

Portugal & Spain Bike & River Cruise: Douro Valley

Bike Vacation + Air Package

If you're dreaming of a Douro Valley River cruise with a rich bouquet of cycling options and authentic Portuguese culture—this is the one! Our expert trip designers have uncovered picturesque and invigorating rides through historic fincas and small medieval villages—including Marialva, where you'll explore its splendid 12th-century hilltop castle. Revel in a gentle spin along the storied shores of the Douro River, passing a landscape of chestnut trees, picturesque villages, and charming vineyards before pausing for a port wine tasting at an exclusive wine cellar in Pinhão. Cross the border into Spain and discover the "Golden City" of Salamanca with its stunning cathedrals and ancient bridges—or perhaps you'll choose to pedal into the scenic Spanish hills, pausing for rural lunch of local delicacies in a remote Spanish village. Along the way, you'll enjoy the luxurious amenities of your Emerald Cruises ship—dining on authentic Portuguese cuisine in its five-star restaurant and relaxing outdoors on the sun deck by the pool as the scenic vistas of the Douro drift by.

Cultural Highlights

Unpack once, then cruise the picturesque Douro River into wine country, disembarking to cycle the back roads of Portugal and Spain.

Luxuriate in the amenities of Emerald's most intimate river cruise ship, the MS *Emerald Radiance*.

Pedal through scenic countryside, passing lush vineyards and rural landscapes and pausing to soak in the ambience of historic villages.

Sample the port wines for which the Douro Valley is renowned during a private tasting with a wine producer.

Savor the distinctive cuisine of Portugal, from its fresh seafood to its farm-to-table produce and cured meats.

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour offers moderate riverside terrain, with daily bus shuttles to the cycling routes. Riding is primarily on paved country roads with limited traffic, through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

On Board Ship: Our group of up to 20 VBT guests will be part of a larger group on board our 112-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join others. While in port, our ship may be docked adjacent to other ships. This means you might walk through other ships while boarding or disembarking, and some views may be obstructed while in port.

Tour Duration: 11 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 6-45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-5 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 64°/49°, May 68°/53°, June 73°/58°, July 76°/60°, August 77°/60°, September 75°/58°, October 69°/55°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 2.5, May 1.7, June 0.5, July 0.2, August 0.3, September 1.0, October 3.8

FLIGHT DAY: Depart from the United States or Canada

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Lisbon

A VBT representative will greet you at the airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Travel to Porto / Embark ship

After an included breakfast, meet your VBT representative in the hotel lobby to travel to Porto (approximately three hours). You will stop en route to stretch your legs and perhaps purchase a coffee or water. Arrive at the dock in Porto at approximately noon and board your Emerald Cruises ship.

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m. However, you are welcome to enjoy lunch on board, served between 12:00 and 3:00 p.m., relax in the ship's common areas, take a walk, or head into town to explore or enjoy a traditional *pastel de nata*, Portugal's famously delicious custard pastry, maybe with a coffee or a glass of port wine.

Later meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride on a local bike path along the Atlantic coast. Later, enjoy a welcome dinner on board. The ship remains in Porto this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

After a 3-hour drive to Porto, with a break to stretch your legs, begin your ride on a paved bike path alongside the scenic Atlantic coast. Get acquainted with your bicycle, your route notes, and your Ride with GPS. This is your chance to check your brakes, get comfortable shifting your full range of gears, and perhaps chat with locals you meet along the way.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 km (6 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Peso da Régua / Cycle to Pinhão / Private port wine tasting

This morning you sail upriver into the Douro Valley, Portugal's spectacularly scenic wine region of sloping riverside vineyards. As you cruise, enjoy breakfast in the ship's Reflection Restaurant and perhaps a stroll around the walking track on the top Sun Deck, admiring the views that pass you by. After lunch on board, disembark in Peso da Régua, situated at the westernmost edge of the demarcated port-wine region.

Your afternoon of cycling follows the Douro's banks along a scenic roadway, leading you deeper into wine country. Gentle hills rise up all around you while the river ambles along to your left. Your destination is Pinhão, perched on a pretty bend in the river and producer of some of the world's finest ports. The town's charming train station is a pleasure to explore, with its artful *azulejos*, the country's famous hand-painted tiles, depicting the harvest.

