

Holland & Belgium Bike and Boat: Amsterdam to Bruges

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 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: 10-44 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-4 hours

Group size: 22 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 61°/46°, June 66°/52°, July 69°/55°, August 70°/55°, September 64°/51°, October 57°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 2, June 2.4, July 2.9, August 2.4, September 3.2, October 4.1

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

You are responsible for making your own way to the barge. Please plan to arrive between 1:00 and 1:45 p.m. Note that you cannot embark before this time, as the barge is being prepared for you. If you are delayed, contact the barge as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. The barge will be moored in Oosterdok, near the entrance of the NEMO Museum, behind Amsterdam Centraal train station. Please refer to the information provided in your *Vacation Preparation Handbook*. The barge sets sail at 2:00 p.m.

You will dock for our warm-up ride, which follows the River Vecht. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner with the group as we cruise toward our first overnight stop in Vianen, a small city on the River Lek.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Nigtevecht to Breukelen Warm-Up Ride — 17 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride starts at Nigtevecht, at the connector between the old river and the modern Amsterdam-Rhine Canal. Although the road is quiet, it is narrow, and you may encounter some light traffic. You will cross the original Brooklyn Bridge into Breukelen town, the home of the first settlers in New Amsterdam (New York).

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Cycle to Kinderdijk / Cruise to Dordrecht

After breakfast, cycle along the small canals of the rural Krimpenerwaard region. You'll follow the course

of the River Lek through Schoonhoven, known as the “Silver City” for its long silversmithing tradition. Continue on to Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage site where 19 of Holland’s iconic windmills—some more than 260 years old—grace the horizon. From there, ride to Alblasserdam and board the barge for a cruise to Dordrecht, one of Holland’s oldest towns and the birthplace of the Dutch state, founded by William of Orange.

Enjoy dinner on board in Dordrecht, where the barge moors overnight. Afterward, take a guided stroll through the city’s historic center with one of your trip leaders and catch a glimpse of its rich past.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vianen to Schoonhoven — 27 km (17 miles) OR Vianen to Schoonhoven via Polsbroek PLUS — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Schoonhoven to Kinderdijk — 31 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

Today’s ride starts in Vianen. First, you’ll cross a large bridge over the River Lek. The next stretch leads you through villages in the Krimpenerwaard Polder, where a small *fietspad* (bike path) takes you through private backyards. In the small, historic city of Schoonhoven, choose a restaurant for lunch on your own. You can board your barge, disembark, or continue riding from here. From Schoonhoven, you’ll cross the River Lek by ferry. The route continues to the town of Nieuwpoort and into the Alblasserwaard Polder. This is mainly dairy farming and pastureland, home to black-and-white Frisian cows and a variety of waterfowl. Your *fietspad* continues through Kinderdijk, amid the country’s largest collection of traditional windmills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 62 km (17 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3: Cruise to Willemstad / Cycle to Tholen

This morning, enjoy a short language lesson while sailing to 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. Your bike ride begins

with a guided tour of this historic town.

Then, cycle to Tholen—once an island in the middle of the wide Zeeland streams, where many locals made their living by fishing. Today, it's connected to the mainland, but still remains a picturesque village filled with relics of its eventful past. Pedal through quiet farmlands and pause for a picnic lunch at historic locks before arriving in Tholen. Here, you'll rejoin the barge and enjoy dinner on board.

Afterward, we've invited some local families to meet you at the barge and accompany you back to their homes for an evening of camaraderie and cultural exchange.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Willemstad to Dintel Locks — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Dintel Locks to Tholen — 22 km (14 miles) OR Dintel Locks to Tholen Including Loop — 35 km (22 miles)

What to Expect:

Ride through the relatively "new" rural agricultural region in the western part of Brabant province—a landscape of potato and sugar beet fields. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the historic Dintel River Locks. Afterward, cross the bridge into Zeeland province and continue to Oud-Vossemeer, the ancestral home of the Roosevelt family. Finally, arrive in Tholen, the charming capital of this former island.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 – 59 km (14 – 37 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Cruise to Antwerp, Belgium

Today is a non-biking day. This morning, take time to relax on board during a scenic cruise to the impressive port city of Antwerp. After enjoying brunch on board, you'll have the rest of the afternoon to explore at your leisure.

Antwerp is known as the "Diamond City" and is the birthplace of the renowned painter Peter Paul Rubens. You may wish to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady or stroll through the Market Square, lined with beautiful

historic townhouses.

