

Vermont: Middlebury Countryside & the Lake Champlain Coast

Bike Vacation Only

Bike from inn to inn on this quintessential self-guided Vermont vacation. From the moment you meet your VBT Local host, you'll feel right at home—because Vermont is VBT's native land! We know this region like the backs of our hands, and our audio-guided navigation app is brimming with tips and tricks only a local would know. Pedal through Bristol's maple-lined countryside, admiring the dramatic backdrop of the Hogback Mountains. Explore quaint shops and farm-to-table restaurants among the stately Victorian homes of Vergennes, and relax with a cocktail on the shores of Lake Champlain at your waterfront hotel. With a convenient train station located in the charming village of Middlebury, this vacation is ideally positioned to keep your vacation's carbon footprint as low as possible.

Cultural Highlights

- Indulge in the lakeside amenities of a historic resort.
- Stroll the shop-lined streets of Middlebury, one of Vermont's inimitable charming towns.
- Pedal the Champlain Valley's gently rolling farmlands, dotted with typical red barns, silos, and dairy cows.
- Marvel at stunning Green Mountain vistas as you cycle through the quaint farmland of Panton.
- Pause on your own to visit the Morgan Horse Farm, where the famed breed is bred and preserved.

What to Expect

This tour offers the full range of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills and is ideal for both beginning and experienced cyclists. 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 if needed.

Tour Duration: 5 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 8-51.4 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-5 hours

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

June 76°/54°, July 81°/59°, August 79°/57°, September 69°/49°, October 57°/39°

Average Rainfall (in.)

June 3, July 4, August 3.6, September 3, October 3

DAY 1: VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins / Travel to Middlebury

Your bike tour in Vermont begins and ends in Middlebury. Rich in literary history, this charming New England town is home to Middlebury College and its annual Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, which has hosted writers from Toni Morrison and Eudora Welty to John Irving and George R.R. Martin. Make your own travel arrangements to Middlebury.

At 1:00 p.m., you meet your VBT Local host, and any other VBT guests arriving on the same day, for a Welcome Orientation in the lobby of the Middlebury Inn. Then take your pick from two rides around town, passing the Pulp Mill Covered Bridge, originally built in 1820, and the picture-perfect falls of Otter Creek, which runs right through town.

Enjoy drinks and dinner at the inn or walk to a nearby restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Middlebury short option – 8 miles | Middlebury long option – 14 miles

What to Expect:

A short spin gives you the opportunity to get used to your bike, shift the gears, and practice riding. Cycle through Middlebury's charming downtown and continue along residential roads around the edge of town. From here, a longer option takes you past the campus of Middlebury College and then continues to some quiet country roads, following ridges with lovely views of Vermont's Green Mountains and New York's Adirondacks. On both rides you cross the Pulp Mill Covered Bridge before viewing the Otter Creek Falls. Then head back to the inn.

DAY 2: Salisbury and Lake Dunmore / Stay Put Day

After a leisurely breakfast, you have a full day to explore as you wish on this Stay Put Day. Stroll the lovely Main Street, with its many shops, restaurants, and galleries. Browse the collections of Middlebury

ephemera at the Sheldon Museum. At Cannon Park, a historic marker commemorates John Deere and his invention of “the plow that broke the plains.” From 1821 to 1825, Deere apprenticed at an area blacksmith shop before moving to Illinois, where he built the world’s first steel moldboard plow.

If the bucolic Vermont roads beckon, you can set out on a ride to the quiet town of Salisbury. On your way out of Middlebury, pick up snacks or a picnic lunch for later. These tranquil roads passing antique stores, weeping willows, and stone walls are meant to be explored at a relaxed pace, so take the time to soak in the picturesque Vermont vistas. Soon, you arrive at Lake Dunmore and Branbury State Park, whose name is a marriage of the towns of Brandon and Salisbury. Enjoy your packed lunch and perhaps take a cool swim in serene Lake Dunmore. Refreshed and renewed, follow more scenic roads back to Middlebury.

Tonight, try one of Middlebury’s fine restaurants, which are all within walking distance of your inn.

