

Spain: Girona & Costa Brava

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Marvel at a gallery of landscapes scrolling past your gaze on this breathtakingly picturesque roll along Spain's "Brave Coast." Castle-crowned villages alternate with pastoral scenes of fertile fields and coastal vistas as you roll beneath the backdrop of the Pyrenees. And as you discover the land that inspired artist Salvador Dali, you'll also meet its modern-day residents in farms and orchards, and gain a different perspective on a private scenic cruise. Off the bike, relax in 4-star accommodations with generous amenities. Come join us on an itinerary that's truly a masterpiece!

Cultural Highlights

Embark on a walking tour of the Old Town of Girona.

Bear witness to the personal life of artist Salvador Dali during a visit to Púbol Castle, his beloved home. Gaze at the majestic Pyrenees over a special dinner on the terrace of your lovely La Bisbal d'Empordà hotel.

Pedal a rural landscape past fields of sunflowers, fruit orchards and rice fields.

Stroll the cobbled streets of Pals, admiring the town's Gothic and Romanesque architecture.

View the artists' galleries and 11th-century castle of Peratallada, a moated town built of stone.

Pause in a lovely apple orchard to learn about cider production.

Savor a delicious, home-grown lunch as the guest of a small Catalan farm.

Enjoy the breeze as you stroll the beachside cycling path from your hotel in L'Escala.

Admire one of the finest amphitheaters outside of Rome on a guided audio tour of the Greek and Roman ruins of Empuries.

Enjoy a scenic private cruise along the Costa Brava.

Toast your travel mates with some of Catalonia's finest wines during a festive farewell dinner.

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain throughout the trip and is ideal for beginning cyclists; however, there may be some challenging hills for non-enthusiastic riders. VBT's van support shuttle is always available for those who would like assistance. Some roads may have busier traffic during the popular months of June and first two weeks of September.

Tour Duration: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 35

Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 03:15

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

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

Average Rainfall (in.)

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

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Spain

Depart from home and travel to Spain. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary and airline tickets.

DAY 2: Arrive Barcelona / Transfer to Girona

Upon arrival at the Barcelona airport, claim your luggage. If your luggage is delayed, fill in a PIR form before leaving the baggage claim area—VBT representatives are not allowed into the baggage claim area. Please make certain that your VBT luggage tags are affixed to your bag so your VBT representative can identify you. After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall, where your VBT representative will be holding a VBT sign and will make arrangements for your transfer to your hotel in Girona, the cultural capital of Catalonia. Transfer time is approximately 90 minutes.

VBT provides you with City Information that includes information and recommendations on what to see and do in Girona during your stay. You have the rest of the day to relax or to begin your exploration of the city. If you arrive early, your hotel room may not be available until 3:00 p.m. You may store your luggage at the reception desk.

Hotel: Nord 1901

DAY 3: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Walking tour of historic Girona

VBT Pre-Trip Extension and Air Package guests: This morning, meet your local guide at 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 for lunch. Afterward, attend a bike-fitting and short orientation, and begin your afternoon's warm-up ride through scenic mountain valleys and along Lake Banyoles. Pause along the shores 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 welcome dinner poolside at the hotel (weather permitting).

Hotel: Nord 1901

Meals: B, L, D

Daily Options: 7 miles (12 km)

DAY 4: Púbol / Castell Dali Gala

Bid farewell to Girona today and shuttle into the heart of the historic Baix Empordà province of Catalonia to the quaint medieval village of Púbol. Here, you'll visit Púbol Castle, purchased by Salvador Dali in 1970 as a gift for his wife Gala. Enjoy a glimpse into Dali's personal life and witness his many talents as you see some of his original paintings, sculptures, and custom-designed furniture. You can also admire some of Gala's haute couture dresses, designed by Christian Dior exclusively for her. Gala continued to live here until her death in 1982. She 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 leisure in one of the village cafés. After lunch, you'll cycle to the coastal village of Platja de Pals for our first nights on the Costa Brava. Tonight, meet the hotel owner before enjoying a special dinner in the hotel's well renowned restaurant.

Hotel: Hotel Sa Punta

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 21 or 30 miles (33.9 or 48 km)

DAY 5: Pals and Peratallada

This morning, you'll ride into the surrounding rural landscape past fields of sunflowers, fruit orchards and rice fields, pausing throughout the day to step back in time into a few of Baix Empordà's medieval villages. Coasting into Pals, you will be charmed by cobbled stone streets and an impressive Gothic Quarter whose facades feature pointed arched 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)—date to the 4th century. After you explore this historic village, enjoy lunch at your leisure.

