

Vermont: Lake Champlain Islands, Burlington & Stowe

Bike Vacation Only

The Champlain islands make way for scenic, car-free bike paths and breathtaking views of mountain ranges in the distance. On the mainland, experience the small-city hospitality and culture of Burlington, the fascinating history chronicled at the famed Shelburne Museum, and the vibrant resort and alpine aesthetic of Stowe. On the water, kayak tranquil lakes, take a refreshing dip in a local beach, and absorb panoramic views as you ferry your bike from one beautiful place to the next.

Cultural Highlights

Cycle the quiet back roads of the Isle La Motte

Explore historic St. Anne's Shrine and Fisk Quarry

Enjoy deluxe accommodations: a cozy Vermont inn, a boutique hotel and a luxurious mountain resort

Pause on a Lake Champlain island for a delicious picnic lunch

Take a leisurely, scenic ride on South Hero Island

Visit a local vineyard for a picnic lunch and wine tasting

Ferry between the islands and the mainland as you ride one rewarding path after another

Follow your own whims in Burlington's lively markets

Tour the Shelburne Museum, an extraordinary collection of 150,000 works

Ride through the heart of Stowe on a dedicated path

Grab a beer at one of Vermont's locally owned breweries during your stays in Burlington and Stowe

What to Expect

This tour offers the full range of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 13 - 33

Average Cycling Time: 00:30 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jun 76°/55°, Jul 80°/60°, Aug 78°/58°, Sep 69°/50°, Oct 57°/40°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jun 3.6, Jul 3.8, Aug 3.6, Sep 3.4, Oct 3

DAY 1: Start from Burlington / Transfer to North Hero / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

Make your own arrangements for travel to Burlington, Vermont. The tour begins and ends at the Burlington International Airport (airport code: BTV). Please plan to have lunch before leaving the airport or bring a packed lunch with you.

VBT will offer a shuttle to our first inn, the North Hero House. The shuttle works on a “show and go” basis. Reservations are not required or available. Meet your Trip Leader outside the main exit door from baggage claim and across the road in the shuttle pickup area. Your trip leader will be wearing VBT staff garments and holding a VBT sign; the van will have a VBT sign on it. Our shuttle to North Hero will leave promptly at 1:00 p.m. (travel time is about 45 minutes). After settling in, join your VBT trip leaders at 3:30 p.m. in your cycling clothes for a bike fitting and brief cycling-skills clinic. This will be immediately followed by a short warm-up ride. This evening, gather at 6:00 p.m. for an orientation meeting and welcome cocktail. You will enjoy dinner at the inn at 7:00 p.m.

If you are arriving after the shuttle departs, or your flight arrives after this time, you will need to arrange your own transportation to the North Hero House at your expense. Please take any taxi from the Burlington airport or call one of the following taxi companies: Green Mountain Taxi (telephone 802-503-3096) or Burlington Airport Taxi (telephone 802-239-1515). Travel time is approximately 45 minutes.

Guests driving to the tour should meet the group at Burlington International Airport (BTV) and park your cars here for the week. Parking rates are approximately \$12.00 USD per day. Burlington International Airport offers both short and long-term parking in their newly expanded, multi-level, covered parking garage. The main parking entrance is located just past the terminal building on the left. Credit cards and cash are acceptable payment methods.

Settle in and relax at North Hero House on North Hero Island, the second largest of three major islands. Originally granted to Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, the Islands have played a pivotal part in our nation’s history. North Hero offers dramatic views of the Green Mountains. The early-19th century architecture adds to the town’s charm. These Lake Champlain Islands and the Adirondacks and Green Mountains are the result of North America colliding with the European continental plate millennia ago.

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Hotel: The North Hero House

Meals: Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Warm-Up North Hero: 12 miles

What to Expect: Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to fit your bike, shift the gears and practice riding. Pedal over gentle terrain on country lanes. Take in your first views of Lake Champlain on the peninsula at Hazen Point.

DAY 2: Cycle Isle La Motte and North Hero Island

Cycle northward this morning along the tranquil lake shore, crossing a causeway to Isle La Motte, one of the Champlain Islands. Named after French explorer Samuel de Champlain in 1609, Lake Champlain is the largest freshwater body east of the Mississippi after the Great Lakes. Canada's St. Lawrence River, an important transportation route for indigenous people for thousands of years, flows from it in the north and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The French and English built forts in a race to control the lake during the early colonial years leading up to the Revolutionary War.

Ride quiet back roads on Isle La Motte, stopping to visit the historic St. Anne's Shrine and Fisk Quarry. The shrine has lovely views of Lake Champlain, information on local history, short walking trails, and inherent serenity. In 1787, Ichabod Ebenezer Fisk built his estate with limestone and marble from Fisk Quarry. At the height of operations, he employed 100 men. Remarkably, the quarry has fossils from the Chazy Coral Reef, the world's oldest reef formed 480 million years ago.