Today's Ride Choices

Lake Dunmore and Branbury State Park short option – 30 miles | Lake Dunmore and Branbury State Park long option – 34 or 39 miles

What to Expect:

Ride out of Middlebury on moderately hilly roads into Vermont’s bucolic farm country. Once you arrive at Lake Dunmore, the short option skirts the northern end of the lake and turns around at the entrance of Branbury State Park, returning to Middlebury on a slightly different route of similar terrain. The long option takes you into Branbury State Park, circumnavigating Lake Dunmore in its entirety. For an additional 5 miles, take a short out-and-back ride to pretty Forestdale. Return to Middlebury on a slightly different route of similar terrain.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Cycle north to Bristol and Basin Harbor / Move on Day

Move on from Middlebury today, choosing from several scenic routes that bring you into the heart of rural Vermont and to the picturesque shores of Lake Champlain. Begin with a ride along Middlebury’s peaceful back roads as the Hogback Mountain Ridge—a major foothill of the Green Mountains—rises before you. Two of your three options head north and deliver you to the tranquil village of Bristol, a gateway to the Green Mountains. By Vermont standards, the village is amazingly flat thanks to ancient geologic events

that deposited a level “fan” of gravel at the New Haven River water gap. It’s an ideal spot to grab lunch at one of its cafes and enjoy a picnic on the green before browsing its interesting shops.

Head out when you’re ready for more scenic riding to Vergennes, passing picturesque Cedar Lake and rolling farm fields. Dubbed the “smallest city in America,” it’s an ideal spot for shopping and some of Vermont’s great farm-to-table food. You might duck into the Bixby Library to gaze upward at its elegant stained-glass dome. Spectacular views of the Champlain Valley, the Adirondacks, and Otter Creek unfold before you as you make your way to Basin Harbor, the lovely resort on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain in Vergennes. For dinner, choose from Basin Harbor’s several dining venues.

Today's Ride Choices

Middlebury to Basin Harbor short option — 24 miles | Middlebury to Bristol to Basin Harbor — 42 miles | Middlebury to Bristol to Lincoln to Basin Harbor — 51 miles

What to Expect:

The most direct route to Basin Harbor departs Middlebury into farmland and offers views of the Green Mountains. You pass charming Victorian farmhouses in Weybridge. After 14 miles, you arrive in Vergennes, Vermont’s smallest “city,” where small shops and restaurants invite you to linger. Continue west through lovely countryside until you arrive at Basin Harbor on the shores of Lake Champlain.

On the longer ride options, cycle peaceful back roads along Hogback Ridge, a major foothill of the Green Mountains. You can stop in Bristol village for lunch, coffee, or shopping, enjoying its dramatic backdrop of Deerleap and South Mountains. Then cycle through rolling farmlands to Vergennes and the shores of Lake Champlain, enjoying spectacular views of the Adirondacks and Otter Creek.

To experience Vermont’s Green Mountains up close, the longest option includes an out-and-back moderate ride along the New Haven River from Bristol to the town of Lincoln. Then cycle through rolling farmlands to Vergennes and the shores of Lake Champlain, enjoying spectacular views of the Adirondacks and Otter Creek.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: West Addison and Chimney Point / Stay Put Day

Spend the day as you wish, exploring the shores of Lake Champlain and the shops of Vergennes. Depending on the season, enjoy the many amenities at Basin Harbor, some complimentary and some at your own expense: swimming, tennis, golf, and a wellness center. Or choose from several excursions that help you delve more deeply into the region's scenic wonders. You may opt to join a guided kayaking excursion through the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, a tranquil haven for birdlife and river creatures. The resort's private harbor and protected sandy beach offer lounge chairs and some complimentary watercraft.

