

Spain: Andalusia, Córdoba & Granada

Bike Vacation Only

While other bike tours merely touch the tourist centers of southern Spain, this comprehensive Andalusian cycling vacation takes you deep into the region's heart. Starting in the sensual southern city of Seville, you'll cycle into the ancient Moorish city of Córdoba, where we've found an authentic Andalusian villa for you to stay in—complete with carved wooden ceilings and a traditional Spanish courtyard. Our itinerary brings you through the famous Ruta Del Vino wine road, spinning past white-washed villages and stopping at an authentic, Andalusian *cortijo* for lunch with VBT's local friends. After pedaling past medieval castles in Jaen, you'll return home to your own ancient castle (now a Parador hotel) where you'll discover the secrets of Andalusian cooking during a class with a local chef. As you cycle the Ruta de las Fortalezas and roll into Granada, you might even hear the haunting chords of a flamenco guitar calling your name.

Cultural Highlights

- Embark on a guided tour of Córdoba, including a visit to the stunning Mezquita.
- Ride through olive groves and vineyards along the scenic Ruta del Vino wine road.
- Sip sangria—Spain's iconic blend of wine and fruit—paired with the bold, flavorful cuisine of Andalusia.
- Spin downhill past castles, Roman ruins, and mountain villages en route to enchanting Granada.
- Explore the Alhambra Palace—one of Spain's most iconic attractions and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

What to Expect

This tour features a mix of easy terrain and moderate hills, making it ideal for energetic beginners and experienced cyclists alike. A VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like a break from riding.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 18-45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-5 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

March 70°/47°, April 73°/50°, May 80°/56°, June 88°/62°, September 90°/64°, October 78°/56°, November 68°/49°

Average Rainfall (in.)

March 1.4, April 2.2, May 1.5, June 0.5, September 0.8, October 2.2, November 3.2

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception & Dinner

Meet your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group at your first hotel in Palma del Río at 10:00 a.m.

Your hotel in Palma del Río is the Monasterio de San Francisco. This former Franciscan monastery was built in 1492 on the orders of the VII Señor de Palma. About 20 years ago, it was converted into a charming hotel that preserves the simplicity and tranquility of its monastic roots. The building has ties to the early era of European exploration in the Americas: monks from this monastery established missions in the New World, bringing their language and customs, planting the famous California orange groves, and founding the Mission de Palma del Río in San Diego. Christopher Columbus spent time here before his journey, as the monastery served as a strategic center of learning and culture. The cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego all owe their names to monasteries and holy places in this region. Today, guests can enjoy fresh orange juice (in season) from the monastery's garden, home to 65 orange trees—some more than five centuries old.

Your trip leaders will provide a tour overview, followed by a safety and bike-fitting session. A warm-up ride around Palma del Río begins immediately afterward, so please be dressed for cycling. You'll ride through the fertile lowlands of the Guadalquivir River.

Following the ride, enjoy lunch on your own—either at the hotel or one of Palma del Río's local restaurants. Spend the rest of the afternoon relaxing by the quiet swimming pool, strolling through the extensive grounds and vegetable gardens, or exploring the town's historic sites. Ambitious riders may opt for an afternoon ride toward the foothills of the Sierra Morena.

This evening, gather with your trip leaders and fellow travelers for a welcome reception featuring tapas and sangria—two Andalusian specialties. You'll also enjoy an introduction to the history of Spain and Andalusia before sitting down to dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Warm-Up Loop — 13 km (8 miles)

Afternoon: Sierra Morena Loop — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Your Andalusian cycling adventure begins with an easy warm-up loop. As you exit town, you'll cross the Genil River and take in views of the fertile Guadalquivir River plain. Along the way, you'll pass a traditional Andalusian farm, known as a *cortijo*. If you choose to ride again after lunch on your own, you can cycle toward the foothills of the Sierra Morena, looping back down to the Guadalquivir River valley.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 40 km (8 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Posadas and Sierra Morena

Following the Guadalquivir River, you make your way into the Campiña Cordobesa—the Córdoba countryside. After a short stop in Posadas, you'll ride up into the foothills of the Sierra Morena mountain range to immerse yourself in the beauty of the Parque Natural de Hornachuelos. At the end of your ride, enjoy an included lunch.

