

## Holland & Belgium Bike & Boat: Amsterdam to Bruges

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

Enjoy the privacy of VBT's exclusive barge as you journey through the charming canals of Holland and Belgium. Unpack only once, then relax in the comfort of your floating home—including a comfortable lounge and dining area—as you watch the scenery float past from the splendid sundeck. By day, cycle easy bike paths past Holland's windmills and polder villages—rubbing elbows with bike-commuting locals along the way. In the evenings, enjoy delicious meals of local specialties prepared by your boat's on-board chef—plus special treats such as a Belgian beer tasting, and a night of festive camaraderie at the home of our Dutch friends. With VBT's deep roots in Holland and Belgium, there are many opportunities to experience the region's rich cultural heritage with the people who live here.

### Cultural Highlights

- Cycle along tranquil rivers and past meadows, dairy farms, quaint villages, and polder countrysides.
- Get acquainted with local people—and local life—during a visit to a family home.
- Join a local guide for a boat tour of Ghent, whose history dates to around 600 AD.
- View the famous Kinderdijk windmills, a UNESCO Heritage site.
- Sip authentic Belgian beer during a special tasting on board.

### What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through both urban and rural areas. You will encounter traffic, especially in urban areas. Some of the bike paths are unpaved, and the terrain can lack shelter from the wind. Our VBT support vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

**Tour Duration:** 12 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 10-44 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-4 hours

**Group size:** 22 max

### Climate Information

#### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 61°/46°, June 66°/52°, July 69°/55°, August 70°/55°, September 64°/51°, October 57°/46°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

May 2, June 2.4, July 2.9, August 2.4, September 3.2, October 4.1

**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 Amsterdam / Pre-Tour Hotel Night:  
Amsterdam**

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 are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

**DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Embark Barge / Warm-Up Ride and  
Cruise to Vianen**

After an included breakfast, make sure your luggage is packed and ready to be transported to the barge. At 9:30 a.m., meet one of your VBT trip leaders in the hotel lobby for a walk to the city center, passing some of Amsterdam's highlights and taking some free time for lunch on your own.

You will board the barge at 1:45 p.m., with departure scheduled for 2:00 p.m. At the docks, meet the barge crew and your VBT trip leaders, who will welcome you aboard with refreshments. As you cruise out of Amsterdam on the IJ waterway, enjoy glimpses of houseboats and floating homes.

You will dock for our warm-up ride, which follows the River Vecht. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner with the group as we cruise toward our first overnight stop in Vianen, a small city on the River Lek.

**Today's Ride Choices**

Afternoon: Nigtevecht to Breukelen Warm-Up Ride — 17 km (10 miles)

**What to Expect:**

The warm-up ride starts at Nigtevecht, at the connector between the old river and the modern

Amsterdam-Rhine Canal. Although the road is quiet, it is narrow, and you may encounter some light traffic. You will cross the original Brooklyn Bridge into Breukelen town, the home of the first settlers in New Amsterdam (New York).

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Cycle to Kinderdijk / Cruise to Dordrecht**

After breakfast, cycle along the small canals of the rural Krimpenerwaard region. You'll follow the course of the River Lek through Schoonhoven, known as the "Silver City" for its long silversmithing tradition. Continue on to Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage site where 19 of Holland's iconic windmills—some more than 260 years old—grace the horizon. From there, ride to Alblasserdam and board the barge for a cruise to Dordrecht, one of Holland's oldest towns and the birthplace of the Dutch state, founded by William of Orange.

Enjoy dinner on board in Dordrecht, where the barge moors overnight. Afterward, take a guided stroll through the city's historic center with one of your trip leaders and catch a glimpse of its rich past.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Vianen to Schoonhoven — 27 km (17 miles) OR Vianen to Schoonhoven via Polsbroek PLUS — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Schoonhoven to Kinderdijk — 31 km (19 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

Today's ride starts in Vianen. First, you'll cross a large bridge over the River Lek. The next stretch leads you through villages in the Krimpenerwaard Polder, where a small *fietspad* (bike path) takes you through private backyards. In the small, historic city of Schoonhoven, choose a restaurant for lunch on your own. You can board your barge, disembark, or continue riding from here. From Schoonhoven, you'll cross the River Lek by ferry. The route continues to the town of Nieuwpoort and into the Alblasserwaard Polder. This is mainly dairy farming and pastureland, home to black-and-white Frisian cows and a variety of waterfowl. Your *fietspad* continues through Kinderdijk, amid the country's largest collection of traditional

windmills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 62 km (17 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 3: Cruise to Willemstad / Cycle to Tholen**

This morning, enjoy a short language lesson while sailing to Willemstad, an old fortified town on the Haringvliet. Its massive walls were laid out in the shape of a seven-pointed star, with each rampart named for one of the seven provinces of the Republic of the United Netherlands. Your bike ride begins with a guided tour of this historic town.

