Bicycle Tours in Portugal: Bike Portugal's Northern Coast

OVERVIEW

Pedal along the rivers, coasts and valleys of Northern Portugal while learning about the characters and cities that in the 12th century founded the country we now know as Portugal. Explore the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Coimbra, Porto and Ponte de Lima and cruise along the Douro, Minho and Lima rivers by bike. Take the time to taste and savor the gastronomic specialties of the area. With 3 wine regions along our route and a blend of fresh seafood, hearty stews and modern day gourmet there is something for all tastes.

Our route crisscrosses the Portuguese Camino and crosses into Spain on the last few days to land in the historic port town of Baiona. Along the way we follow in the footsteps of royalty such as Queen Isabel of Portugal who in the 13th Century was on this same pilgrimage, we'll touch on both the coastal way and the traditional interior route to reach the enthralling towns of Barcelos, Ponte de Lima and Baiona, Spain. A generous dose of Southern Europe's hospitality and lifestyle makes this a unique bicycle tour in an undiscovered part of Europe.

If you want to extend this tour all the way to Santiago de Compostela, check out our 12 day bike tour on the Bike Portugal's Northern Coast Plus the Camino.

HIGHLIGHTS

UNESCO Towns: Coimbra, Porto, Ponte da Lima and Santiago, Douro, Minho and Lima River Valleys, Salt Flats of Aveiro, Cycling Portugal's Northern Coast, Spanish Oysters, Historic Port of Baiona, Spain

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/classic
Includes	9 days, 8 nights' accommodation; 6 dinners with wine, 8 breakfasts; visit to Salt Factory, Porto wine tasting, city guided tours as described in the itinerary
Countries	Portugal, Spain
Begin/End	Coimbra / Baiona - with shuttle to Vigo
Arrive/Depart	Lisbon / Santiago de Compostela or Vigo
Total Distance	245 km (153 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	41 km (25 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	

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/bike-tours/portugal/bike-portugal-northern-coast

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DATES & PRICES

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	66km / 630m (41mi / 2066ft)	Rolling hills		
3	38km / 158m (24mi / 518ft)	Gentle		
4	43km / 254m (27mi / 833ft)	Gentle		
5	Rest Day	Gentle		
6	62km / 555m (39mi / 1820ft)	Gentle		
7	37km / 472m (23mi / 1548ft)	Rolling hills		
8	79km / 809m (49mi / 2654ft)	Hilly		
9	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 travel 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 fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

We recommend flying into the Lisbon Airport (LIS):

1. Taxi to the Lisboa Oriente Train Station (30 min/EUR 20)
2. Train from Lisboa Oriente Train station to *Coimbra B station (2 hours/fares vary)
3. Taxi from *Coimbra A to Day 1 Hotel (15 min/EUR 10)

***Note:** Long distance trains only serve Coimbra B station (away from city center) but all tickets include a 5-min train ride to Coimbra A (center of Coimbra/Baixa de Coimbra). Purchase your train ticket at the train station, no pre-booking necessary.

Look up Portuguese train schedules at CP.pt. Most Portuguese train tickets do not need to be booked in advance. Questions? See our information on taking trains in Europe here or ask us.

DEPARTURE INFO

We spend our lat night in Baiona. The closest airport and main transportation hub is Vigo (VGO), which will provide connections through Madrid. You can take a train from Vigo to other destinations including Santiago or Porto Portugal where you can also fly out of.

The tour ends on the final day with an ExperiencePlus! shuttle drop-off at either

- Vigo Airport; arrival at **10 a.m.**
- Vigo Train Station; arrival at 10:30 a.m.

Shuttle reservations 30 days prior to the tour start are required. Reserve by emailing us**. If you can't make the shuttle, you will be responsible for your own transportation.**

A taxi from Baiona to Vigo/the Vigo Airport takes about 30 minutes and costs around EUR 35-45. A taxi from the Vigo train station to the airport is around EUR 25 and takes around 30 minutes.

