornate golden sandstone architecture, etched with orange-hued Latin inscriptions—befitting a city that hosts Spain's oldest university. Your guided tour of this UNESCO World Heritage site includes visits to the Old and New Cathedrals, built nearly 300

years apart, as well as the grand Plaza Mayor, the heart of the city's social life.

For those who prefer more time on the bike, cycle through the scenic Salamanca Province, a tranquil corner of Spain where many villages have fewer than 300 residents. Begin your ride in Vitigudino, a small village about halfway between the Portuguese border and Salamanca, then spend the day enjoying stirring landscapes of rolling hills and open plains. Pass through rustic villages nestled along rivers and tucked into mountain foothills. Pause for lunch in the tiny hamlet of Lumbrales before continuing back to Portugal to rejoin your ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vitigudino to Lumbrales — 40 km (25 miles)

Afternoon: Lumbrales to Ship — 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Join the private shuttle to Salamanca in the morning. If you choose to cycle instead, disembark with your VBT trip leaders in Vitigudino and begin your ride through the Spanish countryside. Follow small, paved roads with minimal traffic as you make your way to Lumbrales. In the afternoon, expect a few cars as you return to Portugal, finishing with a long, scenic downhill. An optional shuttle is available for the return ride.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 – 72 km (25 – 45 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Côa Valley / Peso da Régua

This morning, visit the Côa Valley Museum and Archaeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, to view its famed rock carvings dating from between 22,000 and 10,000 BCE. Thousands of images—depicting horses, cattle, humans, and abstract figures—have survived millennia, offering a remarkable glimpse into prehistoric life on the Iberian Peninsula. Afterward, travel to Penela da Beira for lunch. This tiny village is notable for the massive granite outcrop at its center.

Your ride continues along quiet country roads to Trevões, a small patrician town whose church

features beautiful frescoes. Take time to explore and perhaps chat with a few locals before shuttling back to the ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Penela da Beira to Trevões — 24 km (15 miles) OR Penela da Beira to Trevões (with Optional Extra Miles) — 41 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

The afternoon ride takes you through hilly countryside, with a few moderate climbs and exhilarating downhill. You'll ride on paved country roads with minimal car traffic. An optional loop with additional miles will also be available for those seeking more time in the saddle.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 41 km (15 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Ecopista do Tâmega / Amarante / Entre-os-Rios

Disembark after breakfast for another spectacular day of cycling along bucolic routes in and around the Douro Valley. After approximately an hour's drive to Cruz de Baixo, begin an unforgettable ride on the Ecopista do Tâmega—a well-maintained rail trail that winds through the breathtaking Tâmega Valley

countryside. Pedal past forests, the rolling hills of the Marão Mountain Range, and charming historic villages before arriving in Amarante, the southern terminus of the trail. From there, take a short shuttle ride to a local wine producer, where you'll learn about the production of Vinho Verde, or "Green Wine." Meet the owner and his family for a wine tasting and a delicious home-hosted lunch.

Later, return to your ship, which will be waiting for you in Entre-os-Rios. This evening, celebrate your Douro River discoveries at the Captain's Farewell Reception, followed by a festive dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ecopista Trail — 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows a well-maintained rail-to-trail bike path. The route is car-free and mostly flat, with an elevation gain of less than 1,500 feet over 24 miles.

Cumulative Distance Range: 39 km (24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Atlantic Coast / Port Wine Tasting

Awake back in Porto this morning. For your final ride in Portugal, cycle to the Atlantic coast and enjoy a scenic, sea-kissed route along the ocean. Upon arriving in Vila Nova de Gaia, savor a fresh seafood lunch, with ingredients sourced from the ocean that very morning.

After lunch, visit a local port wine producer for a guided tour and tasting at his estate. Later, return to Porto on foot by crossing the iconic Ponte Luís I bridge. Bid a fond farewell to your fellow travelers and VBT trip leaders over a cocktail reception and a final, delicious dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ride Along the Atlantic Coast — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's out-and-back ride features minimal elevation gain. You'll cycle on a mix of paved roads and bike paths, beginning and ending in an urban setting.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembark Ship / Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Porto

After enjoying your included breakfast, disembark the ship and conclude your bicycle tour of the Douro Valley with a private guided walk through the historic highlights of Porto. From the colorful riverside district of Ribeira

to grand architectural landmarks and lively squares, you'll gain insight into the rich cultural tapestry of this UNESCO World Heritage city.

Following the tour, you're free to explore more of Porto at your own pace. VBT provides city information, including recommendations for top attractions, restaurants, and experiences to help you make the most of your stay.

Your accommodations tonight are at the Pestana Porto

– A Brasileira, a stylish and centrally located hotel housed in a former 19th-century coffeehouse. Ideally situated near Avenida dos Aliados, this beautifully restored property places the wonders of Porto—its historic streets, vibrant shops, and scenic waterfront—right outside your door.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After your included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to Porto Airport will be provided. The drive takes approximately 20 to 30 minutes, depending on traffic.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Sofitel Lisbon Liberdade (Arrival Day)

Situated on the Avenida da Liberdade, the Sofitel Lisbon Liberdade is known for European elegance. Its spacious rooms are decorated in classic black and gold, with luxurious amenities, and elegant bathrooms. Hotel amenities include a fitness center, a highly rated restaurant featuring Portuguese cuisine, air conditioning, and complimentary WiFi throughout.

Emerald Radiance (Days 1-7)

Expressly built for sailing Portugal's Douro River, the *Emerald Radiance* navigates the heart of the Iberian region in complete luxury. As Emerald Cruises' most intimate ship, with a capacity of 112 guests, *Emerald Radiance* features fleet favorites such as a spacious bar and lounge, a sun deck, and serenity pool. The ship's 40 generously proportioned suites and 10 staterooms feature all the amenities you need. VBT offers both cabin types, suites and staterooms, over five cabin categories.

Pestana Porto A Brasileira (Day 8)

Minutes away from the famous iconic Avenida dos Aliados, the Ribeira district, the Teatro Sá da Bandeira, and the famous São Bento railway station, the Pestana Porto – A Brasileira hotel will not disappoint. A luxurious, 5-star property, its 89 rooms and four suites are thematically tied to imported products during the 15th and 16th centuries such as anise, cocoa, and pink pepper. The hotel's original architectural features remain, plus a Portuguese cuisine inspired restaurant, along with the "A Brasileira" café, notably the first to serve coffee in cups, all contributing to a unique stay in the heart of Porto.