

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

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of rolling terrain and moderate-to-challenging hills. Our 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: Évora

Meet your VBT representative at the Pousada de Lisboa. Please refer to your final day-to-day itinerary for the exact time and place of the meeting.

Your VBT representative will accompany you by shuttle (approximately one hour and 15 minutes) to Herdade do Barrocal for a tour and lunch. You depart Lisbon via the expansive Vasco de Gama Bridge, the longest bridge in Western Europe, spanning the mighty Tagus River. Heading east, you arrive on 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 meet your VBT trip leaders for a bike-fitting and safety session. After the orientation, check in to your rooms and change into your riding attire.

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

Your accommodation for the next two nights is in the historic Convento do Espinheiro Historic Hotel & Spa. Many important noble figures have met here throughout the centuries to shape Portugal's history, earning this 15th-century convent a place as a national monument.

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

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up to Évora — 9 km (5 miles)

### What to Expect:

After meeting your VBT trip leaders for a bike-fitting and safety session, you become accustomed to riding your bike on an easy afternoon warm-up ride. The scenic ride on quiet, well-maintained, two-lane roads winds through the neighborhoods and 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, you begin with a picturesque ride across the plains of Alentejo, following scenic country roads bordered by cork forests. Our 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 need assistance or would like more time to explore Monsaraz.

With its lofty locale, Monsaraz enjoys endless vistas of the Alentejo and neighboring Spain. It has been occupied by various civilizations from Romans, Visigoths, and Arabs to Mozarabs, Jews, and Christians. As you explore its narrow warrens and admire its whitewashed, red-roofed houses, you'll have time to marvel at the remarkable view 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, you venture into Évora to meet a local guide for an enriching walking tour of this magnificently preserved UNESCO World Heritage site. Stop by the São Francisco Church to view its eerie Chapel of Bones, constructed by 16th-century Franciscan monks. Wander atmospheric alleyways past old patrician mansions and whitewashed houses with bright yellow trim. Enjoy dinner 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, a 45-minute shuttle from your hotel. From Redondo, begin riding toward the hilltop village of Monsaraz. Your ride consists of some short inclines and rolling hills, but the VBT support vehicle will be nearby if you opt to shuttle at any point. At the end of the short option in the town of Aldeia de Venda, our shuttle provides transportation to the historic village of Monsaraz, where you have ample time to explore prior to lunch. Today's long option continues from Aldeia de Pais through the scenic Alentejo countryside and finishes with a challenging 1.5 km (just under a 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 territory. As you cycle, you may pass shepherds grazing their herds on wide-open spaces. For lunch, you stop at a typical Portuguese rural café for a farm-fresh meal with warm, welcoming hosts. After, 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 dates all the way back to the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Romans. Its most important remnant from the 500-year Moorish occupation is the medieval mosque, the only mosque from this period to have survived in Portugal. Today it is Mértola's main church, though it boasts many of its original Moorish features.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your hotel.

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 ride across the *Campo Branco* is mostly level, easy riding on narrow, paved country roads with very little traffic, but it promises an excellent workout if there is a breeze. Stop to enjoy lunch at a farm café in Sao João dos Caldeiros. Following your meal, continue your cycling onto the main road to Mértola, where the traffic increases as we near our destination. The VBT support vehicle is also available for anyone who would prefer to shuttle to the hotel after lunch.

Cumulative Distance Range: 45 km (28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4: Parque Natural do Vale do Guadiana / Guadiana River cruise

After breakfast, set out directly from your hotel. (Those preferring a shorter option shuttle 15 minutes to the starting point of their ride instead.) Your morning cycling leads you into the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, one of 30 natural areas in Portugal officially protected by the government. Wind your way through small towns of 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 for nearby mining operations. Here you may straddle the Portugal/Spain border with a foot in each country and half your body in Spain's later time zone!

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

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

### 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. It begins with a steady climb on a national road with some potentially fast-moving traffic and trucks. (If the climb and traffic are an issue, you may take the shuttle from the hotel to where your trip leaders will have your bike ready, an approximately 15-minute ride.) The morning cycling takes you on small paved country roads through the less-traveled Guadiana Valley Natural Park. Although this morning's ride is shorter than those of other days, you will have some rolling hills to challenge you and a rather steep descent for the last 1.2 miles (2 km) to the Guadiana River.

After lunch, if you opt to ride back to the hotel and forfeit the boat excursion, the ride begins with a challenging 1.2-mile (2-km) climb that will reward you with bragging rights and stunning views. The last

3.1 miles (5 km) into Mértola are on a national road that you share 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

## DAY 5: Travel to the Algarve

After breakfast, shuttle southward into the Algarve. We begin our morning ride in the beautiful village of Cachopo in the foothills of the Serra do Caldeirão. Today's rides will introduce you to a different landscape with views of the scenic Algarve regions and the distant Atlantic Ocean. The morning ride is short but the vertical gain will ensure a good workout and build up your appetite for your included lunch. Once you have finished lunch, continue cycling mostly downhill towards your next hotel.

You will end today's ride at your lovely accommodations in the Algarve, the Praia Verde Boutique Hotel, and settle in to one of its breezy, elegant rooms. Enjoy an evening at leisure either enjoying what the hotel has to offer or take a short stroll to the beach before dining at a restaurant in the neighborhood.

### 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:

Our ride in the Algarve follows undulating hills that offer beautiful vistas of the Atlantic Ocean in the distance. Enjoy a brief stop in the port of Monte Novos for lunch. In the afternoon continue on quiet country roads downhill to your hotel, the Vila Monte.

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, you stop to visit the Monterosa olive groves for some olive tasting and to learn more about the production of olive oil. From here, cycle to the small Algarve city of Tavira with its medieval castle. Spend time exploring the site, and enjoy lunch in one of the many lively cafés at your leisure.

After lunch, continue pedaling to the lovely whitewashed village of Cacela-a-Velha, perched on top of a hill with a view to 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 the village before shuttling to your resort for a late afternoon at leisure, taking advantage of the property's pools or spa.

This evening, join your fellow travelers and trip leaders to reminisce about your Portugal bike tour and adventures during a seaside (weather permitting) farewell reception, followed by a delightful dinner of regional Algarve cuisine made with the freshest of ingredients 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. You will cycle on less-traveled lanes through the Algarve countryside past lovely citrus, olive, and avocado groves. There will be some city riding with heavier traffic within the city of Tavira. As you near the Algarve coast, you will see the Atlantic Ocean in the distance before arriving at the seaside village of Cacela-a-Velha. Today's ride is less challenging with slightly rolling hills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 41 km (25 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 7: Travel to Cascais / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends

Enjoy breakfast before your drive to Cascais (approximately four hours). Your tour concludes at approximately 1:00 p.m. at the Cidadela Cascais Pousada & Art District Hotel in Cascais. Taxis are available at the Cascais hotel to take you to central Lisbon hotels, the Lisbon train station, or to the Lisbon airport — approximately 30-45 minutes, depending on traffic.

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.

### Octant Praia Verde Hotel (Days 5-6)

Minutes from Verde Beach in Eastern Algarve, the Octant Praia Verde features a private beach club, 4-star boutique accommodations, outdoor pool and bar, and stunning views of the sea. Your modern room designed in neutral tones with minimalistic furniture includes a private balcony and offers all the amenities you'll need after a rewarding day of cycling. Rooms are equipped with air conditioning and complimentary WiFi. |WiFi|Air Conditioning|



