

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

OVERVIEW

A paved and dirt bicycling adventure through the southernmost coastal region of Portugal, the Algarve. You will begin in Vila Real de Santo António as you pedal towards the lively, small city of Lagos, with an expansive marina filled with gorgeous yachts, numerous restaurants to choose from and a bustling shopping area. Along the way you will cycle past ocher cliffs, citrus groves, sleepy beach towns and experience the warm culture of the Algarve. Ride through valleys filled with dense cushions of Mediterranean vegetation defined by their rocky surroundings, and along clear water streams. Explore the Natural Park of Ria Formosa, a lagoon system that extends over 60 km (37 miles) of the coastline and is home to hundreds of bird species. Discover the lovely Moorish town of Silves and the cliff site of Ponta da Piedade in Lagos. Join us to cycle under sunny skies, and over a variety of paved and dirt terrain as you explore sandy shores as far as the eyes can see, soaring cliffs, whitewashed fishing villages, and a true taste of the warm Mediterranean culture. Learn more about what is included and what to expect on your Explorer tour at the Explorer Tour Style page.

HIGHLIGHTS

Ria Formosa - a wild Paradise, old cities, typical villages, beautiful beaches of Algarve, rural roads, Lagos and its beautiful cliffs and picture perfect views, Moorish-style architecture, Mediterranean nature and ocean landscapes

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	📄 Explorer: Learn more about our Explorer tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/tours/bike-tour-styles/explorer-tours
Includes	7 days, 6 night's accommodation, meals as noted in itinerary, GPS with tracks, support vehicle and 2 bilingual tour leaders
Countries	Portugal
Begin/End	Vila Real de Santo António / Lagos
Arrive/Depart	Faro (FAO) or Lisbon (LIS)
Total Distance	228 km (141 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	46 km (28 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	➤➤➤➤ Consider that around 50% of the ride will be on dirt paths and roads sometimes with rocky or rough terrain. Your pace will be slower and the perceived effort will be greater than when you are on pavement.
Keep in Mind	We work hard to maintain consistency across all of our tours, but some trips have unique differences. Here are some things to keep in mind about this tour. This tour spends time on and off paved roads so support van and aid may not always be readily available. You will have the option to pedal with a guide or pedal on your own, but please be aware that if you are cycling on your own we recommend you are comfortable cycling in remote areas. Learn more about what is included and what to expect on your Explorer tour at the Explorer Tour Style page.

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the 📄 [online itinerary](#) for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:

<https://www.experienceplus.com/guided-bike-tours/portugal/bicycling-algarve-explorer>

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
☞ Oct 8-14, 2022	☞ USD\$2895	☞ USD\$450
☞ Nov 6-12, 2022	☞ USD\$2695	☞ USD\$450
☞ Dec 4-10, 2022	☞ USD\$2695	☞ USD\$450
☞ Mar 11-17, 2023	☞ TBA	☞ USD\$450
☞ May 3-9, 2023	☞ TBA	☞ USD\$450

*We are happy to match solo travelers who would like to share a room with someone of the same gender. If no match exists, due to hotel pricing, we will charge 50% of the single supplement rate. This fee will be collected at the time of the final payment. If a roommate assignment is available this fee will be refunded at the conclusion of the tour.

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	29km / 158m (18mi / 518ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
3	53km / 700m (33mi / 2296ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
4	44km / 597m (28mi / 1958ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
5	54km / 582m (34mi / 1909ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
6	48km / 581m (30mi / 1906ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
7	Last day			

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ARRIVAL INFO

Meeting time 2 p.m. - on Day 1, meet your fellow cyclists and Tour Leaders at the Day 1 Hotel specified on the itinerary.

Note:

As you are planning, remember that the hotels listed in our itineraries are our primary hotels and are - in rare cases - subject to change. Before you make arrangements, **check with us** if your tour departure is guaranteed. If your tour departure is out further than 6 months, please also check with us as there might be slight changes to the itinerary.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like [Rome2Rio](#).

The closest airport to the tour start is Faro (FAO)

Aside from a good bus and train network, taxis are readily available near bus and train stations, as well as Ubers in Lisbon and Faro.

