

Portugal: Porto, the Silver Coast & Lisbon

Bike Vacation Only

If you're looking for an independent cycling vacation featuring warm Portuguese hospitality, this action-packed self-guided itinerary is it! Explore Portugal's Silver Coast from Porto to Lisbon—pausing in authentic seaside villages to take a refreshing dip in the Atlantic's azure waters, or savoring an included dinner showcasing delectable Portuguese cuisine. From the moment you meet your VBT Local host for an orientation and bike-fitting session, you'll be on your own timetable—cycling from inn to inn, arriving to find your luggage already waiting for you. Linger on the beach at Nazaré, catching a glimpse of its record-breaking waves—or enjoy a vibrant sunset in the historic town of Óbidos with its ancient hilltop castle. With this invigorating self-guided tour of the Portuguese coast, you set the pace of your discovery—with 24/7 local VBT support if you need it.

Cultural Highlights

- Stay in diverse locales, from the spa town of Monte Real to the old fishing village of São Pedro Moel
- Cycle along the Silver Coast's sandy beaches framed by Atlantic waves, pine and cork forests, and stunning rural landscapes
- Indulge in Portugal's delicious fresh seafood, enticing pastries, espresso, and affordable, excellent wines
- Spend the night exploring the medieval walled city of Óbidos after day trippers have left
- Visit Alcobaça's Gothic monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, founded by Portugal's first king in the 12th century

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Rides are on relatively flat paved roads and bike lanes. Expect more undulating terrain when crossing the small hills separating the Atlantic coast from the rolling interior. You will encounter some traffic when entering and exiting historic town centers and beachside bike paths and lanes. Please verify your bike selection for this tour, as it is not always possible to change bikes once you arrive on tour. Travel with your friends and family—we can accommodate multiple guests on this self-guided vacation. Our 24/7 support system is available as needed.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15-40 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-5 hours

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 66°/64°, May 72°/68°, June 77°/73°, September 81°/75°, October 73°/70°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 3.5, May 2.5, June 1.5, September 1.5, October 4

DAY 1: VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins / Porto to Monte Real

We suggest arriving in Portugal at least one day prior to the tour start date, as your tour begins at 10:00 a.m. Meet your VBT Local host and any other VBT guests arriving on the same day at 10:00 a.m. in the lobby of the NH Hotel Jardim in Porto. Your host will be carrying a VBT sign. Your transportation to the historic village of Monte Real will take approximately two hours.

The natural hot springs in and around Monte Real have long been considered curative. Lucky for you, your palatial hotel draws on them for their soothing therapeutic spa treatments. Before you indulge, you might want to get acquainted with your bike during an easy loop ride, or take a stroll around the extensive grounds that stretch some 60 acres (24 hectares). Take your time and enjoy this beautiful property. An included three-course dinner is served at the hotel's fine dining restaurant. If you wish, take advantage of the Turkish bath, Jacuzzi, or indoor heated pool this afternoon. (Spa access and treatments are at your expense, with advance reservation).

Today's Ride Choices

Monte Real Loop Short Option — 9 km (6 miles) | Monte Real Loop Long Option — 20 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Short Option:

Designed for you to get comfortable with your bike and move your legs after your flight, this easy short loop starts at your hotel and goes through the town of Monte Real into the surrounding farmland and follows un-trafficked roads for a loop along the Lis River. Watch out for some uneven pavement between kilometers 5 and 7.

Long Option:

Designed for you to get comfortable with your bike and move your legs after your flight, this easy loop starts at your hotel and goes through the town of Monte Real into the surrounding farmland and follow un-trafficked roads to do a loop along the Lis River. Watch out for some uneven pavement between kilometer 12 and 15.

Non-biking options:

After your Welcome Orientation, you may be ready for lunch at your hotel or in town. Later, you may choose to enjoy your hotel's spa facilities. (Spa access costs approximately €16, and treatments are additional). The hotel is surrounded by easily accessible and signed walking paths.

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Monte Real to São Pedro Moel / Move on Day

Get your first taste of Portugal's coastal beauty as you cycle to the Atlantic Ocean. You will travel through pine forests and past fertile farms. You may want to bring a snack and take the time to enjoy it on your arrival at the Ervideira Lagoon. You'll see why this is a favorite spot among local families seeking a calm alternative to the nearby ocean beaches.

