

Portugal & Spain Bike & River Cruise: Douro Valley

Bike Vacation Only

If you're dreaming of a Douro Valley River cruise with a rich bouquet of cycling options and authentic Portuguese culture—this is the one! Our expert trip designers have uncovered picturesque and invigorating rides through historic fincas and small medieval villages—including Marialva, where you'll visit one of Portugal's oldest olive presses. Revel in a gentle spin along the storied shores of the Douro River, passing a landscape of chestnut trees, picturesque villages, and charming vineyards before pausing for a port wine tasting at an exclusive wine cellar in Vila Nova de Gaia. Cross the border into Spain and discover the "Golden City" of Salamanca with its stunning cathedrals and ancient bridges—or perhaps you'll choose to pedal into the scenic Spanish hills, pausing for rural lunch of local delicacies in a remote Spanish village. Along the way, you'll enjoy the luxurious amenities of your Emerald Cruises ship—dining on authentic Portuguese cuisine in its five-star restaurant and relaxing outdoors on the sun deck by the pool as the scenic vistas of the Douro drift by.

Cultural Highlights

Unpack once, then cruise the picturesque Douro River into wine country, disembarking to cycle the back roads of Portugal and Spain.

Luxuriate in the amenities of Emerald's most intimate river cruise ship, the MS *Emerald Radiance*.

Pedal through scenic countryside, passing lush vineyards and rural landscapes and pausing to soak in the ambience of historic villages.

Sample the port wines for which the Douro Valley is renowned during a private tasting with a wine producer.

Savor the distinctive cuisine of Portugal, from its fresh seafood to its farm-to-table produce and cured meats.

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour offers moderate riverside terrain, with daily bus shuttles to the cycling routes. Riding is primarily on paved country roads with limited traffic, through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

On Board Ship: Our group of up to 22 VBT guests will be part of a larger group on board our 112-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join others. While in port, our ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means you might walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

Tour Duration: 8 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 6-45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-5 hours

Group size: 14-22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 64°/49°, May 68°/53°, June 73°/58°, July 76°/60°, August 77°/60°, September 75°/58°, October 69°/55°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 2.5, May 1.7, June 0.5, July 0.2, August 0.3, September 1.0, October 3.8

DAY 1: Porto / Embark Ship

You are responsible for making your own way to Porto, to meet your Emerald Cruises ship. Please arrive between 12:30 and 2:00 p.m. Please note that you cannot embark before 12:00 p.m., as the ship is being prepared for you. If you are late, you must contact the ship as soon as possible to make arrangements to meet the ship.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to enjoy lunch on board, served between 12:00 and 3:00 p.m., relax in the ship's common areas, take a walk, or head into town to explore or enjoy a traditional *pastel de nata*, Portugal's famously delicious custard pastry, maybe with a coffee or a glass of port wine.

This afternoon, meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a test ride in a nearby park. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner on board. Your river ship remains in Porto this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Test — 5 km (3 miles)

What to Expect:

Your short test ride follows a bike path through a nearby park in Porto. Use this time to get acquainted with your bicycle, your route notes, and your Ride with GPS. This is also an opportunity to check your brakes, practice shifting through your full range of gears, and perhaps chat with locals along the way.

Cumulative Distance Range: 5 km (3 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Peso da Régua / Cycle to Pinhão

This morning you sail upriver into the Douro Valley, Portugal's spectacularly scenic wine region of sloping riverside vineyards. As you cruise, enjoy breakfast in the ship's Reflection Restaurant and perhaps a stroll around the walking track on the top Sun Deck, admiring the views that pass you by. After lunch on board, disembark in Peso da Régua, situated at the westernmost edge of the demarcated port-wine region.

Your afternoon of cycling follows the Douro's banks along a scenic roadway, leading you deeper into wine country. Gentle hills rise up all around you while the river ambles along to your left. Your destination is Pinhão, perched on a pretty bend in the river and producer of some of the world's finest ports. The town's charming train station is a pleasure to explore, with its artful *azulejos*, the country's famous hand-painted tiles, depicting the harvest.

Pause for a glass of port wine in town, upon your arrival. As you've been cycling, your ship has been cruising upriver and will meet you in Pinhão. Enjoy dinner on board this evening. You dock overnight in this delightful town.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Peso da Régua to Pinhão — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

After lunch and disembarkation in Peso da Régua, start cycling along the famous N-222 national country

road to Pinhão. The segment of road you ride was honored with the “World’s Best Road” award in 2015. Expect some car traffic, especially in the Peso da Régua area.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 km (16 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Travel to Penedono / Cycle to Trancoso and Marialva / Sail to Vega de Terrón

Cycle to two of the region’s most scenic villages today, each part of Portugal’s network of Historic Villages. After breakfast on board, travel to Penedono, a 50-minute drive south of the Douro River. Then cycle a picturesque route past chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards to Trancoso, a stunning hilltop town that’s home to the oldest documented rural market in Portugal. The medieval stone wall that encloses the cobbled lanes of the Old Town dates to the 13th century, while the tower you’ll see is an echo of Moorish rule. During a guided walk, learn about Trancoso’s rich Sephardic-Jewish heritage.