Later in the afternoon, you arrive at your historic and centrally located four-star hotel in Córdoba. In the 11th century, Córdoba was the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe, boasting a well-developed system of running water and streetlights, along with vast libraries where Arabic, Latin, and Greek manuscripts were translated. Jews, Muslims, and Christians coexisted in this cultural crossroads. Exceptional monuments like the Mezquita of Córdoba reflect the rich blend of these traditions. Notable figures born here include the philosophers Seneca (Roman), Averroes (Arab), and Maimonides (Jewish). Córdoba has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1984.

Your hotel is just steps from the Mezquita in the Judería—the charming Jewish quarter and heart of historic Córdoba. The property comprises several private homes from the 17th and 18th centuries, beautifully restored in 2009, featuring lovely patios and fountains.

Spend the rest of your evening at leisure, enjoying your hotel's amenities or venturing out to explore Córdoba's historic sites. Dinner is on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Palma to Posadas — 25 km (15 miles) OR Palma to Sierra Foothills Out-and-Back — 44 km (26 miles) OR Palma and Sierra Morena Loop — 63 km (38 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride begins in Palma del Río, following a pleasant, flat route through orange groves to reach Posadas. From here, you'll leave the Guadalquivir River plain behind and cycle along the edge of the Sierra. The base ride is easy, and those opting for the shortest option can stop in Posadas. However, we recommend continuing on an out-and-back route into the Sierra Morena foothills—still an easy and scenic choice. For a more challenging experience, the longest option features a moderate loop through Hornachuelos Natural Park, offering one of the most picturesque rides of the tour. And don't forget—tomorrow is a rest day!

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 – 63 km (15 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Guided Walking Tour & Independent Exploration of Córdoba

After breakfast, meet your local guide and set out on foot to explore Córdoba. Begin with a visit to a nearby synagogue before continuing on to the Mezquita.

Originally built as a temple, lighthouse, and warehouse, the Mezquita later became the second-largest mosque in the world. After Córdoba was captured by the Spanish in the 12th century, it was consecrated as a Christian church. Today, it is considered one of the world's greatest examples of Moorish architecture. From the Mezquita, you'll see the Alcázar de los Reyes Cristianos, the Archiepiscopal Palace, the Roman Bridge with its 16 arches spanning the Guadalquivir River, and the synagogue built in 1315 in La Judería.

Córdoba is also an excellent place to shop for pottery, silverwork, *abanicos* (fans), cotton and leather goods, embroidered *mantillas* (scarves), shawls, and wooden crafts. The city's Bullfighting Museum pays homage to this traditional—and controversial—Spanish sport.

This afternoon, enjoy time on your own to explore more of Córdoba's rich history and vibrant shopping

scene. You might also indulge in a local tradition: a soothing Arab bath at one of the nearby hammams, followed by a relaxing massage with essential oils.

This evening, choose a restaurant for dinner on your own. You might take in a flamenco show near the Mezquita or dine in one of La Judería's inviting eateries, where you can sample regional specialties such as *caldereta de cordero* (lamb ragout), *morcilla*, *caña de lomo*, or *salchichón de Pozo Blanco*. Be sure to try Córdoba's most iconic dishes—*salmorejo* and *flamenquines*—and end your meal with traditional Arab-influenced sweets like *alfajores* or *pestiños* with almonds and honey.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Riding Day: Discover Córdoba

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Ruta del Vino / Vía Verde / Andalusian Cortijo

After breakfast, depart Córdoba and shuttle to the Cordillera Subbética and the Ruta del Vino wine road. As the name suggests, this hilly region is rich with olive groves and vineyards, known for producing and exporting excellent white wines and olive oils. One of the most renowned wines of the area is Pedro Ximénez, a sweet variety particularly recommended to accompany local *postres* (desserts). You'll stop for brunch at a beautiful *bodega*, where you'll enjoy a meal paired with locally produced wines.

