

Spain: Andalusia, Córdoba & Granada

Bike Vacation Only

Your bike tour in Spain will provide a myriad of sensory pleasures. Andalusia offers a feast for the eyes with scenic vistas and iconic whitewashed villages surrounded by mountains. Additional pleasures arise from the gardens, vineyards, and fragrant citric and olive groves. On your bike tour through Spain's sunny south, you'll explore magnificent palaces, meander through Roman ruins, and stop for delightful picnics with the region's specialty cuisine at local farms. Feel a refreshing breeze as you pass mountain villages on a downhill glide, and listen for birdlife in a national park. Our carefully curated selection of accommodations ensures that you'll end each discovery-packed day in comfort and style.

Cultural Highlights

- Embark on a guided tour of Córdoba featuring a visit to the amazing Mezquita.
- Ride through olive groves and vineyards along the Ruta del Vino Wine Road.
- Sangria!
- Spin downhill past castles, Roman ruins, and mountain villages toward enchanting Granada.
- Explore the Alhambra Palace— one of Spain's biggest attractions and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills and is ideal for both beginner and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance.

Average Daily Mileage: 18 - 45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Mar 70°/47°, Apr 73°/50°, May 80°/56°, Jun 88°/62°, Sep 90°/64°, Oct 78°/56°, Nov 68°/49°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Mar 1.4, Apr 2.2, May 1.5, Jun 0.5, Sep 0.8, Oct 2.2, Nov 3.2

DAY 1: Warm-up ride / Welcome reception

Meet your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group at the Palma del Rio Hotel (Monasterio de San Francisco, Avenida Pio XII 35, phone +34 957 710183) at 10:00 a.m. Please ask for the exact location of the meeting at the hotel reception desk. If your arrival at the hotel is scheduled for later than 10:00 a.m. or if you are delayed, please contact the Monasterio de San Francisco hotel, and the staff will pass your message on to your VBT trip leaders.

This morning, your trip leaders will host an informative tour overview as well as a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride around Palma del Rio. You will be riding on the fertile lowland of the Guadalquivir River. Please be dressed for riding since your warm-up ride begins immediately follows the safety talk and bike-fitting.

After the warm-up ride, you will have time for lunch on your own at the hotel or at one of Palma del Rio's restaurants. Spend the remainder of the afternoon relaxing by the quiet swimming pool, strolling through the vegetable gardens, or exploring the town's sites. Ambitious riders may opt for an afternoon ride toward the foothills of the Sierra Morena.

Tonight, gather with your trip leaders and travel mates for a welcome reception, including tapas and sangria, two of Andalusia's regional specialties. You'll learn about the history of Spain and Andalusia before dinner is served.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Warm-up Loop — 13 km (8 miles)

Afternoon: Sierra Morena Loop — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Your ride in Andalusia starts with an easy warm-up loop. You will cross the Genil River as you exit town. From there, you will see the fertile plain of the Guadalquivir River and pass a typical Andalusian farm called a *cortijo*. If you choose to ride after lunch on your own, you can cycle out of town toward the foothills of Sierra Morena, looping back down to the Guadalquivir River valley.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 40 km (8 – 25 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Home-hosted picnic lunch with local family

En route to Córdoba, you'll ride up to the foothills of the Sierra Morena Mountain Range and the Parque Natural de Horachuelos. Following the Guadalquivir River, you will make your way into the Campiña Cordobesa-Córdoban countryside. Along the way, you'll stop at a typical Andalusian *cortijo*, where you'll meet a local family and enjoy a picnic lunch.

Later in the afternoon, you'll arrive at your beautiful and centrally located four-star Córdoba hotel. In the 11th century, Cordoba was the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe with a well-developed system for running water and streetlights, along with vast libraries where Arabic, Latin, and Greek manuscripts were translated. Jews, Muslims, and Christians all coexisted in this cultural crossroads. Exceptional monuments like the Mezquita of Córdoba are a good representation of the blend of these different cultures. Famous sons of Córdoba include the philosophers Seneca (Roman), Averroes (Arab), and Maimonides (Jewish). Córdoba has been listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1984.

Your hotel is a few steps from the Mezquita in the Judería—the charming Jewish district and the heart of Córdoba. It consists of ancient, private homes from the 17th and 18th centuries with lovely patios and fountains. The property was carefully restored in 2009.

Spend the rest of the evening at your leisure enjoying all the amenities of your hotel, or venturing out to explore Córdoba's historic sites. Dinner is on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Palma to Posadas (short option) — 33 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Posadas to Lunch (medium option) — 15 km (9 miles) | Posadas to Lunch and Córdoba (long option) — 33 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts through Palma del Río and continues gently uphill toward Hornachuelos. You'll leave the Guadalquivir River plain behind as you bike along the border of the Sierra. The ride is mostly easy but

there will be some uphill cycling no longer than 1 kilometer (0.6 mile). By noon you will approach the quiet town of Posadas for a break. If you are taking the short option, you can take our shuttle to our lunch location. If you continue cycling from the town of Posadas after your break, you'll cross the Rio Guadalquivir for an easy ride to the Cortijo el Temple for lunch. After lunch, you will shuttle to Córdoba or continue cycling on longer option which includes a series of hills to the outskirts of Córdoba. From there, you will be shuttled to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33 – 66 km (20 – 40 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Explore Córdoba

After breakfast, meet your local guide and set out on foot. Start by visiting a nearby synagogue and then continue to the Mezquita.

