

Portugal: Porto, the Silver Coast & Lisbon

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Portugal's scenic Silver Coast points the way from Porto to Lisbon during this Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation. Cycle Atlantic shores at the pace that suits you, stopping as you wish to bask on high bluffs and white-sand beaches pounded by surf, breathe in fragrant pine forests, and linger in historic villages barely visited by tourists. Spa and beach towns steeped in history and character host you along the way while an overnight in medieval walled Óbidos adds a romantic final touch. This is Portugal's best-kept secret; you'll want to savor every moment.

Cultural Highlights

Stay in diverse locales, from the spa town of Monte Real to the old fishing village of São Pedro Moel. Cycle along the Silver Coast's sandy beaches pounded with Atlantic waves, pine and cork forests, and stunning rural landscapes.

Enjoy several beach stays and a two-night stay at an accessible calm beach in Foz do Arelho. Indulge in Portugal's delicious fresh seafood, enticing pastries, espresso, and wines that are affordable and excellent.

Explore the medieval walled city of Óbidos after day trippers have left, thanks to your overnight stay here. Visit Alcobaça's Gothic monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, founded by Portugal's first king in 12th century.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Rides are on relatively flat paved roads and bike lanes tracing the Atlantic coast. Expect more undulating terrain when crossing the small coastal hills separating the coast from the more rolling interior. You encounter some traffic when entering and exiting historic town centers and beachside bike paths and lanes. Please verify your bike selection for this tour as it is not always possible to change bikes once you arrive on tour. Travel with your friends and family—we can accommodate multiple guests on this self-guided vacation. Our 24/7 support system is available as needed.

Tour Duration: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 35

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 67°/50°, May 71°/53°, Jun 75°/58°, Jul 77°/60°, Aug 78°/60°, Sep 77°/58°, Oct 73°/55°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 2.39, May 2.18, Jun 0.91, Jul 0.29, Aug 0.36, Sep 1.2, Oct 3.37

DAY 1: Depart home / Fly overnight to Porto

Depart home for Portugal. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive in Porto

Upon arrival at the Porto airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, you must fill out a PIR form before leaving the customs area; VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. Also, make sure that your VBT luggage tags are attached to your bags so that your representative can identify you.

Upon leaving customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative, who will be holding a VBT sign. Your representative welcomes you to Porto and helps you transfer via taxi or van (approximately 30 minutes, depending on traffic) to your Porto hotel. The rest of the day is yours to explore Porto at leisure, using the VBT City Information as your guide.

Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you fly in earlier than the scheduled program dates, transportation from the airport will be at your own expense

Hotel: PortoBay Hotel Teatro, Porto

DAY 3: VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins / Porto to Monte Real

After breakfast at Hotel Teatro, meet your VBT local host and any other VBT guests departing on the same day at 10:00 a.m. in the hotel lobby for the approximately two-hour transfer to the town of Monte Real. He or she will be carrying a VBT sign. Your transfer to the historic village of Monte Real will take approximately two hours.

The Welcome Orientation with your VBT local host includes:

- An overview of the itinerary
- Bike fitting and equipment familiarization

- Review of the Ride with GPS navigation app
- Important contact information in case you need to reach your VBT local host
- Safety briefing
- Local suggestions (restaurants, things to do, etc.)

The natural hot springs in and around Monte Real have long been considered curative. Lucky for you, your palatial hotel draws on them for their soothing therapeutic spa treatments. Before you indulge, you might want to get acquainted with your bike during an easy loop ride, or take a stroll around the extensive grounds that stretch some 60 acres. Take your time and enjoy this beautiful property. An included three-course dinner is served at the hotel's fine dining restaurant. If you wish, take advantage of the Turkish bath, Jacuzzi, or indoor heated pool this afternoon. (Spa access and treatments are at your expense).

