

Georgia & Florida: Jekyll Island & St. Augustine

Bike Vacation Only

Discover the most rewarding way to bike Florida. History and culture unfold at every turn during this thrilling coastal reel from Amelia Island to St. Augustine. You'll cycle into the Sunshine State's Spanish, French, and English past, pausing to explore historic districts, magnificent seaside state parks, old plantations, and stalwart fortresses. Ride scenic shore roads under a canopy of live oaks. Head inland to farm country, spinning along the St. John's River. And leave your bike behind to experience salt marshes by kayak and to revel in a magnificent sunset cruise.

Cultural Highlights

Ride through some of Florida's most charming historic districts and along its breathtaking coast

Explore architectural treasures spanning Florida's Spanish, French and English periods

Discover the ramparts of Fort Clinch State Park in the company of a Union soldier

Navigate your kayak through a salt marsh preserve in search of eagles, otters, and dolphins

Savor two picnics in scenic locales, each prepared with fresh local ingredients

Learn about life in the historic South at the 1780 Kingsley Plantation

Visit the scene-stealing lighthouse and pristine four-mile beach of Anastasia State Park

Enjoy a relaxed southern reel complemented by an idyll on sweeping verandas under the shade of live oak trees

Embark a sunset cruise on the Schooner Freedom, a fine testament to Civil War blockade runners

Visit a civil rights landmark in St. Augustine: the lunch counter at Woolworth's

See where Ponce de León is believed to have landed in Florida in 1513

What to Expect

This tour offers riding on bike paths and roadways alongside vehicular traffic. In many cases, roadways have marked bike lanes. We have chosen quieter options where possible. Scenic A1A is busier but accustomed to cyclists. There are no hills or dirt roads (except for some short dirt driveways to access some sites). Of course, your VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance or wish for a shorter ride option.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 30

Average Cycling Time: 00:30 - 02:30

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jan 68°/47°, Feb 69°/48°, Mar 74°/53°, Apr 79°/58°, Oct 81°/64°, Nov 74°/54°, Dec 69°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Jan 2.5, Feb 3.1, Mar 3.4, Apr 2.9, Oct 5.5, Nov 2.3, Dec 2.8

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Arrive on Amelia Island / Warm-up ride through historic district

Your tour begins at the Hoyt House in Fernandina Beach on Amelia Island, Florida. If you are flying to Jacksonville, East Coast Transportation will make one complimentary transfer for VBT guests from the Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) to the inn. The shuttle works on a “show and go” basis and departs from the airport at 12:30 p.m. Shuttle reservations are neither required nor available. Connect with the shuttle on the ground floor in the “Meet and Greet” area located across from baggage claim carousel #1. The driver will be holding a VBT sign.

If your flight arrives too late for you to make the 12:30 p.m. shuttle departure, you will need to arrange your own transportation to the inn at your own expense. Taxis and shared-ride services are conveniently located on the lower level outside of baggage claim. The following companies offer transportation: Gator City Taxi, (904) 999-9999, and Go Airport Shuttle & Sedan of Jacksonville, (904) 353-8880. Travel time from Jacksonville International Airport is approximately 35 minutes. Taxi fare is approximately \$60.

For guests driving to the tour, free parking is available at Hoyt House and Williams House during your stay on Amelia Island. Note that after you check out, your car will need to be moved to adjacent street parking, where overnight parking is permitted, for the remainder of the tour.

Check-in at your Amelia Island inn. *Please see your Final Travel Documents for the name and address of your inn since the group is split between two neighboring Victorian inns: Hoyt House and Williams House.* If you made a reservation with either Hoyt House or Williams House prior to your biking tour please notify VBT so you can be accommodated at the same hotel once the tour begins.

Meet your VBT trip leaders at 2:00 p.m. at Hoyt House, dressed in cycling clothes for the important bike fitting and a brief cycling-skills clinic. A warm-up ride takes you on an introductory loop through Fernandina Beach’s protected historic district. There’s time to explore on and off your bike before returning to the inn. Please use the amenities and services provided by the inn at which you are lodging.

Upon return from your warm-up ride, settle into your room. Then gather at 5:30 p.m. at Hoyt House for a welcome reception, followed by a 6:00 p.m. orientation meeting. Dinner tonight is at one of the town's well-regarded restaurants.

Hotel: Hoyt House or Williams House

Meals: Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Amelia Island Warm-Up: 8 miles

What to Expect: The warm-up ride takes you along 14th Street to the historic district of Fernandina Plaza, passing Victorian homes, churches, and quaint shops. Make a stop at Fernandina Plaza Historic State Park, the site of Fort San Carlos. Finish your two-wheeling exploration with a visit to the oldest continuously operating drinking establishment in Florida – the Palace Saloon on Center Street.

