

Holland & Belgium Bike & Boat: Bruges to Amsterdam

Bike Vacation Only

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 World 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: 8 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 11-36 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4 hours

Group size: 14-22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 61°/46°, June 66°/52°, August 70°/55°, September 64°/51°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 2, June 2.4, August 2.4, September 3.2

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

You are responsible for making your own way to meet the barge between 1:00 and 1:45 p.m. Please note that you cannot embark before this time, as the barge is being prepared for your arrival. If you are delayed, you must contact the barge as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. The barge will be moored next to the bus parking at Buiten Katelijnevest in central Bruges and will depart at 2:00 p.m.

You will cruise out of Bruges along a charming canal, with the barge stopping before dinner so you can join your trip leaders for a warm-up ride into the heart of Flanders.

This evening, your barge captain will give a brief welcome talk and introduce the crew. Enjoy a welcome dinner on board and take part in a fun language class to learn a bit of Flemish and Dutch. You will moor near Ghent, one of Belgium's most beautiful cities.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Keersluis Beernem to Aalterbrug Warm-Up Ride — 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

After disembarking and completing your bike fitting, the warm-up ride follows the Ghent–Bruges Canal. As you get comfortable on your bike and follow the route notes, you'll ride along asphalt paths and bike lanes, with some sections on quiet roads. At the end of the ride, the barge will meet you, and we'll sail to the mooring site near Ghent.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 km (13 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Tour Ghent / Cycle to Dendermonde and St. Amands

After breakfast, embark on a guided local boat excursion into the center of Ghent, then enjoy time to explore on your own. Located at the confluence of the Scheldt and Leie rivers, this “City of 200 Bridges” was founded around 600 AD. Many of its beautiful buildings date back to medieval times, when the textile industry brought great wealth to Ghent’s merchants. Numerous old patrician houses have been preserved in the city center, including the Cloth Makers’ Hall, built in 1425. The city’s major church is St. Baaf’s Cathedral, constructed and enhanced in various styles over many centuries. Inside, admire a number of medieval masterpieces, including Jan van Eyck’s renowned *Adoration of the Lamb*.

Lunch is on your own in Ghent.

After lunch, enjoy a scenic ride out of the city. Your bike path follows the Scheldt River, passing through small “polder” villages, marshy grasslands, ponds, and picturesque creeks. A ferry at Berlare-Appels takes you to the south shore of the Scheldt, where you’ll cross the Dender River lock system and rejoin your barge.

Cycle on to Dendermonde, a centuries-old city with a Benedictine abbey and a charming market square at its center. Today’s final destination is St. Amands, where the barge will dock along the banks of the Scheldt River.

This evening, savor a Belgian beer tasting and dinner on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Melle to Dendermonde — 29 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Dendermonde City Tour Loop — 2 km (1 mile)

What to Expect:

The route begins by crossing the Scheldt River at the town of Melle and joins a beautiful bike path along the river’s northern bank. After approximately 6.8 miles (11 km), the route leaves the river to meander through the countryside and a few small settlements. Upon returning to the river, you’ll cross by ferry and continue along the southern bank on a bike path leading to the large Dender River locks. After meeting the barge, you’ll have the option to take a loop ride to explore the small city of Dendermonde. Then, continue cruising to St. Amands, where the barge will moor for the night.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 – 31 km (18 – 19 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3: Cycle from St. Amands to Rupelmonde / Cycle from Rupelmonde to Antwerp via Basel

Cycle from St. Amands to Antwerp along the Scheldt River, passing through the village of Rupelmonde, where you can pause to admire its unique tidal watermill and the statue of Mercator—the renowned 16th-century mathematician and mapmaker who created both the terrestrial and celestial globes.

Enjoy lunch on your own before arriving in Basel, where you'll have time to explore the picturesque church square and Wissekerke Castle. Then continue cycling through farmland and tiny villages en route to Antwerp, Belgium's second-largest city.

Meet the barge at one of Antwerp's historic docks in the afternoon. This evening, walk into town to dine on your own at one of the many local restaurants and enjoy a free evening to explore.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: St. Amands to Rupelmonde — 33 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Rupelmonde to Antwerp — 28 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride offers plenty of variety. To start, your trip leaders will guide you across the Scheldt River on a small ferry. The first part of the ride follows bike paths lined with willow trees and dotted with carp ponds. After passing through the village of Moerzeke, you'll cross the river again by ferry and continue cycling through the city of Temse, once an important trading center. From there, ride on to Rupelmonde—a great spot for lunch on your own. The second part of the ride takes you through Basel, home to Belgium's oldest suspension bridge and the historic Wissekerke Castle. The final stretch leads through agricultural lands until the spire of Antwerp Cathedral comes into view. To reach the city, you'll cycle through a long and exciting bike-and-pedestrian tunnel beneath the river. The barge will be waiting at one of Antwerp's historic docks.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 – 61 km (17 – 37 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Visit Antwerp / Cruise to Tholen

Today is a non-biking day. This morning, you'll visit Antwerp, known as the "Diamond City" and the hometown of the painter Peter Paul Rubens. In the heart of the city, you'll find the Cathedral of Our Lady and beautiful historic townhouses surrounding the Market Square. You'll have plenty of free time to explore the city's many delights at your own pace.

