

South Carolina & Georgia: Charleston to Savannah

Bike Vacation Only

Ride along enchanting Southern routes imbued with classic charm. VBT's Charleston and Savannah bike tours guide you along the South's best sea-side and land attractions. Trace the coastal islands of the Intracoastal Waterway, a 3,000-mile trail of bays, lagoons, inlets, and rivers. Watch the sunset over sailboats in history-rich harbors. On this journey, architecture takes center stage; admire "Rainbow Row," a historic neighborhood of pastel-colored houses, and explore the antebellum mansions of Beaufort with a local guide. Cycle along the Spanish Moss Trail, where fantastical moss-draped neighborhoods, lush marshes, and coastal wildlife co-exist. At the Penn Center, unravel the powerful culture of the Gullah people who call the Carolina Sea Islands home. You're sure to fall under the spell of the South during this captivating ride.

Cultural Highlights

- Cycle by the pastel-hued houses of Charleston, marveling at views of sailboats and historic Fort Sumter
- Immerse yourself in the legacy of the Gullah people when you visit the Sea Island of St. Helena and the culture-rich Penn Center
- Step back in time with a cycle through the famed Bonaventure Cemetery and a guided walking tour of the charming streets of Savannah
- Ride beneath a magnificent avenue flanked by live oaks as you approach historic Wormsloe Plantation
- Cycle beneath the live oaks of the Spanish Moss Trail to arrive among the antebellum architecture of Beaufort

What to Expect

This tour offers options for easy rides throughout the trip. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance. This vacation is ideal for beginning and casual cyclists.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 4 - 36 miles

Average Cycling Time: 00:30 - 03:00

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Mar 68°/48°, Apr 76°/55°, May 83°/64°, Sep 85°/69°, Oct 77°/58°, Nov 69°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Mar 3.58, Apr 3.07, May 3.01, Sep 5.06, Oct 3.12, Nov 2.47

DAY 1: Arrive in Charleston / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception and dinner

Travel to Charleston and gather at the Ansonborough Inn, the first hotel on our itinerary. If you're flying in, you can arrange to meet VBT's complimentary shuttle after your arrival at Charleston International Airport.

For guests who are driving to the tour, parking will be available at the Ansonborough Inn for the week at a daily charge or at the Charleston airport. At tour's end, you may join the VBT van to return from Savannah to the Charleston airport.

After your safety briefing and bike-fitting session this afternoon, enjoy a winding warm-up ride through historic "South of Broad," where you'll take in wide views of the harbor and Fort Sumter. Then continue riding through the historic market. You also ride past St. Philip's Church, one of Charleston's oldest, located on appropriately named Church Street.

Tonight, get to know your fellow travelers during a tour orientation, welcome reception, and dinner at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Charleston Warm-up — 4

What to Expect:

Cycling south, you pass the large fountain at the Waterfront Park entrance. It's a wonderful place to stroll in the evening and watch the sailboats on the harbor or the sunset at Ravenel Bridge. On East Bay Street, pass "Rainbow Row," the historic neighborhood of pastel-colored houses. Biking along the Battery, you

see Fort Sumter, which guards the harbor entrance where the first shots of the Civil War were fired in 1861. In a city defined by its steeples, St. Philip's Church boasts one of the oldest. You ride past it during your warm-up ride, then head to the historic City Market, where sweetgrass baskets are still handcrafted with local pride. Mind the horse carriages as you pass the stables on Anson Street back to the Ansonborough Inn.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Cooper River / Cycle through Sullivan's Island and Isle of Palms

After breakfast, you cycle along a dedicated bike/pedestrian lane on the dramatic Arthur Ravenel Bridge over the Cooper River. Traverse Sullivan's Island, then cross another bridge to the Isle of Palms. Our route follows the scenic shores of the Intracoastal Waterway passing by some of the area's most sought-after homes. As you ride, enjoy soothing vistas the beach. During your lunch stop, you have the opportunity to change into swim clothes and go for a swim.

After lunch at a local restaurant on the Isle of Palms, continue cycling to Fort Moultrie. Edgar Allan Poe was stationed here from 1827 to 1828 while serving in the U.S. Army. The fortress played a key role in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. After your visit, you will return to Charleston via the Arthur Ravenel Bridge. Once at the Ansonborough Inn, you will have time to explore Charleston on your own. Perhaps enjoy a stroll along the Battery, the promenade flanking the city's scenic harbor.

