

Vermont: Lake Champlain Islands, Burlington & Stowe

Bike Vacation Only

Come cycle the bike paths and byways of VBT's Vermont home! Since our inception in 1971, VBT has guided group cycling tours throughout the pastoral valleys of our native Vermont—and we know every hidden corner. From the artsy-chic waterfront city of Burlington to the peaceful byways of the Champlain Islands, you'll love spinning through the clean Vermont air—spotting ospreys and majestic great blue herons winging their way along tranquil shores. Along the way, you'll meet VBT's countless Vermont friends—including a Vermont dairy farmer who introduces you to the local tradition of maple sugaring during a tour of his authentic Vermont sugar shack. As you spin through Stowe's evergreen mountain valleys, you'll even have a chance to stop at a local farm stand for Vermont's favorite summer treat—the maple creemee.

Cultural Highlights

- Enjoy deluxe accommodations: a boutique hotel, a cozy Vermont inn, and a luxurious mountain resort.
- Enjoy a scenic ride on South Hero Island with views of the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks.
- Visit a local vineyard for a picnic lunch and wine tasting.
- Tour the Shelburne Museum, an extraordinary collection of 150,000 works.
- Ride through the heart of Stowe on a dedicated path.

What to Expect

This tour offers a full range of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills and is ideal for beginners and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those needing assistance with hills.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 12-49 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4 hours

Group size: 20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

June 76°/55°, July 80°/60°, August 78°/58°, September 69°/50°, October 57°/40°

Average Rainfall (in.)

June 3.6, July 3.8, August 3.6, September 3.4, October 3

DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

Make your own arrangements for travel to Burlington, Vermont. Guests driving to the tour should park their cars at the tour end point, Burlington International Airport (airport code: BTV) for the week.

The tour begins at Hotel Vermont in downtown Burlington. For those interested, VBT will offer a shuttle from the airport to Hotel Vermont promptly at 2:30 p.m. This shuttle works on a “show and go” basis with no reservations needed. Travel time is approximately 15 minutes. It’s recommended to have lunch in a local restaurant once in town. It also may be possible to have lunch before leaving the airport (opening hours of the airport’s café may vary).

Depending on your arrival time, you may have time to spend the afternoon enjoying Burlington. Offering glorious sunsets, sailing on the lake, hiking and biking on nearby mountains, and Vermont craft beer, Burlington is a beloved destination. Known as the “Queen City,” Burlington is home to the University of Vermont and several smaller colleges. Ben & Jerry’s began their ice cream empire in a renovated gas station downtown. A walk down Church Street Marketplace puts you in the heart of the city’s vibrant, youthful energy. You’ll find many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

Meet your VBT trip leaders at 3:30 p.m. in your cycling clothes for a bike fitting and brief cycling skills clinic. This will be immediately followed by a short warm-up ride. This evening, gather at 6:30 p.m. for an orientation meeting and welcome cocktail. You will enjoy dinner at the hotel at 7:30 p.m.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up Burlington — 5 miles

What to Expect:

Your warm-up spin gives you the opportunity to get used to the bike that will be your stalwart companion for the rest of the week. Admire the beauty of Lake Champlain with the Adirondack Mountains across the horizon.

Cumulative Distance Range: 5 miles

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Burlington Bike Path / South Hero

This morning's bike tour takes you along the shore of the lake toward the Champlain Islands. The lake views and gentle terrain make for very pleasant cycling. Board the Island Line Bike Ferry for a short cruise with your bike. This service joins the two sides of "The Cut" between Colchester and South Hero along the recently resurfaced marble causeway and allows you to "ride" uninterrupted from Burlington into the islands. You will stop at Snow Farm Winery, for a wine tasting and picnic lunch, before continuing on your ride through the towns of Grand Isle and South Hero toward your next hotel.

