

Spain & Portugal: Coastal Camino de Santiago

Bike Vacation Only

To cycle the coastal portion of the Camino de Santiago from north to south, this VBT vacation is the only game in town! On this historic route, you'll meet VBT's many local friends and experience the charm of Spanish traditions during your stay in distinctive historic lodgings—including noble residences and medieval fortresses. Cycling down the Galician coast, you'll be greeted by green valleys tumbling into the sea—as well as the friends of your local trip leaders. Meet an authentic ship's captain on a boating excursion around the Illa de Arousa—plus the Arousa Sea Women who teach you sustainable shellfishing techniques passed down through the generations. In Portugal's Lima Valley, you'll meet the Count of Calheiros, who treats you to lunch at his villa—and may even bestow upon you the sacred shell of St. James.

Cultural Highlights

- Tour two historic treasures of Santiago de Compostela—the Hostal dos Reis Católicos and the splendidly ornate cathedral, the city's revered pilgrimage site.
- Cycle the scenic Portuguese Coastal Camino de Santiago, perhaps passing pilgrims along the way.
- Taste the most prestigious wines of the region: Spain's *albariño* in Rías Baixas and Portugal's *vinho verde*.
- Enjoy lunch as honored guests at a Portuguese Count's elegant manor house.
- Board a traditional fishing boat and pick shellfish with a local "Sea Woman" in the heart of Galicia's seafood tradition.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 11-40 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-4 hours

Group size: 22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 60°/42°, May 64°/47°, June 70°/51°, July 75°/55°, August 76°/55°, September 72°/53°, October 64°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 5.5, May 5.8, June 3.2, July 1.5, August 2.2, September 5.0, October 7.6

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Guided Tour of Hostal dos Reis Católicos and the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral / Travel to Padrón / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception & Dinner

Your tour begins at 9:00 a.m. at our Pre-Tour hotel, A Quinta da Auga, in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Your first VBT trip leader and your local city guide will meet you in the lobby holding a VBT sign.

Please be dressed in your cycling clothes and ready to bike. If you prefer to change at the start of the warm-up ride, pack your cycling gear in your carry-on for easy access. You will travel to the warm-up ride immediately following a guided morning tour of Santiago de Compostela, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

VBT highly recommends flying to Spain at least one day before the tour begins. This allows time to rest and recover from jet lag before you begin sightseeing and cycling.

Your discoveries begin right away, as your guide shares the historical significance of the Hostal dos Reis Católicos during a brief tour of this remarkable complex. Originally opened in 1499 on Obradoiro Square to welcome pilgrims traveling the Way of St. James, it boasts a rich heritage and deep cultural roots. Next, follow your guide to the revered Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela—burial site of the apostle James and the final destination for countless pilgrims to this day. After time to admire its ornate façade and sweeping plaza, you'll continue your journey to the town of Padrón, where legend says the bones of St. James first arrived in Spain by boat.

In Padrón, you'll meet your second VBT trip leader for introductions, a safety briefing, and bike fitting. Your warm-up ride traces the scenic banks of the Ulla River, occasionally overlapping with the Portuguese Way of St. James. Along the way, you may spot small boats traditionally used by pilgrims (weather permitting) for a downriver float into the broad estuary of the Ría de Arousa—Galicia's largest and renowned for producing some of Europe's finest seafood.

After an included lunch in Padrón, you'll board a private coach for a transfer to the coastal town of Cambados and your charming *parador*—a stately 17th-century Galician manor house that will be your

home for the next two nights.

This evening, gather for a welcome cocktail and reception, followed by a dinner featuring a tasting menu of the *parador's* local Galician specialties.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride offers a chance to get comfortable with your bike as you pedal along quiet country roads. The route is mostly level, winding through scenic forests and farmland, and following the banks of the Ulla River.

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 km (14 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Cycle the Ruta do Viño Rías Baixas / Explore A Illa de Arousa

This morning, weather permitting, experience local seafaring traditions firsthand as you sail with Captain Isidro aboard his beautifully preserved historic boat, *Chasula*. With a guide from the “Sea Woman” association, you’ll also learn about the region’s maritime heritage and the cultural importance of seafood harvesting.

Afterward, set out by bike along the waterfront of Cambados and the Camino de Santiago, pausing along the shore to enjoy a picnic lunch. Your route follows gently rolling terrain through coastal vineyards and pine groves in the Rías Baixas—Galicia’s famed estuarine region along the Atlantic coast (pronounced “Ree-ass By-Shass”). This stunning area, which you traverse via the Ruta do Viño Rías Baixas wine road, is celebrated for its white wine grapes introduced by Cistercian monks in the 12th century.

Following narrow country lanes, you’ll arrive at the causeway linking mainland Spain to the island of A Illa de Arousa. Cross over and circumnavigate the island via scenic bike paths and small-town streets, perhaps spotting herons that inhabit this unique island municipality in the heart of the Ría de Arousa, Galicia’s largest estuary.