- Public transportation: You will have frequent bus connections from the Faro Airport to Faro center (<http://eva-bus.com/goshuttle.php>), and from Faro center to the tour starting location (<https://eva-bus.com/pdf/67.pdf>).
- Private transfers: If you'd like to arrange a private transfer, we suggest contacting [AlgarSerra](#) by email (bookings@algarserra.com). Include your arrival flight and time, drop-off location and the number of people in your inquiry.

Lisbon Airport (LIS) is about 5-6 hours by bus or train.

For Portuguese train schedules, please go to [cp.pt](#). For some further reading, you might also find our information on taking trains in Europe [here](#) helpful.

Happy planning!

DEPARTURE INFO

Your trip ends on the final day after breakfast.

The Faro Airport (FAO) can be reached by bus (<http://eva-bus.com/goshuttle.php>), taxi, train or Uber.

For private transfers, refer to the arrival information above.

For more tips or other routes, you might like [Rome2Rio](#).

Have a safe and pleasant journey!

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Arrive in Vila Real de Santo António

Highlights Start on the border between Spain and Portugal

Welcome to the Algarve and Vila Real de Santo António! The Romans, Phoenicians, and Moors have all left their mark on this ancient city with evidence of a Stone Age settlement dating to 5,000 B.C., although many of the historic buildings were destroyed in the massive 1755 earthquake. The nearby Reserva Natural do Sapal salt pans and marshland make for a unique ecological habitat particularly attractive to flamingos and other water birds. The vast white-sand beaches attract people from far and wide to come, play and relax in this calm and invitingly warm section of the Atlantic Ocean. The Spanish village of Ayamonte just across the river is known for its salt industry and fishing community offering an intriguing mix of modern and medieval ripe for your exploration. We'll fit bikes and do a test ride this afternoon before a mouthwatering dinner of local specialties together.

Vila Real de Santo António to Tavira

Highlights Bird Watching and Medieval Tavira

The ride to Tavira will take you through salt marshes, orchards, and you might even spot your first cork trees. Once in Tavira, we recommend taking some time to explore the architectural heritage which reflects Roman, Arab and Christian influences. Enjoy a relaxing day strolling cobbled streets, and check out some of the 22 churches in this town layered with Portuguese history. (If you only have time for one, visit the church of Santa Maria do Castelo, which was built in the 13th century on the site of what was probably one of the largest Moorish mosques in the Algarve.)

From Tavira to Sao Bras de Alportel

Highlights Ria Formosa, The fruits of Algarve

Today's ride from Tavira along the incredible Ria Formosa, one of the most beautiful natural parks in Portugal. This is an absolute paradise for birdwatchers and part of the Natura 2000 Network. Breathtaking coastal views will be another of many highlights on today's ride. As you approach the destination, you will cycle inland and ride past orchards and typical villages of the region. Keep your eyes (and nose!) peeled for vast areas of orange trees along the way. Our destination is São Brás de Alportel, which was once the biggest cork producing centers in Portugal. *Hotel listed is for fall 2022 tours.

DAY 1

Distance 10 km (6 mi)

Level >>>>>

Meals Dinner

Lodging  Hotel Apolo

DAY 2

Distance 29 km (18 mi)

Gain 158 m (518 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast

DAY 3

Distance 53 km (33 mi)

Gain 700 m (2296 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging Estalagem Sequeira

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From São Bras de Alportel to Alte

Highlights Algarve Mountains and Alte

Today's ride is challenging and well worth the effort as the scenery is even more breathtaking than the climbs as you cycle north through rolling hills close to the Algarve mountain range. A mixture of roads and trails will take you through lush green fields. The cycling is fresh with Mediterranean flora and fauna that will invigorate both your lungs and spirit. Our destination is the lovely hillside village of Alte, which is famous for its artisans, whitewashed houses and freshwater springs. The presence of water year-round in an otherwise arid region adds to the unique charm of this town. *Hotel listed is for Fall 2022 tours.

