

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

OVERVIEW

A paved and dirt bicycling adventure through the southernmost coastal region of Portugal, the Algarve. You will begin in Tavira as you pedal towards Cabo de São Vicente, also known as the end of the world. Along the way you will cycle past ochter 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 or 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 and Lagos, Cape S. Vicente - once known as "the end of the world", Moorish-style architecture, Mediterranean nature and ocean landscapes

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	■ Explorer: Learn more about our Explorer tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/explorer
Includes	8 days, 7 nights accommodation, meals as noted in itinerary, GPS with tracks, support vehicle and 2 bilingual tour leaders, transfer to and from Lisbon
Countries	Portugal
Begin/End	Shuttle from Lisbon to Tavira / Shuttle from Sagres to Lisbon
Arrive/Depart	Lisbon (LIS)
Total Distance	255 km (158 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	52 km (32 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	▶▶▶▶
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. 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/bike-tours/portugal/explorer-algarve>

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

DATES & PRICES

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	53km / 616m (33mi / 2020ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
3	44km / 532m (28mi / 1745ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
4	54km / 676m (34mi / 2217ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
5	48km / 522m (30mi / 1712ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
6	Rest Day			
7	54km / 616m (34mi / 2020ft)	Hilly	▶▶▶▶▶	
8	Last Day			

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

ARRIVAL INFO

Your tour starts with a shuttle pick-up on Day 1 (your spot is already reserved on this shuttle):

- Meeting Time: 9:15 am
- Meeting Hotel: [Hotel NH Collection Lisboa Liberdade](#)

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 fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

We recommend flying into Lisbon Airport. (LIS)

Getting to the Meeting Hotel in Lisbon from the Lisbon Airport

- Taxi or Uber (25 min/EUR 15-20)
- or Aerobus (stop Tivoli Theater, right in front of the hotel) (50 min/EUR 3-4)

For more travel planning tips, including our packing lists, visit our [Travel Planning Pages](#).

DEPARTURE INFO

We spend our last night of the tour in Sagres, about 200 miles from Lisbon. If you wish to stay in Sagres, where the tour ends, or head to other locations, note that Sagres is poorly connected by public transportation. The best option is to rent a car and the hotel can assist with this option. Buses are available but seasonal schedules apply and most schedules are restricted to morning hours as opposed to the afternoon.

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

- Lisbon airport (LIS); arrival at ***2 p.m.** (4-hour transfer)
- or [Hotel NH Collection Lisboa Liberdade](#) (same as meeting hotel); arrival at 2:30 p.m. (4.5-hour transfer)

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.

***Note:** Book your flight out of LIS after 4:30 p.m.

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

Pick up in Lisbon, Transfer to Tavira

Highlights Test ride, birds of Tavira, Medieval Tavira castle

Welcome to Portugal! We'll pick you up at our meeting point before shuttling together to Tavira. 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.) We'll celebrate the beginning of our adventure with a special dinner tonight.

DAY 1: Thu, Sep 24th

Meals Dinner

Lodging  Vila Galé Tavira

Tavira to Olhão

Highlights Ria Formosa, orange groves

After a delicious breakfast start today's journey in Tavira and ride 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 town of Olhão, you will cycle inland and ride past lush fields and typical villages of the region. Keep your eyes (and nose!) peeled for vast areas of orange trees along the way. Road Surface: 50% gravel, 50% paved.

DAY 2: Fri, Sep 25th

Distance 53 km (33 mi)

Gain 616 m (2020 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Olhão to Alte

Highlights São Brás de Alportel

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. Along the way, visit the town of São Brás de Alportel, which was once the biggest cork producing centers in Portugal. 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 whitewashed houses and freshwater springs. The presence of water year-round in an otherwise arid region adds to the unique charm of this village. Road Surface: 40% gravel, 60% paved.

DAY 3: Sat, Sep 26th

Distance 44 km (28 mi)

Gain 532 m (1745 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level 

Meals Breakfast

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve

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 4: Sun, Sep 27th

Distance 54 km (34 mi)

Gain 676 m (2217 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  **Silves History Guest House**

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 5: Mon, Sep 28th

Distance 48 km (30 mi)

Gain 522 m (1712 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  **Tivoli Lagos**

Rest day in Lagos

Highlights Historic Lagos, Ponta de Piedade cliffs

One of the oldest towns in the Algarve, Lagos is a historic center of the Portuguese age of discoveries and frequent home of Henry the Navigator. Lagos was home to a historic shipyard and at one point in history, the center of the European slave trade. Save some time to walk around downtown and enjoy a meal in one of the cities wonderful restaurants. We'll also suggest a walk to the beautiful Ponta de Piedade cliffs and it's picturesque lighthouse. This headland just south of town is home to some of the most iconic sandstone cliffs off the coast and on a clear day you'll have views of Carvoeiro to the east and Sagres to the west.

DAY 6: Tue, Sep 29th

Meals Breakfast

Bicycle Tours in Portugal: 2020 Explorer: Cycling the Algarve**Lagos to Sagres**

Highlights Sagres - "the-end-of the world", Cabo de São Vicente

Today you will follow some beautiful trails along the coastline to Ponta da Piedade. The route then heads west and passes through stunning scenery and quaint coastal villages to Sagres. Upon your arrival in Sagres you will be greeted with cliffs and rocks featuring an amazing array of colors. Sagres, " the end of the world" not only has dramatic coastal scenery there is also a fascinating nautical past as you'll see at the Sagres Fortress. Continue a short distance to the edge of Europe, Cabo de São Vicente - the south-westernmost point of continental Europe. Road Surface: 20% gravel, 80% paved.

Tour ends - safe travels!

Highlights Lagos

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!

DAY 7: Wed, Sep 30th

Distance 54 km (34 mi)

Gain 616 m (2020 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Baleeira Hotel

DAY 8: Thu, Oct 1st

Meals Breakfast

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.

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

**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 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!