This evening, you may stroll through the neighboring historic district—a spectacular cluster of mansions designated a Site of Cultural Interest by the Spanish government. Perhaps pause at a traditional café to enjoy a glass of *albariño*, the region's signature "wine of the sea," celebrated for both its coastal origin and perfect pairing with seafood. Dinner is on your own tonight at one of the many restaurants in the Old Town; your trip leaders will be happy to offer recommendations.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cambados to Arousa Island — 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon: Arousa Island to Cambados — 9 km (5 miles) OR Miradoiros Loop PLUS — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride is easy, with most cycling on quiet country roads and bike paths. You may encounter heavier traffic on the island of A Illa de Arousa and in Cambados at the beginning and end of your afternoon ride. The causeway bridge to the island includes a designated pedestrian and cycle path; during the summer months, expect increased bike and foot traffic. As always, the VBT support vehicle will be readily available if you prefer to shuttle across the causeway. For those with extra energy, a longer, moderate loop is available on the return from the island.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 44 km (16 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Cycle the Ruta de la Camelia / Tour the Pazo de Rubianes Gardens with Lunch & Albariño Tasting / Travel to Baiona

The flower of Galicia is the camellia, and today's route is a tribute to its cherished status. You begin with a ride along part of the Ruta de la Camelia, a scenic route connecting several historic gardens. While camellias will not be in bloom during your visit, the botanical gardens remain impressive year-round.

You cycle out of Cambados through neighboring hills and vineyards, following narrow country lanes to the 18th-century Pazo de Rubianes (Palace of Rubianes). This grand estate showcases the horticultural richness of Galicia. Here, enjoy a delicious lunch paired with a tasting of the estate's distinctive *albariño* wine, followed by a guided walk through its remarkable botanical gardens—featuring century-old

camellias, magnolias, and more than 800 other floral species.

Later, shuttle (approximately one hour) to Baiona, scenically situated on Vigo Bay. Known as *Villa de la Arribada*—"port of entry"—Baiona was the first European town to receive news of the discovery of the Americas when Columbus's ship *Pinta* returned here from its historic voyage. You'll check into your next *parador*, dramatically located within a 14th-century fortress on the Monte Real peninsula, overlooking the Vigo estuary. Enjoy sweeping sea views throughout your stay.

This evening, relax over a leisurely dinner in the *parador's* dining room.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Parador to Vineyards — 26 km (16 miles) | Vineyards to Pazo de Rubianes — 17 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride includes some elevation gain as you cycle into the foothills and vineyards surrounding Cambados, offering a rewarding workout. Most of the route follows quiet country roads, though you may encounter occasional traffic. The stretch from the vineyards to Pazo de Rubianes includes additional climbs. Guests who prefer may opt to shuttle to Pazo de Rubianes from the vineyard stop.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 43 km (16 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Coastal Loop Ride to Oia / Visit the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Oia / Explore Baiona

After breakfast, cycle directly from the *parador*. This morning's route follows the coast, often tracing the Portuguese Coastal Camino de Santiago and passing pilgrims on their spiritual journey. You'll veer off the main route into the forested foothills, where shaded paths lead to sweeping seaside views. Descend back to the coast and arrive in the small seaside village of Oia, home to the historic Royal Monastery of Santa María de Oia. This 12th-century structure has served as a monastery, palace, school, and even a prison during the Spanish Civil War.

Enjoy a delicious included lunch at a nearby restaurant overlooking the sea before cycling or shuttling

back to the *parador*.

This afternoon, take time to explore the sights of Baiona, stroll the *parador*'s historic fortress grounds, or relax with a swim in the large outdoor pool.

In the evening, you may walk into the medieval town center of Baiona to enjoy dinner at your leisure.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Baiona to Oia — 20 km (12 miles) | Baiona to Oia PLUS — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Oia to Baiona — 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride features gently rolling hills and scenic sea views, with most of the route following the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James along a main roadway. You may share the Camino de Santiago with pilgrims, and the path can become crowded during the summer months. For those seeking more of a challenge, a morning option includes narrow hillside roads with little traffic. On the return ride, coastal headwinds are possible. The VBT support vehicle will be available for anyone who prefers to shuttle back to the *parador*. An additional independent ride may be available for experienced cyclists—ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 40 km (12 – 24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Cycle the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James / Welcome to Portugal

Today, you bid farewell to Spain as you cycle along the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James into Portugal. This morning begins with a scenic shuttle to Oia, where you start your ride, once again following the spiritual Camino past breathtaking coastal vistas.

Upon reaching the natural border between Spain and Portugal—the Minho River—you'll pass through the southernmost part of Galicia. Soon after, you cross into Portugal by bicycle via the Friendship Bridge. The

welcoming village of Vila Nova de Cerveira greets you on Portuguese soil, where you'll have time to enjoy lunch on your own.

You then continue along a picturesque bike route offering river and ocean views en route to Âncora. From here, a private coach will transfer you to your seaside accommodations just outside the Portuguese town of Viana do Castelo.

