Spain: Girona & Costa Brava

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Cycle along shimmering coasts, through medieval villages and past historic castles during VBT's Costa Brava bike tour. The vast Mediterranean Sea greets you as you ride past picturesque farmlands, coastal vistas, and fruit orchards. Along the way, explore quaint villages and immerse yourself in local life. Dive into the thriving art community amid the fascinating stone buildings in the village of Peratallada; allow gentle winds to carry you through the cobbled streets of Baix Empordà; learn about cider production during a private tour and tasting; and explore Empúries which features some of the most important Greek and Roman ruins on the Iberian Peninsula. Each and every day of your journey is framed by lush farmlands, sunflower fields, and stunning mountain views.

Cultural Highlights

- Learn about the personal life of artist Salvador Dalí during a visit to Púbol Castle.
- Pedal a rural landscape past fields of sunflowers, fruit orchards, and rice fields.
- Pause in a lovely apple orchard to sample ciders and learn about their production.
- Admire one of the finest amphitheaters outside of Rome on a guided audio tour of the Greek and Roman ruins of Empúries.
- Enjoy a scenic private cruise along the Costa Brava.

What to Expect

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

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 35 miles
Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 03:15

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Mar 61º/44º, Apr 64º/47º, May 69º/54º, Jun 76º/54º, Sep 78º/62º, Oct 71º/55º

Average Rainfall (in.)

Mar 1.6, Apr 1.9, May 2.3, Jun 2.3, Sep 3.4, Oct 3.6

FLIGHT DAY: Depart from the United States or Canada

All you have to do is get to the airport. On our Air Packages, we'll take care of the rest, handling all the logistics, so you can travel with peace of mind. Spend your first night aloft and arrive refreshed for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Barcelona / Travel to Girona

A VBT representative will greet you at the Barcelona airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel in Girona. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Walking tour of historic Girona

This morning, after an included breakfast, meet your local guide in the hotel and set off on a walking tour of Girona's Old Town. Discover this city's ancient past as you cross the Onyar River into one of Europe's largest Jewish quarters. You will also pass the Church of St. Felix and the town's splendid Cathedral, which boasts one of the world's largest Gothic naves. After your stroll, don your cycling clothes and shuttle to the foothills of the nearby Pyrenees, where you'll meet your VBT trip leaders.

Upon arrival, attend a short orientation and bike-fitting and begin your warm-up ride through scenic mountain valleys and along Lake Banyoles. Pause along the shore of the lake to enjoy a picnic lunch.

Back in Girona tonight, your small group gathers for a welcome cocktail reception before enjoying a delicious dinner poolside at the hotel (weather permitting).

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Warm-up — 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

Get acquainted with your bike as you cycle on easy paved roads which are similar to the routes you will

have throughout your Costa Brava bike tour. You will ride on a combination of two-lane country roads with light traffic and at times on more heavily trafficked roads. Occasionally, you will have the opportunity to ride on a designated bike path. This easy scenic ride takes you to the shores of Lake Banyoles, Catalonia's largest natural lake. The lake was the rowing venue for the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics and today is a popular training location for rowers.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Púbol / Castell Dali Gala

The first full day of your Costa Brava bike tour begins with a scenic ride into the heart of the historic Baix Empordà province of Catalonia, where you'll stop at the medieval village of Púbol. Here, you'll visit Púbol Castle, purchased by Salvador Dalí in 1970 as a gift for his wife Gala. Enjoy a glimpse into Dalí's personal life and witness his many talents as you gaze at original paintings, sculptures, and custom-designed furniture. You can also admire some of Gala's haute couture dresses, designed exclusively for her by Christian Dior. Gala chose her beloved Púbol Castle as her final resting place and is buried in the cellar's mausoleum.

Later, ride through lush farmlands and small villages where you may enjoy lunch at your leisure in one of the village cafés. After lunch, you'll cycle to the coastal village of Platja de Pals for your first night on the Costa Brava. Tonight, meet the hotel owner before enjoying a special dinner in the hotel's celebrated restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Púbol to Ullastret — 18 km (11 miles)

Afternoon Ullastret to Sa Punta Hotel — 16 km (10 miles) | Begur Challenge Loop Plus — 14 km (9 miles)

What to Expect:

From Púbol, ride through the scenic Catalonian landscape. Your ride will take you on narrow country roads past farms and through forests with some rolling hills. If you would like a longer ride, you can enjoy extra cycling through the countryside, occasionally sharing the road with passing cars. Once at your hotel take the longer option with its rewarding elevation gain.

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 48 km (11 - 30 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 3: Pals and Peratallada

This morning, you'll ride into to the village of Peratallada. Its name translates into "carved stone"—an apt label, as most of the buildings were built from stone taken from the moat that still partially encircles the village. This remarkable town has been declared a historic artistic monument. Its dominant structure is the Castle of Peratallada, dating to 1065 AD. Restoration of this now privately owned castle revealed traces of a Bronze Age settlement. After you explore this historic village, enjoy lunch at your leisure.