After enjoying lunch on your own in Antwerp, rejoin the barge and relax as you cruise through the impressive port and along quieter canals en route to Tholen, the Netherlands.

After dinner on board, we've invited some local families to meet you at the barge and welcome you into their homes for an evening of camaraderie and cultural exchange.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day: Explore Antwerp, then cruise to Tholen, the Netherlands.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Cycle from Tholen to Willemstad / Cruise to Dordrecht

This morning, cycle from Tholen to Willemstad through tranquil agricultural land on the western edge of Brabant province, passing through the small town of Oud-Vossemeer. Claes van't Rosevelt, an ancestor of the American presidential family, emigrated from this village in 1649 in search of a better life. Later, you'll coast into 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.

Meet your barge here and set sail during lunch toward Dordrecht. The barge moors in the city's historic center, offering a relaxed and enjoyable afternoon of exploring. Dordrecht is one of Holland's oldest towns and is considered the birthplace of the Dutch Republic, founded by William of Orange.

This evening, continue exploring on your own and enjoy dinner at one of the town's local restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Tholen to Willemstad — 45 km (28 miles)

Afternoon: Willemstad City Tour — 2 km (1 mile)

What to Expect:

Today's ride begins in the town of Tholen. From here, small country lanes lead through relatively "new" agricultural lands to the village of Oud-Vossemeer, the ancestral home of the Roosevelt family. Shortly afterward, you'll cross the river and follow a bike path along its banks before meandering through the countryside en route to Willemstad, an ancient stronghold of the Orange family. After meeting the barge, you'll have the option to take a short but enjoyable ride around this remarkable 16th-century fortified city.

Cumulative Distance Range: 45 – 47 km (28 – 29 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Cruise to Alblasserdam / Cycle to Kinderdijk / Schoonhoven / Vianen

During breakfast, you'll cruise along the River Noord to Alblasserdam, where your ride begins toward Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Here, 19 of Holland's iconic windmills—some more than 260 years old—grace the horizon. After cycling past these historic windmills, cross the River Lek by ferry and continue riding through the beautiful canal-and-meadow landscapes of Krimpenerwaard to Schoonhoven, or "Silver City," renowned for its long silversmithing tradition. Rejoin the barge here and enjoy an included lunch. Afterward, you have the option to either cycle or cruise to Vianen.

If you choose the longer option, you'll pass through a landscape of wide polders separated by numerous canals. These areas—patches of land reclaimed from the sea—sit an average of six feet (1.8 meters) below sea level. The afternoon route winds through a series of villages and hamlets, with trails that often skirt the backyards of locals. You'll also ride along the Lek River dike, where you'll enjoy clear views of the region's dramatic differences in water levels.

Spend the night in Vianen, a small city on the River Lek. Dinner is on board tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Kinderdijk to Schoonhoven — 32 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Schoonhoven to Vianen — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

Disembark the barge at Alblasterdam and begin cycling to Kinderdijk, where you'll pause for a visit. From here, continue your ride along the legendary dike, surrounded by 19 traditional windmills. The route features scenic bike paths and passes dairy farms with typical black-and-white Frisian cows. Later, cross the River Lek by ferry and arrive in the small city of Schoonhoven, renowned for its silversmithing industry. After lunch, continue cycling through the Krimpenerwaard Polder. One final ferry takes you back across the Lek River to medieval Vianen.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 58 km (16 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Arrive in Amsterdam

During breakfast this morning, you'll cruise to Breukelen, the charming town after which Brooklyn, New York, is named. Begin your ride by crossing a white drawbridge—the original “Brooklyn Bridge”—and cycle toward Amsterdam. Follow the scenic Vecht and Gaasp rivers, which lead directly into the city. Along the Vecht River, you'll pass magnificent 17th-century mansions and country estates once built by wealthy Amsterdam merchants. Stop for a picnic lunch along the way.

This evening, enjoy your final dinner on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Breukelen to Weesp — 23 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Weesp to Diemen — 9 km (6 miles) | Diemen to Amsterdam — 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

The first part of today's ride follows the River Vecht along small country lanes to the town of Weesp. Here, enjoy a picnic lunch between two windmills before choosing to either shuttle in the support vehicle to meet the barge in Amsterdam or continue cycling. If you continue, the route follows the River Gaasp toward Diemen, where there is another opportunity to shuttle to the barge. For those who wish to cycle the full distance, the route continues along the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal all the way into the city. The barge will be docked near Amsterdam's central railway station.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9 – 44 km (6 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembark Barge / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an included breakfast, your tour concludes. Please ensure you disembark the barge no later than 9:00 a.m., as the crew needs time to prepare for their next guests. For departure suggestions, please refer to your *Vacation Preparation Handbook*.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

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.