

# Daily Itinerary

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## DAY 1

### VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins / Ride Girona loop

Make your own independent travel arrangements to Girona. Collect your bags and clear customs then choose from several recommended transportation options or decide your own path. We suggest arriving in Spain at least one day prior to the tour start date as your tour begins at 9:00 a.m.

Meet your VBT local host at 9:00 a.m., along with any other VBT guests departing on the same day, for your Welcome orientation in the lobby of the Nord 1901 Girona (Career Nord 7-9, +972 411 522). Please be dressed and ready for cycling. Your local host will be carrying a VBT sign.

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.)

After, set off on your own, following your Ride with GPS app. Your first invigorating reel creates a figure 8, leading you northwest of Girona into the Catalan countryside and the gently sloping foothills of the Pre-Pyrenees. You ascend gradually, taking in lovely views of the village of Montcal below. As you ride, you can take inspiration knowing the Rocacorba climb is nearby; this cycling ascent up Puigsou Mountain—named for the 12th-century sanctuary or Rocacorba near the summit—provides solid training for professional cyclists and hardy challenges for keen amateurs. For now, you turn south as rolling terrain takes you through the traditional Catalan town of Sant Medir known for its candy festival in early March. Then enjoy an easy coast back to the center of Girona. Your hotel is steps away from the city's Old Town and pedestrian squares, rich with history and brimming with the excellent cuisine of the region.

### Today's Ride:

**Girona “under Roca Corba” loop:** 28.9 km (18 miles)

**What to Expect:** Depart along city streets and ride into the countryside on secondary paved roads. You pass horse farms and small villages, then gradually ascend to the highest point just past Montcal. Enjoy stunning views of surrounding mountains and a rolling descent back to center of Girona.

**Meals:** B (included for Self-Guided Ait+ guests only)

**Nord 1901**

## DAY 2

### Cycle Girona to Sant Feliu de Boada

Today you cycle out of Girona heading east toward the Mediterranean. After winding your way out of the city, you ascend the coastal range that separates Girona from the coast. This classic ride with its long climb is favored by the many cyclists drawn to the region and you'll quickly see why as you're surrounded by emerald-green hills and forests. Pause at the Els Angels chapel to admire its stonework along the way.

From the highest point, you are rewarded with fantastic views northwest to the Pyrenees and east to the Mediterranean. Linger a while to take it all in, then coast your way into a very flat finish through scenic arable land and farming villages, including Madremanya, Monells, Corçà, Ullastret, Canapost, and Peratallada. Any of these centers is worth a quick stop to do some exploring and soaking in of the rural Catalan character. You'll find this network of quiet country roads, all paved and with little traffic, to be a cyclist's dream as you crisscross a typical Mediterranean landscape.

Your home for the night is the beautifully preserved village of Sant Feliu de Boada in the region of Baix Empordà, surrounded by farmland and dotted with stone houses. In the heart of the village, admire the 16th-century church built in late-Gothic style that is believed to have been founded as early as the 11th century.

Your home for the night is a traditional Catalan *masia*, a sprawling stone authentic farmhouse renovated with all the comforts of a modern inn. It is ideally situated to stroll to either of Sant Feliu de Boada's excellent Catalan restaurants, where the region's specialties are prepared with locally sourced ingredients, and where crema catalana, the local custard dessert, is always a favorite finale.

#### Today's Ride:

Girona to Sant Feliu de Boada: 45.6 km (28 miles)

**What to Expect:** Begin cycling from your city center hotel on pedestrian and city streets. After 4 km (2.4 miles), you are outside the city and you begin an initial steady ascent to Els Angels. You reach the highest point at 15 km (9 miles), then take care coasting almost 5 km (3 miles) downhill with some steep sections into the lovely medieval town of Madremanya. Another 5 more km (3 miles) of descending brings you to Monells and a plain of rolling to flat farmland through several villages and into the small medieval hamlet of Sant Feliu de Boada.

**Meals:** B

**Can Barrull**

## DAY 3

### Sant Feliu de Boada to Llafranc

Today's ride leads you to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and Spain's Costa Brava. You pedal first along bucolic country roads, passing meadows and fertile farmlands. Catalan *masias*, country houses like the one you stayed in last night, round out this picturesque landscape. Your first destination today is Calonge, past the outskirts of La Bisbal d'Empordà. This is the province of Baix Empordà, or Lower Empordà, where gentle agricultural plains are overlooked by small ridgelines—all of it interlaced with a network of small rural roads that stretch for miles, ideal for cycling. Spend all the time you'd like exploring the 13th-century towers and walls of the Calonge castle, taking in views of the Bay of Sant Antoni.

Later, continue your breathtaking reel to Palamós, home to one of the last surviving fishing fleets along these shores. This seaside town did not miss its opportunity to also become a beloved beach destination. Cycle next through a coastal pine forest, arriving later in Llafranc, a seaside resort with a small sandy beach where Ernest Hemingway and Salvador Dalí were said to have spent time. High above the town on a bluff, the historic Saint Sebastian lighthouse warns sailors of the rocky Saint Sebastian point below. Once you settle in to your hotel, take a short stroll to Llafranc's seaside promenade, where a range of restaurants awaits.

