

Spain & Portugal: Coastal Camino de Santiago

Bike Vacation + Air Package

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 feel the depth of sacred traditions during your stay at an ancient monastery next to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. 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: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 11-40 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-4 hours

Group size: 14-22 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

FLIGHT DAY: Depart from the United States or Canada

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Santiago de Compostela

A VBT representative will greet you at the airport to start your first day in Santiago de Compostela off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Guided tour of Parador de Santiago de Compostela and the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral / Travel to Padrón / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception and dinner

After an included breakfast this morning, meet your VBT local guide in the hotel lobby. Please ensure you have checked out of the hotel and be dressed in your cycling clothes and ready for biking (or if you prefer to change into cycling clothes in a restroom at the start of the warm-up ride, please put them in your carry-on luggage for easy access). You will travel to the warm-up ride immediately after your morning's tour in Santiago de Compostela, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Your discoveries of this fascinating city begin immediately, as your VBT local guide explains the historic significance of the Parador de Santiago de Compostela, also known as the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, during a brief tour of the complex. This remarkable property, opened in 1499 on Obradoiro Square to serve the pilgrims coming to Santiago along the Way of St. James, boasts a rich heritage and long history. Next, follow your guide to the revered Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, burial site of the apostle James and the destination of countless pilgrims still today. After time to take in its ornate façade and sweeping plaza, you learn more about the pilgrimage as you journey to the town of Padrón, where the bones of St. James are said to have first arrived in Spain by boat.

You meet your VBT trip leaders in Padrón for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session. Your warm-up ride follows the banks of the Ulla River, occasionally overlapping with the Portuguese Way of St. James. On your way, you may see little boats, typically used by pilgrims (weather permitting) for a downriver float on the Ulla into the sweeping seascapes of the Ría de Arousa—the largest of Galicia’s estuaries and producer of some of Europe’s best seafood. After an included lunch in Padrón, you will be shuttled aboard a private coach to the port town of Cambados and its charming *parador*, a stately 17th-century Galician manor house and your home for the next two nights.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 23 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride will give you the opportunity to become familiar with your bike as you ride country roads with little traffic. The ride is fairly level, mostly through lovely forests and farmlands and following the banks of the Ulla River.

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 km (14 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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

This morning, if weather permits, experience local seafaring traditions firsthand as you sail with Captain Isidro on his beautifully preserved, historic boat *Chasula*. You’ll also learn how the sea is valued and how seafood is collected in this culture with our guide from the association of the “Sea Woman.”

Afterward, set out on your bike to cycle along the waterfront of Cambados and the Camino de Santiago, and pause along the shore of the sea to enjoy a picnic lunch. Your route traces the gently rolling coastal vineyards and velvety pine groves of the Rías Baixas, the name given to the four pristine estuaries along Galicia’s Atlantic coast. (It is pronounced “Ree-ass By-Shass.”) This stunning region, which you traverse

along the wine road known as the *Ruta do Viño Rías Baixas*, is renowned for its white wine grapes introduced here in the 12th century by Cistercian monks. Following narrow country lanes, you arrive at the causeway connecting Spain's mainland to the island of A Illa de Arousa. Cross over, then circumnavigate the island on picturesque bike paths and typical small-town streets, perhaps spotting some of the herons that reside on this island municipality in the middle of the Ría de Arousa, the largest estuary in Galicia.

This evening, you may walk through the neighboring historic district, a spectacular cluster of mansions that has been declared a Site of Cultural Interest by the Spanish government. Perhaps pause at one of the traditional cafés for a glass of local wine such as a refreshing glass of *albariño*, known locally as the "wine of the sea" for the coastal vineyards that produce it and for its compatibility with seafood. After, enjoy dinner on your own at one of the numerous restaurants in the Old Town; your trip leaders will give you 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 of the cycling on quaint country roads and bike paths. You might experience some heavier traffic on the island of A Illa de Arousa and in Cambados at the beginning and end of your afternoon ride. You cross the causeway bridge on a pedestrian/cycle path; during the summer months there could be heavier bike traffic and more pedestrians. As always, the VBT support vehicle will be readily available if you prefer to shuttle across the causeway to the island. Those with additional energy can ride a longer, moderate loop when coming back 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 camellia gardens with lunch and albariño wine tasting / Travel to Baiona