Hotel: Termas de Mont Real

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Rides:

Monte Real Loop short option: 8.9 km (5.5 miles)

What to Expect: Designed to get you used to your bike and move your legs after your flight, these two easy short loops depart from your hotel and through the town of Monte Real into the surrounding farmland and follow un-trafficked roads to do a loop on either side of the Lis River. Watch out for some uneven pavement between kilometer 5 and 7.

Monte Real Loop long option: 19.9 km (12.5 miles)

What to Expect: Designed to get you used to your bike and move your legs after your flight, these two easy short loops depart from your hotel and through the town of Monte Real into the surrounding farmland and follow un-trafficked roads to do a loop on either side of the Lis River. Watch out for some uneven pavement between kilometer 12 and 15.

Non-biking options: After your Welcome Orientation you may be ready for lunch at your hotel or in town. After, you may choose to enjoy your hotel's spa facilities (spa access cost of approx. 16 euros and treatments additional). The hotel is surrounded by easily accessible and signed walking paths.

DAY 4: Monte Real to São Pedro Moel

Get your first taste of Portugal's coastal beauty as you cycle to the Atlantic. You traverse a route through pine forests and past fertile farms, arriving at the Ervideira Lagoon, with mirror-like waters where you might fuel up on a snack you may have brought along. You'll see why this is a favorite spot among local families seeking a calm alternative to the nearby beaches of the ocean.

You continue with a slight ascent up a small ridge, arriving at the white sands of the sleepy village of Pedrogão. Take a refreshing swim in the Atlantic if you wish. Then turn slightly inland to parallel the coast, passing the town of Vieira and its namesake beach. Later, arrive in the resort of São Pedro Moel, a graceful village tucked above the surf and sand in a protective cove. Pass its landmark Penedo da Saudade lighthouse, built on the rocky promontory from where a 17th-century widowed Duchess is said to have mourned her husband. After settling in to your hotel, take a scenic stroll along the boardwalks that trace the dramatic cliffs, the ideal place to observe a stunning sunset over the Atlantic. Choose from a half-dozen or more restaurants, some listed in your VBT Road Book, within a short walk of your hotel. Or take advantage of the ocean view from your hotel's dining room.

Hotel: Hotel Mar e Sol

Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Rides:

Monte Real to São Pedro Moel: 42.6 km (26.4 miles)

What to Expect: Today's route descends from Monte Real on paved roads through agricultural land, then climbs back up a small ridge before reaching the Atlantic coast. At the ocean, take a left and head south, paralleling the coast along a paved bike lane through the town of Praia de Vieira. Just before reaching your evening's destination and hotel in the small town of São Pedro Moel, you ride past the Penedo da Saudade lighthouse.

DAY 5: São Pedro Moel to Alcobaça

You depart São Pedro Moel's cobbled streets and join a dedicated bike route through fragrant pine forests paralleling the coastline. Sections of this historic Atlantic pine forest were planted in the 13th century by King Afonso III to stop the degradation of the dunes. Later, during the Age of Discovery, they supplied the timber for Portugal's fleet of intrepid explorers as they sailed to distant shores.

Your route delivers you to the town of Nazaré, renowned for its long crescent beach and resort atmosphere, and celebrated as the place where surfer Garrett McNamara rode the record-breaking 100-foot wave at North Beach. You're sure to find a spot for lunch here; freshly caught seafood is always

on the menu.

Later, you pass the marina and turn inland to follow the Alcobaça River on a dedicated bike lane. In the charming town of Valado dos Frades, admire the late 19th-century train station and its artful *azulejo* tiles, once voted the most beautiful train station in Portugal. Then gently ascend to the small city of Alcobaça, centered around the 13th-century Cistercian monastery, one of the country's most magnificent Gothic structures. It was originally built to commemorate the taking of Santarém from the Moors in 1147 and today holds the tombs of King Pedro I. Architecturally, it represents the first example of its style, with its unique portal and rose window. Take all the time you'd like to wander this UNESCO World Heritage site.