From there, ride toward the Subbética mountain range, with the option to cycle along the *Vía Verde* rails-to-trails path. Avid cyclists seeking more elevation may choose a more challenging route.

As you approach the perched village of Zuheros, keep an eye out for birds—including two protected species found in this area: the peregrine falcon, symbol of the Sierra Subbética Natural Park, and the griffon vulture.

Near Luque, stop at a traditional *cortijo* for a late picnic lunch. The meal features ingredients sourced almost entirely from the garden of your host, Balbino, who proudly serves the farm's award-winning organic olive oil.

After lunch, a short shuttle takes you to your next hotel. The 18th-century Parador de Jaén—one of Andalusia’s most beautiful castles—sits high above the city on Santa Catalina Hill, on the site of the former Moorish fortress of Santa Catalina, dating back to the 8th century. This evening, enjoy an included dinner at your leisure at the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Wine Road to La Primilla — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: La Primilla to Cortijillo on Bike Path — 40 km (24 miles) OR La Primilla to Cortijillo on Road PLUS — 44 km (26 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning, you’ll take a bus from Córdoba to the Montilla-Moriles hills, one of Andalusia’s most renowned wine regions. Your ride begins in the village of Espejo, passing several *lagares*—traditional farms where grapes are grown and pressed. The terrain is rolling with just a few hills, leading you to Lagar La Primilla for a brunch and wine tasting. Afterward, you may shuttle to the start of the *Vía Verde* rails-to-trails path for a scenic and easy ride all the way to Cortijillo. Alternatively, riders seeking more of a challenge can opt for a longer route with moderate hills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 64 km (12 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Explore the Region of Jaén: Land of Castles and Olive Groves / Andalusian Cooking Demonstration

Today, your loop ride follows the road to Guardia, the ancient Roman and Visigoth city of *Mentesa Bastia*, guarded by a 12th-century castle perched on a rocky promontory. You’ll also visit the *Puente de la Sierra*, considered the gateway to the *Sierra de Jaén*—a small mountain range on the historic road to Granada. After pausing for lunch on your own in *Puente de la Sierra*, you may choose to challenge yourself with a ride to *Otiñar Castle*, set amid stunning mountains and deep limestone canyons. Alternatively, return to the Parador and consider visiting the nearby *Santa Catalina Castle*, just steps from your hotel.

Later, enjoy time to relax before meeting up with the group for a hands-on cooking class featuring a

popular Andalusian dish. Dinner will be served in the Parador's elegant dining room, adorned with a blend of Moorish and Spanish décor.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Jaén to Puente de la Sierra — 35 km (21 miles)

Afternoon: Otiñar Canyon PLUS — 15 km (9 miles)

What to Expect:

Start your ride with a descent and mostly flat terrain before beginning a long but gradual climb to Guardia, crowned by its hilltop castle. From there, continue along a gently rolling road with scenic views of the Jaén mountains, all the way to the main entrance of the Sierra de Jaén. Here, you can pause for lunch on your own—or, if you're seeking more mileage, opt for a challenging ride to the castle of Otiñar, where you'll be rewarded with some of the most stunning views of the entire trip. Today may also offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leaders for details or choose to shuttle back to the Parador.

