Chile: Coastal Vistas & Vineyards

Bike Vacation Only

This unique Chile cycling vacation includes a region most bike tours miss—the coast! As you spin along sunny Chilean shores, you'll discover a wealth of South American marine life during a boating excursion with a local fisherman. Your local VBT trip leaders will introduce you to the colorful coastal city of Valparaiso—with its brightly-painted buildings and vibrant street art. Turning inland, you'll spin through the Valle de Casablanca, famous for its fine white wines, and enjoy a tasting at the innovative Kingston Family Winery. Cycle through the Valle dei Maipo—then receive a royal welcome from our friends at the sumptuous Santa Rita Vineyards. As you enjoy the amenities of this opulent estate, you'll experience a unique wine-tasting workshop, in which an experienced Chilean sommelier helps you uncover the secrets of your own palate.

Cultural Highlights

- Marvel at Humboldt penguins and sea lions as they lounge on islands just offshore.
- Join a captain in his small boat and help him bring in the catch of the day.
- Admire the pride of Viña del Mar, the Reloj de Flores—a large clock made of flowers.
- Stroll the cobbled, winding streets of hillside Valparaiso, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with a local guide.
- Blend your own wine with a sommelier, then have it bottled and labeled to go.

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain and short-mileage rides throughout and is ideal for beginning cyclists. Longer mileage options with easy-to-moderate terrain offer fun for more avid bikers with rides in the afternoons. Many of the scenic coastal rides are on primary roads with traffic. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with hills or do not feel comfortable with some of the more heavily trafficked roads. In order to provide a variety of scenery and rides, there is considerable travel time required on this tour. Drives can range from 1.5 to 2.5 hours, and some of the rides require a shuttle time of 30-45 minutes to the ride's starting and ending points.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 11 - 34 miles
Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 04:00
Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)
Jan 85º/54º, Feb 84º/53º, Mar 80º/49º, Apr 72º/45º, Oct 71º/45º, Nov 77º/48º
Average Rainfall (in.)
Jan 0, Feb 0.1, Mar 0.2, Apr 0.5, Oct 0.5, Nov 0.2

DAY 1: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Travel to Pacific Coast / Welcome reception and dinner in Zapallar

Meet one of your VBT trip leaders at The Singular Santiago hotel at 8:45 a.m. Please be dressed in your cycling attire for your warm-up ride. You shuttle (approximately 1.5 hours) to the starting point of your ride, where you meet your second trip leader.

Leave the hustle and bustle of the Santiago metropolitan area and shuttle northwest toward the Pacific Coast. Crossing the coastal mountain range, you travel through the agricultural heartland of Chile. The Mediterranean-like climate of the central region is ideal for growing avocados, peaches, walnuts, olives, almonds, citrus fruits, flowers for export, and, of course, grapes for producing the country's excellent wines.

Begin your Chile bike tour with a warm-up ride traversing this farmland on a scenic and seldom-traveled country road. Following your ride and lunch, continue your journey with a shuttle (approximately one hour) to the quaint coastal fishing town of Zapallar and your charming inn overlooking the Pacific.

You meet tonight for a cocktail reception before enjoying a delicious welcome dinner at the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Warm-up — 19.9 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride will give you the opportunity to become familiar with your bike as you ride fairly level country roads with little traffic. There will be an occasional uphill climb and some roads with more traffic

than others, but today's ride will be a great introduction and provide a preview of the upcoming rides on this tour.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19.9 km (12 miles)

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Playas Salinas de Pullally / Papudo

Following breakfast, set out on a morning ride along Chile's scenic *Ruta del Mar*, or Route of the Sea. Enjoy marvelous vistas as you pedal along Chile's central coast. Later, turn off the Ruta del Mar and follow a narrow, paved road past small farms to Playas Salinas de Pullally. This beautiful beach was named for the salt dunes that attracted indigenous populations in the past. Today the beach is a refuge to surfers and kayakers. There'll be time to explore before you enjoy your included box lunch.

Following lunch, cycle on an easy, quiet rural road before shuttling back to your hotel (approximately 40 minutes). Those looking for a longer ride this afternoon may return to the hotel via a rewarding scenic route.

This afternoon, relax in the hotel's pool or venture down a hillside path through tall pines to walk along the seaside Rambla, a series of coastal stone walkways built around giant boulders. Nearby, there's a popular beach where you may join local residents sunbathing and swimming in the calm waters of a horseshoe-shaped cove.

This evening, enjoy dinner at your leisure at your inn's small restaurant or on the outside terrace. Or you may opt to walk along the scenic Rambla to a seaside restaurant where you may sample freshly caught seafood.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Zapallar to Las Salinas de Pullally Beach — 33.2 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Las Salinas de Pullally with Shuttle to Zapallar — 10 km (6 miles) OR Las Salinas de Pullally to Zapallar — 22.8 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

The first part of today's ride follows a gently rolling route. After passing through Papudo, there's one last gradual climb. Then the ride becomes flat all the way to the beach and to the end of the short option. The long option includes a few ascents, which make the ride back to the hotel a bit challenging. Please note: there is typically heavy traffic on the coastal *Ruta del Mar* during the summer months of January and February. This may cause longer travel times and less desirable riding conditions for guests choosing the longer afternoon ride.