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Meet in Coimbra

DAY 1: Tue, Jul 9th

Highlights Stay in a renovated 18th century palace, UNESCO World Heritage Town

Meet the group in Coimbra, Portugal - an easy train ride from Lisbon, and explore the streets that Afonso I, king of Portugal once walked. It is rumored that he was born in Coimbra and it is certain he was buried here in 1185. Arrive early to explore the historic center of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our hotel in Coimbra is located slightly out of town but its a perfect setting to begin a tour steeped in history and mythology. This historic country estate features beautiful grounds and was the site of a tragic 14th century love story between lady-in-waiting Inês de Castro and Prince Pedro. This is where we meet for our bike fitting and first dinner.

Meals Dinner

Lodging Quinta das Lagrimas

Bicycle Coimbra to Aveiro

DAY 2: Wed, Jul 10th

Highlights Ride along the Mondego River, Explore the Aveiro canals

Exiting Coimbra you'll follow the bike path along the Mondego River this morning. Our route takes you through the small towns of the interior as you head north to Aveiro on the shore of Aveiro Lagoon, which empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Enjoy a stroll along the riverfront or explore the city's famous network of waterways with a canal cruise. Don't miss out on trying the famed Fios de Ovos de Ovar pastries.

Distance 66 km (41 mi)

Gain 630 m (2066 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging Hotel Moliceiro

Pedal the salt flats and the coast.

DAY 3: Thu, Jul 11th

Highlights The history of salt, beachfront hotel

Visit a local salt factory to learn about salt's integral history in the economy of this region as well as to learn about products that are made today. You'll have a close-up view of the source as we pedal the salt flats before taking a short ferry ride along the Ria de Aveiro, an estuary teeming with wildlife. (Keep your eye's peeled for flamingos.) It's easy to see how water conquered land and shaped the towns in this area. The numerous oxygenated lagoons provide the seaweed that is sold to pharmaceutical companies, and is another important income source for the local economy. This evening, we'll walk to a local hang-out for an aperitif together. There will be plenty of time for a dip in the ocean which is only a short distance from our hotel.

Distance 38 km (24 mi)

Gain 158 m (518 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level

Meals Breakfast

Lodging Furadouro Hotel

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Bicycle to Porto through small towns

DAY 4: Fri, Jul 12th

Highlights Explore the interior, Porto

Today's ride is a part of the Camino de Santiago so look for fellow pilgrims along the way. Our ride take us from a fisherman's village along the Atlantic coast, to green pine woods, and a quiet bike path that will lead you directly to the heart of downtown Porto, or Ribeira do Porto as it is known locally. Before crossing the iconic metal bridge into Porto you'll pedal through its sister city on the south bank, Vila Nova de Gaia, featuring docks lined with famous Porto wineries. Locals will tell you it is the best place to admire Porto from a far! As you make your way across the famous Douro River the colorful city of Porto will come alive before your eyes. Welcome to the home of proud happy people with a quick smile.

Distance 43 km (27 mi)
Gain 254 m (833 ft)
Terrain Gentle
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Boeira Garden Hotel

Porto

DAY 5: Sat, Jul 13th

Highlights Explore Porto, Pilgrim's passport, wine tasting

Today you decide - explore the Douro by boat, take a scenic tram ride, or explore the intricate historic city streets of Porto. If you stay in town, don't miss a visit to the spectacular Lello Library. For lunch, seek out a unique Francesinha sandwich with chips and sauce or - if you're feeling especially brave - a bowl of Tripas á moda do Porto. This evening we'll meet for a group tour and taste of the famous Porto wine in Gaia. You can pick up your pilgrim's passport today so you can track your progress along the Portuguese Camino de Santiago which ends at Santiago de Compostela.

Distance 15 km (9 mi)
Gain 135 m (443 ft)
Terrain Gentle
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Boeira Garden Hotel

Bicycle Porto to Barcelos, Portugal

DAY 6: Sun, Jul 14th

Highlights Ride in Portugal's Wine Country

Have you spotted the colorful rooster that is Portugal's unofficial mascot? If not, keep your eye out; the rooster is said to embody the Portuguese love of life and it originates in Barcelos. But, before we get there, we must say goodbye to bustling Porto. We ride out on a bike path that eases us into the peaceful wine country. Expect fun hills and green lush vistas along the way along with plenty of other cyclists with whom to share an "OLÁ."