If you'd like to get in more miles—and more stunning Vermont vistas—you can choose from three loop rides. First, cycle through a scenic valley and along the gently rolling farm fields of Panton, enjoying panoramic views of the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the west. If you wish, ride a little farther to the town of West Addison, a sleepy Vermont village boasting a scenic town common. Today's longest option takes you to Chimney Point Historic Site, home to the 1785 tavern that once served Thomas Jefferson and James Madison and the setting of countless stories of Native American, French colonial, and early American history. While here, enjoy views of the Champlain Bridge, half a mile long and one of the few bridges that spans Lake Champlain. Return to your resort whenever you'd like, riding through farmland with lake and mountainside vistas.

This evening, you may dine on site or take a taxi into Vergennes.

Today's Ride Choices

Basin Harbor to Panton — 18 miles | Basin Harbor to Addison — 23 miles | Basin Harbor to Champlain Bridge — 30 miles

What to Expect:

Basin Harbor is ideally located for a choice of three successively longer loop rides. Cycle along Lake Champlain and into gently rolling farmland, with views of the Green Mountains of Vermont and the Adirondacks of New York always in sight. For the shortest option, turn due west at about 8 miles to the lake, and then at 9.3 miles, turn north with views of the lake on your left on the return to the resort. For a ride to Addison, at 12.3 miles, at the West Addison General Store, you turn north with views of the lake on your left on the return to the resort. The longest option traverses the flat terrain of the Great Plains of Vermont. Turn due west at 14.3 miles, then reach the lake shore at about 15.5 miles. The Champlain Bridge and Chimney Point are at 17 miles. Continue north to return to your resort with views of the lake on your left.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Cycle to Vergennes and Middlebury / Depart for home

This final day of your Self-Guided Bicycling Vacation just may be one of the more memorable. You leave the shores of Lake Champlain and cycle into Vergennes. If you wish, take an optional loop ride along Otter Creek and continue to Kingsland Bay, 50 acres of beautiful state parkland where you can stroll nature trails and take in peaceful lake views. Return to Vergennes. From here, continue to the tranquil town of Weybridge, adorned with fanciful Victorian farmhouses and westerly views across the Lemon Fair River. Later, you might choose to visit the University of Vermont Morgan Horse Farm, a National Historic site dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the Morgan horse through careful breeding and selection. To learn about their efforts, we recommend you stop here for a guided tour, which run on the hour with no reservations required. Later, pedal into Middlebury and enjoy lunch on your own.

The tour concludes at the Middlebury Inn, where your luggage will be delivered. Please arrive by 2:00 p.m. If you would like to shower before onward travels, Vermont Sun Fitness Center on Exchange Street offers shower facilities. The travel time for a taxi from Middlebury to Burlington International Airport is approximately 60 minutes. Please plan accordingly.

Today's Ride Choices

Basin Harbor to Vergennes to Middlebury – 22 miles | Basin Harbor to Vergennes and Kingsland Bay and Middlebury – 35 miles

What to Expect:

Follow Otter Creek into Vergennes. From here, an optional 12.5-mile loop takes you through lush farmland and delivers you to Kingsland Bay State Park and then back to the center of Vergennes. From town, today's ride then follows quiet roads into Weybridge, passing Victorian farmhouses and spectacular views of the Green Mountains. After an optional visit to the Morgan Horse Farm, ride country roads into Middlebury, where you find many lunch options. The tour concludes at the Middlebury Inn.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Middlebury Inn (Days 1-2)

In Middlebury's downtown center, the historic Middlebury Inn offers updated, air-conditioned accommodations in a historic setting. Set on the Middlebury town green, it provides easy access to the town's many excellent restaurants and shops. Relax in this cozy 1827 inn while you enjoy its inviting common rooms, farm-to-table dining in Morgan's Restaurant, a cozy bar, and day spa.

Basin Harbor (Days 3-4)

Basin Harbor is a peaceful lakeside inn surrounded by spectacular lake and mountain views. For more than a century, the resort has delivered authentic Vermont hospitality, and is the first heritage accommodation in the state to receive a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary designation. Enjoy modern comforts like air conditioning and native touches like locally quarried marble fireplaces and custom mill-work. Relax in the beautiful gardens, swim in the lake, or head to the golf course. The 700-acre resort, operated by fourth-generation innkeepers, is a wonderful place to relax after a day of exploring.