Cumulative Distance Range: 33.2 – 56 km (20 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Zapallar and Cachagua by bike / Humboldt Penguins / Fisherman's Catch / Travel to Concón

This morning, you set off on your bicycle to explore Zapallar, a quaint seaside town of historic mansions. The village was settled more than 100 years ago by an affluent Chilean who wanted to develop a modest South American version of the French Riviera. He offered land to his affluent friends and relatives on the condition that they build within a couple years, which they gladly did. Descendants of the original families still own many of the homes, but only the very rich can afford to live in what some have called "The Hamptons of Chile." Today, this elite town boasts lavish estates with impeccable flower gardens.

Still, Zapallar boasts the timeless charms of the old world, as you will see for yourself as you cycle from your hotel to its small fishing port. Fishermen still work as they have for centuries here. Experience the seafaring tradition firsthand when you venture out to sea with a captain in his small boat. Out on the open water, you help collect traps with crab and possibly the rare rock shrimp found only in these waters. Back on land, continue cycling amid the winding streets lined with cypress and eucalyptus trees, stopping by one of the most famous houses, *Hildesheim*, named after a German town. This charming building is a perfect replica of a 16th-century Bavarian house.

Next, ride to Cachagua, a small seaside town south of Zapallar famous for its Humboldt penguins. Years ago, after lost or injured migrating penguins started showing up on the shores of a nearby island, concerned residents started protecting and feeding them. Since then, the delightful creatures have become a prized fixture—one of the few Humboldt penguin communities left in South America. Today, the unspoiled island sanctuary is one of Chile's treasured national parks and home to thousands of Humboldt penguins and other birds. Your afternoon ride delivers you to the Cachagua beach that offers the best views of this tiny island just offshore. Don't forget your binoculars for a more up-close observation.

Continue cycling south to reach Maitencillo, a scenic haven for surfers, paragliders, cyclists, joggers, and skaters. Stop for lunch on your own and a chance to sample *helado*, ice cream, or a *cerveza*, beer, from one of the many local kiosks on the beach. Later, shuttle south (approximately 1 hour) along the Pacific Coast highway to your next destination, Concón. The unique situation of your seaside accommodations—partially built into huge stone boulders—provides the rooms with spectacular views of the ocean and the crashing waves below.

Dine on your own by the marina of Concón or enjoy seaside dining at your hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Zapallar to Maitencillo Beach — 19.8 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's rides will be on the small neighborhood roads of Zapallar and Cachagua. Some of the neighborhood roads in Cachagua are packed dirt but should not pose a problem for road bikes. The ride to Maitencillo features a gradual but long uphill.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19.8 km (12 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Viña del Mar / Valparaíso walking tour

Take a leisurely morning ride from your hotel this morning. Enjoy the sound of the crashing waves as you cycle along a lovely coastal route to a site where sea lions—fed and protected by the Marine Biology University of Valparaíso—sunbathe on offshore rocks. Don't forget your binoculars for more interesting observation. Later, pedal into Reñaca beach, one of the famous beaches of Viña del Mar, and explore the area before biking back to the hotel. Along today's route, you pass the magnificent towering dunes of Concón, a terrific photo opportunity.

Later this afternoon, shuttle approximately 45 minutes to one of Chile's most vibrant cultural centers, Viña del Mar. This lovely town with a spectacular coastal setting is known as the "Garden City," as you'll understand upon seeing the Reloj de Flores—a large clock made of flowering plants. From here, you board the local metro to the next town, Valparaíso.

Valparaíso is a major Chilean port and was a popular stopover for late-19th-century ships sailing from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean through the Straits of Magellan. The city also supported and supplied the California Gold Rush of the 1850s. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage site due to its unique urban design and distinctive architecture, its cobblestone alleyways and hillside buildings are the focus of your walking tour today. There'll be time to browse the tiny boutiques and art galleries and to enjoy dinner on your own in one of the restaurants overlooking the port.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Concón Loop — 18.8 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's easy leisurely loop ride on the two-lane seaside road begins and ends at your hotel. The entire ride is flat and provides several coastal viewpoints for photo opportunities.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18.8 km (11 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Casablanca Wine Valley / Kingston Family Winery picnic lunch and wine tastings

This morning, you leave the cool coastal climate and travel inland approximately one hour to the Casablanca Wine Region. The valley is relatively new to wine growing; its grapes were planted as recently as the 1980s. This scenic area is widely known for its white wine grapes, especially Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Your ride today traces shaded roads through eucalyptus forests to expansive vistas of vineyards and olive groves. You'll be rewarded with a tasting of some of the region's wines and a sumptuous picnic lunch at the fifth-generation American-Chilean Kingston Family Winery.

