

## Georgia & Florida: Jekyll Island & St. Augustine

### Bike Vacation Only

Many cycling tours of Georgia and Florida miss out on this region's historic and cultural center—but not us! Dating back to pre-colonial times, the vibrant historical district of St. Augustine is beautifully preserved—and your bayfront accommodations are the perfect vantage point for exploring all the city has to offer. As you cycle along the Georgia coast toward St. Augustine, our route will take you through pristine Jekyll Island, pedaling along sun-drenched coastal byways as you watch for signs of bald eagles, snowy egrets, and dolphins cavorting in the surf. In the company of knowledgeable trip leaders, you'll explore the richly biodiverse saltmarsh around Big Talbot up close during a guided kayaking excursion—and sail the blue waters off Florida's Atlantic coast on an authentic replica of a 19th-century schooner. This is truly the south Atlantic seaboard at its best!

### Cultural Highlights

- Cycle past the sprawling beaches, grand "cottages," and historic ruins of Jekyll Island.
- Navigate your kayak through a salt marsh preserve in search of eagles, otters, and dolphins.
- Visit the scene-stealing St. Augustine Lighthouse and the nearby pristine four-mile beach of Anastasia State Park.
- Embark a sunset cruise on the *Schooner Freedom*, a fine testament to Civil War blockade runners.
- Cycle the farmlands of St. John's County, pedaling past potato and cabbage fields, small farming communities, and the tranquil St. John's River.

### What to Expect

This tour features riding on bike paths and roadways that may include vehicular traffic. In many areas, roadways have marked bike lanes, and we've selected quieter routes whenever possible. While Scenic A1A is busier, it is well-traveled by cyclists and generally accommodating. There are no hills or dirt roads, aside from a few short dirt driveways providing access to select sites. As always, your VBT support vehicle is available for assistance or to offer a shorter ride option.

**Tour Duration:** 6 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 5-26 miles

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

**Group size:** 14-20 max

## Climate Information

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

January 68°/47°, February 69°/48°, March 74°/53°, April 79°/58°, October 81°/64°, November 74°/54°, December 69°/48°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

January 2.5, February 3.1, March 3.4, April 2.9, October 5.5, November 2.3, December 2.8

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

Your tour begins at the Jekyll Island Club Resort, located on Jekyll Island—one of Georgia’s famed Golden Isles. A complimentary VBT shuttle will be available from Jacksonville International Airport, departing at 12:30 p.m. This is a “show and go” service that does not require or accept reservations, so please arrive on time to meet the shuttle.

If your flight arrives too late to meet the 12:30 p.m. departure, you will need to arrange your own transportation to the resort at your own expense. For guests driving to the tour, we recommend parking at Jacksonville International Airport.

You’ll meet your VBT trip leaders at 2:00 p.m. at the Jekyll Island Club Resort. Please arrive dressed in cycling clothes for your bike fitting and a brief cycling-skills clinic.

A warm-up ride leads you past forests and ponds to Great Dunes Park, a tranquil 20-acre stretch of gently rolling sands, swaying palms, and tall grasses. You may wish to dip your toes in the Atlantic before continuing to the Jekyll Island Historic District—home to 34 preserved buildings across a 240-acre site surrounding your resort.

After your ride, check in to your room at this historic resort—a restored compound of opulent vacation homes built by wealthy businessmen at the turn of the 20th century. Once known as “the richest, most inaccessible club in the world,” the Jekyll Island Club counted J.P. Morgan and William Vanderbilt among its members. You might take a dip in the pool or relax on the gracious porch before joining your fellow travelers at 5:30 p.m. for a welcome reception, followed by a 6:00 p.m. orientation meeting. Dinner tonight is at the hotel’s formal restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Jekyll Island Warm-Up Ride — 4 miles

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride follows flat terrain along Shell Road to Great Dunes Park. After a brief stop, continue to Jekyll Island's Historic District before returning to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Jekyll Island / Horton House / Jekyll Island Pier / Wanderer Memory Trail**

After breakfast, set out on a loop ride tracing the perimeter of Jekyll Island. Your route offers scenic views of the Atlantic Ocean and East River, passing the grand “cottages” that reflect the island's gilded past. Ocean breezes are your constant companion as you pedal along flat roads, stopping to explore historic sites that speak to the island's rich heritage. Bicycling has long been a tradition here—once a favorite pastime of elite visitors on the island's Crane Bicycle Path.