Distance 62 km (39 mi)
Gain 555 m (1820 ft)
Terrain Gentle
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Hotel Bagoeira

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Bicycle to Ponte de Lima

DAY 7: Mon, Jul 15th

Highlights Explore historic Ponte de Lima

Today's ride is short so you can take full advantage of beautiful country roads that lead to the oldest village in Portugal, Ponte de Lima. Often considered the postcard village of Portugal, Ponte de Lima is situated on the banks of Rio Lima and is the heart of the green wine region. It is also home to a very old tradition dating back to Roman or even Phoenician times: Vaca Das Cordas, or "playing with wild cows". Vaca Das Cordas is a type of bull-running through town, followed the next day - generally in July, by the Festa do Corpo de Deus (Corpus Christi), when flowers carpet the streets. Stroll through the picturesque historic center and along an old bridge where you'll likely spot pilgrims walking along the Portuguese Camino de Santiago.

Distance 37 km (23 mi)
Gain 472 m (1548 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging Hotel Inlima

Bicycle to Baiona, Spain

DAY 8: Tue, Jul 16th

Highlights Pedal to Spain, the beaches of Baiona, Columbus's first port

On March 1, 1493 the first of Columbus's ships touched shore in Baiona. The news of his "discovery" of America soon spread to the rest of Europe. Today's ride follows the coast and Minho river as we pedal north towards this historic port and cross into one of the most beautiful regions of Spain, Galicia. Toast your arrival into Spain with a glass of Albarino or by relaxing on the beach in Baiona.

Distance 79 km (49 mi)
Gain 809 m (2654 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Hotel Parador de Baiona

Onward travels

DAY 9: Wed, Jul 17th

Highlights Travel home or to other parts of Spain

Shuttle from Baiona today to the nearby city of Vigo, where a landmark naval battle (Battle of Rande) took place outside Vigo in 1702. The battle between Anglo-Dutch and French-Spanish fleet was over the arrival of Spanish galleons laden with an immense treasure of gold, silver and jewels. Here the story differs, depending on which side you are on: either the Spanish galleons were attacked with treasure on board, or the treasure had already been unloaded... but no one knows where. Of course, this stoked the fire of many a treasure hunter including Jules Verne's Captain Nemo in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. From here, trains and buses head north to Santiago or south to Porto or Lisbon for you to continue your journey, happy travels! Or, take a hopper flight from the international airport.

Meals Breakfast

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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 what we believe are the most important aspects of a bike tour.

- On all our guided tours, you can expect 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.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel. Plus, all the logistics are taken care of.

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/travel-planning/
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing EP!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer and Self-guided tour styles excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: 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 and Self-guided tours we include a GPS device on all bikes.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

On a guided tour, each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. On a self-guided tour you'll receive a comprehensive orientation and bike fit on the first or second morning of your trip. 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 on the RWGPS Experience includes important phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat 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 a guided 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. On a self-guided tour you will have luggage transfers that will transport your bags from one hotel to the other.

Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options or ask when you are planning your self-guided trip.

Need Fewer Miles? On a guided tour, the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. On a self-guided tour we recommend you review the tour level to make sure you can ride the full distance.

ON A GUIDED TOUR: TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADERS

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 5-8% 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 and not expected on self-guided tours.

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 that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

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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.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? 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.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van support and 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
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2 tour leaders, GPS and van support
- 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 except for land extension.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation and support:2 tour leaders, van Support and 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
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

Self-guided Tours: perfect for those who have an independent spirit, want the flexibility to choose their own dates, and don't need van support or tour leaders during their trip. Every departure is a private tour!

- Tour Length: 6-8-days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel on bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: GPS routes and luggage transfers
- Price: $
- Tour Levels: 1-4

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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.

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CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- ☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (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/travel-planning/customer-information-form/
- ☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/travel-insurance/
- ☐ Choose a bicycle training program: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/
- ☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with 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 Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date 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/travel-planning/.
- ☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/packing/.
- ☐ We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

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!

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