

Portugal: Lisbon, Évora & the Algarve

Bike Vacation Only

No need to choose: on this vacation, you can enjoy two of Portugal's most renowned regions, the Algarve and Alentejo. Starting in Lisbon, you'll pedal deep into the cork forests and charming, white-washed villages of Alentejo. In the quaint riverside hamlet of Pomarão, you'll even have the rare pleasure of standing with one foot in Spain and the other in Portugal—with each foot in a different time zone! Our local leaders will take you through the dramatic landscape of *Campo Branco* to discover the ancient Moorish village of Mértola. Then, take a delightful cruise on the Guadiana River into the Algarve region. Here, you'll pedal past olive groves and small, local farms—returning to your luxurious suite to relax, enjoy a dip in the pool, and savor authentic, local cuisine.

Cultural Highlights

- Marvel at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Évora and the eerie Chapel of Bones in São Francisco Church.
- Cycle through Alentejo's stunning landscapes of sprawling vineyards, cork forests, and olive groves.
- Roam the hallowed halls of a Moorish medieval mosque in the ancient town of Mértola.
- Pedal along the Guadiana River, then cruise its waters aboard a privately chartered boat.
- Indulge in the amenities of your elegant Algarve retreat, relaxing by a heated pool and savoring locally sourced meals.

What to Expect

This tour features a combination of rolling terrain and moderate to challenging hills. The VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. Ideal for energetic beginners and experienced cyclists.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 10-37 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-5 hours

Group size: 14-22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

March 62°/46°, April 64°/48°, May 70°/52°, September 81°/60°, October 71°/55°, November 62°/49°

Average Rainfall (in.)

March 1.6, April 2.3, May 2.0, September 1.2, October 2.7, November 3.0

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Travel to Évora / Warm-Up Ride

Meet your VBT representative at the Pousada de Lisboa, our Pre-Tour hotel in Lisbon, at 8:30 a.m.

Your VBT representative will accompany you by shuttle (approximately one hour and 15 minutes) to Herdade do Barrocal for a tour and lunch. Depart Lisbon via the expansive Vasco da Gama Bridge—the longest bridge in Western Europe—spanning the mighty Tagus River. Heading east, you enter the scenic plains of the Alentejo region, known for its stunning vistas and abundant cork and olive groves. After lunch, continue to your hotel and change into your riding attire before meeting your VBT trip leaders for a bike-fitting and safety session.

Begin your bike tour from the hotel with a warm-up loop ride through the rustic farmland and gentle hills of this picturesque region, returning to your hotel outside the historic medieval town of Évora, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Your accommodation for the next two nights is the Convento do Espinheiro Historic Hotel & Spa. This beautifully preserved 15th-century convent, once a meeting place for noble figures who shaped Portugal's history, is today recognized as a national monument.

This evening, join the hotel's sommelier in the convent's atmospheric wine cellar to sample some of the region's wines before gathering for a sumptuous welcome dinner in the historic dining room.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 9 km (5 miles)

What to Expect:

After meeting your VBT trip leaders for a bike-fitting and safety session, set out on an easy afternoon warm-up ride to become familiar with your bike. This scenic loop follows quiet, well-maintained two-lane roads, winding through charming neighborhoods and the rolling countryside surrounding your hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9 km (5 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Historic Villages of Redondo and Monsaraz / Walking Tour of Évora

After breakfast, shuttle from your hotel to the whitewashed town of Redondo, home to a 500-year-old Portuguese pottery tradition. From here, begin a picturesque ride across the plains of Alentejo, following scenic country roads bordered by cork forests. Your destination looms in the distance: hilltop Monsaraz, one of Portugal's oldest settlements, and its imposing castle. Enthusiastic riders may enjoy the climb into town; the VBT support vehicle will be available to shuttle you from Aldeia de Venda to Monsaraz if you would like assistance or prefer more time to explore.

With its lofty locale, Monsaraz offers sweeping vistas of the Alentejo and neighboring Spain. Over the centuries, it has been occupied by Romans, Visigoths, Arabs, Mozarabs, Jews, and Christians. As you explore its narrow lanes and admire the whitewashed, red-roofed houses, take time to marvel at the views of the Alqueva Dam and the second-largest artificial lake in Europe. Enjoy lunch at a local café before shuttling back to your hotel.

