

Spain & Portugal: Coastal Camino de Santiago

Bike Vacation Only

Cycle Spanish Galicia and Portugal's northern coast into a diverse array of landscapes and charming medieval centers. This stunning, sea-kissed corner of Iberia is laced with gentle rivers, sweeping estuaries, scenic valleys, and rolling vineyards. You'll ride into a breathtaking world, tracing the sacred Coastal Portuguese Camino de Santiago on this bike tour. Visit the magnificent Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela during a Holy Year, taste the region's celebrated wines and the freshest seafood, and share meals at a luxurious estate and at a local family's home. Your seaside route is varied, too, as you embark private small boats, trace the famed Wine Road of Rías Baixas and follow the beloved Camellia Route to lavish gardens. Historic *paradores* host you along the way, elegant properties rich in cultural heritage.



Cultural Highlights

- Tour two historic treasures of Santiago de Compostela – the Hostal dos Reis Católicos and the

splendidly ornate cathedral, the city's revered pilgrimage site.

- Enjoy a private cruise to lovely Cambados, following the Ulla River to the Ría de Arousa – Galicia's largest estuary and source of the region's seafood.
- Cycle the scenic Coastal Portuguese Camino de Santiago, perhaps passing pilgrims along the way.
- Taste the most prestigious wines of the region: Spain's albariño in Rías Baixas and Portugal's *vinho verde*.
- Cycle across the famous ancient bridge in Ponte de Lima, whose original arches date to Roman times.
- Enjoy lunch as honored guests at a Portuguese Count's elegant manor house and sample his *vinho verde* wines.
- Savor delightful company and a delicious home-prepared Portuguese dinner as guests of a local family.

What to Expect

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

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 11 - 40

Average Cycling Time: 01:30 - 03:15

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 60°/42°, May 64°/47°, Jun 70°/51°, Jul 75°/55°, Aug 76°/55°, Sep 72°/53°, Oct 64°/48°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 5.5, May 5.8, Jun 3.2, Jul 1.5, Aug 2.2, Sep 5.0, Oct 7.6

DAY 1: Guided tour of Parador de Santiago de Compostela and the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral / Transfer to Padrón / Warm-up ride / Cruise to Cambados / Welcome reception and dinner

Your tour starts at 8:30 a.m. at the Parador de Santiago de Compostela, also known as the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Phone +34 981 58 22 00). Your VBT local guide will

meet you in the lobby with a VBT sign. If your arrival at our Santiago de Compostela hotel will be later than 8:30 a.m. or if you are delayed, please call the hotel and ask the front desk to pass the message on to your VBT local guide. Please be dressed in your cycling clothes and ready for biking as we will be transferring to the warm-up ride immediately after your morning's tour in Santiago de Compostela.

VBT highly recommends flying to Spain at least one day before the tour begins; this allows you to rest and recover from jet lag before you begin sightseeing and cycling.

Your discoveries of this fascinating city begin immediately as your VBT local guide explains the historical significance of the Parador de Santiago de Compostela, also known as the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, during a brief tour of the complex. This remarkable property, opened in 1499 on Obradoiro Square to serve the pilgrims coming to Santiago along the Way of St. James, boasts a rich heritage and long history. Next, follow your guide to the revered Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, burial site of the apostle James and the destination of countless pilgrims still today. After time to take in its ornate façade and sweeping plaza, you learn more about the pilgrimage as you transfer to the town of Padrón, where the bones of St. James are said to have first arrived in Spain by boat.

You meet your VBT trip leaders in Padrón for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session. Your warm-up ride follows the banks of the Ulla River, occasionally overlapping with the Portuguese Way of St. James. After an included lunch in Padrón, you embark a boat typically used by pilgrims (weather permitting) for a downriver transfer on the Ulla into the sweeping seascapes of the Ría de Arousa – the largest of Galicia's estuaries and producer of some of Europe's best seafood. Your destination is the lovely port of Cambados and the town's charming parador – a stately 17th-century Galician manor house and your home for the next two nights.

This evening, gather for a welcome cocktail and reception, followed by a dinner featuring a tasting menu with some of the parador's local Galician specialties.

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 km (14 miles)

Afternoon

Warm-up: 23 km (14 miles)

What to Expect: The warm-up ride will give you the opportunity to become familiar with your bike as you ride country roads with little traffic. The ride is fairly level, mostly through lovely forests and farmlands and following the banks of the Ulla River. There will be some traffic as you leave and enter the town of Padrón.