Settle in and relax at North Hero House Inn (Shore Acres Inn for June 4 departure only) on North Hero, the second largest of three major Lake Champlain islands. Originally granted to Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, the islands have played a pivotal part in our nation's history. North Hero offers dramatic views of the Green Mountains and the town's early-19th-century architecture adds to its charm. The Lake Champlain Islands, the Adirondacks, and the Green Mountains are the result of North America colliding with the European continental plate millennia ago. This evening, enjoy dinner at the inn.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Burlington and Bike Ferry — 14 miles

Afternoon: Snow Farm Winery to North Hero — 20 miles

What to Expect:

Your morning ride provides you with lake views heading north from Burlington to Grand Isle while on the Island Line Rail Trail Causeway which was built in 1900. You will cross "The Cut" on an included bike ferry run by the non-profit group Local Motion. After a picnic and wine tasting at Snow Farm Winery, travel by the private property of Harry Barber, a native of Switzerland who created multiple miniature castles from local stone that can be seen from the road. You will pass the Ed Weed Fish Culture Station that raises landlocked Atlantic salmon and trout to release into Vermont's rivers and streams. The ride to Grand Isle features gentle terrain of mostly paved roads, with minimally few unpaved sections.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 — 34 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: Cycle Isle La Motte and North Hero Island

Cycle northward this morning along the tranquil lakeshore, crossing a causeway to Isle La Motte, one of the Champlain Islands. Named after French explorer Samuel de Champlain in 1609, Lake Champlain is the largest freshwater body east of the Mississippi after the Great Lakes. Canada's St. Lawrence River, an important transportation route for indigenous people for thousands of years, flows in from the north and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The French and English built forts in a race to control the lake during the early colonial years leading up to the Revolutionary War.

Ride quiet back roads on Isle La Motte, stopping to visit the historic St. Anne's Shrine and Fisk Quarry. The shrine has lovely views of Lake Champlain, information on local history, short walking trails, restrooms, and blissful serenity. In 1787, Ichabod Ebenezer Fisk built his estate with limestone and marble from Fisk Quarry. At the height of operations, he employed 100 men. Remarkably, the quarry has fossils from the Chazy Reef, the world's oldest reef, formed 480 million years ago.

As you continue your invigorating ride, take in the natural and historical sights. This was the first of the lake's islands to be visited by French navigator and explorer Samuel de Champlain and his party of French and Native Americans in 1609. He described the place as "covered with the most beautiful pines that I have ever seen." After lunch on your own, you are free to choose between a guided kayaking excursion, more cycling along the lovely shoreline, or an afternoon of relaxation. This evening, enjoy another dinner at the inn's restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Isle La Motte — 32 miles (34 miles for June 4 departure only)

What to Expect:

Cycle north from your inn to Isle La Motte, with stops at St. Anne's Shrine, Fisk Quarry, and Halls Apple Orchard. Cyclists can shorten the ride with a shuttle before they reach the causeway to Alburgh.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 32 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Explore Shelburne / Cycle along Lake Champlain / Shuttle to Stowe

This morning, you head to Shelburne to visit an authentic sugar house where you learn about Vermont's proud tradition of maple sugaring. After, you will ride to the Shelburne Museum for an optional visit. This fine museum of folk and decorative art, quilts, textiles, paintings, Americana, and period buildings boasts an extraordinary collection of more than 150,000 works in a unique setting which includes 39 exhibition buildings. Among its holdings are 500 quilts, 1,400 waterfowl decoys, 120 weathervanes, and 50 carousel figures—along with the 220-foot steamboat Ticonderoga, built in 1906 at the Shelburne Shipyard on Lake Champlain. It operated as a day boat serving ports along New York and Vermont shores until 1953. The Shelburne Marina and Shipyard opened in the late 1700s and began building sidewheel steamboats in the early 1800s. During World War II, it had naval contracts to build sub-chasers, torpedo lighters, and tugboats.

You may choose to continue to Shelburne Farms, a 1,400-acre working farm and education center. With its beautiful grounds and interesting architecture, this National Historic Landmark was designed as a model agricultural estate in 1886 by Dr. William Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb. If you're looking for a bit more cycling, enjoy an additional ride south to Charlotte, where you can visit the town beach. Scan the waves and try to catch a glimpse of "Champ," the legendary lake creature that could be a distant cousin of the Loch Ness Monster. Lunch is on your own today. Your trip leaders will make suggestions of the best places to stop along your ride.

Meet back at the Shelburne Museum parking lot at 3:30 p.m. for the shuttle (approximately 60 minutes) to Stowe. Upon arrival, relax or take a stroll around the resort town before dinner on your own tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Shelburne Museum — 4 miles

Afternoon: Charlotte Beach — 16 miles OR Shelburne Farms and Shipyard — 12 miles

What to Expect:

A shuttle brings to you a sugar house in Shelburne. From there, a short ride on back roads leads to the

Shelburne Museum. You may continue to Shelburne Farms, home to fine cheddar cheeses, as well as Shelburne Marina and Shipyard. Enjoy more country cycling along the lake to Charlotte and its town beach. Meet back at the Shelburne Museum parking lot for a 3:30 p.m. shuttle to Stowe.

