Georgia & Florida: Jekyll Island & St. Augustine

Bike Vacation Only

Explore the islands and cultures of Georgia and Florida on one diverse bike trip. From the grand cottages of Jekyll Island and historic Amelia Island to the rich heritage of St. Augustine, you'll ride scenic shore roads, weaving your way along sweeping coasts and scenic estuaries. Along the way, stop to kayak in pristine salt marshes teeming with birdlife. Learn about the St. Augustine Lighthouse on guided tour and climb the 219 steps to reach the top of the lighthouse for stunning and splendid views. Embark a sunset sail on the Schooner Freedom. And glimpse the rural side of Florida during a leisurely spin among farming communities along the St. John's River. When you join VBT, you'll discover the most enriching way to bike Florida and Georgia.

Cultural Highlights

- Cycle past the sprawling beaches, grand "cottages" and historic ruins of Jekyll Island
- Navigate your kayak through a salt marsh preserve in search of eagles, otters, and dolphins
- Visit the scene-stealing St. Augustine Lighthouse and the nearby pristine four-mile beach of Anastasia State Park
- Embark a sunset cruise on the Schooner Freedom, a fine testament to Civil War blockade runners
- Cycle the farmlands of St. John's County, pedaling past potato and cabbage fields, small farming communities and the tranquil St. John's River

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.

Average Daily Mileage: 5 - 26 miles
Average Cycling Time: 00:30 - 02:30

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

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

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: Arrive in Jekyll Island / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception and dinner

Your tour begins at the Jekyll Island Club Resort on Jekyll Island, Georgia. A shuttle will be offered from Jacksonville International Airport at 12:30 p.m. 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 60 minutes. Taxi fare is approximately $110.

For guests driving to the tour, we recommend you park at the Jacksonville International Airport. Parking rates start at $5 per day.

You meet your VBT trip leaders at 2:00 p.m. at Jekyll Island Club Resort (371 S Riverview Dr, Jekyll Island, GA 31527, tel. 888.445.3179) on Jekyll Island, one of Georgia’s famed Golden Isles. Please be dressed in cycling clothes for a bike fitting and a brief cycling-skills clinic.

A warm-up ride takes you past forests and ponds to Great Dunes Park, a pretty 20-acre retreat of gently rolling sands, swaying palms and tall grasses. Perhaps dip your toes in the Atlantic before continuing to the Jekyll Island Historic District, 34 buildings across the 240-acre site surrounding your hotel.

Upon return from your warm-up ride, settle into your room. Your hotel is a restored compound of vacation homes built by wealthy businessmen at the turn of the 20th century. The likes of J.P. Morgan and William Vanderbilt were members of what was once called “the richest, most inaccessible club in the world.” Perhaps take a dip in the pool or relax on the gracious porch. Then gather at 5:30 p.m. for a welcome reception, followed by a 6:00 p.m. orientation meeting. Dinner tonight is at the hotel’s formal restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Jekyll Island Warm-up — 3 miles

What to Expect:

The warm-up ride is on flat terrain and takes you along Shell Road to Great Dunes Park. After stopping at Great Dunes Park, continue to Jekyll Island's historic district and return to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 3 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Jekyll Island / Horton House / Jekyll Island Pier / Wanderer Memory Trail

After breakfast, you head out on a loop ride the traces the perimeter of the island. Your route takes in views of the Atlantic and the East River, passing grand "cottages" from the island's gilded past. Ocean air is your constant companion as you pedal along flat roads, stopping along the way to explore sites that speak to a rich heritage and history. Indeed, the island enjoys a long bicycling past, too. Getting around on two wheels along the island's Crane Bicycle Path was a favorite pastime of well-to-do visitors in days of yore.

Stop at the Horton House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, it is a shell that has withstood the passage of time remarkably well, considering that it was one of the first tabby buildings in Georgia – constructed from crushed oyster shells in 1743. William Horton, a military aide to James Oglethorpe, the British founder of Georgia, brewed the state's first beer here. There'll also be time to explore the adjacent cemetery of the DuBignon family, which owned the island from 1790 to 1886. Visit the Jekyll Island Pier to see what the catch of the day is. Stop at Driftwood Beach to marvel at the bleached limbs of fallen pine and oak trees. Spend more time in the National Historic Landmark District surrounding your hotel before an included lunch.

Your afternoon is free to follow your own whims. Relax at the resort, shop in the historic district, explore the exhibits of the Mosaic Jekyll Island Museum or perhaps enjoy a boat tour. Tonight, dinner is on your own. The hotel's complimentary shuttle can take you to a restaurant recommended by your trip leader.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Jekyll Island Loop — 17 miles

What to Expect:

Leave from the resort for a loop ride around Jekyll Island. You stop along the way to visit the historic sites of Horton House, Dubignon Cemetery, Driftwood Beach, and the National Historic Landmark District. The day's ride is on flat roads and bike paths.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Timucuan Preserve / Fort George Island

After a hearty breakfast, shuttle about one hour to Amelia Island to start your ride. You pedal along Fernandina Beach, then join the tree lined Amelia Island Trail bike path to the causeway over Nassau Sound and traverse the islands of Big Talbot. Arrive at Simpson Creek 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 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, you shuttle 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.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Amelia Island and Big Talbot Island — 17 miles

What to Expect:

Cycle from Fernandina Beach via the causeway across the Nassau Sound. Your route traverses Amelia Island and Big Talbot Islands. 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, travel to St. Augustine.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4: St. Augustine Lighthouse / Anastasia State Park

Explore historic and lovely St. Augustine! 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 the museum at this beautiful beacon showcases some of the artifacts from the area's earlier days. Once at Anastasia State 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 revered local restaurant.

There's time this afternoon to cycle to the Nombre de Dios Mission, home to a dramatic cross that stands 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 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!

Today's Ride Choices

Morning St. Augustine Lighthouse and Lincolnville — 12 miles

Afternoon Vilano Beach Ride — 13 miles | Lunch to Hotel — 2 miles

What to Expect:

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 restaurant. 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12-25 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Farmlands ride

After breakfast you shuttle 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. Pause at Riverdale Park, a forested green space on the banks of the St. John's, to take in the beauty of the river. Continue cycling to the charming parish town of St. Ambrose, a small farming community that embodies rural coastal Florida. After lunch at a local restaurant – a renovated general store once known as Masters' Grocery – shuttle back to St. Augustine and relax or explore the city.

Gather with the group tonight for a farewell dinner celebration.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Florida Farmlands — 25 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 25 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Departure

After an included breakfast walk from the hotel to the Lightner Museum. Browse the remarkable relics of the 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.

Hotel 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.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

The Jekyll Island Club Hotel (Days: 1,2)

A member of the Historic Hotels of America and the centerpiece of Jekyll Island's historic district, the Queen Anne-style Jekyll Island Club recalls the grand days of the Industrial Age when elite businessmen built their "cottages" far from city life. Gracious, sprawling, and recognizable by its iconic Victorian turret, the hotel blends rich history with modern comfort on lush grounds. At this island resort, dine in the grand dining room or on the casual pier. Your warm and comfortable room in the main building offers all the amenities and convenience you could need, including in-room WiFi and air conditioning.

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.