In the afternoon, continue cycling to a lush, rural landscape past sunflower fields, fruit orchards and rice paddies, and then step back in time in Baix Empordà s medieval villages. Coasting into Pals, you will be charmed by cobbled stone streets and an impressive Gothic Quarter whose facades feature distinctive windows, stone balconies and semicircular arches. The town's Roman wall with its four square towers and the Romanesque clock tower—Torre de les Hores (Tower of the Hours)—dates back to the 4th century. Take some time to visit some of the artists' galleries before getting back on your saddle for your return ride to your hotel. You are at your leisure this afternoon to relax by the lovely swimming pool or stroll down to the nearby beach.

This evening, enjoy a sumptuous dinner in your hotel's elegant dining room.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hotel to Torrent and Peratallada — 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon Lunch to Pals and hotel — 23 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Enjoy a morning of easy riding as you glide into Peratallada. In the afternoon, continue cycling to the village of Pals. Additional riding is available after your exploration of Pals. Cycling on narrow country lanes and some busier roads, you will pass medieval villages before ending with an uphill ride to your hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 49 km (16 - 30 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Apple orchards and lunch at a Catalonian farmhouse

After breakfast, you'll cycle toward your home for the next three nights on the Mediterranean. Today's leg of your Costa Brava bike tour leads you along scenic country vistas with the spectacular snow-capped Pyrenees in the distance. Your destination is the province of Alt Empordà (upper Empordà), north of Baix Empordà (lower Empordà).

Take a break from riding after you pass through a lovely apple orchard and enjoy lunch at a typical mas – a small Catalonian farmhouse. Our hosts, Eva and Marc, will spoil you with food grown from their organic farm and offer the opportunity to sample the rice harvested from nearby Pals.

In the afternoon, enjoy a scenic ride past a medieval water mill before arriving in the village of Parlava. Here, you may continue riding or shuttle to our Mediterranean beachfront hotel. Once at the hotel, wander along the waterside cycling path into the town of L'Escala or treat yourself to one of the hotel's many spa options.

This evening, enjoy dinner on your own in one of the hotel's restaurants or walk along the beachside cycling path to a restaurant in the neighboring village of Sant Martí d'Empúries. This small village was first settled by the Greeks in the 6th century BCE and later became an important medieval political center. It continues to maintain much of its historic charm, so it's easy to imagine what life may have been in that bygone era.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hotel Sa Punta to Lunch — 19 km (12 miles)

Afternoon Lunch to Parlava — 14 km (9 miles) | Parlava to hotel Plus — 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

A glorious morning ride traverses apple orchards framed by the snow-capped Pyrenees. After lunch, you may shuttle to your Mediterranean beachfront hotel or continue cycling past a medieval water mill, through Parlava, where you may shuttle to your Mediterranean beachfront hotel in L'Escala.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 55 km (12 - 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Vineyards and cork trees / Picnic lunch / Peralada and Vilabertran / Empúries

After breakfast overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, you will shuttle 45 minutes to the bucolic mountain town of Cantallops near the border of France for the starting point of today's ride. You will cycle through a rural landscape of vineyards and olive and cork trees before meeting your trip leaders, who will prepare a lovely picnic lunch for your enjoyment.

Later, continue riding to one of the most important sites in the area: the perfectly restored Peralada Castle. Explore the village of Vilabertran, famous for the Santa Maria de Vilabetran monastery as well as for being the setting for Dalí's 1913 painting Vilabertran, which he painted when he was only nine years old. You will complete your cycling today in the village of Castelló D'Empúries, where you can opt for some extra miles all the way back to your hotel or hop on a shuttle.

After returning to your hotel, enjoy its spa (additional cost) or nearby beach, or explore the neighboring ruins of Empúries, some of the most important Greco-Roman ruins on the Iberian Peninsula. Admission to the ruins is part of your VBT tour and includes a self-guided audio tour of this archaeological site which has one of the finest amphitheaters outside Rome. The large terraces of your garden-view spa rooms are ideal for relaxing and enjoying the beautifully landscaped native vegetation surrounding the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Cantallops to Lunch — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon Lunch to Castelló d'Empúries — 22 km (13 miles) | Castelló d'Empúries to hotel Plus — 34 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Cycle through a rural landscape to Peralada Castle, finishing the ride in Castelló D'Empúries. At the end of today's ride, you can opt for some extra miles or shuttle back to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 76 km (12 - 46 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Mediterranean cruise / L'Estartit / Torroella de Montgri / Farewell dinner

This morning, you'll shuttle to neighboring L'Escala's marina. Here, you'll embark a chartered boat for a private cruise along the scenic Costa Brava coast. During this tour, you'll cruise past gorgeous coves and the dramatic, craggy rock formations of the Islas Medes jutting into the sea. These crystal-clear waters nurture significant biodiversity, making it one of the most important marine reserves in the western Mediterranean.