Tonight, enjoy dinner on your own at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day: Cruise to and Explore Antwerp

Included Meals: Brunch

DAY 5: Cycle to Dendermonde and St. Amands

After breakfast in Antwerp, you'll hop on your bike for a scenic ride along the Scheldt River to Temse, pausing along the way for lunch on your own in Rupelmonde. This charming town features a unique tidal watermill and a statue of the mathematician and mapmaker Mercator, the world's leading geographer in the 16th century. He created both the terrestrial and celestial globes that helped shape modern navigation.

In the afternoon, cycle past Wissekerke Castle in Bazel and enjoy magnificent river views as you continue to Dendermonde, a centuries-old city known for its Benedictine abbey and charming market square.

From there, continue riding to St. Amands, a small village nestled on a beautiful bend in the river. Before dinner on board tonight, enjoy a Belgian beer tasting and learn more about the country's rich brewing traditions.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Antwerp to Temse — 36 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Temse to St. Amands — 27 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

Begin your route with a short ferry ride across the Scheldt River, followed by a brief spin to view a unique

bike-and-pedestrian tunnel beneath the river (with the option to ride through it). Afterward, cycle through the typical Flanders countryside, winding through agricultural lands and quiet suburban areas to reach Kruibeke, known for its lively Wednesday market. You'll arrive back at the Scheldt, pausing for lunch in Rupelmonde. In the afternoon, follow the river again—switching between its banks—crossing by bridge and ferry. This section of the ride is especially scenic, taking you over the Temse Bridge and into the city of Temse, once a bustling trading center. Continue along the Scheldt Dike to the Mariekerke ferry, then cycle on to our mooring in St. Amands.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 63 km (16 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: St. Amands to Ghent / Boat Tour of Ghent

After breakfast, cycle from St. Amands to Ghent. Located at the confluence of the Scheldt and Leie rivers, this "City of 200 Bridges" was founded around 600 AD and features many beautiful buildings dating back to medieval times, when the textile industry brought great wealth to Ghent's merchants.

After a leisurely lunch on board the barge, board a local boat for a guided excursion into the heart of Ghent. You'll also have time to explore this attractive medieval canal city on your own. Many old patrician houses have been preserved in the city center, including the 1425 Cloth Makers' Hall, where textile merchants once met and traded. The city's major church is St. Baaf's Cathedral, constructed and expanded over several centuries in a variety of architectural styles. Inside the cathedral, you can admire a number of medieval masterpieces, including Jan van Eyck's famous *Adoration of the Lamb*.

This evening, enjoy dinner on your own at one of Ghent's local restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Dendermonde to Ghent — 44 km (27 miles)

What to Expect:

Today features a shorter ride in the morning only. After passing through the village of Berlare, you'll continue through more quaint villages and scenic agricultural lands en route to the lovely town of Schellebelle. After some pedal strokes along the river dike, the route follows a suburban stretch leading to

the large locks of Merelbeke. Regroup at Brewery Huyghe in Melle, home of the world-famous beer with the iconic pink elephant! Then, cycle a short distance to rejoin the barge, where you'll enjoy lunch on board as it sails to its next mooring site along the canal.

Cumulative Distance Range: 44 km (27 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7: Arrive in Bruges

During breakfast, your barge cruises toward Bruges. It will briefly dock farther along the waterway at Aalter Bridge, where the day's cycling begins. The barge then continues along the main canal and meets the group in Bruges in the late afternoon. Alternatively, if you've chosen the longer ride option, you'll cycle to Bruges via an extended countryside route through the charming village of Damme.

Regarded by many as Europe's best-preserved medieval city, Bruges is laced with canals and lined with beautiful houses once built by wealthy textile merchants. A 350-foot (106.7-meter), 13th-century belfry tower—home to Europe's most famous carillon—stands tall over the city's Market Square. You'll have plenty of time to soak in the medieval ambiance and stroll through Bruges' winding streets.

Tonight, enjoy your final dinner on board the barge.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Aslterburg to Chapel — 25 km (16 miles)

Afternoon: Chapel to Barge in Bruges — 8 km (5 miles) OR Chapel to Damme — 16 km (10 miles) |
Damme to Bruges — 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

After an early-morning barge cruise, disembark at Aalterburg to begin biking through one of the prettiest parts of the Flemish countryside. For the final miles into Bruges, you'll follow the canal. The longer route diverts through the countryside, passing an old abbey and the historic town of Damme—an ancient literary center and former harbor of Bruges.

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 – 51 km (16 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembark Barge / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After an included breakfast, your tour concludes. It is important that you leave the barge no later than 9:00 a.m. so the crew can prepare for their next guests. Please refer to the information in your *Vacation Preparation Handbook* for departure recommendations.

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.