You will continue with a slight ascent up a small ridge, arriving at the white sands of the sleepy village of Pedrogão. Take a refreshing swim in the Atlantic if you wish. Then, turn slightly inland to parallel the coast, passing the town of Vieira and its namesake beach. Later, arrive in the resort of São Pedro Moel, a graceful village tucked above the surf and sand in a protective cove. Pass its landmark Penedo da Saudade lighthouse, built on the rocky promontory where a 17th-century widowed Duchess is said to have mourned her husband. After settling into your hotel, take a scenic stroll along the boardwalks atop the dramatic cliffs, the ideal place to observe a stunning sunset over the Atlantic. Choose from a half-dozen or more restaurants within a short walk of your hotel, or take advantage of the ocean view from your hotel's dining room.

Today's Ride Choices

Monte Real to São Pedro Moel — 43 km (26 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's route descends from Monte Real on paved roads through farmland, then climbs up a small ridge

before reaching the Atlantic coast. At the ocean, take a left and head south, paralleling the coast along a paved bike lane through the town of Praia de Vieira. Just before reaching your evening's destination and hotel in the small town of São Pedro Moel, you will ride past the Penedo da Saudade lighthouse.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: São Pedro Moel to Alcobaça / Move on Day

You will depart São Pedro Moel's cobbled streets and join a dedicated bike route through fragrant pine forests paralleling the coastline. Sections of this historic Atlantic pine forest were planted in the 13th century by King Afonso III to stop the erosion of the dunes. Later, during the Age of Discovery, they supplied the timber for Portugal's fleet of intrepid explorers as they sailed to distant shores.

Your route brings you to the town of Nazaré, renowned for its long crescent beach and resort atmosphere, and celebrated as the place where surfer Garrett McNamara rode the record-breaking 100-foot (30-meter) wave at North Beach. You're sure to find a spot for lunch here. Freshly caught seafood is always on the menu.

Continue cycling past the marina, and turn inland to follow the Alcobaça River on a dedicated bike lane. Then gently ascend to the small city of Alcobaça, centered around the 13th-century Cistercian monastery, one of the country's most magnificent Gothic structures. It was originally built to commemorate the taking of Santarém from the Moors in 1147 and today holds the tomb of King Pedro I. Architecturally, it represents the first example of its style, with its unique portal and rose window.

Conclude your ride here and take all the time you'd like to wander this UNESCO World Heritage site and enjoy the inner pool, as your hotel is well integrated into this monastery.

The Dinner is on your own, and the best town's restaurants are just in front of your hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

São Pedro Moel to Alcobaça — 40 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

The route departs the town of São Pedro Moel on a short section of cobbled street and immediately

follows a paved, dedicated bike lane that alternates between pine forests and the coast with ocean views. In the busier town of Nazaré, use caution on the steep descent through narrow streets and along the beach-front bike lane (you will ride on sidewalk for a few hundred meters). After leaving town, you will turn inland along a flat paved road and join the riverside bike lane and country roads, ascending gradually to the town of Alcobaça.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Alcobaça to São Martinho do Porto / Move on Day

Start the day at your own pace, revisiting the monastery or just enjoying a late-morning coffee or early lunch, and grabbing some snacks for the road. Any time of day is perfect for the delicious *pastel de nata*, the Portuguese custard-tart pastry dusted with cinnamon.

Then cycle into the agricultural fields that slope to the coast, following a bike route to the seaside town of São Martinho do Porto. Founded by monks in the 13th century, it was a favorite seaside resort of Portuguese nobility in the 19th century. Its unique, protected, scallop-shaped bay of fine sand is bordered on its southern side by one of Europe's largest dunes at the far end. The red sandstone Salir do Porto soars to 160 feet (49 meters).

Here, a two-night stay allows for a beachside rest day or a choice of two optional rides. Dinner is on your own, and the seaside town's restaurants are just a short walk away.