In the afternoon, continue cycling 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 encircles parts of the village. This atmospheric 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. Take some time to visit some of the artists' galleries here before getting back on your saddle for your return ride to your hotel. The afternoon is at leisure 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.

Hotel: Hotel Sa Punta

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 16 or 31 miles (25.8 or 49 km)

DAY 6: Cider farm visit / Home-hosted lunch

After breakfast, you'll cycle toward your home for the next three nights on the Mediterranean Costa Brava. This glorious ride traverses scenic countryside vistas overseen by the 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 as you pass through a lovely apple orchard and learn about the cider production in this special region of Spain. Also enjoy lunch here while tasting some of the local cider.

After lunch, enjoy a scenic ride past a medieval mill before arriving in the village of Parlavà. Here, you may opt to continue riding or shuttle to our Mediterranean beachfront hotel. Once at the hotel, wander along the waterside cycling path into the town of L'Escalà. You may also want to splurge and 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 BC and was an important medieval political center. Today, it maintains much of its medieval charm, so it's easy to imagine what life may have been in that bygone

era.

Hotel: Hostal Spa Empuries

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 12, 21 or 35 miles (19.1, 32.9 or 55 km)

DAY 7: Vineyards and cork trees / Picnic lunch / Peralada and Vilabertran / Empuries

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 have prepared 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. You will complete your cycling today in the village of Vilabertran, famous for the Santa Maria de Vilabertran monastery as well as the setting for Dali's 1913 painting Vilabertran, which he painted when he was nine years old.

Later, shuttle back to the Mediterranean coast and enjoy the hotel spa (additional cost) or beach, or explore the neighboring ruins of Empuries, some of the most important Greek and Roman ruins on the Iberian Peninsula. Admission to the ruins is included, and you may take as little or as much time as you wish with an audio self-guided visit of this archaeological site, including one of the finest amphitheaters outside of Rome.

Please Note: The Dali Museum is closed on Mondays; if our regularly scheduled visit to the Dali Museum falls on a Monday, we will visit the museum this morning, prior to your ride.

Dinner tonight is at your leisure. Dine at one of the hotel's restaurants or walk along the beachside cycle path to enjoy a quiet meal in the village of L'Escala.

Hotel: Hostal Spa Empuries

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 12 or 21 miles (20.4 or 35.3 km)

DAY 8: 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. During this thrilling 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 a significant biodiversity, making it one of the most important marine reserves in the western Mediterranean.

Your Trip Leaders meet you at the end of your cruise in the port of L'Estartit, with your bicycle ready for the day. Your ride today is watched over by the massive Montgri Massif, which to some locals 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 medieval 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, join your Trip Leaders and travel mates for 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 over this special meal.

Hotel: Hostal Spa Empuries

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 15 miles (25.5 km)

DAY 9: Transfer to Figueres / Dali Museum / Transfer to Barcelona / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT provides a morning transfer to Figueres, the birthplace of Salvador Dali, for an included tour of the Dali Museum (Note: The Dali Museum is closed on Mondays; if our regularly scheduled visit to the Dali Museum falls on a Monday, we will visit the museum the morning of Day 5, prior to your ride.)

VBT Air Package guests: After the tour, transfer 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.

VBT Post-Trip Extension guests: After the tour, transfer to Barcelona's Hotel 1898 with your fellow travelers. Here, you may enjoy a short afternoon break before transferring from Hotel 1898 to Barcelona's International airport for your late-afternoon flight to Palma de Mallorca. Upon arrival at the Palma de Mallorca (PMI) airport, claim your luggage. Exit the Luggage Collation area through Gate C. A VBT representative, holding a VBT sign, will meet you at the Airport Meeting Point near Exit 4. At this time,

please verify with your VBT representative the time of your transfer at the end of your trip from your Mallorca hotel back to the airport. If you are not able to locate the representative, go to the Moltona Viatges Office for assistance. You will transfer by private car or van (about 30 minutes) to your centrally located hotel in Palma de Mallorca. VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations on what to see and do during your stay.

Air Package Hotel: Hotel 1898 Post-Trip Hotel: Hotel Saratoga Meals: B

DAY 10: Depart for home

After breakfast* this morning, you will transfer to the airport for your departing flight **. Please ensure that you are ready in the hotel reception area at the designated time.

*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.

**VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your Transfer Reminder. VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. Transfer times are about 40 minutes to the Barcelona airport. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: B

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel 1898 (Day: 9)

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.

Hostal spa Empúries (Days: 6,7,8)

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.

Nord 1901 (Days: 2,3)

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: 4,5)

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.