DAY 2: Circle Amelia Island / Fort Clinch State Park / American Beach / Lunch at the Beach

Today you set out to explore Amelia Island by bike from your inn, setting your own pace. Remarkably, Amelia Island boasts 4,000 years of history and is the only place in the U.S. to have been ruled under eight different flags. Throughout your invigorating day, you circumnavigate the island, just two miles wide and 13 miles long. Pass Florida's oldest lighthouse, wide beaches, and plenty of inviting spots to stop, relax, and take in the lovely ocean vistas. It won't take long for you to discover that this is the ideal way to bike Florida.

In the morning, ride under the canopies of oaks to Fort Clinch. Explore this 19th-century defense during an included guided tour by a Union soldier. There'll be time here to dig your toes into the white sand beach or wade out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Pause for an included lunch at a popular seaside restaurant.

After lunch you cycle past American Beach, where the African-American community came to swim and socialize during the era of segregation. Cultural icons from Zora Neale Hurston and Ray Charles to Hank Aaron soaked up the rays here. The enclave was established by Florida's first African-American millionaire, Abraham Lincoln Lewis, and his Afro-American Life Insurance Company.

Gather at 5:00 p.m. for a social hour and a visit from a local historian. After, enjoy a relaxed stroll through

the Historic District of Fernandina Beach, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Choose one of the town's restaurants for dinner on your own perhaps enjoying your meal al fresco.

Hotel: Hoyt House or Williams House

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 - 27 miles

Morning

Fort Clinch (short option): 15 miles

OR

Fort Clinch and American Beach (long option): 27 miles

What to Expect: Leaving the inn, you ride on Atlantic Avenue to historic Fort Clinch State Park under a canopy of beautiful live oaks. You tour the fort with a park staff member who provides a living history interpretation as a Union soldier. Return to Atlantic Avenue and cycle on A1A south, pausing for lunch at Sliders Seaside Grill on the beach. Today's short option leads you back to Hoyt House after lunch. The longer option continues to American Beach and returns to Hoyt House on the same route.

DAY 3: Timucuan Preserve / Kayak Excursion / Fort George Island

After a hearty breakfast, you hop on your bike and head south, leaving Amelia Island. Later, arrive at the Timucuan Ecological and Historical Preserve, where kayaks await you for an exciting nature excursion. After an introduction to our vessels, set out into the marshes. Your route is designed for easy paddling, allowing you the opportunity to fine-tune your skills, or to observe the flora and fauna up close. The salt marsh attracts abundant wildlife. Your guide may help you spot wood storks, osprey, great blue heron, snowy egret, bald eagle, otter, and dolphin. You need not have prior kayak experience to enjoy today's outing, an out-and-back paddle. Your Trip Leaders have prepared a picnic lunch of locally sourced ingredients that you will enjoy back on shore.

After lunch, cycle south and onto Fort George Island. You pass the Ribault Club, once a 1920s-era golf club and now a historic building on the National Historic Register. Then continue to the end of the island and Kingsley Plantation. Its interpretive exhibits provide a fascinating chronicle of plantation life. This circa-1780 estate, established by Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr., once produced indigo and Sea Island cotton. Kingsley took a teenage African princess, Anna, as his wife. Anna Kingsley later held a central role in

creating a free black community.

You shuttle from Kingsley Plantation to St. Augustine (about 90 minutes) and check into your bayfront accommodations. America's First City, as it is often called, celebrated the 450th anniversary of its founding in 2015. Your trip leaders can recommend great options for dinner on your own, all within an easy walk.

Hotel: Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 - 34 miles

Morning

Fort George Island with Kayaking: 28 miles

OR

Fort George Island without Kayaking: 34 miles

What to Expect: Heading south from the inn, you leave Amelia Island via the causeway across the Nassau Sound. Your route traverses Big Talbot Island, Long Island, and Little Talbot Island, passing through four state parks. Pause on the banks of Simpson Creek for a guided kayak excursion, paddling with the creek's tide and in the surrounding basin. (Additional cycling is available for those who don't wish to kayak.) After a picnic lunch, rejoin A1A south for a short stretch before turning onto Fort George Island, pedaling its length along quiet roads. You have time to visit both the Ribault Club and Kingsley Plantation.

DAY 4: Anastasia State Park / St. Augustine Lighthouse / Sunset Sail

You ride from your inn over St. Augustine's famous Bridge of Lions, cycling through local neighborhoods. Your destination is Anastasia State Park, which comprises 1,600 acres of rich ecosystems and abundant wildlife. Stop along the way to savor the breathtaking views from the historic St. Augustine Lighthouse. A visit of this beautiful beacon showcases some of the artifacts from the area's earlier days. Once at the park, explore up to four miles of pristine beach and the estuarine tidal marsh teeming with plant and animal life. Enjoy time on the beach.

