

Vermont: Lake Champlain Islands, Burlington & Stowe

Bike Vacation Only

Cycle along scenic shoreline paths during this spectacular Lake Champlain bike tour, where unrivaled nature, charming towns, and Vermont hospitality go hand in hand. Your route features picturesque, car-free bike paths and breathtaking views of mountain ranges in both directions – the Adirondacks to the west and the Green Mountains to the east. On the mainland, experience the small-city hospitality and culture of Burlington, the fascinating history chronicled at the famed Shelburne Museum, and the stunning galleries and eclectic shops of Vergennes. On the water, kayak tranquil Lake Champlain, 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

- Enjoy deluxe accommodations: a cozy Vermont inn, a boutique hotel, and a lakeside resort
- Enjoy a scenic ride on South Hero Island with views of the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks
- Visit a local vineyard for a picnic lunch and wine tasting
- Tour the fascinating Lake Champlain Maritime Museum and Shelburne Museum
- Ride along the gently rolling farmland of the Champlain Valley

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 support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

Average Daily Mileage: 12 - 49 miles

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: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

Pre-Trip Extension guests: After an included breakfast, you have the day to continue enjoying Burlington. Known as the Queen City, Burlington is home to the University of Vermont and several smaller 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, youthful energy. You'll find many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

Tour Only guests: Make your own arrangements for travel to Burlington, Vermont. Guests driving to the tour should park your cars at the tour end point, Burlington International Airport (airport code: BTU), for the week. Parking rates are approximately \$12.00 per day. The 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.

The tour begins at Hotel Vermont in downtown Burlington. For those interested, VBT will offer a shuttle from the airport to Hotel Vermont promptly at 2:30 p.m. This shuttle works on a "show and go" basis with no reservations needed. Meet your trip leader outside the main exit 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 and the van will have VBT signage. If you would like to travel to the tour meeting point on your own from the airport instead, taxis and ride shares are readily available. Travel time is approximately 15 minutes. You may choose to have lunch before leaving the airport or have lunch in a local restaurant once arriving in town.

Depending on your arrival time, you may have time to spend the afternoon enjoying Burlington. Known as the Queen City, Burlington is home to the University of Vermont and several smaller 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, youthful energy. You'll find many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

All guests: Meet 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

6:30 p.m. for an orientation meeting and welcome cocktail. You will enjoy dinner at the hotel at 7:30 p.m.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up Burlington — 8 miles

What to Expect:

Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to get used to the bike that will be your stalwart companion for the rest of the week. Admire the beauty of Lake Champlain with the Adirondack Mountains across the horizon.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Burlington Bike Path / South Hero

This morning's bike tour takes you along the shore of the lake toward the Champlain Islands. The lake views and gentle terrain make for very pleasant cycling. Board the Island Line Bike Ferry for a short cruise with your bike. This service joins the two sides of "The Cut" between Colchester and South Hero along the recently resurfaced marble causeway and allows you to "ride" uninterrupted from Burlington into the islands. You will stop at Snow Farm Winery for a wine tasting and picnic lunch, before continuing on your ride through the towns of Grand Isle and South Hero toward your next hotel.

Settle in and relax at North Hero House Inn (Shore Acres Inn for June 4 departure only) on North Hero, the second largest of three major Lake Champlain 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 and the town's early-19th century architecture adds to its charm. The Lake Champlain Islands, the Adirondacks, and Green Mountains are the result of North America colliding with the European continental plate millennia ago. This evening, enjoy dinner at the inn.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Burlington and Bike Ferry — 14 miles

Afternoon: Snow Farm Winery to North Hero — 20 miles

What to Expect:

Your morning ride provides you with lake views heading north from Burlington to Grand Isle while on the Island Line Rail Trail Causeway which was built in 1900. You will cross “The Cut” on an included bike ferry run by the non-profit group Local Motion. After a picnic and wine tasting at Snow Farm Winery, travel by the private property of Harry Barber, a native of Switzerland who created multiple miniature castles from local stone that can be seen from the road. You will pass the Ed Weed Fish Culture Station that raises landlocked Atlantic salmon and trout to release into Vermont’s rivers and streams. The ride to Grand Isle features gentle terrain of mostly paved roads, with a minimal of unpaved sections.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 34 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Cycle Isle La Motte and North Hero Island

Cycle northward this morning along the tranquil lakeshore, 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 in from 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, rest rooms, and blissful 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 Reef, the world’s oldest reef, formed 480 million years ago.

