

Cycling Europe

PORTUGAL *Lisbon, Coast & Villages*

GUIDED CYCLE TOUR 8 Days / 7 Nights - 225 KM



Portugal, like its neighbour Spain, is a land of wonderful contrasts. Classified a Mediterranean country, mostly for its customs, heritage and passion for the marine environment, it's truly distinct and surprisingly global. Once at the forefront of navigation and world discovery, Portugal remains an intriguing destination where history, landscape, gastronomy and a humble, gracious, soft-spoken culture welcomes visitors.

This week of diverse cycling takes us through the heart of Portugal's best kept secrets. From breathtaking coastlines, rural landscapes to enchanting hilltop palaces. We observe Manueline architecture, verdant National Parks and visit century old vineyards and farmsteads - hearing tales of chivalry and Templar Knights. Of course opportunities to sample Portugal's tasty local dishes, its superb wines and delicious pastries are part of the experience! For music and art aficionados, Portugal's distinct Sado comes rich in musical storytelling while ceramic, classical paintings and neo classical architecture add to the cultural richness of the nation.

Join us on this unique exploration by bicycle of Portugal's hidden gems. Daily rides of 40-60 km have been carefully selected to ensure our routes are on quieter back roads and at a level beginner to intermediate riders can enjoy.

The week consists of 5 riding days and a free day at the stunning medieval town of Sintra – where opulent palaces adorn a majestic forest rising up from the nearby coastline. Each riding day offers completely different scenery – blending sun swept coastal roads between coves with forested parklands, enchanting rural villages and long stretches of peaceful, open countryside.

NOTE:

Our routes are "unguided" in the sense that you are free to ride at your own pace. We provide the route information and have a daily support vehicle on the road but otherwise enjoy your freedom to explore!

DAY 1 Sunday / Arrival Day Lisbon – Group meets 7pm at Hotel in Lisbon’s central–



Orientation with Trip Leader and Dinner. If you arrive Lisbon earlier we suggest you visit the Sao Jorge Castle, the Gulbenkian Museum and wander the streets of the Barrio Alto where tiny bars spill onto the streets and sounds of Fado fill the air. Accommodation in comfortable tourist class 4 star hotel Welcome dinner included this evening.

DAY 2 Monday / Lisbon Interpretive tour and Estoril / Cascais coastal towns / 25 km easy gradient



Starting with a morning guided tour of Lisbon on bike that includes a cycle to Belem (where *Vasco de Gama* set sail from), followed by a short van transfer (30 minutes) onto Cascais – a beautiful coastal town west of Lisbon. Guided visits of Lisbon’s surroundings. This afternoon you can also stroll the seafront promenade with great pubs and shopping right from the hotel.

DAY 3: Tuesday / Cascais, Cabo da Roca and the Parque Natural of Sintra / 55 km hilly.



Today we ride the stunning coastal route between Cascais and Ericeira, taking in a number of sun swept coastal villages and enjoying the vast flora and bird life of this historic part of Estremadura. A highlight is a visit to Cabo da Roca, continental Europe’s most westerly point. You will follow an undulating coastal road with one long climb at beginning.

DAY 4 Wednesday / Ericeira to Sintra / 45 km – moderate.

Estremadura’s rural inland settlements and medieval townships. A scenic spin through the region’s pasturelands and agricultural landscapes arriving to Sintra, a virtual fairytale kingdom and once home to generations of Portuguese royalty seeking solitude in this verdant mountain hideaway. The cycling is via small rural roads and undulating valleys. The *Mafra National Palace* is a worthy visit on today’s ride. We have a 2 night stay in Sintra, offering plenty of time to explore the palaces, Moorish fortress and boutique shops and cafes of this lovely area. Accommodation in a heritage style mansion for the next two nights.

DAY 5: Thursday / FREE DAY Sintra.



Today you have the option of exploring many of Sintra's natural and cultural wonders such as the forested paths leading to a Moorish Fortress and of course, *La Pena Palace* – an extraordinary site. This fairytale village is adorned with medieval treasures, tidy boutique shops, tea houses and eateries built into stone walls and laden with sweeping, colourful flora. Alternatively, you can relax around the hotel pool or self explore on bike as there are many riding options including the *Montserrat Monastery* or the coastline itself.

DAY 6 Friday / Palmela, Parque Natural of Arrabida and the Vineyards of Setubal 50 km moderate.



Today we transfer to the wonderful highlands of the *Arrabida Park* and ride through the woodlands of Setubal, passing traditional windmills and visiting (optional) a wonderful family run vineyard – *tasting their wines and homemade cheese* before continuing over the highlands - bringing us into Setubal, a thriving city set on the *Rio Sado* – home to the country's most abundant wildlife (bird) sanctuary. The cycling today is mainly undulating with an optional scenic but challenging headland ascent.

DAY 7 Saturday / Troia Peninsula, the cork forests and Santiago do Cacem / 59 km flat easy.



Starting with a 20 minute ferry crossing over the *Rio Sado*, today's ride visits long dune stretches, rice paddies, remote beaches and forested back roads. *Troia Peninsula* has some of Portugal's most remote coastline (*great for dolphin and whale watching*). We continue south, following cork forests to the historic Moorish town of *Santiago do Cacem*, a colourful sleepy Alentejo village in woodlands where little has changed in centuries.

DAY 8 Tour ends – transfer Santiago do Cacem - Lisbon

This morning after breakfast, a private group transfer returns you to Lisbon (1 hr 30 min), Normally the transfer takes you direct to the Lisbon Airport but a central drop off can be arranged.