Accommodation: Parador de Cambados, Cambados, Spain

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Cycle the Ruta do Viño Rías Baixas / Explore the island of A Illa de Arousa

This morning set out on your bike from your parador and cycle along the waterfront of Cambados and the Camino de Santiago. Your route traces the gently rolling coastal vineyards and lovely green pine groves of the Rías Baixas, the name given to the four pristine estuaries along Galicia's Atlantic coast. (It is pronounced "Ree-ass By-Shass.") This stunning region, which you traverse along the wine road known as the *Ruta do Viño Rías Baixas*, is renowned for its white wine grapes introduced here in the 12th century by Cistercian monks. Following narrow country lanes, you arrive at the causeway connecting Spain's mainland to the island of A Illa de Arousa. You cross over, then circumnavigate the island on picturesque bike paths and typical small-town streets, perhaps spotting some of the herons that reside on this island municipality in the middle of the Ría de Arousa, the largest estuary in Galicia. Take some time to stroll the waterside promenade of the main town before cycling to one of the island's pristine yellow-sand beaches for a delicious picnic lunch prepared by the parador's chef. After lunch, enjoy some leisure time to explore before riding back to the mainland.

This evening, meet your trip leaders for a walk through the neighboring historic district, a spectacular cluster of mansions which has been declared a Site of Cultural Interest by the Spanish government. Perhaps pause at one of the traditional cafés for a glass of local wine such as a refreshing glass of albariño, known locally as the "wine of the sea" for the coastal vineyards that produce it and for its compatibility with seafood. After, enjoy dinner on your own at one of the numerous restaurants in the Old Town – your trip leaders will give you recommendations.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 - 42 km (17 - 26 miles)

Morning

Parador de Cambados to picnic site: 28 km (17 miles)

Afternoon

Picnic site to Parador de Cambados: 14 km (9 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride is easy with most of the cycling on quaint country roads and bike paths. You might experience some heavier traffic on the island of A Illa de Arousa and in Cambados at the beginning of your morning ride and end of your afternoon ride. You cross the causeway bridge on a pedestrian/cycle path; during the summer months there could be heavier bike traffic and more

pedestrians. As always, the VBT support vehicle will be readily available if you prefer to shuttle across the causeway to the island.

Accommodation: Parador de Cambados, Cambados, Spain

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Cycle the Ruta de la Camelia / Tour the Pazo de Rubianes camellia gardens with lunch and albariño wine tasting / Transfer to Baiona

The flower of Galicia is the camellia, and today's route is a testament to its revered status. You begin with a spin along part of the *Ruta de la Camelia*, a beautiful ride connecting various historic gardens. Even though you will not see the various camellias in bloom due to the month of your visit, you are sure to find the botanic gardens impressive any time of year.

You cycle out of Cambados via neighboring hills and vineyards, following narrow country lanes to the vineyards and gardens of the 18th-century Pazo de Rubianes (Palace of Rubianes). This grand villa boasts a splendid example of Galicia's horticultural beauty. Savor a sumptuous lunch and tasting of the estate's unique regional albariño wine before a guided walk through its impressive botanical gardens, a lavish display of century-old camellias, magnolias and more than 800 other floral species.

Later, you shuttle (approximately 1 hour) to Baiona, scenically set on Vigo Bay. This pretty port town is known as Villa de la Arribada, meaning "port of entry" as it was the first in Europe to learn of the discovery of America when Columbus' ship the *Pinta* arrived on its shores after its overseas voyage. Here, you arrive at your next parador, located within a beautiful 14th-century fortress on the peninsula of Montereal opposite the Vigo estuary. Enjoy sweeping sea views throughout your stay.

This evening, savor a leisurely dinner in the parador's dining room.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 22 - 43 km (14 - 27 miles)

Morning

Parador to Vineyards: 22 km (14 miles)

Vineyards to Pazo de Rubianes: 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride includes some elevation gain, leading you into the foothills and vineyards surrounding Cambados and providing a great workout. Most of the cycling is on country roads with some occasional traffic as you depart Cambados. The ride from the Vineyards to Pazo de Rubianes has

additional elevation gains and some roads with traffic. Guests may opt to shuttle to Pazo de Rubianes from the vineyards.

Accommodation: Parador de Baiona, Baiona, Spain

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Coastal loop ride to Oia / Tour the Royal Monastery of Santa María de Oia / Explore Baiona

After breakfast, cycle directly from the parador. This morning's route follows the coast – often along the Portuguese Coastal Camino de Santiago and passing pilgrims on their spiritual journey. You steer off the main bike route into the shade of the forested foothills, where spectacular seaside views unfold as you ride. Descend back to the coast and the small seaside village of Oia. Here, you tour the historic Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Oia. This 12th-century treasure has been a monastery, a palace, a school and even jail during the tumultuous Spanish Civil War. After, you stop by a nearby restaurant, where the owner has invited you to hear stories about his family's fascinating past as you enjoy a delicious lunch overlooking the sea. There'll be free time to further explore Oia at your leisure before cycling or shuttling back to the parador.

Those looking for a longer ride may spend the remainder of the afternoon riding routes provided by your Trip Leaders. Alternately, spend time exploring the sites of Baiona, stroll the parador's historic fortress grounds or take a dip in the large swimming pool.