DAY 4


Distance 44 km (28 mi)
Gain 597 m (1958 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level 
Meals Breakfast
Lodging  Alte Traditions Guest House

Alte to Silves

Highlights Cork tree forests, Silves

Today you'll cycle along dirt roads and paths winding through green valleys as you head towards Arade Dam. This has to be a contender for one of the most beautiful rides ever. You'll wind your way along a reservoir and then enter a forest of cork-oak trees, and then gently cruise down the valley towards your destination, Silves. This town has a fascinating history as it was the former capital of the Kingdom of the Algarve. Take a stroll and explore the Silves castle and the Moorish architectural sites. Road Surface: 80% gravel, 20% paved.

DAY 5



Distance 54 km (34 mi)
Gain 582 m (1909 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level 
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Ponte Romana

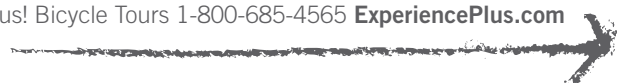
Silves to Lagos

Highlights Beaches, Lagos

Today's ride is rewarded with great views of the Atlantic! The journey continues along the Odelouca River, enjoy this rural area and typical Portuguese villages like Odiáxere which you'll pass along the way. The path leads you to the Atlantic Ocean and an incredible beach wrapped around one of Europe's largest bays. This golden-sand beach is called "Meia Praia" (which translates to "half beach"), funny enough because it's actually one of the longest beaches of the Algarve and is renowned for its spaciousness and tranquility. After enjoying the coast, you will cycle to our final destination, the cosmopolitan city of Lagos. We'll have a special dinner tonight to celebrate our journey. Road Surface: 35% gravel, 65% paved.

DAY 6

Distance 48 km (30 mi)
Gain 581 m (1906 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level 
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging  Tivoli Lagos



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Tour ends - safe travels!

DAY 7

Highlights Lagos

Meals Breakfast

Lagos is well-connected to Faro, Lisbon, or other destinations so take an extra day or two to explore. The Ponta de Piedade cliffs and lighthouse are certainly worth a visit and the city has a variety of wonderful restaurants to tempt you. Whatever you decide enjoy!

INCLUDED

WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include the three most important aspects of a guided bike tour.

- Superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling. More details on our bikes page: <https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/>
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/>
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing ExperiencePlus!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Not included on Explorer Tours.)

ON TOUR

- See "What's Included" on your tour Itinerary for tour-specific inclusions.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see our bikes page (<https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/>) . If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer tours we include a GPS device on all bikes. We ask that you bring your own helmet to ensure the best fit. Please ask if you would like us to provide you with a gently used helmet and we will do so.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

Each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform

to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information also includes Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat, Spotlight and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks. On tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths.

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Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options.

Need Fewer Miles? If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM:

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5% of the tour cost per traveler – this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or taken by our guides or travelers free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you on tour, you must inform your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

STYLES **OUR TOUR STYLES**

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers. No matter what you are looking for in a cycling vacation, we have a tour with just the right pace for you.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? then our Classic style bike tours are for you! Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars, most itineraries include at least one two-night stay at the same hotel.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars, occasional multi-night stays at the same hotel.
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Group riding and GPS
- Price: \$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Spotlight Tours: Multi-nights stays, loop rides, choose from a selection of activities or enjoy hotel amenities during your free time.

- Tour Length: 6-7 days
- Hotels: 3-5 stars, typically 3-nights spent in one hotel and 2-nights in the other.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Multi-night Stays: Min 2 night stays
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars, typically there is a 2-night hotel stay every 5-7 days.
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

**LEVELS**

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 – 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- Read through your Reservation Confirmation (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- Complete the Customer Information Form: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/customer-information-form/>
- We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/travel-insurance/>
- Choose a bicycle training program: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/>
- Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/>

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- Review the arrival and departure information under the "Travel Information" tab to see meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, and other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- Begin your chosen training program
- Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Deposit Payment Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail you have received for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/>.
- Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists on our website at <https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/packing/>
- We'll email you your access code to RideWithGPS Experiences where you will find the Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date.

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!