#### Today's Ride:

**Peratallada to Llafranc:** 42 km (26 miles)

**What to Expect:** Roll out of Sant Feliu de Boada on flat rural paved roads through tiny villages and farmland. You ride around the outskirts of the larger town of La Bisbal d'Empordà, then return to untrafficked rural roads. A gradual climb of about 2 km (1.2 miles) leads up to a ridge where views of the Mediterranean Sea unfold. At 16 km (9.6 miles), an easygoing descent winds into Calonge, where you join slightly busier roads as you approach the coast. You encounter the most traffic this week near Palamós, between about 28 km (17.4 miles) and 30 km (18 miles), but then you return to smaller roads and dedicated bike lanes and a few hundred feet of gravel on a dedicated bike path. End your rewarding day by winding your way slightly downhill to seaside Llafranc.

**Meals:** B

**Hotel mas Pastora**

## DAY 4

### Llafranc to Empúries

Today's ride takes you up and over the coastal range, through the gentle plains of the Costa Brava, then north from the Baix (or "lower") Empordà to the Alt (or "upper") Empordà—with ample opportunity to stop and explore. Your ride begins through a dreamy landscape of medieval towns and traditional *mas* farmhouses. You skirt the town of Palafrugell—once a producer of cork harvested from local forests. Then traverse the small village of Torrent, opting if you wish for a side trip to the historic hilltop town of Pals. This remarkably restored medieval center boasts cobbled streets framed with arches and stone balconies. Its 49-foot Romanesque tower—known locally as the Torre de les Hores, or the Tower of the Hours—was built between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Continue north to Torroella de Montgri, once an inland port for the Kings of Aragon until the Ter River silted up and changed its fate. The village's medieval center is a delight to wander. As you continue cycling, you keep the towering Montgri massif to the west, enjoying an easy spin until you reach the coast. Your hotel is conveniently located near Empúries, a fascinating archaeological site of Phoenician and Roman ruins.

#### Today's Ride:

**Llafranc to Empúries:** 42.8 km (26 miles)

**What to Expect:** Today's ride starts with an initial ascent away from the coast of about 2 km (1.2 miles), so you may want to pocket a croissant for after. You skirt the town of Palafrugell and some busier roads, partially following a bike path. Then a quick turn takes you onto rural roads and gently rolling terrain until your 11.5 km mark (7.1 miles). At about 15 km (9 miles), you may detour to the hilltop town of Pals and then trace a quiet countryside route. After riding through more farmland and medieval villages, you encounter busier roads and the town streets of Torroella de Montgri. You are soon back to slightly rolling rural paved roads until you reach 37.7 km (23.4 miles) at Albons. A short hitch north along the coast leads to your hotel.

**Meals:** B

**Hostal d'Empúries**

## DAY 5

### Stay Put Day / Empúries Loop

Take today to kick back and enjoy your seaside locale. You can relax on the beach, then explore the former fishing port of nearby L'Escala. Anchovies were the main haul here and remain central to the town's annual October festival. If you'd like to visit the fascinating ruins at Empúries, there's a shared-use path next to your hotel that leads you there. Also worth exploring are the port of L'Escala itself, the Old Town, and the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia Empúries. If you wish, you can partake of your hotel's spa facilities at your expense; the cost is 15 euros per person and reservations are recommended.

If you're up for more riding today, you can follow a scenic 50 km (30 mile) loop. It leads you inland and gains some elevation that affords spectacular views of the coast and Pyrenees. Then you descend and circle back to the coast, returning to the shore at Sant Pere Pescador, a pretty town along the River Fluvià near the Bay of Roses. Take some time here to enjoy the long sandy beach of the bay, explore the 14th-century castle, and find a café for a lunch of fresh seafood. After, as you parallel the coast back, you pass the archaeological site at Empúries, the most important Greco-Roman ruins on the Iberian Peninsula. Pause here to explore if you wish, admiring the ancient Roman wall and some incredibly preserved mosaics.

This evening, consult our recommendations for a spot to enjoy a final dinner and celebrate your exploration of the Costa Brava. Restaurants in Sant Martí d'Empúries are a 10-minute walk away while L'Escala is 20 minutes. Or you may dine at your hotel's restaurant.

#### Today's Ride:

**Empúries Loop:** 48.5 km (30 miles)

**What to Expect:** Ride inland away from the seaside, initially through rolling farmland. At about 16 km (9.6 miles), an initial climb brings you to the tiny town of Garrigoles with its small church. Ride along a high plateau with views of the Pyrenees in front of you. A quick descent then turns quickly and ascends to the highest point of the day at around the 23 km mark (14.3 miles). A sustained descent rolls through farms and villages, then traverse some rolling hills until the route flattens back out at the plain at Sant Thomas de Fluvià. At Sant Pere Pescador you cross the Fluvià River and turn south, paralleling the coast through the medieval town of Sant Martí d'Empúries and to your hotel.

**Meals:** B

**Hostal d'Empúries**

## **DAY 6**

### **Departure transfer / VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation ends**

Your tour ends after breakfast at your hotel in Empúries. Depending upon your destination, it may not be possible to depart for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.