In the evening, walk with your trip leaders to the medieval town center of Baiona, where they recommend restaurants for your dinner at leisure.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 - 61 km (13 – 38 miles)

Morning

Parador to Oia: 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon

Oia to Parador: 19 km (12 miles)

Long option Oia to lighthouse and La Vuelta hill plus challenge: 40 km (25 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride features gently rolling hills with scenic sea views. Most of the cycling is on the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James, which follows a main roadway. You may be sharing the Camino de Santiago with pilgrims; the path can become crowded in the summer months. Your ride will also follow narrow hillside roads with little traffic. The afternoon return ride could have coastal

headwinds. The VBT support vehicle will be available for anyone wishing to shuttle back to the parador. The longer option, an afternoon ride from Oia offers elevation gain and longer distances for those looking for a more challenging workout.

Accommodation: Parador de Baiona, Baiona, Spain

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5: Cycle the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James to Portugal / Private boat river crossing into Portugal

Today you bid farewell to Spain as you cycle the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James into Portugal. This morning you have two cycling options. You may either cycle directly from the parador, a longer option, or shuttle to Oia to begin biking as you follow the spiritual Camino again past amazing coastal vistas for most of your ride. Around mid-day, you arrive at Spain and Portugal's natural border—the Minho River. Here, you embark a private boat and ferry across to Portugal. Once on Portuguese soil, you continue your coastal cycle journey on a scenic bike route or shuttle to your seaside accommodations, located outside the Portuguese town of Viana do Castelo.

This evening, join your trip leaders and one of the hotel's management staff for a sunset cocktail at the hotel's beach bar overlooking the sea. Learn about the hotel's unique philosophy that embraces the active lifestyle of its guests, from surfers and paddleboarders to cyclists and yogis. After getting acquainted with the hotel's amenities, enjoy an included dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 - 65 km (11 – 40 miles)

Morning

Oia to Minho River ferry: 17 km (11 miles)

OR

Parador de Baiona to Minho River ferry: 37 km (23 miles)

Afternoon

Minho River ferry to Viana do Castelo: 28 km (17 miles)

What to Expect: Most of today's cycling is on the Portuguese Coastal Way of St. James along a designated path next to the main road to Portugal. You may be sharing the Camino de Santiago with pilgrims; the path can become crowded in the summer months. The afternoon ride follows designated bike paths along the Portuguese coast, with some short segments on busy roads and city streets as you approach Viana do Castelo.

Accommodation: FeelViana Sport Hotel, Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Cycle to Ponte de Lima / Lunch and vinho verde wine tasting at a Count's manor / Farewell reception and dinner at a local family's home

After a lavish breakfast buffet, cycle directly from the resort, following the Lima River through lush vineyards and quaint Portuguese villages. Your first destination is Ponte de Lima, the oldest chartered town in Portugal. This pretty riverside town was named for the long medieval bridge that spans the Lima River. You cross the historic bridge, then pedal into a bucolic farming landscape draped with hillside vineyards and dotted with beautiful manor houses known as *paços*, small country palaces that once served as rest stops for kings during their travels through the countryside.

Like royalty of old, you too will use one as a rest stop – the Paço de Calheiros, owned and operated by the family of Count Calheiros since medieval times. The present-day family home was built in the 17th century. Its stalwart structures and three-foot granite wall have stood the test of time. You may stroll the grounds and admire breathtaking views of the Lima Valley. If the day is clear you may also glimpse the Atlantic Ocean. Get to know your host, Count Calheiros, over a lunch accompanied by vinho verde wines harvested from his vineyards. After this reinvigorating respite, shuttle back to your hotel.

This evening, join your fellow riders and your trip leaders on a short stroll through the hotel's surrounding neighborhood. Tonight, you are the special guests at a local family's home for a festive farewell reception and dinner.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 38 - 50 km (24 - 31 miles)

Morning

FeelViana Hotel to Ponte de Lima: 38 km (24 miles)

Afternoon

Ponte de Lima to Paço de Calheiros: 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: Today's rides will follow a variety of bike paths, narrow rural roads with limited traffic and country roads with varied levels of traffic. Some of the rural town streets are cobbled and can be slippery when wet. Though you spend most of today on easy flat terrain, the last couple of miles from Ponte de Lima to the Paço de Calheiros feature some elevation gain.

Accommodation: FeelViana Sport Hotel, Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Transfer to Porto / Tour concludes in Porto

Enjoy breakfast before you transfer to Porto (approximately one hour). Your tour concludes at approximately 10:00 a.m. at the Pestana Vintage Hotel in Porto. Taxis are available to take you to central Porto hotels, the Porto train station, or the Porto airport – approximately 30-45 minutes depending upon traffic.

Important: Flight departures from Porto prior to 1:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you depart earlier, you are responsible for your own transfer arrangements from the FeelViana Sport Hotel to Porto's airport (approximately 45-60 minutes).

Included Meals: Breakfast