Stop at the Horton House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This enduring shell structure, built from tabby (a mix of crushed oyster shells, lime, and water), dates to 1743 and is one of the oldest surviving tabby buildings in Georgia. William Horton, a military aide to James Oglethorpe—the British founder of Georgia—brewed the state's first beer here. Nearby, explore the cemetery of the DuBignon family, who owned the island from 1790 to 1886. At the Jekyll Island Pier, check out the catch of the day, and don't miss Driftwood Beach, where gnarled pine and oak trees stand as dramatic sculptures shaped by time and tide. Spend additional time in the National Historic Landmark District that surrounds your resort before enjoying an included lunch.

The afternoon is yours to relax or explore at your leisure. Browse the shops in the historic district, visit the exhibits at the Mosaic Jekyll Island Museum, or take a boat tour. Dinner is on your own this evening. The resort's complimentary shuttle can bring you to a restaurant recommended by your trip leader.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Jekyll Island Loop — 17 miles

What to Expect:

Depart from the resort for a scenic loop ride around Jekyll Island, following flat roads and bike paths. Along the way, stop to explore historic sites including Horton House, DuBignon Cemetery, Driftwood Beach, and the National Historic Landmark District.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 3: Cycle Amelia and Big Talbot Islands / Kayak Simpson Creek**

After a hearty breakfast, shuttle about one hour to Amelia Island to begin your ride. Pedal along Fernandina Beach, then follow the tree-lined Amelia Island Trail bike path across the causeway over Nassau Sound, traversing the islands of Big Talbot. Arrive at Simpson Creek, where kayaks await for an exciting nature excursion. After a brief orientation, set out into the salt marshes on an easy out-and-back paddle—perfect for honing your technique or observing the local wildlife up close. Your guide may help you spot wood storks, osprey, great blue herons, snowy egrets, bald eagles, otters, or even dolphins. No prior kayaking experience is required. Back on shore, enjoy a picnic lunch of locally sourced ingredients prepared by your trip leaders.

After lunch, shuttle about 90 minutes to St. Augustine and check into your bayfront accommodations. Known as America's First City, St. Augustine celebrated the 450th anniversary of its founding in 2015. Tonight, your trip leaders can recommend excellent dining options within easy walking distance.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Amelia Island and Big Talbot Island — 17 miles

What to Expect:

Cycle from Fernandina Beach via the causeway across Nassau Sound, traversing Amelia Island and Big Talbot Islands. Pause along Simpson Creek for a guided kayak excursion, paddling with the tide and exploring the surrounding basin. After a picnic lunch, continue by vehicle to St. Augustine. Additional cycling is available for those who prefer not to kayak.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 4: St. Augustine Lighthouse / Anastasia State Park

Explore historic and picturesque St. Augustine! Begin your ride from the inn by crossing the city's iconic Bridge of Lions, then cycle through charming neighborhoods en route to Anastasia State Park. This 1,600-acre natural gem is home to diverse ecosystems and abundant wildlife. Along the way, pause to admire the sweeping views from the historic St. Augustine Lighthouse and visit its museum, which showcases fascinating artifacts from the area's early days. At the park, enjoy up to four miles of pristine beach and explore the estuarine tidal marsh.

Next, pedal through the Lincolnville Historic District, a 45-square-block area known for its role in the Civil Rights Movement and its collection of Victorian-era buildings. Stop for lunch at a beloved local restaurant before continuing your exploration.