Today's Ride Choices

Alcobaça to São Martinho do Porto — 28 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Descend gradually from Alcobaça to the river valley, then join a dedicated bike route to the Atlantic coast and the beach resort town of São Martinho do Porto. Follow town streets and bike lanes to the scallop-shaped beach and your hotel for the next two nights.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: São Martinho do Porto / Stay Put Day

Your Stay Put Day is full of possibilities! If you can't get enough of cycling, you can choose to ride one of two loops. The short option loops inland from São Martinho do Porto to the outskirts of the town of Caldas da Raina. The longer option, back to Nazaré, returns on a ridge high above the Atlantic with stunning views.

Instead, you might enjoy São Martinho do Porto's unique, scallop-shaped, protected beach. Your hotel's staff can suggest a rental outfit where you can set out on a kayak, canoe, sailboat, paddleboard, paddle boat, or windsurfer. Relax in the calm waters of the lagoon, enjoying lunch at a seaside café, or simply relax on the beach. The day is yours to do as you please. In the evening, seek out a nearby restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

São Martinho do Porto to Caldas da Raina Loop — 35 km (22 miles) | São Martinho do Porto to Nazaré Loop (Long Option) — 36 km (22 miles)

What to Expect:

São Martinho do Porto to Caldas da Raina Loop:

Cycle southeast through farmland. At about kilometer 14 (mile 9), you encounter the first of two ascents on the outskirts of Caldas da Raina. Then at about 23 kilometers (14 miles), you start a long gradual descent of over 15 kilometers (10 miles) back to the bay of São Martinho do Porto.

São Martinho do Porto to Nazaré Loop (Long Option):

On this longer optional loop, cycle northeast through flat or gently rolling farmland from São Martinho do Porto. The ride returns back to the surf mecca of Nazaré. On the return ride, you'll stay close to the coast after leaving Nazaré, which means a steep climb of about 2 kilometers (between kilometer 26.3 and 30) to a beautiful ridgeline with little traffic and then a fun descent to São Martinho do Porto.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6: São Martinho do Porto to Óbidos / Move on Day

Enjoy today's leisurely ride to Óbidos, one of Portugal's best-preserved medieval walled towns. You will ride out of São Martinho do Porto, following the Atlantic coast south into the beach and town of Foz do Arelho, then wind inland through a mixture of small farms, villages, and pear orchards.

This cultural and historic gem of Óbidos is so beautiful that King Dinis offered it as a wedding gift to Queen Isabel in 1282. Future kings followed suit—for 600 years!—and the hilltop town has since become known as the Casa das Rainhas, the House of Queens. Whether or not you are royalty, you're likely to fall in love with the whitewashed houses, bougainvillea vines, and crenellated walls. It is a fitting end to your self-guided bike tour of Portugal.

The charming pedestrian center invites endless exploration. Narrow cobblestone streets lead to leafy, shaded squares, rising gradually to the town's highest point—the 15th-century castle. If you'd like, you can walk along the top of some of the city walls and enjoy breathtaking views of the town's red roofs and surrounding countryside—although not recommended if you dislike heights! Staying in Óbidos overnight is a real treat. After the day trippers have left, a hush falls over the cobblestones as street lamps illuminate the town in a magical glow. Step out into this mesmerizing atmosphere to enjoy a celebratory evening and dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

São Martinho do Porto to Óbidos (Short Option) — 51 km (31 miles) | São Martinho do Porto to Óbidos (Long Option) — 64 km (40 miles)

What to Expect:

São Martinho do Porto to Óbidos (Short Option):

The shorter option to Óbidos follows the ridge parallel to the Atlantic coast south. Start with a steep ascent at kilometer 2.8 (1.8 miles), then gradual ascent to the maximum elevation at about 10 kilometers (6 miles). An exhilarating descent takes you into the beach town of Foz do Arelho at the mouth of the Óbidos Lagoon. You ride through villages and farmland with some undulating terrain up to just over 29 km (18 miles), then turn on a short portion of hard-packed gravel bike path along the shore of the lagoon (3 km, 1.8 miles), which is not accessible by car. You then continue pedaling through farmland and charming villages to the hilltop town of Óbidos. Take care in the busy and cobbled streets of Óbidos.