Originally built as a temple, lighthouse, and warehouse, the Mezquita was once the second-largest mosque in the world and later consecrated as a Christian church after Córdoba was captured by the Spanish in the 12th century. Today, it is considered one of the world's greatest examples of Moorish architecture. From the Mezquita, you'll see the Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos, and the Archiepiscopal Palais, the Roman Bridge with 16 arches spanning the Guadalquivir River, as well as the synagogue built in 1315 in La Judería. Córdoba is also an excellent place to shop for pottery, silverwork, abanicos (fans), cotton and leather goods, embroidered mantillas (scarves), shawls, and wooden crafts. A Bullfighting Museum pays homage to the controversial sport.

Take time on your own this afternoon to explore the many sites and shops of Córdoba. You might want to enjoy an ancient local tradition: an Arab bath in one of the nearby hammams. Immerse yourself in its warm waters, followed by a relaxing massage with essential oils.

Tonight, choose a restaurant for dinner on your own in Córdoba. You might visit a flamenco house in front of the Mezquita or one of the restaurants in La Judería, the Jewish district, where you can also taste local specialties like *caldereta de cordero*, ragout of lamb, or sausages such as *morcilla*, *caña de lomo*, and *salchichón de Pozo Blanco*. *Salmorejo* and *flamenquines* are the most famous Cordovan dishes. Arab influences can be found in the sweet *alfajores* and *pestiños* with almonds and honey.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Ruta del Vino / La Via Verde / Wine and cooking demonstration

After breakfast, you will leave Córdoba and shuttle to the Cordillera Subbética and the Ruta del Vino wine road. As the name suggests, this hilly region is full of olive trees and vineyards, producing and exporting excellent white wines and olive oils. One of the most renowned wines produced in this area is the Pedro Ximénez sweet wine, particularly recommended to complement local *postres* desserts. For lunch, you will stop at a beautiful *bodega* and taste locally produced wines with your meal.

From there you will ride toward the Subbética mountain range, where you have the option of cycling on the Via Verde rails-to-trails path all the way to the hotel. Avid cyclists looking for some hills can opt for a more challenging route.

Hacienda Minerva, your base for the next two nights, was built at the end of the 19th century. Abandoned for years, it was restored and repurposed as a hotel in 2004. The old machinery of the olive-oil mill still serves as part of the décor. Enjoy time to relax by the pool, book a massage, or indulge in the hotel's Arab baths (at additional cost – please ask your leaders to assist in booking massages and the Arab baths in advance of your arrival to the hotel). This evening you will learn how to make one of Andalusia's popular dishes. Dinner will be served in the dining room of the hotel, which was once the pressing room of the oil mill.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Wine Road to La Primilla — 20 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Easy after Lunch ride on the Via Verde — 13 km (8 miles) | La Primilla to Hacienda Minerva — 19 km (12 miles) | La Primilla to Hacienda Minerva Plus — 35 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

You will take a bus from Córdoba to the Montilla-Moriles hills, one of the famous wine regions of Andalusia, and start riding from Espejo, passing several *lagares*, farms where grapes are grown and pressed. You will stay on rolling terrain in the morning with just a few hills, arriving at Lagar La Primilla for lunch and a wine tasting. After lunch, you can shuttle to your starting point on the Vía Verde rails-to-trails path, where you can expect a beautiful easy ride to your hotel. Other riders may opt for some hills on the longer moderate ride to Hacienda Minerva.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 55 km (13 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Explore Zuheros / Organic picnic lunch / Olive-oil tasting

Today, you'll follow the bike path to Luque, passing peaceful farms, olive groves, and the lush, surrounding hillsides. As you pedal along the gently rolling path, keep your eyes open for a variety of birds, including two of the many protected species of this area: the peregrine falcon, symbol of the Natural Park of La Sierra Subbética, and the griffon vulture. Alternatively, you may cycle on a nearby paved road to Luque for a hillier ride with additional mileage.

Near Luque, you'll stop at a *cortijo* for a picnic lunch made from local ingredients freshly picked from the garden of your host, Balbino. This *cortijo*, simply known as El Cortijillo is famous for its prize-winning, organic olive oil.

After lunch, retrace your way to Hacienda Minerva on a scenic route, passing through the quaint whitewashed village of Zuheros. Built onto a rocky promontory, Zuheros is considered one of the most beautiful, "white villages" of Spain. It is also known for its castle with spectacular views, as well as its cheese and olive oil production. Take some time to enjoy the scenery, marvel in the views of the castle, and wander through the picturesque little streets.

From Zuheros you can take the easy Via Verde bike path back to the hotel or continue on a more challenging scenic route for additional mileage.

