

Arizona: Saguaro National Park & the Sonoran Desert

Bike Vacation Only

Soak in sprawling desert landscapes as you ride across vast, versatile ranges. Ride into the prolific “winery row,” where you’ll enjoy a picnic and educational tasting at a family-owned winery. Coast into artists’ colonies to see the work of local masters. Your journey leads you to idyllic Patagonia, a quirky town encapsulated by picturesque mountains. At the Saguaro National Park, ride through its distinctive native namesake cacti found nowhere else on earth and explore the renowned Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, featuring hundreds of animal and plant species. VBT’s Arizona bike tour guides you along some of the American Southwest’s most stunning routes to unearth quintessential Arizona.



Cultural Highlights

- Sample Arizona’s surprising wines during a tasting and picnic at a winery featuring wines created from the West’s unique terroir

- Explore the walking trails and fascinating exhibits of the highly regarded Arizona Sonora Desert Museum
- Bike and picnic among the beautiful saguaro cacti of Saguaro National Park
- Visit the Tumacácori National Historical Park for a self-guided tour, home to three Spanish mission communities and beautiful orchards and gardens
- Savor local cuisine infused with Native American, Spanish, Mexican and Anglo-American influences

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available for those who would like assistance. This tour includes strategic shuttles on most days in order to access the best cycling routes, avoiding busy roads and repetitive scenery.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 6 - 36

Average Cycling Time: 01:15 - 04:00

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Feb 68°/41°, Mar 73°/44°, Apr 81°/51°, Oct 84°/57°, Nov 73°/45°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Feb .07, Mar 0.7, Apr 0.3, Oct 0.9, Nov 0.6

DAY 1: Arrive in Hereford / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception and dinner

Make your own arrangements for travel to Arizona and to our first inn. VBT offers a shuttle that departs from Tucson International Airport at 1:00 p.m. The shuttle works on a “show and go” basis. Reservations are not required. Your Top Shelf Transpiration driver will meet you at the bottom of the escalator leading near the baggage claim carousels. The driver will be holding a VBT sign. The travel time to Casa San Pedro is approximately one hour and 45 minutes.

If you are scheduled to arrive at the airport after the shuttle’s departure or if you are delayed, you must take a taxi at your own expense. For guests driving to the tour, we recommend that you park your vehicle

at the Tucson International Airport and take the shuttle, as our tour ends in Tucson. Parking at the airport costs approximately \$10 a day in the garage, or \$4.50-\$6 a day in the economy lot offsite. Or you can park at Casa de San Pedro B&B for the week. Please contact the first inn if any travel delays or changes occur; they will inform your VBT trip leaders.

Upon arrival at Casa San Pedro, take time to settle in and change into your biking clothes. At 3:00 p.m., meet your group and your VBT trip leaders for the first day of your Arizona bike tour. After a safety and bike-fitting session, enjoy by a short warm-up ride. At 5:30 p.m., meet your fellow travelers during a tour orientation and welcome reception. Enjoy your welcome dinner served family style in the B&B's dining room, ending with homemade pies. Get to know your traveling companions as you anticipate your vacation, highly rated among Arizona bike tours.

Today's Ride Choice

Afternoon: Warm-Up – 6 miles

What to Expect: Get acquainted with your bicycle during a leisurely warm-up ride along South Palominas Road. The majority of this ride is on a paved road, a short portion is on packed dirt.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 miles

Accommodation: Casa de San Pedro B&B, Hereford

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Cycle to Bisbee

This morning, get your Arizona bike tour underway as you cycle to the historic mining town of Bisbee, crossing the scenic San Pedro River en route. Nestled among the rust-hued Mule Mountains, Bisbee was founded in 1880 and remained a thriving community until its large-scale mining operations ceased in the 1970s. Today, Bisbee flourishes as an artists' colony and exudes a delightful "Old West" feel. Upon arrival, begin exploring this charming town on Mexico's border. You may also uncover the mining history of Bisbee at the Bisbee Mining & Historical Museum. After an included lunch at a local restaurant, there'll be more time to explore the historic town.

Shuttle to the inn. Take time this afternoon to relax in the B&Bs courtyard listening to the fountain and birds. Or wander the grounds and stroll through the labyrinth and gardens. This evening you will enjoy a delicious, locally sourced dinner.