Conclude your ride at your resort, where you may choose to relax in its indoor or outdoor pool, steam room or sauna. Savor an included dinner in the fine-dining restaurant.

Hotel: Real Abadia Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride:

São Pedro Moel to Alcobaça: 40.2 km (25 miles)

What to Expect: The route departs the town of São Pedro Moel along its cobble streets and immediately follows an un-trafficked, paved, dedicated bike lane that alternates between pine forest and coast with ocean views. In the busier town of Nazaré, use caution on the steep descent through narrow streets and along the beach-front bike lane (you ride on sidewalk for a few hundred meters). Then after leaving the town, you turn inland along a flat paved road and join the riverside bike lane and country roads, ascending gradually to the town of Alcobaça.

DAY 6: Alcobaça to Foz do Arelho

Depart your hotel this morning and coast down to the center of Alcobaça. Start your day at your own pace here, whether you revisit the monastery, enjoy a late morning coffee or early lunch at an outdoor café, and grab some snacks for the road. Any time of day is perfect for the delicious *pastel de nata*, the Portuguese custard tart pastry dusted with cinnamon. Then cycle into the agricultural fields that slope to the coast, following a bike route to the seaside town of São Martinho do Porto. Founded by monks in the 13th century, it was a favorite seaside resort of Portuguese nobility by the 19th century. Cycle along its protected unique scallop-shaped bay of fine sand, coming upon one of Europe's largest dunes at the far end: The red sandstone Salir do Porto soars to 160 feet. Continuing south, you rise to a plateau with magnificent Atlantic vistas. Then enjoy an exhilarating descent to the seaside resort town of Foz de

Arelho, sitting on the beautiful Óbidos Lagoon where it opens out to the Atlantic. This stunning inlet shimmers under the Portuguese sun in varied shades of turquoise and emerald.

Here, a two-night stay allows for a beachside rest day or an optional ride. Dinner is on your own and if you wish, you may reserve a cooking experience with a resident Portuguese chef. Or some of the town's restaurants are a short walk away.

Hotel: Hillside House Suites and Spa

Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Ride Choices:

Alcobaça to Foz do Arelho high road: 46.3 km (28.7 miles)

What to Expect: Start by descending from Alcobaça to the river valley, joining a dedicated bike route to the Atlantic coast and the beach resort town of São Martinho do Porto. Follow town streets and bike lanes to the lane along the scallop-shaped beach, then ascend away from the shore just under a 1 km (at 31.9 km) to four rolling hills for about 10 km (6 miles) before a stunning ocean view and an exhilarating descent to the Óbidos Lagoon and your hotel for the next two nights.

DAY 7: Foz do Arelho Stay Put Day

Your Stay Put Day is full of possibilities! If you can't get enough of cycling, you can ride a loop back north toward São Martinho do Porto and returning on a ridge high above the Atlantic with stunning views. Or take advantage of Foz do Arelho's unique setting on the seawater-fed Óbidos lagoon, the most extensive coastal lagoon system on Portugal's coast. Your hotel's staff can point you to a rental outfit where you can set out on a kayak, canoe, sailboat, paddleboard, paddle boat, or windsurfer. Relax in the calm waters of the lagoon or head out into the waves of the Atlantic, grabbing lunch at a seaside café along the way. Or simply relax on the beach or at your hotel's pool. The day is yours to do as you please as is the evening, to enjoy dinner at your hotel or seek out a nearby restaurant.

Hotel: Hillside House Suites and Spa

Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Rides:

Foz do Arelho to São Martinho do Porto short option: 27.8 km (17.2 miles)

What to Expect: If you choose to ride today, cycle north through gentle farmland, then back to the bay of São Martinho do Porto. An initial climb of just over 1 km brings you high on a ridge with Atlantic views before the descent back to the lagoon of Foz do Arelho and your hotel.