As you continue your invigorating ride, take in the natural and historical sights. This was the first of the lake’s islands to be visited 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, more cycling along the lovely shoreline, or an afternoon of relaxation. This evening enjoy another dinner at the inn’s restaurants.

Today’s Ride Choices

Morning: Isle La Motte — 32 miles (34 miles for June 4 departure only)

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. Cyclists can shorten the ride with a shuttle before they reach the causeway to Alburgh.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 miles (34 miles for June 4 departure only)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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

This morning, you head to Shelburne to visit an authentic sugar house where you learn about Vermont's proud tradition of maple sugaring. After, you will ride to the Shelburne Museum for an optional visit. This fine museum of folk and decorative art, quilts, textiles, paintings, Americana, and period buildings boasts an extraordinary collection of more than 150,000 works in a unique setting which includes 39 exhibition buildings. Among its holdings are 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 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 south to Charlotte, where you can visit the 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. Lunch is on your own today, you trip leaders will make suggestions of the best places to stop along your ride.

Meet back at the Shelburne Museum parking lot at 3:30 p.m. for the shuttle (approximately 40 minutes) to Vergennes. Upon arrival, relax or take a stroll around the resort before dinner on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Shelburne Museum — 4 miles

Afternoon: Charlotte Beach — 16 miles OR Shelburne Farms and Shipyard — 12 miles

What to Expect:

A shuttle brings to you a sugar house in Shelburne. From there, a short ride on back roads leads 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 3:30 p.m. shuttle to Vergennes.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 – 20 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Cycle to Vergennes and Kingsland Bay / Farewell dinner

This morning, ride along Otter Creek to Kingsland Bay, one of Vermont's loveliest state parks. Continue to Vergennes. Dubbed the "smallest city in America," it's an ideal spot for shopping and great food. Be sure to check out all the nooks and crannies, as some of the shops in this tiny hilly city are located below street level. After lunch on your own, follow a route through the gently rolling farmland of the beautiful Champlain Valley to Ferrisburgh, adding to your daily dose of gorgeous views.

You have many options this afternoon. You may walk some of the area's nature trails, swim in the lake, or golf. Don't miss out on a visit to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. With more than a dozen exhibit buildings, the museum presents a comprehensive overview of the maritime history and nautical archaeology of the Champlain Valley. You can also relax on the beautiful Basin Harbor grounds. Gather this evening to share stories about your bike tour in Vermont over a festive farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vergennes and Kingsland Bay — 20 miles

Afternoon: Vergennes to Basin Harbor — 7 miles | Ferrisburgh — 14 miles

What to Expect:

Follow the Otter Creek into Vergennes, where you may pause for shopping and lunch. Ride or shuttle back to the hotel. Today's longer option provides more delightful Champlain Valley vistas as you cycle gentle terrain to Ferrisburgh.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 – 41 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: West Addison and Chimney Point / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Departure

After an included breakfast, choose from one of three loop rides through Vermont's scenic countryside. First, you can ride through a scenic valley and along the gently rolling farm fields of Panton, with panoramic views of the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the west. If you wish, ride a little further to the town of West Addison with a stop at WAGS, the bustling West Addison General Store. Today's longer 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. Enjoy views of the recently rebuilt Champlain Bridge, half a mile long and one of the few bridges that spans Lake Champlain. Later, you'll return to your hotel, riding past farmland, and lake and mountainside vistas. You may choose to shower before enjoying a final lunch at Basin Harbor.

VBT has made arrangements for a shuttle from Basin Harbor to the Burlington International Airport at 2:00 p.m. (travel time approximately 60 minutes). We recommend flights out of Burlington no earlier than 4:30 p.m. If you need to get back to the airport prior to that time, transportation back to Burlington will be at your own expense.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Panton — 18 miles OR Addison — 23 miles OR Champlain Bridge — 30 miles

What to Expect:

On your choice of three successively longer loop rides, cycle along Lake Champlain and into gently rolling farmland with Vermont's Green Mountains and New York's Adirondacks framing your view. The longest option traverses the delightful flat terrain of the southern Champlain Valley.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 30 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Vermont (Day: 1)

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.

The North Hero House (Days: 2,3)

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.

Basin Harbor (Days: 4,5)

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.