The flower of Galicia is the camellia, and today's route is a testament to its revered status. You begin with a spin along part of the *Ruta de la Camelia*, a beautiful ride connecting various historic gardens. Even though you will not see camellias in bloom due to the month of your visit, you are sure to find the botanic gardens impressive any time of year.

You cycle out of Cambados via neighboring hills and vineyards, following narrow country lanes to the vineyards and gardens of the 18th-century Pazo de Rubianes (Palace of Rubianes). This grand villa boasts a splendid example of Galicia's horticultural beauty. Savor a sumptuous lunch and tasting of the estate's unique regional *albariño* wine before a guided walk through its impressive botanical gardens—a lavish display of century-old camellias, magnolias, and more than 800 other floral species.

Later, you shuttle (approximately one hour) to Baiona, scenically set on Vigo Bay. This pretty port town is known as Villa de la Arribada, meaning "port of entry," as it was the first in Europe to learn of the discovery of America when Columbus' ship the *Pinta* arrived on its shores after its overseas voyage. Here, you'll check into your next *parador*, located within a beautiful 14th-century fortress on the peninsula of Montereal, opposite the Vigo estuary. Enjoy sweeping sea views throughout your stay.

This evening, savor 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, leading you into the foothills and vineyards surrounding Cambados and providing a great workout. Most of the cycling is on country roads with some occasional traffic. The ride from the vineyards to Pazo de Rubianes has additional elevation gains. Guests may opt to shuttle to Pazo de Rubianes from the vineyards.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Coastal loop ride to Oia / Royal Monastery of Santa María de Oia

/ Explore Baiona

After breakfast, cycle directly from the *parador*. This morning's route traces the coast, often following the Portuguese Coastal Camino de Santiago and passing pilgrims on their spiritual journey. You steer off the main bike route into the shade of the forested foothills, where spectacular seaside views unfold as you ride. Descend back to the coast and the small seaside village of Oia, with its historic Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Oia. This 12th-century treasure has been a monastery, a palace, and a school—and was even a jail during the tumultuous Spanish Civil War. You will stop at a nearby restaurant for a delicious, included lunch overlooking the sea, before cycling or shuttling back to the *parador*.

Spend time exploring the sites of Baiona, stroll the *parador*'s historic fortress grounds, or take a dip in the large swimming pool.

In the evening, you may walk to the medieval town center of Baiona for your dinner at 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 with scenic sea views. Most of the cycling is on the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James, which follows a main roadway. You may be sharing the Camino de Santiago with pilgrims; the path can become crowded in the summer months. Your ride will also follow narrow hillside roads with little traffic if you decide for more challenging morning option. The afternoon return ride could have coastal headwinds. The VBT support vehicle will be available for anyone wishing to shuttle back to the *parador*.

Today may offer an additional independent ride 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 to Portugal / Welcome in Portugal

Today, you bid farewell to Spain as you cycle the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James into Portugal. This morning, enjoy the scenic short shuttle to Oia to begin biking as you follow the spiritual Camino again past amazing coastal vistas.

Arriving at Spain and Portugal's natural border, the Minho River, you will discover southernmost part of Galicia. Shortly after, you enter Portugal bicycling over the Friendship Bridge. The village of Vila Nova de Cerveira will welcome you onto Portuguese soil, where you can find choices for lunch on your own. Then you continue your journey on a scenic bike route with river and ocean views to Íncora. Here, our private coach will shuttle you to your seaside accommodations, located outside the Portuguese town of Viana do Castelo.