Cumulative Distance Range: 4 – 20 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Stowe Village

This morning's scenic ride begins on the paved Stowe Recreation Path, a flat route free of motorized vehicles. Stop at the Brookdale Covered Bridge for a photo op before continuing on to Edson Hill where your climb will be rewarded with majestic views of the surrounding mountains. Arrive in downtown Stowe, with its many shops and restaurants. Take time to explore the Vermont Ski and Snowboard Museum, fine antique and craft galleries, and outdoor clothing and equipment stores. Lunch is on your own today. You can choose from any of the restaurants in Stowe Village or along the recreation path.

Today's extended biking option leads you to Stowe Hollow, following pleasant country roads. Here, enjoy more panoramic views of Vermont's peaks, forests and farms.

Return to the resort to enjoy a dip in the pool, relax in the sauna or stroll the neighboring trails. Later gather for a festive farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Stowe — 16 miles | Stowe Hollow Plus — 23 miles

What to Expect:

Today's rides traverse the hills around Stowe. You will cycle on the flat Stowe Recreational Path and on a few sustained inclines along picturesque roads, enjoying the mountain views. You may choose to add a few more miles (and hills) with an extended ride option. While today's rides do not offer a lot of mileage, there are moderately rated sections on the routes. After your ride and lunch, return to the resort at your leisure.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 - 23 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Stowe / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Departure

After breakfast at the resort, rejoin the Stowe Recreation Path and ride a short distance to one of Stowe's best landmarks, the historic Trapp Family Lodge.

The lodge was founded by the famous family who settled in Stowe after fleeing the Nazi occupation of Austria. Here you may choose to join your leaders in an optional guided hike. At Trapp Family Lodge, the walking choices are nearly infinite, as their 2,500 acres boast over 30 miles of hiking trails, which double as cross-country ski trails in winter. Your tour concludes with a lunch at the lively Bierhall where its namesake beer is brewed and both Vermont and Austrian specialties are on the menu.

VBT has arranged a shuttle from Stowe to Burlington International Airport at 2:00 p.m. (travel time of approximately 60 minutes).

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Stowe Recreation Path to Trapp Family Lodge — 5 miles | Trapp Family Lodge hike (optional) — 3 miles

What to Expect:

Spend your final morning on a short ride to the historic Trapp Family Lodge. The ride starts on the Stowe Recreation Path and then continues on a packed dirt road with a gentle incline. The optional hike on the trails at the lodge are on well used forest paths with minimal elevation gain/loss. Later enjoy a final lunch at a brewery before returning to Burlington.

Cumulative Distance Range: 3 miles

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Vermont (Day 1)

Vermont's newest boutique hotel, the Hotel Vermont offers perfectly situated accommodations in downtown Burlington. The natural splendor of this "green," sustainably operated hotel, coupled with its desire to embrace both the outdoors and shared community values, promises a truly memorable experience. Guests will enjoy warm, attentive service and special touches designed to improve one's mental and physical well-being. The hotel's air-conditioned rooms are simple, yet elegant, with clean, crisp design elements and warm rustic charm. Rooms include flat-screen TVs, MP3 docking stations, and complimentary Internet access.

The North Hero House (Days 2-3)

Having recently completed an extensive renovation, this beautifully restored country inn has been welcoming guests since 1891 when they arrived by paddle wheel steamer. North Hero House features two full bars, a sandy beach, an acclaimed restaurant and a caring staff. Clustered at the water's edge, rooms include WiFi, clock-radios, and cable television and most feature a stunning panoramic view of the lake and mountains.

Bluebird Cady Hill Lodge (Days 4-5)

Boasting an exceptional location—especially for active travelers—the Bluebird Cady Hill Lodge is just a five-minute walk from charming downtown Stowe, Vermont, and five miles from the famed Mount Mansfield. Enjoy hiking and world-class mountain biking on nearby backcountry trails; attractions like Trapp Family Lodge, the Vermont Ski Museum, and a variety of breweries are also within easy reach. When you're not out adventuring, revel in the lodge's rustic mountain ambiance and relaxing amenities, including two swimming pools, a hot tub, game room, fire pits, fitness center, Great Room bar, air-conditioning, high-speed Internet access, and beautiful alpine views.