Later, venture into Évora to meet a local guide for an enriching walking tour of this magnificently preserved UNESCO World Heritage site. Visit São Francisco Church to view its eerie Chapel of Bones, constructed by 16th-century Franciscan monks. Wander atmospheric alleyways lined with patrician mansions and whitewashed houses trimmed in bright yellow. Dinner is on your own in Évora this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Redondo to Aldeia de Venda and Monsaraz — 37 km (23 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride begins in the town of Redondo, approximately a 45-minute shuttle from your hotel. From Redondo, ride toward the hilltop village of Monsaraz. The route features some short inclines and rolling hills, with the VBT support vehicle nearby should you wish to shuttle at any point. At the end of the short option in the town of Aldeia de Venda, the shuttle will transport you to the historic village of Monsaraz, where you will have ample time to explore before lunch. The long option continues from Aldeia de Pais through the scenic Alentejo countryside and finishes with a challenging 1.5 km (just under one mile) climb into Monsaraz.

Cumulative Distance Range: 37 km (23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Baixo Alentejo Region / Mértola

After breakfast, shuttle south to the small town of Castro Verde in the lower Alentejo region, or Baixo Alentejo. Today's rides introduce you to the arid, beautiful landscapes of the Campo Branco, or White Plains. As you cycle, you may pass shepherds grazing their herds across the wide-open terrain. For lunch, stop at a typical Portuguese rural café for a farm-fresh meal with warm, welcoming hosts. Afterward, shuttle or ride to the remarkable fortified hilltop town of Mértola and your hotel.

After settling into your accommodations, join a local guide for a fascinating exploration of Mértola. This town's rich history stretches back to the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Romans. Its most important remnant from the 500-year Moorish occupation is the medieval mosque—the only one from this period to have survived in Portugal. Today it serves as Mértola's main church, still preserving many of its original Moorish features.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your leisure in one of the town's inviting restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Geraldos to Mértola — 45 km (28 miles)

What to Expect:

After a two-hour morning shuttle south, begin today's ride in Geraldos, pedaling into the arid and beautiful landscape of the *Campo Branco*, or White Plains. The route across the Campo Branco is mostly level and follows narrow, paved country roads with very little traffic, though it promises an excellent workout if there is a breeze. Stop for lunch at a farm café in São João dos Caldeireiros. After your meal, continue cycling onto the main road toward Mértola, where traffic increases as you approach town. The VBT support vehicle is available for anyone who would prefer to shuttle to the hotel after lunch.

Cumulative Distance Range: 45 km (28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4: Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana / Guadiana River Cruise

After breakfast, set out directly from your hotel. (Those preferring a shorter option may shuttle approximately 15 minutes to the starting point of their ride instead.) This morning's cycling leads you into the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, one of 30 natural areas officially protected by the Portuguese government. Wind your way through small towns showcasing beautifully preserved traditional architecture, and coast down to the banks of the Guadiana River. The river's small port village of Pomarão was specially constructed to support nearby mining operations. Here, you may straddle the Portugal–Spain border—standing with one foot in each country and half your body in Spain's later time zone!

Savor lunch at a riverside café overlooking the marina. Then, embark a privately chartered boat for a relaxing afternoon cruise on the Guadiana River. Your cruise delivers you directly to the hotel's private dock in Mértola. Those seeking a longer and more challenging option after lunch may forfeit the boat excursion and cycle back to the hotel.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Mértola to Pomarao — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Pomarao to Hotel Museu (No River Cruise) — 20 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts from the hotel, beginning with a steady climb on a national road with some potentially fast-moving traffic and trucks. (If you prefer to avoid the climb and traffic, you may shuttle approximately 15 minutes from the hotel to where your trip leaders will have your bike ready.) The morning cycling route follows small, paved country roads through the less-traveled Guadiana Valley Natural Park. Although today's ride is shorter than on other days, you will encounter some rolling hills and a steep descent over the final 1.2 miles (2 km) to the Guadiana River. After lunch, those who choose to ride back to the hotel instead of joining the boat excursion will begin with a challenging 1.2-mile (2-km) climb, rewarded by sweeping views and well-earned bragging rights. The final 3.1 miles (5 km) into Mértola are again on a national road shared with fast-moving traffic and trucks. The VBT support vehicle is available throughout

the day.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 44 km (15 – 27 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Travel to the Algarve

After breakfast, shuttle southward into the Algarve, a region where the mountains meet the sea. Begin your morning ride in the beautiful village of Cachopo, tucked into the rolling foothills of the Serra do Caldeirão. Today's routes reveal a changing landscape, with sweeping views of the Algarve's rugged countryside and glimpses of the distant Atlantic shimmering on the horizon. Though the morning ride is short, the steady climbs offer a satisfying workout—and the perfect appetite for an included lunch featuring local flavors.

After lunch, continue cycling mostly downhill toward your next hotel. Along the way, you may wish to pause and explore the Algarve Costumes Museum in São Brás de Alportel, a charming celebration of the region's rich cultural heritage.