Dinner is on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Charleston to Sullivan's Island and Lunch – 14

Afternoon: Sullivan's Island to Charleston – 16

What to Expect:

Cycle from the Ansonborough Inn over the Arthur Ravenel Bridge, enjoying expansive views of downtown, Charleston Harbor, and the Atlantic. Arrive at the Isle of Palms for lunch, where you can go for a swim at the beach.

After lunch, ride back through Sullivan's Island to Fort Moultrie. Explore this National Monument and then retrace your way back to the Ansonborough Inn by bike or shuttle. Upon your return, you may enjoy Charleston on your own and choose from a range of Southern-style restaurants.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 30 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Shuttle to Beaufort / Cycle to Port Royal / Experience a Beaufort Social

Today, you shuttle about 70 minutes south to Beaufort, where you cycle the stunning Spanish Moss Trail. Formerly the path of the Port Royal Railroad, this 12-foot wide, multi-purpose paved trail offers beautiful water and marsh views, coastal wildlife viewing, and historic points of interest as it meanders through neighborhoods draped in Spanish moss. The invigorating trail delivers you to Port Royal, a quaint Lowcountry town in the heart of a biologically rich estuarine ecosystem. After time to admire its houses listed on the National Historic Register, follow another segment of the Spanish Moss Trail to Beaufort. Once in Beaufort lunch will be on your own, the town offers many restaurants to select from.

End your rewarding cycling day in Beaufort. Named "The South's Best Small Town" by *Southern Living* magazine in 2017, it is a charming haven renowned for its Sea Islands, historic downtown and savory Lowcountry food. Check into your hotel here and make yourself at home. The Beaufort Inn is conveniently located to give you easy access to the city's downtown and waterfront.

Enjoy a Lowcountry boil before experiencing firsthand a famous Southern tradition at your inn: a Beaufort social hosted by a local historian. Enjoy this fun opportunity to dance the exuberant yet dignified Virginia Reel, a Colonial-era folk dance, while learning about the culture and history of Beaufort and its people.

If you wish to partake of the Beaufort Inn's spa services during your stay, VBT encourages you to make your reservations well in advance of your arrival.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Spanish Moss Trail – 15

What to Expect:

Cycle along the tranquil Spanish Moss Trail to Port Royal, where several buildings and homes are listed

on the National Register of Historic Places. Stop at the Sands boardwalk and observation tower for views of the Beaufort River and possible dolphin sightings. As you pass through Port Royal, take time to visit the Cypress Wetlands to see an ecosystem unique to the area. Your ride will conclude at your inn in the center of Beaufort.

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: St. Helena Island / Fripp Plantation / Walking tour of Beaufort

Enjoy breakfast in town, then ride through beautiful farmland to St. Helena Island, passing the historic Chapel of Ease along your way. During the Colonial period, rice and cotton planters who found themselves too far from the churches of Beaufort constructed informal “chapels of ease” on their plantations. Built in the mid-18th century, St. Helena’s Chapel of Ease was largely destroyed by a fire more than 100 years later. Its four original walls remain, making it an evocative historic landmark.

Your visit to the Fripp Plantation starts with a cycle down its white fence-lined driveway. You will be greeted by your VBT trip leaders and a local tour guide. As your VBT trip leaders prepare your picnic lunch the local tour guide will share the history of the Fripp Plantation including a walking tour of the home. After this tour, enjoy your picnic lunch in the shade of the pecan trees on the plantation grounds overlooking the water.

After lunch, ride to the Penn Center for an included visit. The Penn Center is a National Monument and the first institution to recognize the Reconstruction Era of the South. Founded in 1862 to educate freed slaves, it’s now a cultural center for African American residents of the Sea Islands, a community also known as the Gullah. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. held the annual retreat for his Southern Christian Leadership Conference at the center. After an enriching visit, return to Beaufort via shuttle or bike.

Later, embark on a walking tour of Beaufort. Stroll past the city’s mix of antebellum mansions, live oaks, and charming 1950s storefronts with a resident guide, who explains why the town has lured so many moviemakers to its lovely streets. A number of critically acclaimed films have used Beaufort as their backdrops, including *Forrest Gump* with Tom Hanks, *The Prince of Tides* with Barbra Streisand, and *The Great Santini* with Robert Duvall.