Note: Casa de San Pedro does not have a liquor license and invites guests to provide their own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Casa de San Pedro to Mexican Border and Bisbee — 32 miles

What to Expect: Cycle to Bisbee along Route 92, a paved highway. Pass over the San Pedro River, one of only two major rivers that flow north out of Mexico into the United States. It also is one of the last few undammed large rivers in the Southwest. This morning's ride brings you to the United States and Mexico border. The ride into Bisbee will be a steady incline. Bisbee sits at over 5000 feet of elevation, your VBT trip leaders will offer a shuttle option into Bisbee. Arrive in Bisbee, enjoy lunch with the group at a local restaurant and explore the historic mining town and view the Lavender Pit, a former open pit copper mine. After your exploration, shuttle back to the inn.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20-52 miles

Accommodation: Casa de San Pedro B&B, Hereford

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Shuttle to Sonoita / Cycle to Patagonia / Shuttle to Tubac

Today, shuttle from Hereford to Sonoita. From here, you cycle through beautiful open range and over rolling hills to a local winery, where you pause for a picnic lunch and a wine tasting. The Twisted Union Wine Company is a small locally owned business in beautiful Elgin, Arizona—right in the middle of what has become known as “winery row.” Your lunch will be enjoyed while taking in views the vast landscape and grapevines. The tasting will include premium wines created with the focus of highlighting the uniqueness of the local terroir.

Later, shuttle or ride into Patagonia, where you can browse all manner of eclectic local shops. Enjoy a tasty treat at the famed Gathering Grounds, home of “the best cup of coffee in Arizona.” You will have hot and cold options to choose from in this popular coffee shop. In the late afternoon, shuttle from Gathering Grounds to Tubac Golf Resort & Spa. Settle into your private hacienda and enjoy the rest of the evening on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Sonoita to Vineyard — 16 miles

Afternoon: Vineyard to Patagonia — 20 miles

What to Expect: Start this morning with a one-hour shuttle from Casa de San Pedro to the town of Sonoita. From here, cycle to Elgin on paved roads with rolling hills and open range. After a picnic lunch

and wine tasting at The Twisted Union Wine Company, continue your loop back to Sonoita. Once in Sonoita, choose to shuttle to Patagonia or pedal the additional 12 miles downhill. Visit the quaint shops and galleries in Patagonia. Your final meeting point is Gathering Grounds. From here the shuttle is about one-hour to your hotel in Tubac.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16-36 miles

Accommodation: Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, Tubac

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4: Discover Tubac

After breakfast, a scenic cycling route delivers you to the town of Tubac, crossing the Santa Cruz River for a leisurely ride in the beautiful countryside. On your way back, you stop at Tumacácori National Historical Park, a mission dating to the 17th century. Enjoy a self-guided visit of the mission, museum, orchard, garden, and walking trails. If you wish, you can also visit the family-owned and -operated Santa Cruz Chili & Spice Company. Afterward, there'll be time to explore Tubac, a colorful artists' colony where talented sculptors, painters, potters, artisans, and jewelers perfect their craft drawing inspiration from the magnificent desert landscapes. You may also decide to visit the Tubac Presidio State Historic Park.

After lunch on your own, the afternoon is free for you to explore. Relax at the resort, tee off at the golf course. If you desire a tee time or spa appointment during your stay, we recommend that you contact the resort prior to traveling. Please note: spa amenities are available to a limited number of guests on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and there are no treatments available on these two days.

Enjoy dinner this evening at the resort.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Tubac & Tumacacori National Historical Park – 24 miles

Afternoon: Tubac Loop Ride – 10 miles

What to Expect: This morning, you ride on paved roads from the resort through the countryside to the Tumacácori National Historical Park. Here, enjoy a self-guided visit of the mission grounds and explore the museum and bookshop. After, cycle into the center of Tubac to explore the town and enjoy lunch on your own. Or choose to continue on your bike for an additional 10-mile loop through some of the residential roads and open terrain of Tubac. Some of Tubac's favorite restaurants are Elvira's, Shelby's Bistro, Wisdom's DOS, and the Tubac Deli.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10-34 miles