Then, cycle to Tholen—once an island in the middle of the wide Zeeland streams, where many locals made their living by fishing. Today, it's connected to the mainland, but still remains a picturesque village filled with relics of its eventful past. Pedal through quiet farmlands and pause for a picnic lunch at historic locks before arriving in Tholen. Here, you'll rejoin the barge and enjoy dinner on board.

Afterward, we've invited some local families to meet you at the barge and accompany you back to their homes for an evening of camaraderie and cultural exchange.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Willemstad to Dintel Locks — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Dintel Locks to Tholen — 22 km (14 miles) OR Dintel Locks to Tholen Including Loop — 35 km (22 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

Ride through the relatively “new” rural agricultural region in the western part of Brabant province—a landscape of potato and sugar beet fields. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the historic Dintel River Locks. Afterward, cross the bridge into Zeeland province and continue to Oud-Vossemeer, the ancestral home of the Roosevelt family. Finally, arrive in Tholen, the charming capital of this former island.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 59 km (14 – 37 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4: Cruise to Antwerp, Belgium

Today is a non-biking day. This morning, take time to relax on board during a scenic cruise to the impressive port city of Antwerp. After enjoying brunch on board, you'll have the rest of the afternoon to explore at your leisure.

Antwerp is known as the "Diamond City" and is the birthplace of the renowned painter Peter Paul Rubens. You may wish to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady or stroll through the Market Square, lined with beautiful historic townhouses.

Tonight, enjoy dinner on your own at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day: Cruise to and Explore Antwerp

Included Meals: Brunch

## DAY 5: Cycle to Dendermonde and St. Amands

After breakfast in Antwerp, you'll hop on your bike for a scenic ride along the Scheldt River to Temse, pausing along the way for lunch on your own in Rupelmonde. This charming town features a unique tidal watermill and a statue of the mathematician and mapmaker Mercator, the world's leading geographer in the 16th century. He created both the terrestrial and celestial globes that helped shape modern navigation.

In the afternoon, cycle past Wissekerke Castle in Bazel and enjoy magnificent river views as you continue to Dendermonde, a centuries-old city known for its Benedictine abbey and charming market square.

From there, continue riding to St. Amands, a small village nestled on a beautiful bend in the river. Before dinner on board tonight, enjoy a Belgian beer tasting and learn more about the country's rich brewing

traditions.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Antwerp to Temse — 36 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Temse to St. Amands — 27 km (16 miles)

### What to Expect:

Begin your route with a short ferry ride across the Scheldt River, followed by a brief spin to view a unique bike-and-pedestrian tunnel beneath the river (with the option to ride through it). Afterward, cycle through the typical Flanders countryside, winding through agricultural lands and quiet suburban areas to reach Kruibeke, known for its lively Wednesday market. You'll arrive back at the Scheldt, pausing for lunch in Rupelmonde. In the afternoon, follow the river again—switching between its banks—crossing by bridge and ferry. This section of the ride is especially scenic, taking you over the Temse Bridge and into the city of Temse, once a bustling trading center. Continue along the Scheldt Dike to the Mariekerke ferry, then cycle on to our mooring in St. Amands.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 63 km (16 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 6: St. Amands to Ghent / Boat Tour of Ghent

After breakfast, cycle from St. Amands to Ghent. Located at the confluence of the Scheldt and Leie rivers, this “City of 200 Bridges” was founded around 600 AD and features many beautiful buildings dating back to medieval times, when the textile industry brought great wealth to Ghent’s merchants.

After a leisurely lunch on board the barge, board a local boat for a guided excursion into the heart of Ghent. You'll also have time to explore this attractive medieval canal city on your own. Many old patrician houses have been preserved in the city center, including the 1425 Cloth Makers’ Hall, where textile merchants once met and traded. The city’s major church is St. Baaf’s Cathedral, constructed and expanded over several centuries in a variety of architectural styles. Inside the cathedral, you can admire a number of medieval masterpieces, including Jan van Eyck’s famous *Adoration of the Lamb*.

This evening, enjoy dinner on your own at one of Ghent's local restaurants.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Dendermonde to Ghent — 44 km (27 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Today features a shorter ride in the morning only. After passing through the village of Berlare, you'll continue through more quaint villages and scenic agricultural lands en route to the lovely town of Schellebelle. After some pedal strokes along the river dike, the route follows a suburban stretch leading to the large locks of Merelbeke. Regroup at Brewery Huyghe in Melle, home of the world-famous beer with the iconic pink elephant! Then, cycle a short distance to rejoin the barge, where you'll enjoy lunch on board as it sails to its next mooring site along the canal.