Make your own dinner plans in Beaufort this evening; there are many excellent restaurants from which to choose.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning St. Helena Island Loop – 22 OR OR Beaufort to St. Helena Island – 36

What to Expect:

If you wish, you may shuttle to St. Helena Island to begin this morning's ride. During this pleasant ride on coastal routes, pause at Land's End Point to explore the beach. Continue on Seaside Road through beautiful farmland, then return to the Penn Center. Those who want a longer ride can start from the inn and cycle across Lady's Island to St. Helena Island. After your visit at the Penn Center, you can shuttle or cycle back to Beaufort in the afternoon.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 - 36 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Shuttle to Savannah / Cycle Isle of Hope to Wormsloe Historic Site / Farewell dinner

This morning, shuttle to Savannah (approximately 90 minutes). Once you have arrived, your Savannah bike tours begin with a journey towards the Isle of Hope. Here, cycle past attractive old homes dating from the early 19th century, enjoying views of the Intracoastal Waterway as you ride.

Our destination this morning is informally known as Wormsloe Plantation, a State Historic Site. One of the most photographed locations in the entire South, it features a 1.5-mile-long live oak avenue framed by a graceful stone entry arch. The remains of the estate—which was constructed using "tabby," a building material similar to cement and made from lime, ash and crushed oyster shells—are renowned as the oldest standing structure in Savannah.

After a picnic lunch hosted by your leaders, continue cycling past Savannah State University's Thunderbolt campus and the moss-hung gardens of Bonaventure Cemetery, an 18th-century cemetery featured in John Berendt's critically acclaimed novel *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. John Muir also sojourned here for six nights during his "Thousand Mile Walk" to the Gulf of Florida.

After you settle in at your hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to explore Savannah at leisure.

Tonight, celebrate with the group during a farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Isle of Hope – 27

What to Expect:

As you leave the city center, ride past seven of Savannah's city squares. Pedal past Savannah State University toward the waterfront. On the Isle of Hope, ride past stately homes and enjoy marsh views. Visit Wormsloe Historic Site and the Bonaventure Cemetery. Ride through downtown neighborhoods of different architectural styles back to Savannah.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Departure

Your Savannah bike tour concludes after an included breakfast at your hotel. VBT's complimentary shuttle is available to take departing guests to the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV), arriving around 12:00 p.m. for your departing flight. We suggest a flight departing after 2:00 p.m. Guests who need to get to the airport earlier or later must make their own arrangements.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

The Ansonborough Inn (Days: 1,2)

The Ansonborough Inn is located within Charleston's historic district of Ansonborough, so named when Admiral George Anson won the property in a spirited poker game. Just one block north of the Market Street area, it is centrally located and close to all of historic downtown Charleston. Once a shipping warehouse, the property was transformed into a luxury hotel after a \$3.5 million renovation. With only 46 rooms, the hotel makes guests feel very much at home. Rooms range in size from 450 to 750 square feet and feature individual climate control, voice mail, mini-fridge, microwave, and in-room safe. Enjoy the hotels expanded continental breakfast and daily wine-and-cheese reception. The rooftop deck and cozy pub offer relaxing spots for a drink.

The Beaufort Inn (Days: 3,4)

With a majestic main house and several adjacent cottages, the award-winning Beaufort Inn occupies an entire block in the city of Beaufort's historic district. A splendid example of Victorian architecture, the complex dates to the 1890s and features elegant gables, wraparound porches lined with inviting rocking chairs, and a lush, manicured garden. During your stay, you may wish to relax with a massage at the inn's on-site spa, or enjoy afternoon tea in one of its mahogany-paneled dining rooms. Each of the Beaufort Inn's 28 rooms is air-conditioned and equipped with cable/satellite television and complimentary wireless Internet access.

Andaz Savannah (Day: 5)

Sophisticated and modern, the Andaz Savannah is a stylish haven on the edge of the historical district. This artfully decorated hotel is just a few blocks from River Street, the bustling shopping avenue along the Savannah River, and set right on Ellis Square, a lively urban square of fountains and a life-sized chess set. Relax on the outdoor pool terrace and enjoy a handcrafted cocktail before settling into your air-conditioned guest room, graced with fine linens, comfortable robes, and a walk-in shower.