São Martinho do Porto to Óbidos (Long Option):

The longer option to Óbidos follows the ridge parallel to the Atlantic coast south. Start with a steep ascent at kilometer 2.8 (1.8 miles), then gradual ascent to the maximum elevation at about 10 kilometers (6 miles). An exhilarating descent takes you into the beach town of Foz do Arelho at the mouth of the Óbidos Lagoon. You ride through villages and farmland with some undulating terrain up to just over 29 km (18 miles), then turn on a short portion of hard-packed gravel bike path along the shore of the lagoon (total of 3 km, 1.8 miles), which is not accessible by car. After a few hundred meters on the road, you rejoin the gravel bike path for 4.4 km (2.8 miles) along the tranquil lagoon (total on gravel: 7.4 km, 4.6 miles). Continue west to the mouth of the lagoon at Bom Sucesso Beach before turning inland on rolling roads. Then ascend gradually and pedal through farmland and charming villages to the hilltop town of Óbidos. Take care in the busy and cobbled streets of Óbidos.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7: Lisbon / VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation ends

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel in Óbidos. At 10:00 a.m., complimentary transportation of about one hour brings you to the VBT Self-Guided Air+ hotel in the heart of Lisbon, together with any other VBT self-guided guests.

From there, you may continue with your independent travel. Depending upon your destination, it may not be possible to depart for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully.

If you wish to linger in Óbidos and travel to Lisbon on your own, the train and bus stations are a half-mile (850 meters) from your hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Termas de Monte Real (Day 1)

The grand and elegant Termas de Monte Real is situated among 60 acres of landscaped gardens and woodland in the historic village of Monte Real. Its full spa facilities, including a Turkish bath, sauna,

Jacuzzi, and heated pool, are drawn from the same thermal waters that first brought visitors here generations ago. During your stay at this air-conditioned property, stroll the walking path, bike the tree-lined byway, swim in the outdoor pool, and linger on the lake, taking in the property's natural splendor and clean air. Settle in to the Paços de Rainha Restaurant for the fine Mediterranean and Atlantic cuisine of the Silver Coast.

Hotel Mar e Sol (Day 2)

The Hotel Mar e Sol's prime location overlooking the Atlantic and the beautiful Penedo da Saudade lighthouse makes it the ideal Silver Coast accommodation. Operating since 1966, this welcoming, air-conditioned property enjoys a long tradition of hospitality. The pleasures of São Pedro Moel are right outside your door, whether it's a stroll on a coastal footpath, a ride on a bike trail, or a walk to the historic center. A half-dozen restaurants are just a short distance away, but at the hotel, the chef is happy to prepare his award-winning Seafood Rice for you at the O Penedo restaurant. A treatment at the Cubo D'Água spa might be in order after a day of exploring.

Montebelo Mosteiro de Alcobaca (Day 3)

Step into the magic of history at the Montebelo Mosteiro de Alcobaça, set within the newly revitalized Rachadouro Cloister. Ingeniously designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Souto Moura, this 5-star hotel blends seamlessly with the Monastery of Alcobaça, one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Take advantage of the indoor pool, spa, and fitness center, and savor the flavors of Portugal in its fine-dining restaurant, where ancient and modern details combine for a unique décor.

Hotel Concha (Days 4-5)

The Hotel Concha is an intimate hotel tucked into the seaside resort town of São Martinho do Porto. Air-conditioned guest rooms are contemporary with neutral colors and wood floors. An onsite lobby bar serves a light menu and Portuguese specialties. Restaurants, cafés, shops, and the unique, shell-shaped, protected beach are all just a short stroll from the hotel.

The Literary Man (Day 6)

Located just on the edge of the Óbidos city walls, this stylish boutique hotel occupies a former convent. The interiors perfectly reflect the hotel's name: its walls are lined with some 45,000 books, making it a literary lover's dream. In the Gin Bar, drinks are named after celebrated writers, and throughout its hallowed rooms, comfortable seating invites you to grab a title off a shelf and settle in. During your stay, you might enjoy your evening on the outdoor patio and select a Portuguese wine from the cellar.

Everything about this air-conditioned haven for bibliophiles evokes the simple comfort and solace of books. Even the natural woodwork and neutral fabrics of the guestrooms—ideal complements to the historic building’s stonework, wooden beams, and wrought iron—ensure there’ll be little to distract you from a good read.