

Portugal End to End



Welcome to Peak Tours' Portugal end to end, another great adventure on two wheels!

Riding in Portugal is a pure joy, it is the antithesis of the hustle and bustle of normal life. The first thing you may notice when riding out there is the utter peace and quiet, you can't even hear a plane or a car sometimes. The roads are generally good surface (apart from the ubiquitous cobbles you see in almost all town centres) and the traffic is minimal. Riding in this peaceful country is also like stepping into a time machine in parts, as you will find yourself riding through villages where they still use horse and cart to get around; who knows what they'll think when a group of lycra-clad joyriders speed through their backyard! From the boulder-strewn hillsides, hilltop castles and deep-ridged valleys of the north; to the majestic sweep of the steep-sided, vineyard packed Douro river; to the beautifully restored "Pousada's" and stately "Marble Towns", to the tranquil rivers and pleasant farmland of the Alentejo region; all culminating in a dramatic finish at the sea! We truly hope you have a fantastic time exploring this wonderful country and come away with some great memories.

This exciting and challenging tour provides another rewarding experience in a similar vein as our LEJOG or Channel to the Med tour with the 'magic van' providing refreshments throughout the week. Your bags will be transported for you each day and we will be having some fantastic lunches along with our famous 'brew stops' twice a day providing you with everything you need to keep you going - you certainly won't go hungry!

Highlights

- Dramatic hills and beautiful valleys
- Stunning hilltop towns of Monsanto and Marvão
- Staying in some fantastic Pousadas
- Peaceful riding with varied terrain and wildlife

What's included?

12 nights' accommodation, 12 breakfasts, 10 lunches

Refreshment stops with our famous red brew vans

Mechanical support including spare bikes and equipment

GPS files and route notes

Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers

2 back up vans and a guide cycling at the back of the group

Pick up from airport / station on arrival day (Tuesday) and drop off on departure day (Sunday)

Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate

Lots of Fun!



Itinerary

Tuesday: Non-riding day

We arrive in the bustling coastal city of Porto.

We will collect you from the airport. In the evening we will have a group meal at a lovely restaurant about 15 minutes walk from the hotel.

Welcome to the tour!

Wednesday: Day 1 Spanish Border to Mondim de Basto

Distance: 44 miles / 70 km
Elevation: 4650 ft / 1417 m

After smiling pics close to the Spanish border the ride soon gets really interesting through the vast, impressive, Villa Real district.

We are in the true north of Portugal here with sporadic farming communities, impressive backdrops of mountain ranges, rides over large dams, deep-ridged gorges and long sweeping downhills.

Although the first few days are hilly there is over 7000ft of descent on this first exhilarating day!

Thursday: Day 2 Mondim de Basto to Quintao

Distance: 56 miles / 114 km
Elevation: 4832 ft / 1472 m

Our second day in the saddle is another belter as, after we leave Mondim behind we soon hook up with the lovely "Tamega line" cycle path which utilises the old railway line used to transport goods away from this area historically known for linen production.

As we wind down into distinctive Amarante don't forget to look back over the bridge for some fantastic views before the climb out to

pick up a beautiful, smooth, hill-top road which eventually climbs up out of one valley and heads into a new one to see us finally reaching the majestic Douro river, lifeblood of this region.

Friday: Day 3 Quintao to Freixinho

Distance: 52 miles / 83 km
Elevation: 5069 ft / 1545 m

A short but hilly day in the saddle today sees us cycling alongside the lovely Douro again in the morning. This most tranquil of rivers is a pleasure at any time but a true delight first thing in the morning.

We head away from the river to begin a large climb out of the valley at 25 miles into the route but it is generally very gradual so take your time.

We finish the day off in the first of our "Pousada's", these lovely old convents have been converted into hotels and they make a really impressive stop-over, especially in such a timeless hamlet as Freixinho.

Saturday: Day 4 Freixinho to Belmonte

Distance: 65 miles / 104 km
Elevation: 5460 ft / 1164 m

Putting some miles behind us on a more direct morning route for this longer day's ride, we find ourselves working our way round the Parque da Serra da Estrala, shunning the mammoth climbs of the centre itself.