As you continue your invigorating reel, take in the natural and historical sights. This was the first of the lake's islands set foot upon by French navigator and explorer Samuel de Champlain and his party of French and Native Americans in 1609. He described the place as "covered with the most beautiful pines that I have ever seen." After a picnic lunch, you are free to choose between a guided kayaking excursion or more cycling along the lovely shoreline. Or you may simply relax before dinner back at the inn.

Hotel: The North Hero House

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 49 miles

Morning

Isle La Motte: 31 miles

Afternoon

Grand Isle: 18 miles

What to Expect: Cycle north from your inn to Isle La Motte, with stops at St. Anne's Shrine, Fisk Quarry and Halls Apple Orchard. The short option shuttles back to the inn before the causeway. Optional 17.8-mile lollipop loop ride in lieu of or after kayaking, south to Grand Isle.

DAY 3: South Hero / Burlington Bike Path

This morning's Lake Champlain bike tour takes you along the shore of Grand Isle, also known as South Hero Island, the largest of the Champlain Islands. The lake views and gentle terrain here make for very pleasant cycling. You stop at Snow Farm Winery, Vermont's first vineyard, for a wine tasting and picnic lunch, and then continue cycling. Later, board the Island Line Bike Ferry for a short cruise with your bike. This service joins the two sides of "The Cut" between South Hero and Colchester along the recently resurfaced marble causeway and allows you to "ride" uninterrupted from the islands into Burlington. After crossing "The Cut," join the Burlington Bike Path and continue cycling to your Burlington hotel.

Known as The Queen City, Burlington is home to the University of Vermont and other small colleges. Ben & Jerry's began their ice cream empire in a renovated gas station downtown. Offering glorious sunsets, sailing on the lake, hiking and biking on nearby mountains, and Vermont craft beer, Burlington is a beloved destination. A walk down Church Street Marketplace puts you in the heart of the city's vibrant, alternative and youthful energy.

After settling in, you can explore Burlington's Church Street Marketplace and find a spot for dinner on your own. You'll find many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

Hotel: Hotel Vermont

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 35 miles

Morning

Snow Farm Winery: 21 miles

Afternoon

Bike Ferry and Burlington: 14 miles

What to Expect: Your morning ride takes you from North Hero to Grand Isle, accompanied by lake views, over gentle terrain and classic dirt roads. During this morning's ride, you will pass the Ed Weed Fish Culture Station that raises landlocked Atlantic salmon and trout to release into Vermont's rivers and streams. Feel free to view the vast tanks of fish and educational exhibits or walk around the hatchery grounds. After a picnic and wine tasting at Snow Farm Winery, ride along the Island Line Rail Trail Causeway, built in 1900. You cross "The Cut" on a private Local Motion Bike Ferry exclusively for VBT. The ride into Burlington features gentle terrain on bike paths. Travel by the private property of Harry Barber, a native of Switzerland who created miniature buildings from local stone that can be seen from the road.

DAY 4: Explore Shelburne / Cycle along Lake Champlain / Shuttle to Stowe

After breakfast, you ride to the Shelburne Museum for an included visit. This fine museum of folk art, decorative arts, quilts and textiles, paintings, Americana and period homes boasts an extraordinary collection of more than 150,000 works in a unique setting comprising 39 exhibition buildings. Among its holdings, you can admire 500 quilts, 1,400 waterfowl decoys, 120 weathervanes, and 50 carousel figures—along with the 220-foot steamboat *Ticonderoga*, built in 1906 at the Shelburne Shipyard on Lake Champlain. It operated as a day-boat serving ports along New York and Vermont shores until 1953. The Shelburne Marina and Shipyard opened in the late 1700s and began building sidewheel steamboats in the early 1800s. During World War II, it had naval contracts to build subchasers, torpedo lighters and tugboats.

You may also choose to continue to Shelburne Farms, a 1,400-acre working farm and education center. With its beautiful grounds and interesting architecture, this National Historic Landmark was designed as a model agricultural estate in 1886 by Dr. William Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb. If you're

looking for a bit more cycling, enjoy an additional ride to Charlotte, where you might visit its town beach. Scan the waves and try to catch a glimpse of “Champ,” the legendary lake creature that could be a distant cousin of the Loch Ness Monster. Meet back at the Shelburne Museum parking lot at 4:00 p.m. for the shuttle (approximately 60 minutes) to Stowe. Upon arrival, relax or take a stroll around the resort town before dinner on your own tonight.

