

Holland & Belgium Bike & Boat: Amsterdam to Bruges

Bike Vacation Only

Cruise the Low Country's waterways on easy bike paths through rich farmlands filled with birdsong and swirling windmills. The Old World unfolds at a swan's pace along timeless rivers and canals, while your onboard comfort is paramount. Discover Belgium's medieval gems: Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent as well as cosmopolitan Amsterdam. We introduce you to local families and regional specialties with Belgian beer on tap, chocolate for breakfast, and a classic VBT picnic among other surprises. All that's missing is you!

Cultural Highlights

- Spend time with a local family in their home
- Visit Antwerp the "Diamond City" and admire the art of Peter Paul Rubens
- Cycle along rivers, through lush farmlands, on top of dikes and along canals
- Spend leisurely time in the medieval Belgian cities of Bruges and Ghent
- Cross the original "Breukelen Bridge" by bike
- Taste Dutch cheese on a working dairy farm
- Visit the ancestral hometown of the Roosevelt family
- Learn how Dutch engineers "reclaim" land from the sea
- Visit the historic 19th century Kinderdijk windmills, a UNESCO site
- Enjoy a classic VBT picnic lunch alongside historic locks
- Take a guided boat excursion to medieval Ghent's historic center
- Sample Belgian beer and chocolates

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through both urban and rural areas. You will encounter traffic, especially in urban areas. Some of the bike paths are unpaved and the terrain can lack shelter from the wind. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

Tour Duration: 8 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 35

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 03:30

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 61°/46°, Jun 66°/52°, Jul 69°/55°, Aug 70°/55°, Sep 64°/51°, Oct 57°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 2, Jun 2.4, Jul 2.9, Aug 2.4, Sep 3.2, Oct 4.1

DAY 1: Embark barge / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Cruise to Vianen

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: You are responsible for making your own way to meet our barge. Plan to arrive between 1:00 and 1:45 p.m. Please note that you cannot embark before this time, as the barge is being prepared for you. If you are late, you must contact the barge as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. We sail at 2:00 p.m. The barge will be moored in Oosterdok, near the entrance of the NEMO museum, behind the Amsterdam Centraal train station. Please refer to the information listed in the tour handbook.

You will dock before dinner for our warm-up ride, which follows the river Vecht. This evening, gather with the group for a welcome dinner onboard. You moor overnight in Vianen, a small city on the river Lek.

For September 12th, 2019 departure: Meet one of your VBT Trip Leaders in the hotel lobby at 9:00 a.m. and transfer Amsterdam. Enjoy a guided walking tour of Amsterdam, visiting many of the city's highlights and taking some free time for lunch on your own before boarding the barge at 1:45 p.m.

Please note regarding WiFi onboard the barge: Due to the nature of the barge movements, internet access is not always available. As such, if stable internet access is critical to you, VBT recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: Due to the limited WiFi onboard, VBT also recommends that you download your VBT Maps & Route Notes from a WiFi zone prior to arrival on the boat if you wish to use Ride with GPS on your smartphone. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. This option is in addition to VBT's traditional printed maps and route notes available on tour.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: D

Daily Options: 10.5 miles (17 km)

DAY 2: Cycle to Kinderdijk / Cruise to Dordrecht

After breakfast, cycle along the small canals of the rural region of Krimpenerwaard. You will trace the route of the river Lek through Schoonhoven, known as the “Silver City” for its long silversmithing tradition. Continue to Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where 19 of Holland's famous windmills — some more than 260 years old — adorn the horizon. Then you can ride (or cruise, if you prefer) to Dordrecht, one of Holland's oldest towns and birthplace of the state of The Netherlands, founded by William of Orange. Take some time to stroll through the city's historic center to get a glimpse of its rich past. This evening, your barge captain will give a short talk and introduce the crew. The barge moors in Dordrecht tonight and enjoy dinner on board.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 16 or 33 miles (26 or 53 km)

DAY 3: Cruise to Willemstad / Cycle to Tholen

This morning, enjoy a short language lesson while sailing to Willemstad, an old fortified town on the Haringvliet. There'll be time here to explore. The massive walls were laid out in the shape of a seven pointed star, each rampart named for one the seven provinces of the Republic of United Netherlands.

Then cycle to Tholen, once an island in the middle of the large Zeeland streams where many people fished for a living. Today, it is connected to the mainland, but it remains a picturesque village with relics of an eventful past. Pedal through its quiet farmlands and pause for a picnic lunch at historic locks before arriving in Tholen. Here you will rejoin the barge and enjoy dinner onboard. After dinner, some local families meet us at the barge and accompany you back to their homes for an evening of camaraderie and cultural exchange.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, L, D

Daily Options: 14.5 or 28 miles (23.4 or 45 km)

DAY 4: Cruise to Antwerp, Belgium

Today is a non-biking day. This morning, take time to relax onboard during a morning cruise to the impressive port of Antwerp. After lunch on board, you have the rest of the afternoon to explore. Antwerp is known as the “Diamond City” and the native city of the painter Peter Paul Rubens. You may wish to visit the Cathedral of Our Lady and the Market Square, lined with beautiful historic townhouses. Tonight, enjoy dinner on your own in a local restaurant.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: Non-biking day

DAY 5: Cycle to Dendermonde

After cruising out of Antwerp, you will dock and board your bikes for a ride to Temse, Basel Castle, and along the old Schelde River. Pause along the way for lunch on your own near Wissekerke Castle in Bazel. Your afternoon route continues past magnificent river views to Dendermonde, the centuries-old city with a Benedictine abbey and pretty market square at its center. Before dinner on board tonight, you can learn more about Belgian beer during our onboard beer tasting.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 20.5 or 36 miles (33 or 58 km)

DAY 6: Tour Ghent

After breakfast, cycle from Dendermonde to Ghent. Located at the confluence of the Schelde and Leie rivers, this “City of 200 Bridges” was founded around 600 AD and boasts many beautiful buildings dating to medieval times, when the textile industry brought great wealth to Ghent's merchants. After a leisurely lunch on board the barge, embark a local boat for an excursion into the center of Ghent with a guide. There'll be time to explore this attractive medieval canal city on your own. Many old patrician houses have been preserved in the city center. One historic building is the 1425 Cloth Makers' Hall, where textile merchants met and traded. The city's major church is St. Baaf's Cathedral, constructed and enhanced in various styles over many centuries. In the cathedral, admire a number of masterpieces of medieval painting, including Jan van Eyck's famous “Adoration of the Lamb.” Try one of the local restaurants for

dinner on your own.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 22 miles (36 km)

DAY 7: Arrive in Bruges

During breakfast, we cruise to Bruges. Alternately, if you have chosen the longer ride option, you will begin your ride as the barge sets off. The barge will briefly dock farther along the waterway at Aalter Bridge, where the day's shorter cycling route begins. The barge rejoins the main canal and meets us all in Bruges in the late afternoon.

Regarded by many as Europe's best-preserved medieval city, Bruges is laced by a network of canals lined by beautiful houses built by wealthy textile merchants. A 350-foot, 13th-century belfry tower, which houses Europe's most famous carillon, presides over the city's Market Square. You have ample time to marvel at the medieval ambiance of this lovely city and to walk its winding streets. Dine on the barge one last time this evening.

Hotel: Barge Fiep

Alternative: Barge Sailing Home

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 20 or 35 miles (32 or 57 km)

DAY 8: Depart Barge / Discover Bruges / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: After breakfast, your tour ends. It is important that you leave the barge no later than 9:00 a.m. so the crew can prepare for our next guests. Please refer to the information listed in the tour handbook.

Meals: B