After settling in and exploring the hotel's amenities, you may wish to take a short walk to the beach to enjoy a stunning sunset over the Atlantic. This evening, enjoy an included dinner at your leisure in the hotel's restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Oia to Vila Nova de Cerveira — 32 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Vila Nova de Cerveira to Âncora — 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Most of today's ride follows the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James along a designated path next to the main road into Portugal. You may be sharing the route with pilgrims, and the path can become crowded during the summer months. After passing through the town of A Guarda, you'll cycle along a quieter side road with some short rolling hills before crossing the Minho River bridge into Portugal. The afternoon ride continues along the river on designated bike paths, ending in Âncora, where your private coach will be waiting. An additional independent ride may be available for experienced cyclists—ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 53 km (13 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Cycle to Ponte de Lima / Lunch and Vinho Verde Tasting at a Count's Manor / Farewell Reception and Dinner

After a lavish breakfast buffet, take a short journey to the heart of the Lima Valley to cycle through lush vineyards and quaint Portuguese villages. Then follow the river to Ponte de Lima, the oldest chartered

town in Portugal. Enjoy a stroll through this charming riverside town, named for the long medieval bridge that spans the Lima River, before boarding our private coach to a bucolic farming region draped in hillside vineyards and dotted with elegant manor houses known as *paços*—small country palaces that once served as royal rest stops during journeys through the countryside.

Like royalty of old, you too will pause at one of these estates—the *Paço de Calheiros*, home to the family of Count Calheiros since medieval times. The current residence, built in the 17th century and surrounded by three-foot-thick granite walls, has withstood the test of time. You'll have the chance to stroll the grounds and admire sweeping views of the Lima Valley. On a clear day, you may even catch a glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean. Over lunch, accompanied by *vinho verde* wines from the estate's vineyards, enjoy warm hospitality and conversation with your host, Count Calheiros. After this reinvigorating respite, you'll return to your hotel by shuttle.

This evening, gather with your group for a sunset cocktail and learn about your hotel's unique philosophy, which celebrates an active lifestyle embraced by surfers, paddleboarders, cyclists, and yogis alike. Later, enjoy a festive farewell dinner featuring regional culinary delights.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Nogueira to Ponte de Lima — 27 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride includes some elevation gain with longer inclines and features a mix of bike paths, narrow rural roads with limited traffic, and country roads with varying traffic levels. As you follow the river to Ponte de Lima, the final few miles are on flat, easy terrain.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (16 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Porto / Your VBT Vacation Ends

Enjoy a fresh Portuguese breakfast before bidding farewell to your trip leaders and boarding a short coach ride to Porto—the heart of Portugal's wine region and a cultural capital rich in authentic charm. Your tour concludes at approximately 10:30 a.m. at our Post-Tour hotel, Pestana Porto A Brasileira. Taxis

are available from there to central Porto hotels, the train station, or the airport (a 30–45-minute drive, depending on traffic).

Important: Flight departures from Porto before 1:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you plan to depart earlier, you are responsible for arranging your own transportation from the FeelViana Sport Hotel to Porto Airport (approximately a 45–60-minute drive).

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Parador de Cambados (Days 1-2)

Occupying an elegant old ancestral mansion known locally as Bazán, the Parador de Cambados is steeped in Old World history and charm. Cozy common rooms are adorned with period furnishings, while air-conditioned guest rooms are bright and comfortable. In the *parador's* interior courtyard, a terrace café enjoys the soothing soundtrack of a stone fountain. Savor Galician specialties in the dining room, take a refreshing dip in the swimming pool, and step out to explore the unique atmosphere of the Old Quarter of Cambados, designated a Site of Cultural Interest by the government of Spain.

Parador de Baiona (Days 3-4)

Beautifully situated within the walls of the peninsular Montereal Fortress and surrounded by a lovely bay and the open sea, the Parador de Baiona provides a magical setting. Whether strolling the fort's ramparts or sipping a cocktail on the terrace, enjoy stunning panoramas of Galicia's rugged coast, the glimmering Cies Islands, and beautiful sunsets from throughout the *parador*. Its gardens, kissed by Atlantic breezes, are ideal for strolling, while the dining rooms serve traditional Galician seafood with attention to purity and exquisite local flavors. From your elegant, air-conditioned room, you'll enjoy sweeping sea views and all the amenities you need for a comfortable stay.

Feelviana Sport Hotel (Days 5-6)

Constructed out of timber harvested from the surrounding woodlands, the 4-star FeelViana Sport Hotel is situated in a Cabedelo beach pine forest landscape. Throughout your stay, watersports activities and equipment are available, as are yoga and spa treatments. Enjoy locally sourced cuisine at the restaurant,

tavern, or beach bar, enjoying views of the surrounding pine forest, the Atlantic Ocean, or the Lima River as you dine. Each air-conditioned room has a garden view and is its own haven of calm and comfort.