Pause for a port wine tasting in town, learning about the different varietals from a local producer. As you've been cycling, your ship has been cruising upriver and will meet you in Pinhão. Enjoy dinner on board this evening. You dock overnight in this delightful town.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Peso da Régua to Pinhão — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

After lunch and disembarkation in Peso da Régua, start cycling along the famous N-222 national country road to Pinhão. The segment of road you ride was honored with the "World's Best Road" award in 2015. Expect some car traffic, especially in the Peso da Régua area.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 km (16 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Travel to Penedono / Cycle to Trancoso and Marialva / Sail to Vega de Terrón

Cycle to two of the region's most scenic villages today, each part of Portugal's network of Historic Villages. After breakfast on board, travel to Penedono, a 50-minute drive south of the Douro River. Then cycle a picturesque route past chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards to Trancoso, a stunning hilltop town that's home to the oldest documented rural market in Portugal. The medieval stone wall that encloses the cobbled lanes of the Old Town dates to the 13th century, while the tower you'll see is an echo of Moorish rule. During a guided walk, learn about Trancoso's rich Sephardic-Jewish heritage.

After lunch in Trancoso, continue riding to Marialva, a sleepy little village overlooked by an imposing 12th-century castle. Take time to explore the old-world charms here before traveling back to the Douro River, where your ship greets you in Pocinho. As you recount the day's adventure over dinner, you continue cruising upriver to Vega de Terrón at the Spanish border, where you dock overnight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Penedono to Trancoso — 28 km (18 miles)

Afternoon: Trancoso to Marialva — 33 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

After a 50-minute morning shuttle, you cycle the typical Portuguese countryside past chestnut trees, vineyards, and olive and almond orchards to Trancoso. After a guided walk and lunch, cycle to Marialva among rolling hills, with limited traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 – 61 km (18 – 39 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Tour Salamanca, Spain or cycle rustic Spanish villages

Enjoy another abundant breakfast on board, then choose how you'd like to spend the day, joining a full-day excursion to Salamanca, Spain, or cycling amid Spain's gorgeous countryside. Salamanca is a rare gem among Spanish cities. Its ornate, golden sandstone architecture is adorned with orange-hued Latin inscriptions – befitting a town that hosts the country's oldest university. Your tour of this UNESCO World Heritage site includes the Old and New Cathedrals, some 300 years apart in age, and the vast Plaza Mayor.

For those who prefer more cycling, ride among the scenic vistas of Salamanca Province, a tranquil corner of Spain where most villages have a population of less than 300. Begin your ride in Vitigudino, a tiny Spanish village halfway to the city of Salamanca (the province's capital). Then spend the day amid stirring landscapes of rolling hills and wide plains, passing through rustic villages hugging rivers or nestled among mountains. Pause for lunch in the small hamlet of Lumbrales before continuing back to Portugal – and your ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Vitigudino to Lumbrales — 40 km (25 miles)

Afternoon: Lumbrales to ship — 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Join the private shuttle to Salamanca in the morning. If you choose to cycle, leave the bus with your VBT trip leaders in Vitigudino and cycle the Spanish countryside. Ride small paved roads, with almost zero traffic, to Lumbrales. You may encounter a few cars in the afternoon on your return to Portugal, with a long downhill at the end. An optional shuttle is provided for the afternoon ride.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 – 72 km (25 – 45 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Côa Valley / Peso da Régua

This morning, visit the Côa Valley Museum and Archaeologic Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to view the famed rock carvings that date to between 22,000 and 10,000 BCE. Thousands of images of horse, cattle, human, and abstract figures have survived millennia, providing insight into prehistoric lives in Iberia. After, travel to Penela da Beira for lunch. The tiny village is notable for the massive granite outcrop at its center.