Your ride concludes at Vila Monte Farm House, a serene hideaway set amid fragrant gardens and citrus groves. Settle into one of its breezy, elegant suites and savor the tranquility of the authentic Algarvian countryside—far from the crowds of the coast, yet infused with the true spirit of Portugal.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cachopo to Montes Novos Lunch — 17 km (11 miles)

Afternoon: Montes Novos to Vila Monte — 33 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride in the Algarve follows undulating hills, offering beautiful vistas of the Atlantic Ocean in the distance. Enjoy a brief stop for lunch in the port town of Monte Novos. In the afternoon, continue on quiet country roads, descending downhill to your hotel, the Vila Monte Farm House.

Cumulative Distance Range: 50 km (32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Cycle to Monterosa Olive Groves, Tavira, and Cacela-a-Velha / Farewell Dinner

After a sumptuous breakfast, enjoy a leisurely spin through the surrounding Algarve countryside, with vistas of the sea in the distance. Along the way, stop to visit the Monterosa olive groves for an olive oil tasting and to learn more about the production process. From here, cycle to the small Algarve city of Tavira, home to a medieval castle. Spend time exploring the site and enjoy lunch at your leisure in one of the many lively cafés.

After lunch, continue pedaling to the lovely whitewashed village of Cacela-a-Velha, perched atop a hill overlooking the easternmost lagoon of the Formosa River. The village is home to the Fortaleza de Cacela, located on the site of the original castle constructed during the Muslim period. Spend time exploring before shuttling to your resort for a leisurely late afternoon, perhaps relaxing by the pools or visiting the spa.

This evening, join your fellow travelers and trip leaders for a fireside farewell reception, followed by a delightful dinner featuring regional Algarve cuisine made with the freshest ingredients and paired with local wines.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vila Monte to Cacela-a-Velha with Monterosa — 41 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts from your hotel, following less-traveled lanes through the Algarve countryside past groves of citrus, olive, and avocado trees. There will be some city riding with heavier traffic as you pass through Tavira. As you approach the Algarve coast, catch glimpses of the Atlantic Ocean in the distance before arriving at the seaside village of Cacela-a-Velha. Today's ride is less challenging, featuring gently rolling hills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 41 km (25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Cascais / Your VBT Vacation Ends

Enjoy breakfast before departing on a scenic drive to Cascais (approximately four hours). Your tour concludes at approximately 1:00 p.m. at our Post-Tour hotel, the Pestana Cidadela Cascais. Taxis are readily available at the hotel to take you to central Lisbon hotels, the Lisbon train station, or Lisbon Airport—a drive of approximately 30–45 minutes, depending on traffic.

Important: For a smooth departure, we recommend booking flights from Lisbon after 4:00 p.m. If you are departing earlier, you will need to arrange your own transportation from the last hotel in the Algarve to Lisbon Airport.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Convento do Espinheiro Hotel & Spa (Days 1-2)

The Convento do Espinheiro, Historic Hotel & Spa is steeped in history, it is listed as one of Portugal's national monuments for the many significant noble figures who met here to shape the history and character of the nation. The 15th-century convent has been restored to offer all the amenities of a modern resort, including air conditioning, amidst a peaceful and inspiring atmosphere. During your stay, sample one of its five restaurants and bars, the indoor or outdoor pool, and health club. Enjoy a meditative stroll in the almost 20 acres of gardens, or a contemplative visit to its onsite historic church. The wine cellar features some of the region's preferred wines.

Hotel Museu (Days 3-4)

A standout property in Mértola, the Hotel Museu—a literal “museum hotel”—rests on a foundation that dates back to Roman times, as guests can see from a glance through the glass floor of the lobby. Onsite exhibits showcase additional artifacts from the Roman and Moorish period. Tucked between the historic center of Mértola and the banks of the Guadiana River, the hotel offers splendid riverside vistas. Air-conditioned rooms are simple yet boast all the amenities of a typical 3-star hotel, and more. Enjoy dinner on the scenic hotel terrace overlooking the river.

Vila Monte Farm House (Days 5-6)

Your hosts at the Vila Monte Farm House invite you to settle in to Portugal's picturesque seaside haven. At this unique and authentic resort, buildings are fashioned after the typical architecture of the Algarve with chimneys, terraces, and whitewashed stairways. Guests who are joining us on the post extension can indulge in the property's Junior Suites and Superior Suites, set among orange trees and offering all the amenities of an elegant retreat. The air-conditioned Farm House restaurant serves regional delicacies made from the freshest ingredients from local markets or from the resort's own gardens. Relax in one of the swimming pools or treat yourself to a massage in the gardens. The resort's Guest Assistants are on hand to help you customize your stay, whether you simply want to relax or explore more with several available optional excursions.