Hotel: Topnotch Resort

Meals: Breakfast

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 – 28 miles

Morning

Shelburne Museum: 12 miles

Afternoon

Charlotte Beach: 16 miles

OR

Shelburne Farms and Shipyard: 12 miles

What to Expect: Ride in the morning through the University of Vermont campus, connecting to back roads that lead to the Shelburne Museum. You may continue to Shelburne Farms, home to fine cheddar cheeses, as well as Shelburne Marina and Shipyard. Enjoy more country cycling along the lake to Charlotte and its town beach. Meet back at the Shelburne Museum parking lot for a 4:00 p.m. shuttle to Stowe.

DAY 5: Stowe Village / Morrisville

Your scenic ride this morning begins on the paved Stowe Recreation Path, a flat route free of motorized vehicles. Turning off the recreation path onto Luce Hill Road and the picturesque neighboring village of Moscow, following roads with very little traffic and wonderful views of Mount Mansfield and the Worcester Range. Stop at a glassblowing artist workshop in Moscow. Along the way, you will pass the famous Emily's Bridge, a Stowe landmark with a ghostly past. Arrive into downtown Stowe, with its many shops and restaurants. Take time to explore the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum, fine antique and craft galleries, and outdoor clothing and equipment stores. Lunch is on your own today, choose from one of the restaurants in Stowe Village or one of the many along the recreation path.

Today's longer option leads you to Morrisville in Lamoille County, following picturesque country roads. Stopping at Rock Art Brewery to sample some of their Vermont craft brew beer.

Whichever ride you choose today, return to the resort to enjoy a dip in the pool or a spa treatment (advanced reservations recommended). Later gather for a farewell dinner at Flannel restaurant, a Stowe favorite.

Hotel: Topnotch Inn

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 5 – 35 miles

Morning

Stowe Bike Path and Moscow: 11 miles

Stowe to Morrisville: 19 miles

Afternoon

Downtown Stowe to Topnotch: 5 miles

What to Expect: Today's rides skirt hillsides around the mountain resort of Stowe. Cycling on the flat Stowe Recreational Bike Path and through the village of Moscow enjoying the mountain views along a picturesque road. You may choose to ride to the village of Morrisville to visit a local brewery. After your ride and lunch return to the resort.

DAY 6: Stowe and Waterbury/ VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Depart for home

After breakfast at the resort this morning choose to cycle on the Stowe Recreation Bike Path, hike on a path in the woods of Stowe, or enjoy a leisurely morning enjoying the amenities of the hotel. Later this morning, transfer to Waterbury stopping along the way at Cold Hollow Cider Mill, one of Vermont's most popular stops for savory apple cider donuts. Stop in to sample this local favorite. Your tour concludes with a festive lunch overlooking the rolling mountains and hills of Waterbury.

VBT has made arrangements for a shuttle from Waterbury Center to the Burlington International Airport at 2:00 p.m. (travel time approximately 60 minutes). We recommend flights out of Burlington no earlier

than 4:00 p.m. If you need to get back to the airport prior to that time, the transfer back to Burlington will be at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choice:

Morning

Stowe Bike Path: 10 miles

What to Expect: Ride from the hotel along the bike path deciding how far you would like to travel. You may ride all the way to downtown Stowe and back or pause along the way to enjoy the forested areas and open fields.

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

The North Hero House (Days: 1,2)

Having recently completed an extensive renovation, this beautifully restored country inn has been welcoming guests since 1891 when they arrived by paddle wheel steamer. North Hero House features two full bars, a sandy beach, an acclaimed restaurant and a caring staff. Clustered at the water's edge, rooms include WiFi, clock-radios, and cable television and most feature a stunning panoramic view of the lake and mountains.

Topnotch Resort (Days: 4,5)

This contemporary-chic hotel in the Green Mountains offers beautiful views of Mount Mansfield and the ski trails of Stowe Mountain Resort. The Spa at Topnotch is rated in the "Top 10" by Spa Finder and offers a full wellness program (advanced reservations recommended). Its tennis center is rated #1 in the East by Tennis magazine. Dining at Topnotch's Flannel restaurant features fresh local ingredients, seasonal inspirations, and world-class wines. Meet up in The Roost lobby bar for a craft beer and samples of the Chef's nibbles or sit on the patio under the pergola near the fire pit. All rooms are fully renovated and offer individually controlled air-conditioning, Keurig coffee maker, iHome docking clock radio, complimentary WiFi with strong bandwidth, refreshment center, bathrobes, and more.

Hotel Vermont (Day: 3)

Vermont's newest boutique hotel, the Hotel Vermont offers perfectly situated accommodations in downtown Burlington. The natural splendor of this "green," sustainably operated hotel, coupled with its desire to embrace both the outdoors and shared community values, promises a truly memorable experience. Guests will enjoy warm, attentive service and special touches designed to improve one's mental and physical well-being. The hotel's air-conditioned rooms are simple, yet elegant, with clean, crisp design elements and warm rustic charm. Rooms include flat-screen TVs, MP3 docking stations, and complimentary Internet access.