Cumulative Distance Range: 44 km (27 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 7: Arrive in Bruges

During breakfast, your barge cruises toward Bruges. It will briefly dock farther along the waterway at Aalter Bridge, where the day's cycling begins. The barge then continues along the main canal and meets the group in Bruges in the late afternoon. Alternatively, if you've chosen the longer ride option, you'll cycle to Bruges via an extended countryside route through the charming village of Damme.

Regarded by many as Europe's best-preserved medieval city, Bruges is laced with canals and lined with beautiful houses once built by wealthy textile merchants. A 350-foot (106.7-meter), 13th-century belfry tower—home to Europe's most famous carillon—stands tall over the city's Market Square. You'll have plenty of time to soak in the medieval ambiance and stroll through Bruges' winding streets.

Tonight, enjoy your final dinner on board the barge.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Aslterburg to Chapel — 25 km (16 miles)

Afternoon: Chapel to Barge in Bruges — 8 km (5 miles) OR Chapel to Damme — 16 km (10 miles) |  
Damme to Bruges — 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

After an early-morning barge cruise, disembark at Aalterburg to begin biking through one of the prettiest parts of the Flemish countryside. For the final miles into Bruges, you'll follow the canal. The longer route diverts through the countryside, passing an old abbey and the historic town of Damme—an ancient literary center and former harbor of Bruges.

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 – 51 km (16 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Disembark Barge / Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Bruges**

After an included breakfast, say goodbye to your barge crew and one of your trip leaders. Then, walk through Bruges's winding streets to the hotel with your remaining trip leader, enjoying an orientation of the historic city center along the way. There's so much to see and do just around the corner—VBT provides city information with helpful recommendations.

Bruges was northern Europe's leading trade center between the 13th and 15th centuries, driven largely by its thriving wool and textile industries. The city has also been famous for its fine lace for over 500 years; you may wish to visit one of the small cottage industries dedicated to lacemaking.

Enjoy dinner on your own tonight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 9: Post-Tour Hotel Night: Bruges**

From your centrally located hotel, stroll the cobbled streets of this enchanting town. Be sure to climb to the top of the Belfort Tower for a panoramic view of the splendid medieval cityscape. You may also want to visit the 12th-century Basilica of the Holy Blood, said to contain a small vial of Christ's blood brought to



Bruges from the Holy Land in 1149. Or, stop by the Memling Museum, housed in one of the oldest surviving medieval hospitals in Europe.

Tonight, enjoy dinner on your own at one of Bruges' wonderful restaurants, using VBT's city information as your guide.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DEPARTURE DAY: Departure**

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation will be provided to the Brussels Airport for your departing flight. The drive takes approximately one hour and 45 minutes to two hours, depending on traffic.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Grand Hotel Amrâth Amsterdam (Arrival Day)**

Perfectly located just a third of a mile from Centraal Station, the 5-star deluxe Grand Hotel Amrâth Amsterdam brightens your stay with rooms bathed in natural light and the warm hues and opulent styles inspired by the Amsterdam School. Luxury and an artistic touch enhance your every moment in this historic and monumental building, a former shipping house that served the busy port, now lovingly restored. All of Amsterdam is right outside your door from its central perch. End your days over the elegant culinary creations of Restaurant Seven Seas, or with a sauna, steam, or massage in the luxurious spa.

### **Barge La Mar (Days 1-7)**

A cozy and spacious, two-deck, 22-passenger barge with a homelike atmosphere, the La Mar has 12 comfortable cabins—10 twin and two single—with private bathrooms and private showers, and the barge has climate control throughout. Common areas include a dining area and lounge with a bar, and a sun deck at the bow. Smoking is permitted only outside on the sun deck. The barge moors each night.

Drinks of all types are available for purchase at the bar on board the *La Mar*. It is not customary for guests to bring their own wine and liquor on board. Your understanding is appreciated. Onboard meal menus are set, though the chef is happy to accommodate vegetarians and those on restricted diets for health reasons.

### **Hotel Navarra (Days 8-9)**

Ideally located in the historic center of Bruges, near the Market Square with its famous Belfry Tower, the Hotel Navarra offers an intimate and welcoming atmosphere, complemented by excellent service. The elegant, 17th-century mansion occupied by the hotel is listed as a historic monument, yet you'll enjoy modern amenities that include free WiFi, air conditioning, a spa, an indoor swimming pool, a sauna, a gym, and a small garden with sun terrace.