Back at the hotel, enjoy time to relax before your small group gathers to learn about the olive oil industry and why it is the main business in the area.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Via Verde to El Cortijillo (easy ride) — 21 km (12 miles) | Via Verde to El Cortijillo (moderate ride) — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: After Lunch ride to Zuheros and Hacienda Minerva — 13 km (8 miles) | Zuheros to Hacienda Minerva Loop — 24 km (15 miles)

What to Expect:

A beautiful and undulating route on the gentle Via Verde bike path leads from your hotel toward Zuheros and Luque through the Parque Natural de la Sierra Subbética. An alternative route can provide additional

mileage and hillier terrain. Enjoy a lunch stop at El Cortijillo with an organic home-hosted meal. Fully fortified, you will follow a gorgeous route up to today's highlight village, Zuheros, and then back down to the hotel. The afternoon ride includes a 1.2-mile (2-km) hill plus a few shorter climbs to reach the hilltop village of Zuheros. If you are looking for more mileage after arriving in Zuheros you may opt for a longer ride back to the hotel. The longer ride not only offers additional mileage but some hills for a rewarding challenge.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 63 km (12 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Travel to Granada

After breakfast, you will start your morning ride in the small town of Benalúa de las Villas. Begin with a gradual descent through a valley with the Sierra Nevada mountain range in the distance and head towards the enchanting city of Granada. You will pedal through towns that were heavily fortified in the Middle Ages prior to the final conquest of Granada in 1492, including Colomera with its castle and towering church. As you continue on the Ruta de las Fortalezas, you will find traces of Roman influence, including a 2,000-year-old bridge. Leaving the mountains and small villages behind, you will enter La Vega Granada's main valley and finish your ride with lunch and celebratory toast under the shade of pine trees with a cool breeze coming from the Cubillas Reservoir.

This evening, join your trip leaders for a festive farewell dinner and sample some regional culinary delights.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ruta de las Fortalezas to Olivares — 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Olivares to Campus Nautico — 21 km (13 miles) | Olivares to Campus Nautico Plus — 32 km (19.2 miles)

What to Expect:

Your final ride takes you from the mountains north of Granada down to the Genil River lowlands. You will leave Benalúa de las Villas and head down a mountain valley with the impressive Sierra Nevada mountain range as the backdrop. You will pass a 2,000-year-old Roman bridge and the towns of Colomera and

Moclín with their Arab fortresses and Christian churches. The ride is a gently rolling route with a continuous descent into the valley and along the Genil riverbank. More adventurous riders have the option of a slightly longer, more challenging ride with a few more hills.

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 – 57 km (15 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Alhambra Palace / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, you will meet your local guide and walk to the Alhambra Palace for an included visit to the Palace and Generalife Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Due to hotel check-out times, please settle your hotel bill and check out prior to your included visit of the Alhambra Palace. After the tour, you will return to the hotel to collect your luggage and continue to your next destination. Your flight from Granada should not be scheduled to depart earlier than 3:00 p.m.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Monasterio de San Francisco (Day: 1)

Monasterio de San Francisco was a Franciscan monastery built in 1492 by the VII Señor de Palmas orders. It was transformed into a charming hotel in 1985, yet preserves the simplicity and tranquility of a monastery. The refectory is now a quiet reading room, the ancient vegetable garden still supplies the kitchen, and the patios are the same ones walked by the monks in silent prayer five centuries ago. Only the large swimming pool shaded by orange trees is a reminder of the modern world. Today, guests can still drink the juice of the garden's 65 orange trees, some of which are five centuries old. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout the premises.

Las Casas de la Juderia Cordoba (Days: 2,3)

Hotel Las Casas de la Judería is located a few steps from the Mezquita in the very heart of Córdoba. It consists of ancient, private homes from the 17th and 18th centuries with charming patios, gardens, and fountains. The property is air conditioned and beautifully restored, and exhibits a perfect blend of history and comfort. Free WiFi is also available.

Hacienda Minerva (Days: 4,5)

Located in the geographic center of Andalusia, this enchanting property is close to Sierra Subbética Park and the famous Via Verde bike path. The hotel is surrounded by centuries-old olive trees and faces the charming “white village” of Zuheros. This historic 19th-century farm has been lovingly restored. Its unique architecture is embedded in the landscape with all the modern comforts. The Hacienda has unique public spaces: a library with 10,000 books, a wine cellar, and a swimming pool. The hotel is not air conditioned but does offer WiFi throughout the premises.

Hotel NH Collection Victoria (Days: 6,7)

Enjoy an ideal location in the heart of Granada and an elegant ambiance during your stay at the Hotel NH Collection Granada Victoria. The hotel is located near the Cathedral, Royal Chapel, and Alcaicería bazaar, in a bustling neighborhood of shops and restaurants. The Alhambra is just a 20-minute walk away. Savor traditional Mediterranean cuisine in the hotel’s sunny restaurant or tapas at the bar. Your soundproof and air-conditioned room features a flat-screen TV, free WiFi, and private bath with rain-effect shower.