Foz do Arelho to Nazaré Loop long option: 67.1 km (41.6 miles)

What to Expect: On this longer optional loop, cycle north through gentle farmland, then back to the bay of São Martinho do Porto. Then continue north back to the surf mecca of Nazaré. On the return ride, you stay close to the coast after leaving Nazaré, which means a steep climb of about 2 kilometers (between kilometer 42.4 and 44.3) to a beautiful ridgeline with little traffic and a fun descent to São Martinho do Porto. After traversing the town, another climb of just over 1 km brings you to another ridge with Atlantic views before the descent back to the lagoon of Foz do Arelho and your hotel.

DAY 8: Foz do Arelho to Óbidos

Enjoy today's leisurely reel to Óbidos, one of Portugal's most finely preserved medieval walled towns. You ride out of Foz do Arelho, following the northern shore of the lagoon and winding inland through a mixture of small farms, villages, and pear orchards.

So beautiful is this cultural and historic gem that King Dinis offered it as a wedding gift to Queen Isabel in 1282. Future kings followed suit—for 600 years!—and the hilltop town has since been known as the *Casa das Rainhas*, the House of Queens. You're equally likely to fall in love with its whitewashed houses, bougainvillea vines, and crenellated walls. It is a fitting end to your Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation.

The charming pedestrian center invites endless exploration. Narrow cobbled streets point to leafy shaded squares, rising gradually to the town's highest point, the 15th-century castle. If you'd like, you can walk along the top of some portions of its city walls and enjoy breathtaking views of the town's red roofs and surrounding countryside—though you might want to pass if you dislike heights! Staying in Óbidos overnight is a real treat. After the day trippers have left, a hush falls over the cobblestones as street lamps illuminate the townscape in a magical glow. After you settle in to your hotel, a former convent, you can step out into this mesmerizing atmosphere to enjoy a celebratory evening and dinner.

Hotel: The Literary Man

Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Rides:

Foz do Arelho to Óbidos short option: 35.6 km (22.1 miles)

What to Expect: The shorter option to Óbidos skirts the northern side of the Óbidos Lagoon with some undulating terrain up to just over 14 km (8.6 miles), then flattens out on the hard-packed gravel bike path along the lagoon (3 km), which is otherwise not accessible by car. You ascend gradually and then roll through farmland and charming villages leading to the hilltop town of Óbidos. Take care in the busy and cobbled streets of Óbidos.

Foz do Arelho to Óbidos long option: 48.6 km (30.0 miles)

What to Expect: The longer option to Óbidos skirts the northern side of the Óbidos Lagoon with some undulating terrain up to just over 14 km (8.6 miles), then flattens out on the hard-packed gravel bike path along the lagoon (3 km). After a few hundred meters on the road, you rejoin the gravel bike path for 4.4 km right along the tranquil lagoon (total on gravel 7.4 km). Continue west to the mouth of the lagoon at Bom Sucesso Beach before turning inland on rolling roads, then ascend gradually and roll through farmland and charming villages leading to the hilltop town of Óbidos. Take care in the busy and cobbled streets of Óbidos.

DAY 9: Lisbon/ VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After breakfast, at 10:00 a.m., transfer about one hour to your hotel in Lisbon, along with any other VBT Self-Guided guests. You have the remainder of the day to uncover the cultural and historic treasures of the historic Portuguese capital. Wander the narrow atmospheric streets of the Alfama district. Explore the fantastic Manueline architecture of the Jerónimos Monastery and Belém Tower. Marvel at the enormous Monument to the Discoveries. This evening, perhaps you will enjoy dinner accompanied by the passionate song of the city's famed fado singers. See your VBT City Information for specific recommendations about how to spend your time.

Hotel: Olisippo Castelo, Lisbon

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Depart for home

After breakfast* this morning, a private transfer is provided to Lisbon airport for your homeward flight.

