

Holland & Belgium Bike & 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: 14-22 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: Embark barge / Cruise to Vianen

You are responsible for making your own way to meet our barge. Plan to arrive between 1:00 and 1:45 p.m. Please note that you cannot embark before this time, as the barge is being prepared for you. If you are late, you must 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 the Amsterdam Centraal train station. Please refer to the information listed in the tour handbook. The barge sails at 2:00 p.m.

You will dock for our warm-up ride, which follows the river Vecht. Later, gather with the group for a welcome dinner on board while cruising. You moor overnight in Vianen, a small city on the river Lek.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Nigtevecht to Breukelen Warm-up — 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 will 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: Breakfast

DAY 2: Cycle to Kinderdijk / Cruise to Dordrecht

After breakfast, cycle along the small canals of the rural region of Krimpenerwaard. You will trace the route of the river Lek through Schoonhoven, known as the "Silver City" for its long silversmithing tradition. Continue to Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage site where 19 of Holland's famous windmills—some

more than 260 years old—adorn the horizon. Then you can ride (or cruise, if you prefer) to Dordrecht, one of Holland's oldest towns and birthplace of the state of the Netherlands, founded by William of Orange. Enjoy dinner on board in Dordrecht, where the barge moors overnight. After dinner, stroll through the city's historic center to get a glimpse of its rich past with one of your trip leaders.

Today's Ride Choices

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

Afternoon: Schoonhoven to Alblasserdam via Kinderdijk — 30 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts in Vianen. First, you cross a big 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 old city of Schoonhoven, choose a restaurant for lunch on your own. You can board your barge, disembark, or continue riding here.

From Schoonhoven, you'll cross the River Lek by ferry. The route continues to Nieuwpoort town and into the Alblasserwaard Polder. This is mainly dairy farming and pastureland with black-and-white Frisian cows and variety of waterfowl. Your *fietspad* continues through Kinderdijk amid the country's largest collection of traditional windmills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 56 km (16 – 35 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, each rampart named for one the seven provinces of the Republic of United Netherlands. Your bike ride begins with a guided tour of this town.

Then cycle to Tholen, once an island in the middle of the large Zeeland streams where many people fished for a living. Today, it is connected to the mainland, but it remains a picturesque village with relics

of an eventful past. Pedal through quiet farmlands, and pause for a picnic lunch at historic locks before arriving in Tholen. Here, you will 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 — 26 km (16 miles) OR Dintel Locks to Tholen including loop — 35 km (22 miles)

What to Expect:

Ride through the relatively "new" rural agricultural corner of western Brabant province. It is a country of potatoes and sugar beets. You'll enjoy a picnic lunch at the historic Dintel River Locks. Afterward, cross the bridge to Tholen, a former island in Zeeland province reaching Oud-Vossemeer, the home of the Roosevelt family. Finally, arrive in Tholen, the tiny island capital.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 59 km (15 – 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 morning cruise to the impressive port of Antwerp. After brunch on board, you have the rest of the afternoon to explore. Antwerp is known as the "Diamond City" and the native city of painter Peter Paul Rubens. You may wish to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady and the Market Square, lined with beautiful historic townhouses. Tonight, enjoy dinner on your own in 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 cruising out of Antwerp, you will dock and mount your bike for a ride along the Scheldt River to Temse, pausing along the way for lunch on your own in Rupelmonde. In the afternoon, cycle past Wissekerke Castle in Basel, and enjoy magnificent river views as you cycle to Dendermonde, a centuries-old city with a Benedictine abbey and pretty market square at its center. Continue cycling on to St. Amands, a small village on a beautiful bend in the river. Before dinner on board tonight, you can learn more about Belgian beer during an onboard beer tasting.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Antwerp to Temse — 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon: Temse to Sint-Amands — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

Begin your route with a small ferry ride across the Scheldt River followed by a short spin to view a special bike-and-pedestrian tunnel under the river. Afterward, cycle through typical Flanders' countryside, crisscross through agricultural and quiet suburban areas to reach Kruibeke with its Wednesday market. You'll arrive back at the Scheldt pausing for lunch in Rupelmonde, with its unique tidal watermill and statue of the mathematician and mapmaker Mercator. He was the world's premier geographer in the 16th century and created both the terrestrial and celestial globes. In the afternoon, you will follow the river again, on either side, crossing it by bridge and with ferries. This section of the ride is most scenic, over the Temse Bridge, to the city of Temse, once a trading center. Next, ride on the Scheldt Dike to the Mariekerke ferry. Dendermonde is reached by another huge bridge. Then continue cycling to our mooring in St. Amands.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 60 km (16 – 37 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Tour 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 boasts many beautiful buildings dating to medieval times, when the textile industry brought great wealth to Ghent’s merchants.

After a leisurely lunch on board the barge, embark a local boat for an excursion into the center of Ghent with a guide. 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. One historic building is the 1425 Cloth Makers’ Hall, where textile merchants met and traded. The city’s major church is St. Baaf’s Cathedral, constructed and enhanced in various styles over many centuries. In the cathedral, admire a number of masterpieces of medieval painting, including Jan van Eyck’s famous *Adoration of the Lamb*. Try one of the local restaurants for dinner on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Dendermonde to Ghent — 40 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

Today, there is only a morning ride. In the afternoon, you will visit Ghent. After Berlare village you’ll divert through more quaint villages and scenic agricultural lands to the lovely town of Schellebelle. After some pedal strokes on the river dike, you’ll follow a suburban stretch to the large locks of Merelbeke. Here, you’ll embark for lunch on board while the barge sails to its canal mooring site.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 km (25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 7: Arrive in Bruges

During breakfast, your barge cruises to Bruges. The barge will briefly dock farther along the waterway at Aalter Bridge, where the day’s cycling begins. The barge rejoins the main canal and meets us all in Bruges in the late afternoon. Alternately, if you have chosen the longer ride option, you will cycle to Bruges with an extra countryside ride via Damme.

Regarded by many as Europe’s best-preserved medieval city, Bruges is laced by a network of canals lined

by beautiful houses built by wealthy textile merchants. A 350-foot (106.7-meter), 13th-century belfry tower, which houses Europe's most famous carillon, presides over the city's Market Square. You have ample time to marvel at the medieval ambiance of this lovely city and to walk its winding streets. Dine on the barge one last time this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning-Afternoon: Aalterburg to Picnic — 10 km (6 miles) | Picnic 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 start biking through one of the prettiest parts of the Flemish countryside. On the last miles to Bruges, you will follow the canal. The longer option diverts through the countryside via an old abbey and Damme, an ancient literary town and former Bruges harbor.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembark Barge / Discover Bruges

After an included breakfast, your tour ends. 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 listed in the tour 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.

Hotel Navarra (Day 8)

Ideally located in the historic center of Bruges, near the Market Square with its famous Belfry Tower, the Hotel Navarra offers an intimate and welcoming atmosphere, complemented by excellent service. The elegant, 17th-century mansion occupied by the hotel is listed as a historic monument, yet you'll enjoy modern amenities that include free WiFi, air conditioning, a spa, an indoor swimming pool, a sauna, a gym, and a small garden with sun terrace.