Your spin continues along quiet country roads to Trevões, a small patrician town whose church houses some beautiful frescoes. Take time to explore and perhaps chat with some locals before getting a lift back to the ship.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Penela da Beira to Trevões — 30 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

The afternoon ride is across a hilly countryside, with a few moderate climbs and swooping downhills. Riding is on paved country roads with limited car traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 30 km (19 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Ecopista do Tâmega / Amarante / Entre-os-Rios

Disembark after breakfast for another spectacular day of cycling bucolic routes in and around the Douro Valley. After about an hour's travel time to Cruz de Baixo, you begin an unforgettable ride on the Ecopista do Tâmega, a well-kept rail trail through the breathtaking countryside of Tâmega Valley. Pedal past forests, the hills of the Marão Mountain Range, and historic villages before arriving in the small town of Celorico do Basto for lunch. Continue riding to Amarante, the southern terminus of the rail trail, where you browse the magnificent modernist paintings of Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso in the museum that bears his name.

Later, travel back to your ship, which is waiting for you in Entre-os-Rios. This evening, celebrate your Douro River discoveries at the Captain's Farewell Reception, followed by dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ecopista trail – 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows a well-maintained rail-to-trail bike path. It is a car-free and hill-free ride, with an elevation gain of less than 1,500 feet in 24 miles.

Cumulative Distance Range: 39 km (24 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Atlantic coast / Aveiro / Porto

Awake back in Porto this morning. For your final spin in Portugal, travel to the Atlantic and the beautiful coastal city of Aveiro. Its scenic location on a lagoon and its several languorous canals has inspired many a traveler to compare it to Venice. Following a scenic and sea-kissed cycle along the ocean, embark a traditional *moliceiro* boat for a relaxing ride among the picturesque canals. After, enjoy a fresh seafood lunch, your meal plucked from the ocean that morning. Later, return to Porto, where you bid a fond farewell to your fellow travelers and your VBT trip leaders over a cocktail reception and a final delicious dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Aveiro loop ride — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's biking has practically no elevation gains. You ride on a mixture of paved roads and bike paths and finish in an urban environment.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembarkation / Porto walking tour

Once you have finished your included breakfast, disembark the ship and conclude your bicycle tour of Douro Valley with a private guided walk past the city's highlights. Afterwards you are free to explore more of Porto on your own. VBT provides you with city information containing recommendations on what to do during your stay.

Our centrally located hotel puts the wonders of Porto right outside your door.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Porto airport will be provided (an approximately 20 to 30-minute drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

138 Liberdade Hotel (Arrival Day)

This five-star hotel is ideally located on Lisbon's main boulevard, Avenida da Liberdade, in the center of this historical city. Leisure travelers will find a myriad of ways to occupy themselves thanks to the hotel's convenient location close to Rossio Square and the Baixa District. After a day of exploring, enjoy spacious, air conditioned guest rooms with luxurious amenities. The hotel has an outside terrace for morning coffee or afternoon cocktails and the signature restaurant serves Portuguese specialties throughout the day. A 24-hour fitness center equipped with free weights and cardiovascular equipment is open seven days a week.

Emerald Radiance (Days 1-7)

Expressly built for sailing Portugal's Douro River, the *Emerald Radiance* navigates the heart of the Iberian region in complete luxury. As Emerald Cruises' most intimate ship, with a capacity of 112 guests, *Emerald Radiance* features fleet favorites such as a spacious bar and lounge, a sun deck, and serenity pool. The ship's 40 generously proportioned suites and 10 staterooms feature all the amenities you need. VBT offers both cabin types, suites and staterooms, over five cabin categories.

Pestana Porto A Brasileira (Day 8)

Minutes away from the famous iconic Avenida dos Aliados, the Ribeira district, the Teatro Sá da Bandeira, and the famous São Bento railway station, the Pestana Porto – A Brasileira hotel will not disappoint. A luxurious, 5-star property, its 89 rooms and four suites are thematically tied to imported products during the 15th and 16th centuries such as anise, cocoa, and pink pepper. The hotel's original architectural features remain, plus a Portuguese cuisine inspired restaurant, along with the "A Brasileira" café, notably the first to serve coffee in cups, all contributing to a unique stay in the heart of Porto.