*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Real Abadia Hotel (Day: 5)

Surrounded by the sweeping beauty of Alcobaça and extensive gardens of native plants, the bike-friendly Real Abadia embraces the Cistercian traditions of its historic town. This air-conditioned resort eases your body and soul with a no-fee spa that features a sauna, steam room, and indoor pool. You can also relax in the outdoor pool. At mealtime, beautiful vistas unfold through floor-to-ceiling windows in an airy and comfortable dining room. Each air-conditioned room is individually designed with thoughtful touches inspired by the local culture.

Hillside House & Suites (Days: 6,7)

The Hillside House & Suites is a boutique hotel with casual elegance. There are only 12 rooms, which creates an intimate atmosphere. The air-conditioned property has an ideal location in the seaside resort of Foz do Arelho, just above the tranquil Óbidos Lagoon. A lively resort destination since the 19th century, Foz do Arelho boasts a diverse selection of restaurants and interesting architecture, all just a walk or a bike ride from Hillside. During your stay, choose from the calm waters of the lagoon or the open Atlantic surf; water sports equipment rentals are nearby. If you prefer, simply relax by the infinity pool and indulge in spa services. Guest rooms have a contemporary flair, with white walls, cool marble floors and warm colors.

Josefa D Obidos Hotel (Day: 8)

Located within the medieval walled town of Óbidos, this newly renovated boutique hotel offers stylish rooms with contemporary furnishings in warm colors and hardwood floors. An outdoor terrace provides lounges chairs to relax in the sun or shade. Located in historic Óbidos, easily stroll onto its narrow pedestrian streets to find a selection of restaurants or cafés or historic sites.

Hotel Mar e Sol (Day: 4)

The Hotel Mar e Sol's prime location overlooking the Atlantic and the beautiful Penedo da Saudade lighthouse makes it the ideal Silver Coast accommodation. Operating since 1966, this welcoming, air-conditioned property enjoys a long tradition of hospitality. The pleasures of São Pedro Moel are right outside your door, whether it's a stroll on a coastal footpath, a ride on a bike trail, or a walk to the historic

center. A half-dozen restaurants are just a short distance away, but at the hotel, the chef is happy to prepare his award-winning Seafood Rice for you at the O Penedo restaurant. A treatment at the Cubo D'Água spa might be in order after a day of exploring.

Olisippo Castelo (Day: 9)

Located astride the walls of St. George Castle in the heart of Lisbon—between the historic Mouraria and Alfama districts—the Olisippo Castelo Hotel offers stunning panoramic views of the city. The cultural treasures of the Alfama—its narrow streets, charming tram cars, and fado music venues—are a short walk away. Throughout your stay in this classic hotel, Portuguese hospitality greets you at every turn. Your comfortable air-conditioned city-view room provides all the traditional amenities you need for an enjoyable stay, while the latest technology helps make your stay a little more efficient. Savor warmth, elegance, and luxury as you explore Lisbon.

PortoBay Hotel Teatro (Day: 2)

Occupying Porto's glorious former Baquet Theater in the heart of the historic center, the Hotel Teatro retains the refined and artistic atmosphere of its former self. All its tasteful touches point to the elegance of the original 1859 building—from the box-office-style reception desk to the theater theme of the restaurant and bar, where meals and cocktails are prepared with the care of the finest director. Each air-conditioned room is given an air of sophistication and warmth by gold and bronze touches and thoughtful design flourishes.

Termas de Monte Real (Day: 3)

The grand and elegant Termas de Monte Real is situated among 60 acres of landscaped gardens and woodland in the historic village of Monte Real. Its full spa facilities, including a Turkish bath, sauna, Jacuzzi, and heated pool, are drawn from the same thermal waters that first brought visitors here generations ago. During your stay at this air-conditioned property, stroll the walking path, bike the tree-lined byway, swim in the outdoor pool, and linger on the lake, taking in the property's natural splendor and clean air. Settle in to the Paços de Rainha Restaurant for the fine Mediterranean and Atlantic cuisine of the Silver Coast.