After getting acquainted with the hotel's amenities, you may take a short stroll to the beach and delight in a stunning sunset with ocean views, before 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 Íncora — 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Most of today's cycling is on the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James along a designated path next to the main road to Portugal. You may be sharing the Camino de Santiago with pilgrims; the path can become crowded in the summer months. After you pass the town of A Guarda, you will cycle on a side road with some short sections of rolling hills, till you cross the river Minho bridge into Portugal, leaving Spain. The afternoon ride follows the river flow and designated bike paths all the way to Íncora. Here, our private coach will wait for you.

Today may offer an additional independent ride 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 wine tasting at a Count's manor / Farewell reception and dinner

After a lavish breakfast buffet, take a short journey to the heart of 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 the stroll in this pretty riverside town, named for the long medieval bridge that spans the Lima River, before you board our private coach to a bucolic farming landscape draped with hillside vineyards and dotted with beautiful manor houses known as *paços*, small country palaces that once served as rest stops for kings during their travels through the countryside. Like royalty of old, you, too, will use one as a rest stop—the Paço de Calheiros, owned and operated by the family of Count Calheiros since medieval times. The present-day family home was built in the 17th century. Its stalwart structures and three-foot granite wall have stood the test of time. You may stroll the grounds and admire breathtaking views of the Lima Valley. If the day is clear, you might also glimpse the Atlantic Ocean. Get to know your host, Count Calheiros, over a lunch accompanied by *vinho verde* wines harvested from his vineyards. After this reinvigorating respite, shuttle back to your hotel.

This evening, join your entire group for a sunset cocktail. Learn about the hotel's unique philosophy that embraces the active lifestyle of its guests, from surfers and paddleboarders to cyclists and yogis. Tonight, enjoy an included festive farewell dinner and sample some 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 offers a variety of bike paths, narrow rural roads with limited traffic, and country roads with varied levels of traffic. While following the river to Ponte de Lima, you spend the last couple of miles on easy flat terrain.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (16 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Porto

Your tour culminates with a fresh Portuguese breakfast. You'll say so long, farewell to your trip leaders and take a short bus ride into Porto, the hub of Portugal's wine production and a cultural capital dripping with authentic charm. Your hotel—the Pestana Vintage Porto—is built within the walls of 16th- and 18th-century buildings. You'll enjoy its location directly on the banks of the Douro River in the heart of the historic district, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Step out onto the Praça da Ribeira square next to the quayside of the Cais da Estiva. Here, wonderful outdoor cafés line the riverfront.

The remainder of the day is yours to make your own discoveries. Your room may not be ready until 3:00 p.m., but your luggage awaits your arrival at the hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, transportation to the Porto airport will be provided (an approximately 30- to 45-minute drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Parador de Santiago de Compostela (Arrival Day)

History, art, tradition, and modern amenities converge at the Parador de Santiago, known to many as the Hostal dos Reis Católicos. One of the most luxurious hotels in the Paradores chain, it is perfectly situated on Obradoiro Square, next to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The building was constructed as a royal hospital in 1499 to accommodate pilgrims traveling to Santiago, making it one of the oldest hotels in the world. Elegant, air-conditioned rooms, four beautiful cloisters, and a stunning vaulted dining room serving Galician-style cuisine combine to make this into a truly memorable stay.

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.

Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel (Day 7)

Constructed on a part of Porto's medieval city wall, Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel is a charming 5-star property located in Praça da Ribeira square. Forming part of a block of townhouses dating from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, this magnificent building is a protected UNESCO World Heritage site. Its privileged location affords beautiful views of the Douro River. You can enjoy Portuguese and international cuisine at the casual RIB Restaurant. Have a drink at Bar Heritage, and relax after a festive day in Porto. Rooms include air conditioning and WiFi, and are in a classic NON river-view category; however, at check-in time, you may ask about upgrading for an additional cost to a river-view room. Upgrades are only available at time of check-in and are subject to availability at that moment. They cannot be pre-reserved prior to your arrival. Upgrade costs vary and are only quoted at check-in time.