Cumulative Distance Range: 35 – 50 km (9 – 30 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Cycle the Ruta de las Fortalezas / Arrive in Granada

After breakfast, begin your morning ride in the small town of Benalúa de las Villas. Enjoy a gradual descent through a valley with the Sierra Nevada mountain range in the distance as you head toward the enchanting city of Granada. Along the way, you'll pass through towns once heavily fortified in the Middle Ages, including Colomera, with its imposing castle and church. Following the *Ruta de las Fortalezas* ("Route of the Fortresses"), you'll also spot traces of Roman influence, including a 2,000-year-old bridge. Leaving the mountains and villages behind, you'll enter La Vega, Granada's fertile main valley, and finish your ride with lunch and a celebratory toast beneath the pine trees, cooled by breezes from the Cubillas Reservoir.

After lunch, enjoy a short ride by vehicle into Granada, where you'll have time to settle in before dinner. Your centrally located hotel offers easy access to the city's many highlights—just steps from historic

monuments, lively plazas, charming streets lined with restaurants and cafés, and some of Granada's best shopping. This evening, join your trip leaders for a festive farewell dinner and a final sampling of Andalusian culinary delights.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ruta de las Fortalezas to Olivares — 25 km (15 miles) | Olivares to Campus Nautico — 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Your final ride takes you from the mountains north of Granada down to the Genil River lowlands. Depart from Benalúa de las Villas and descend through a mountain valley, with the impressive Sierra Nevada range as your backdrop. Along the way, you'll pass a 2,000-year-old Roman bridge and the towns of Colomera and Moclín, each marked by Arab fortresses and Christian churches. The route features gently rolling terrain with a continuous descent into the valley and along the Genil riverbank. Today may also offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists—ask your trip leader for details, or choose the shorter option starting from Olivares.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 46 km (13 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Alhambra Palace Visit / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After breakfast, meet your local guide and walk to the Alhambra Palace for an included visit to the palace and Generalife Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Due to hotel check-out times, please settle your bill and check out prior to the tour. After your visit, you will return to the hotel to collect your luggage and continue to your next destination. Please ensure that your flight from Granada is not scheduled to depart earlier than 3:00 p.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Monasterio de San Francisco (Day 1)

Monasterio de San Francisco was a Franciscan monastery built in 1492 by the VII Señor de Palmas orders. It was transformed into a charming hotel in 1985, yet preserves the simplicity and tranquility of a monastery. The refectory is now a quiet reading room, the ancient vegetable garden still supplies the kitchen, and the patios are the same ones walked by the monks in silent prayer five centuries ago. Only the large swimming pool shaded by orange trees is a reminder of the modern world. Today, guests can still drink the juice of the garden's 65 orange trees, some of which are five centuries old. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout the premises.

Las Casas de la Juderia Cordoba (Days 2-3)

Hotel Las Casas de la Judería is located a few steps from the Mezquita in the very heart of Córdoba. It consists of ancient, private homes from the 17th and 18th centuries with charming patios, gardens, and fountains. The property is air conditioned and beautifully restored, and exhibits a perfect blend of history and comfort. Free WiFi is also available.

Parador de Jaen (Days 4-5)

The Parador de Jaen, part of Spain's group of historic hotels, offers stunning views of the three mountains surrounding the city of Jaen. It is located at the top of Santa Catalina hill, in the 18th-century castle that has been beautifully restored. Enjoy modern comfort combined with historic authenticity and regional Andalusian craftsmanship evidenced in the stunning dining room, vaulted entry hall, extensive gardens, and outdoor swimming pool. Santa Catalina Castle is a few steps away from the hotels and can be explored on its own. Air conditioning and WiFi are available.

Hotel NH Collection Victoria (Day 6)

Enjoy an ideal location in the heart of Granada and an elegant ambiance during your stay at the Hotel NH Collection Granada Victoria. The hotel is located near the Cathedral, Royal Chapel, and Alcaicería bazaar, in a bustling neighborhood of shops and restaurants. The Alhambra is just a 20-minute walk away. Savor traditional Mediterranean cuisine in the hotel's sunny restaurant or tapas at the bar. Your soundproof and air-conditioned room features a flat-screen TV, free WiFi, and private bath with rain-effect shower.