This afternoon, you may choose to cycle to the Nombre de Dios Mission—site of a dramatic 204-foot cross—or visit the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park, believed to be where Spanish explorer Ponce de León landed in 1513. Overlooking the Matanzas River and St. Augustine Inlet, this 15-acre park offers rich history and beautiful scenery. You might also opt for an optional student-led tour of Flagler College, formerly the opulent Ponce de León Hotel and now home to one of the largest original collections of Tiffany stained-glass windows.

This evening, head across the street to the City Marina and board the Schooner Freedom for a magical sunset sail—feel free to join the crew as they raise the sails!

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: St. Augustine Lighthouse and Lincolnville — 12 miles

Afternoon: Vilano Bridge — 13 miles OR Lunch to Hotel — 2 miles

### What to Expect:

Ride to the St. Augustine Lighthouse for an included museum tour, then visit Anastasia State Park for a

stroll along the beach, weather permitting. Continue your morning ride through the Lincolnville Historic District and enjoy a delicious lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, cycle to the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park and the Nombre de Dios Mission to explore the early history of St. Augustine. Conclude your day's ride with a scenic stretch across the bridge to the beautiful beaches of Vilano, a charming seaside town.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 – 25 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 5: Farmlands Ride**

After breakfast, shuttle about 30 minutes to the starting point of today's scenic ride in St. Johns County. Cycle inland past the fertile fields and small communities of rural Florida, pedaling along quiet roads lined with acres of potato and cabbage farms. Enjoy peaceful views of the St. Johns River along a portion of the route.

Pause at Riverdale Park, a forested green space on the riverbank, to take in the tranquil beauty of the surroundings. Then continue riding to the charming parish town of St. Ambrose, a small farming community that embodies the essence of rural coastal Florida.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant—a cozy spot housed in a renovated general store once known as Masters' Grocery. Afterward, shuttle back to St. Augustine, where you can relax or explore the city at your leisure. This evening, gather with your fellow travelers for a festive farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Florida Farmlands — 25 miles

What to Expect:

Today, ride through the farmlands of St. Johns County for another taste of Florida's diverse landscapes. A 30-minute shuttle brings you to the starting point, where your route crisscrosses agricultural fields and parallels the St. Johns River. Pedal past potato and cabbage farms, and pause for a break at Riverdale Park, a scenic green space along the river. After a snack stop, continue to the charming parish town of St. Ambrose. At the end of your ride, enjoy an included lunch before returning to the hotel by afternoon

shuttle.

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 6: Lightner Museum Visit / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an included breakfast, walk from the hotel to the Lightner Museum and explore its remarkable collection with your included admission. Built in 1887 in the Spanish Renaissance style, this impressive three-story museum houses fascinating relics from America's Gilded Age, including an outstanding collection of decorative and fine arts.

Hotel checkout time is 11:00 a.m. VBT has arranged a shuttle from the hotel to Jacksonville International Airport (JAX), departing St. Augustine at 11:00 a.m. Travel time is approximately 60 minutes. Flights departing before 2:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you need to travel to the airport at a different time, taxis are available.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-biking day: Explore the Lightner Museum with included admission

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### The Jekyll Island Club Resort (Days 1-2)

A member of the Historic Hotels of America and the centerpiece of Jekyll Island's historic district, the Queen Anne-style Jekyll Island Club Resort recalls the grand days of the Industrial Age when elite businessmen built their "cottages" far from city life. Gracious, sprawling, and recognizable by its iconic

Victorian turret, the hotel blends rich history with modern comfort on lush grounds. At this island resort, dine in the grand dining room or on the casual pier. Your warm and comfortable room in the main building offers all the amenities and convenience you could need, including in-room WiFi and air conditioning.

### **Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront (Days 3-5)**

This boutique-style hotel is an architectural salute to the rich Spanish traditions of St. Augustine. Its interconnected cottage-style buildings feature tiled roofs and wooden balconies. The air-conditioned hotel comprises 19 different buildings set around an inner courtyard and connected by an interior corridor. All of St. Augustine is right outside your door, from the historic Spanish Quarter to the Castillo de San Marcos. Guest rooms include a coffee maker, mini-refrigerator, and a spacious desk with two phones and voicemail. Free WiFi is available throughout the hotel.