GRADE / TERRAIN

- Day 1 Easy to Moderate (mostly flat urban riding in Lisbon)
- Day 2 Moderate to Advanced moments (Long ascent of coastal headland)
- Day 3 Moderate at times (mostly rolling / occasional longer climb)
- Day 4 Moderate to Advanced moments (one long ascent of coastal pass)
- Day 5 Easy (mostly flat, coastal ride and forested stretches in parkland)

Total distance 225 km

2019 GROUP TOUR DATES

Set date departures: 09-16 June, 1- 8 September, 10-17 November

(a minimum of 4 participants required to guarantee departure)

Group size: minimum 4, maximum 16 – for larger groups (over 14) two guides provided

Other departure dates for groups of 4 or more can be arranged (subject to hotel availability)

(If you are travelling on your own we can endeavour to find a room mate for you)

2019 TOUR COST: per person in Euros (cost includes a 21-speed bike)

€1555 Twin/Double room

€ 200 single room supplement

€ 63 per person optional addition for SEAVIEW rooms in 2 hotel locations

€ 100 surcharge for Electric bike – on request

BIKE INFORMATION



Spanish made BH bicycles (model Silverlite). They are light weight aluminium hybrid bikes with Shimano components and disc brakes front and back. All bikes have a rear carry rack (without panniers) and a front waterproof carry bag that connects to the handlebars (not displayed).

Bike frames come in MALE and FEMALE designs. Unless indicated to us in advance, all women's bike requests will be the FEMALE frame (drop cross bar – example on left above).

Helmets, Toe Clips (strap and strapless) and GEL seat pad covers (not seats) are available free of charge - please ADVISE AT TIME OF BOOKING! Waterbottles are provided & mounted on all bikes.

ELECTRIC BIKES



E-Bikes are 24v and 36v battery bikes – hybrid style and they have a rear carry rack (no panniers) and a front carry bag. The batteries are rated for 60 km / day on economic power use and our tours cannot guarantee a spare battery during day riding for every person.

NOTE

Some bike models may be different on the tour – pending final number of participants and sizes available. Quality will always remain the same.

TOUR COST INCLUDES:

- 7 night accommodation in charming 3 & 4 star hotels (Air conditioned rooms)
- Breakfast daily, 3 dinners
- Bike Hire - 21 Speed Hybrid bike hire (handle bar carry bag and rear support rack (without pannier) on all bikes)
- Helmets, gel seats and toe clips available on request at no extra cost (Please indicate toe clips with or without strap model)
- Guide & Support Van – the Guide drives the Support van which will be on the road as you cycle; you are provided with the route information and are free to ride at your own pace and explore as you wish.
- Daily cycling notes and route maps
- Touring suggestions
- Daily baggage transfers
- Guided visits as stated in the itinerary
- Group transfer to Lisbon Airport or City at end of tour (Day 8)

TOUR COST DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Transfer on arrival to your first hotel
- Lunches and dinners not stated in the inclusions
- Entrance fees
- Items of a personal nature

MEALS – Meals are generally taken within your hotel (*and sometimes in the villages*). Three Dinners are included, these normally include a choice of starters, main courses, a light dessert and a drink of your choice. Breakfasts are typically Portuguese and normally light buffets with a wide variety of choices. With regard to lunches there are a number of village and countryside *Inns* on route where you can sample authentic Portuguese gastronomy.

TRANSPORT: A vehicle is available on days (or part of days) if you do not wish to cycle. Our vehicles are modern vans with plenty of space for bikes, luggage and passengers if need be. Arrival Airport transfers are not included and on the final departure day we provide an early group shuttle back to Lisbon Airport.

GUIDE SERVICE: An experienced guide is on hand during the riding days who drives the support vehicle. With larger groups, two guides may be present – one driving and one cycling. The guide ensures that hotel, baggage transfers, meals, transport and the riding go smoothly. This person also deals with the general well-being of the guests, their safety and looks after bike maintenance. He/she monitors road conditions and any route information / changes. Please note that the support vehicle is generally with the group throughout the day providing full mechanical support and back-up to the riding group.

TRIP NOTES AND MAP: Detailed route information and maps are provided so that you can cycle at your leisure. Route notes are updated annually and have been measured by both vehicle and GPS systems.

TRANSPORT CONNECTIONS TO LISBON (PRE TOUR):

Airport transfers to Lisbon are frequent and easy. Taxis are relatively inexpensive from the airport to the hotel or city centre. Expect to pay minimum 15€ taxi fare or slightly more if travelling at night. There is a very efficient and rapid airport shuttle bus to the city centre – costing about 3-4€ person for the one way trip. Least expensive is the METRO that departs right from the arrivals zone – about 2 - 4 € one way. However the Metro route may require you to change lines before you reach the hotel.

AIRPORTS: Lisbon Portela International Airport (LIS)

TRAIN: There are connections from the rest of Europe by train into Lisbon however most people fly direct into the country. For onward travel and other visits around Portugal, train is a perfectly valid option. There is a decent Metro UNDERGROUND train system connecting you to all Lisbon's main attractions. Alternatively the age old tram cars still function on the steep streets of Lisbon and make for a great way to experience the city!

BUS: Bus connections throughout Portugal are very good and inexpensive. Connecting to the Algarve in the south or Porto in the north, are two common travel extensions in Portugal.

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