After lunch, continue inland to the foothills of the Andes (travel time approximately two hours, depending upon traffic). Your home for the next two nights is the regal Hotel Casa Real. Surrounded by the Santa Rita vineyards, the family here has been making wine since 1880. With only 16 luxurious rooms, this Tuscan-inspired villa will be exclusively yours.

After settling into your accommodations, you are treated to a welcome reception on Casa Real's veranda, followed by a gracious candlelit dinner served in the villa's intimate dining room.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Casablanca Valley — 20.3 km (12 miles) | Casablanca Valley PLUS — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's short option is mainly flat and very easy, while the longer option includes some short inclines and a fun ride through a eucalyptus forest.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20.3 — 38.3 km (12 — 23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Andean foothills / Santa Rita Vineyards / Wine making / Chilean barbecue farewell dinner

After breakfast, begin your ride through the Santa Rita Vineyards. Your scenic morning follows country roads flanked by magnificent ancient trees. Pass local farmers in their ponchos, many still using horses as their means of transportation. Feel free to stop and sample delicious *pan amadado* (homemade bread) and fresh empanadas (savory turnovers) along the way to the village of Champa. Shuttle or continue riding back to Casa Real, where you will enjoy a picnic lunch in the lovely Casa Real gardens.

Later, you may tour the impressive Museo Andino, or Andean Museum, located just steps away in the vineyard. The museum houses more than 1,800 pieces of art from several Andean cultures, as well as artifacts from as far away as Easter Island and the Atacama Desert. Perhaps enjoy a relaxing swim in the pool or a stroll through the expansive gardens, where you can admire the second-tallest bougainvillea in the world, or walk through the Santa Rita vineyards to the monument marking where the "lost Carmenere grape" was recently discovered. In 1863, the phylloxera aphid invaded European vineyards, destroying all the grapes by 1870. However, European vinifera was grafted to American rootstock, which was impervious to the insect, and eventually the European vineyards bounced back. The Carmenere grape was thought to be lost forever until it was discovered in 1994, here in Santa Rita's vineyards.

Later, learn about blending wines from an expert Santa Rita sommelier. Create your own wine blend to your specific palette's desire. Your concoction will be bottled and labeled as your very own. Afterward, celebrate your week with a typical Chilean barbecue on the lovely patio of the Casa Real (weather permitting).

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Santa Rita Vineyard to Champa — 29.1 km (18 miles) | Champa to Santa Rita Vineyard — 32.6 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Both the short and long options are mainly flat and very easy.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29.1 – 61.7 km (18 – 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Santiago / Historical city center walking tour / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends or begin Post-Trip Extension

After an included breakfast this morning, travel approximately 45 minutes to Santiago for an included walking tour of Santiago's historical city center. After the tour and lunch on your own, travel to the Santiago airport, where your tour concludes at 3:00 p.m. Departure flights prior to 6:00 p.m. are not recommended; you will need to make your own transportation arrangements to the airport if you have an earlier departure.

Please note: VBT transportation times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar (Days: 1,2)

Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar is a unique, European-style boutique hotel designed to reflect the history of the city. This 4-star luxury property has stunning ocean views and offers first-class service. The hotel's restaurant has an exquisite menu prepared from fresh and local ingredients. Rooms are decorated in a classic and cozy style; 400-thread-count cotton sheets, lush pillows, and French amenities are just a few of the special touches you'll enjoy. The hotel's location puts you a short walk away from the nearby coastal path that leads to Zapallar's beautiful swimming beach. Note that the Hotel Isla Seca Zapallar is not air-conditioned.

Radisson Acqua Concon Hotel & Spa (Days: 3,4)

The Radisson Acqua Concón Hotel & Spa enjoys a stunning location, set among dramatic seaside boulders. Attractive sea-view rooms are generously outfitted with all the modern amenities, including complimentary WiFi, flat-screen televisions, free bottled water, and spacious desks. The hotel's roof terrace offers outdoor sunbathing by its intimate pool. On cooler days, enjoy the indoor pool carved into the hotel's rock foundation. During your stay, treat yourself at the Acqua Spa, soothe body and mind with an indoor seawater pool, and indulge in a selection of massage services, beauty techniques, and skin treatments. Note that the Radisson Acqua Concón Hotel & Spa is not air-conditioned.

Casa Real (Days: 5,6)

This Tuscan-inspired hotel is nestled in a beautiful natural environment. Located in the heart of a century-old, 120-acre (49-hectare) park, the regal hacienda was once the manor house of the Santa Rita Winery and is imbued with its history and traditions. The park boasts the second-tallest bougainvillea in the world, as well as numerous gardens and paths for tranquil walks. You might also relax in the small swimming pool and pool house. The hacienda's small chapel was restored by a craftsman from the Vatican's Sistine Chapel. As the villa has just 16 rooms, your group has the entire place to itself. Note that the Hotel Casa Real is not air-conditioned.