Your trip leaders will meet you at the end of your cruise in the port of L'Estartit, with your bicycle ready for the day. Today's ride will pass the impressive Montgri Massif, which locals say looks like a sleeping bishop. You'll see the ancient Montgri Castle perched on its summit as you pedal along. Stop for lunch on your own in the quaint town of Torroella de Montgri, resting on the banks of the Ter River. Once a royal port for the Kings of Aragon, it retains its medieval core and stalwart walls.

This evening, trade stories of your Costa Brava bike tour alongside your trip leaders and travel mates during a festive farewell reception and dinner at your lovely beachside inn. Much of the menu is harvested from the hotel's organic garden, and you will sample some of Catalonia's finest wines with this special meal.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning L'Estartit to L'Escala — 26 km (15 miles)

What to Expect:

From the port of L'Estartit you will cycle through town before joining quieter country roads that link the various medieval villages you will enjoy on today's ride. Some of the roads will be busier than those on previous days but the riding is easy and scenic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 km (15 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Figueres / Dalí Museum / Travel to Barcelona

VBT provides a morning transportation to Figueres, the birthplace of Salvador Dalí, for an included tour of the Dalí Museum. (Note: The Dalí Museum is closed on Mondays; if our regularly scheduled visit to the

Dalí Museum falls on a Monday, we will visit the museum the morning of Day 5, prior to your ride.)

After the tour, travel to the Hotel 1898, centrally located on Las Ramblas Boulevard near the Placa de Catalunya, for your final night in Spain. You have the remainder of the afternoon and evening free for independent exploration.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Barcelona airport will be provided (an approximately 20 to 30 minute drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Nord 1901 (Days: 2,1)

Located in the historic heart of Girona, the Nord 1901 Hotel was completely renovated in 2009 to offer sophisticated flair and modern amenities while still preserving the ambiance of its Old Town setting. Intimate and family-operated, it is within walking distance of Girona's main attractions, including the colorful houses along the River Onvar, the Plaza Independencia, the Jewish quarter, the cathedral, and a wide range of popular restaurants and cafés. Enjoy breakfast on the garden terrace and take advantage of the only garden in the city center with a swimming pool. Each luxurious room is equipped with climate control, a safe, hot-water kettle for coffee- and tea-making, flat-screen TV, free WiFi, and a private bath with shower, bathrobe, slippers, and hairdryer.

Hotel Sa Punta (Days: 2,3)

The Hotel Sa Punta's magnificent setting in a grove of pines is less than a 15-minute walk from the beach of Pals in Costa Brava. Within the grounds of the hotel you will find lovely gardens and a large saltwater swimming pool. The Font brothers have owned and operated the restaurant and hotel for almost 40 years, and their attention to detail is evident wherever you look. The Sa Punta restaurant has a world-renowned reputation that has attracted celebrities for years and is considered one of the best eating establishments in Costa Brava. The large guest rooms are fitted with all the amenities of a luxury resort including air conditioning, and the VBT rooms have a terrace overlooking the hotel's lush gardens.

Hostal spa Empúries (Days: 4,5,6)

Situated directly on Portitxol Beach and on our route, overlooking the Bay of Roses, the Hostal spa Empúries stands on an ancient settlement, beside the Greek and Roman ruins of Empúries, and is within easy walking distance of the medieval towns of Sant Marti d'Empúries and L'Escala. The air-conditioned resort hotel is dedicated to sustainable tourism and also to the health and well-being of its guests. The property features lovely gardens of native vegetation, an outdoor terrace overlooking the sea, and landscaped areas to stroll through. Gym facilities are complimentary, and optional spa services and indoor pools are also available.

Hotel 1898 (Day: 7)

Discover a true treasure. Located in the heart of Barcelona, the historic Hotel 1898 was once home to the Philippines Tobacco Company. The structure was built in 1891 by architect Josep Oriol Mestres. Early in this century, hotelier Núñez i Navarro restored the property, preserving its historic splendor and 19th-century architectural elements and transforming it into the modern-day Hotel 1898. Today, this unique, colonial-style structure exudes a special personality that brings the best of Barcelona's rich past to its guests. Centrally located on Las Ramblas Boulevard and just a block from Placa de Catalunya, the hotel is an easy walk to all of Barcelona's important sites. The elegant rooms are equipped with air conditioning, free WiFi, and beautiful marble bathrooms. The rooftop terrace features a heated swimming pool, as well as a lovely indoor pool, fitness center, and spa in the tastefully designed basement of the hotel.