After lunch in Trancoso, continue riding to Marialva, a sleepy little village overlooked by an imposing 12th-century castle. Take time to explore one of the oldest olive presses in Portugal and to taste some local products, before traveling back to the Douro River, where your ship greets you in Pocinho. As you recount the day’s adventure over dinner, you continue cruising upriver to Vega de Terrón at the Spanish border, where you dock overnight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Penedono to Trancoso — 28 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Trancoso to Marialva — 33 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

After a 50-minute morning shuttle, cycle through the picturesque Portuguese countryside, passing chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards on your way to Trancoso. After a guided walk and lunch, continue cycling to Marialva along rolling hills with minimal traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 – 61 km (18 – 39 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Tour Salamanca, Spain, or Cycle Through Rustic Spanish Villages

Enjoy another abundant breakfast on board, then choose how you'd like to spend the day, joining a full-day excursion to Salamanca, Spain, or cycling amid Spain's gorgeous countryside. Salamanca is a rare gem among Spanish cities. Its ornate, golden sandstone architecture is adorned with orange-hued Latin inscriptions—befitting a town that hosts the country's oldest university. Your tour of this UNESCO World Heritage site includes the Old and New Cathedrals, some 300 years apart in age, and the vast Plaza Mayor.

For those who prefer more cycling, ride among the scenic vistas of Salamanca Province, a tranquil corner of Spain where most villages have a population of less than 300. Begin your ride in Vitigudino, a tiny Spanish village halfway to the city of Salamanca (the province's capital). Then spend the day amid stirring landscapes of rolling hills and wide plains, passing through rustic villages hugging rivers or nestled among mountains. Pause for lunch in the small hamlet of Lumbrales before continuing back to Portugal and rejoining your ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vitigudino to Lumbrales — 40 km (25 miles)

Afternoon: Lumbrales to Ship — 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Join the private shuttle to Salamanca in the morning. If you choose to cycle, leave the bus with your VBT trip leaders in Vitigudino and cycle the Spanish countryside. Ride small paved roads, with almost zero traffic, to Lumbrales. You may encounter a few cars in the afternoon on your return to Portugal, with a long downhill at the end. An optional shuttle is provided for the afternoon ride.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 – 72 km (25 – 45 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Côa Valley / Peso da Régua

This morning, visit the Côa Valley Museum and Archaeologic Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to view the famed rock carvings that date to between 22,000 and 10,000 BCE. Thousands of images of horse, cattle, human, and abstract figures have survived millennia, providing insight into prehistoric lives in Iberia. After, travel to Penela da Beira for lunch. The tiny village is notable for the massive granite outcrop at its center.

Your spin continues along quiet country roads to Trevões, a small patrician town whose church houses some beautiful frescoes. Take time to explore and perhaps chat with some locals before getting a lift back to the ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Penela da Beira to Trevões — 24 km (15 miles) | Penela da Beira to Trevões (with extra miles) — 41 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

The afternoon ride is across a hilly countryside, with a few moderate climbs and swooping downhills. Riding is on paved country roads with limited car traffic. An optional loop with extra miles will be offered as well.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 41 km (15 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Ecopista do Tâmega / Amarante / Entre-os-Rios

Disembark after breakfast for another spectacular day of cycling bucolic routes in and around the Douro Valley. After about an hour's travel time to Cruz de Baixo, you begin an unforgettable ride on the Ecopista do Tâmega, a well-kept rail trail through the breathtaking countryside of Tâmega Valley. Pedal past forests, the rolling hills of the Marão Mountain Range, and historic villages before arriving in Amarante, the southern terminus of the rail trail. From here, take a short shuttle ride to a local wine producer, where you'll learn about the production of the famous Vinho Verde, or "Green Wine." Meet the owner and his

family for a wine tasting and a delicious home-hosted lunch.

Later, travel back to your ship, which is waiting for you in Entre-os-Rios. This evening, celebrate your Douro River discoveries at the Captain's Farewell Reception, followed by dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ecopista Trail — 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows a well-maintained rail-to-trail bike path. The route is car-free and mostly flat, with an elevation gain of less than 1,500 feet over 24 miles.

Cumulative Distance Range: 39 km (24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Atlantic Coast / Port Wine Tasting

Awake back in Porto this morning. For your final ride in Portugal, cycle to the Atlantic coast and enjoy a scenic, sea-kissed route along the ocean. Upon arriving in Vila Nova de Gaia, savor a fresh seafood lunch, with your meal sourced from the ocean that morning.

After lunch, visit a local port wine producer for a guided tour and tasting at his premises. Later, return to Porto on foot by crossing the iconic Ponte Luís I bridge. Bid a fond farewell to your fellow travelers and VBT trip leaders over a cocktail reception and a final delicious dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ride Along the Atlantic Coast — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's out and back ride has minimal elevation gain. You will cycle on a mix of paved roads and bike paths, starting and ending in an urban setting.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembarkation / VBT Bicycling Vacation Ends

After enjoying your included breakfast, disembark the ship and conclude your bicycle tour of the Douro Valley. You may choose to join a private guided walk through the city's highlights. Afterward, you are free to explore more of Porto on your own or continue with your travel arrangements.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Emerald Radiance (Days 1-7)

Expressly built for sailing Portugal's Douro River, the *Emerald Radiance* navigates the heart of the Iberian region in complete luxury. As Emerald Cruises' most intimate ship, with a capacity of 112 guests, *Emerald Radiance* features fleet favorites such as a spacious bar and lounge, a sun deck, and serenity pool. The ship's 40 generously proportioned suites and 10 staterooms feature all the amenities you need. VBT offers both cabin types, suites and staterooms, over five cabin categories.