Accommodation: Tubac Golf Resort & Spa, Tubac

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Shuttle to Tucson / Saguaro National Park West / Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

This morning, shuttle from Tubac Golf Resort & Spa to Saguaro National Park, home to the remarkable Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. This unusual museum boasts more than 300 animal species and 1,200 varieties of plants in a beautiful natural setting. You can start pedaling directly from the museum this morning to the Red Hills Visitor Center, to orient yourself to the Saguaro National Park, named for the distinctive large cacti that grow here and nowhere else on earth. It is pure pleasure to cycle this classic Arizona landscape that has come to epitomize the Southwest. At the visitor center, take in spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and a short video if you choose. Your ride continues to the stunning Gates Pass in the dramatic Tucson Mountains. Then an exhilarating descent returns you to the desert museum. Enjoy lunch on your own in either of the museum's two restaurants. There'll be ample time to observe wild animals and desert plants, attend lectures, visit an art show, and take a self-guided tour along the two miles of walking trails. After your explorations, board a shuttle to your Tucson hotel, a warm and authentic hacienda. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Today's Ride Choices:

Morning: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum loop ride – 14.4 miles | Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum loop ride with Gates Pass – 19.2 miles

What to Expect: Shuttle this morning to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Start your ride to the Red Hills Visitor Center ride in the Saguaro National Park, with its endless views of large saguaro cacti. Those looking for a challenging climb may continue on Gates Pass Road (at 12.2 miles), a winding, hilly ride. This additional mileage follows a road with no shoulder and blind corners for 2.4 miles so it is only for more comfortable riders. Both options return to the museum for lunch and exploration on your own.

Please note: The rules in Saguaro National Park are strictly enforced. You must wear a helmet at all times when cycling in the park, and you must obey the speed limit and any traffic signs. Park rangers will issue tickets to offenders, including those speeding on downhill slopes.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14.4-33.6 miles

Accommodation: Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch, Tucson

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6: Saguaro National Park East / Farewell dinner

For your final ride of your Arizona bike tour, take a short shuttle from the hotel to a local bike shop where your cycling will begin. Today's ride is a scenic route along the Old Spanish Trail into Saguaro National Park. Once in the park follow the one-way Loop Drive, for a thrilling cycle through the park. Your morning ride ends at the Javelina picnic area for a picnic lunch, a spectacular setting, gazing upon a desert terrain dotted with stunning saguaro cacti. Saguaro National Park, spread over 92,000 acres on the edge of the modern city of Tucson, protects some of the most impressive forests of these giant subtropical plants. After lunch, continue cycling through the park to returning Broadway Bicycles and then hop a ride to Hacienda del Sol. Be sure to leave time to stop and purchase an Arizona cycling jersey!

Tonight, celebrate with the group during a farewell dinner at Hacienda del Sol's renowned restaurant, The Grill.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Broadway Bikes to Saguaro National Park East – 14 miles

Afternoon: Saguaro National Park East to Broadway Bikes – 8 miles

What to Expect: Take a short shuttle this morning from Hacienda Del Sol to Broadway Bicycles, located in Tucson. Visit the bicycle shop, a great place to purchase cycling gear. Cycle the Old Spanish Trail through Tucson toward Saguaro National Park East. In the park follow the one-way Loop Drive. Stopping for a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders. After, you may ride or shuttle back to Broadway Bicycles.

Please note: The rules in Saguaro National Park are strictly enforced. You must wear a helmet at all times when cycling in the park, and you must obey the speed limit and any traffic signs. Park rangers will issue tickets to offenders. BEWARE of the first downhill after the ranger tollbooth on the left.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 22 miles

Accommodation: Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch, Tucson

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Departure

Your Arizona bike tour concludes after an included breakfast at your hotel. VBT's complimentary shuttle is available to take departing guests to the Tucson airport at 9:00 a.m., arriving approximately 40 minutes later. If you are flying out of Tucson, we suggest a flight no earlier than 12:00 p.m. Guests who need to

get to the airport earlier or later must make their own arrangements. The VBT shuttle is also available to shuttle guests whose cars are parked at the first inn. It will arrive at the inn by noon.

Included Meals: Breakfast