Next, pedal through the Lincolnville Historic District, a 45-square-block area of the city. Once a focal point for the Civil Rights Movement, the district today contains the highest concentration of Victorian-era

buildings in St. Augustine, as well as a museum and cultural center. Along the way, you stop for lunch at a local food truck.

There's time this afternoon to cycle to the Nombre de Dios Mission, home to a dramatic cross that stand 204 feet tall, and the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park, said to be the spot where Spanish explorer Ponce de León first landed on Florida shores in 1513. Today, the 15-acre park is a paradise for historians and nature lovers alike, overlooking the Matanzas River and St. Augustine Inlet. Discover the early history of St. Augustine here before continuing across the bridge to the beautiful beaches in the seaside town of Vilano. Or return to your hotel and take a swim or grab a refreshing drink. You may take an optional student-guided tour of historic Flagler College. Originally built as the Ponce de León Hotel, it includes the largest collection of Tiffany stained-glass windows and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the early evening, you cross the road to the City Marina and board the *Schooner Freedom* for a delightful sunset sail. Feel free to join the crew as they raise the sails!

Hotel: Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 - 24 miles

Morning

St. Augustine Lighthouse and Lincolnville: 14 miles

Afternoon

Vilano Beach Ride: 10 miles

What to Expect: Explore historic and lovely St. Augustine! Then ride to the St. Augustine Lighthouse for an included museum tour. Visit Anastasia State Park for a stroll along the beach, weather permitting. Continue your morning ride through the Lincolnville Historic District and have a delicious lunch at a local food truck. After lunch, a short ride takes you to the Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park and the Nombre de Dios Mission. Discover the early history of St. Augustine before continuing across the bridge to the beautiful beaches in the seaside town of Vilano.

DAY 5: Farmlands Ride / Farewell Dinner

After breakfast you transfer 30 minutes to the starting point of today's scenic ride in St. John's County. Then you cycle inland past the fertile fields and small communities of rural Florida. Pedal past acres of potato and cabbage fields, mostly on quiet roads. Views of the St. John's River keep you company for a portion of your ride. After a freshly prepared lunch at a farm-to-fork culinary market, transfer back (30 minutes) to St. Augustine and relax or explore the city.

Gather with the group tonight for a farewell dinner celebration.

Hotel: Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Morning

Florida Farmlands: 26 miles

What to Expect: Today you ride through the farmlands of St. John's County for another flavor of Florida. A 30-minute shuttle brings you to our ride's starting point. The route crisscrosses farmlands and parallels the St. John's River. Pass potato and cabbage fields and take a break at Riverdale Park, a charming green space along the St. John's. After a snack stop, continue along the river to the charming parish town of St. Ambrose. At the end of your ride, enjoy an included lunch. Return to the hotel by afternoon shuttle.

DAY 6: St. Augustine / Lightner Museum / Depart for home / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast you may visit the Woolworth's lunch counter, a civil rights landmark, and the Lightner Museum with your included admission. Built in 1887 in Spanish Renaissance style, the impressive three-story museum now contains fascinating relics from America's Gilded Age, including a fine collection of decorative and fine arts.

Checkout time is 11:00 a.m. VBT has made arrangements for a shuttle from the hotel back to the Jacksonville International Airport (JAX). The shuttle departs St. Augustine at 11:00 a.m. Travel time is approximately 60 minutes. Flights departing before 2:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you need to travel at a different time to the airport in Jacksonville, taxis are available, and the fare is approximately \$125.

If you drove to the starting point of the tour, your trip leaders will shuttle you back to Fernandina Beach at 11:00 a.m. to retrieve your car around 1:00 p.m.

Meals: Breakfast

Today's Ride Choice:

Non-Biking Day: Explore the Lightner Museum with included admission

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront (Days: 3,4,5)

This boutique-style hotel is an architectural salute to the rich Spanish traditions of St. Augustine. Its interconnected cottage-style buildings feature tiled roofs and wooden balconies. The air-conditioned hotel comprises 19 different buildings set around an inner courtyard and connected by an interior corridor. All of St. Augustine is right outside your door, from the historic Spanish Quarter to the Castillo de San Marcos. Guest rooms include a coffee maker, mini-refrigerator, and a spacious desk with two phones and voicemail. Free WiFi is available throughout the hotel.

The Hoyt House (Days: 1,2)

The Hoyt House Inn of Amelia Island's town of Fernandina Beach offers luxurious guest rooms, romantic elegance, a gourmet breakfast, and—above all—true Southern hospitality. Enjoy a relaxed atmosphere and fine amenities throughout your stay. The inn is one mile from the beach and in the heart of the Historic District, a 50-block region ideal for strolling. Hoyt House is just steps away from Fernandina Beach's marvelous restaurants and boutiques. Grab a rocking chair and relax on the porch with morning coffee or an evening drink, or slumber underneath a tree by the pool.