There are two notable climbs however on this day punctuated by an 11 mile descent! Our destination for this evening is the interesting little town of Belmonte, a Jewish enclave, it is home to the last of Portugal's "Marranos" Jewish community.



Itinerary

Sunday: Day 5 Belmonte to Monsanto

Distance: 50 miles / 80 km
Elevation: 5030 ft / 1533 m

We have a short day in the saddle today to give us time to explore the surreal and impressive boulder-strewn landscape of lovely Monsanto at the end of the day, and perhaps, if you're feeling frisky, climb the shepherds path up to the old ruined castle.

We leave Belmonte behind and head out to a fair climb up to Sorthela with amazing views to accompany our cup of morning tea! Strewn around here are the huge boulders that mark our journey today, residents build houses round them and make beautiful gardens out of them.

Heading south from Penamacor Castle our approach to Monsanto is on some lovely back roads ready for the final steep, kicker up to our accommodation with far reaching views.

Monday: Day 6 Monsanto to Alcantara

Distance: 39 miles / 62 km
Elevation: 2223 ft / 677 m

The purist "end to enders" may want to close one eye today as we make a foray into Spain at the back end of this day and the beginning of the next. The reasons for this are that the route is far better and it avoids the congestion and busy roads surrounding Castelo Branco, it also gives us a much more scenic and safer entrance point back into Portugal.

A nice rolling short day in the saddle will allow time for a bit of rest after the hilly first few days.

Tuesday: Day 7 Alcantara to Marvao

Distance: 50 miles / 80 km
Elevation: 4350 ft / 1325 m

A shorter day today starts with a morning of rolling roads, large vistas and easy navigation as we blast our way over the Spanish countryside heading for a Valencia de Alcantara lunch stop.

As we approach the Portuguese border again the route becomes winding and twisting with lots of interesting nooks and crannies. The scenery becomes increasingly dramatic as we enter the Parque da Serra de S.Mamede, and further into the park you will see up on the hill-top our last climb of the day, the ascent to the marvellous, magical, mesmerising, Marvao, with hopefully plenty of time to explore this enchanting, historical, hill-top village, one of the best known of Portugal's "Marble Towns".

Day 8 Wednesday: Marvao to Vila Vicosa

Distance: 76 miles / 122 km
Elevation: 4143 ft / 1262 m

The longest day of the trip today at 76 miles but one of the easiest climbing-wise, sees us riding through the gorgeous Parque da Serra de S.Mamede in the morning and beyond.

We make a slight border crossing again into España and back to keep us on the best roads. Later in the day, we approach Elvas, it is too higgledy-piggledy for us to go straight through it and stay sane, so we cycle round it which luckily gives us ample opportunity to view the impressive viaducts and fortifications surrounding this small town. The fortifications are the largest group of bulwarked, dry ditched land fortifications in the world! Don't say we don't spoil you here at Peak Tours!

We arrive after a good ride out in the saddle to one of the prettiest of Portugal's "Marble Towns" the lovely Vila Vicosa another stately "Marble Town" which has an attractive plaza, a marble palace, castle and more importantly, great ice cream!



Itinerary

Thursday: Day 9 Vila Vicosa to Moura

Distance: 65 miles / 104 km
Elevation: 3000 ft / 914 m

A decent 65 mile day of easy gradient through the lovely Alentejo region is on the cards today. A very pleasant morning's ride through gently undulating countryside gives way to a short, steep climb up to dramatic marble-lined Monsaraz for a superb lunch spot with lots of lovely little tavernas.

Following a lazy lunch we head across from the Evora to Beja districts crossing a few large bodies of water before heading to the well-preserved old Moorish quarter of working-class Moura.

Friday: Day 10 Moura to Mertola

Distance: 66 miles / 134 km
Elevation: 3173ft / 697 m

A really easy day elevation wise today sees us in the sticks for a large part of the morning soaking up the peace and tranquillity of this beautiful area in splendid isolation.

We later begin to see some signs of settlement

as we skirt the edge of the Vale do Guadiana park on our way to a cracking descent into our evening's accommodation with enough time to wander the ancient cobbled streets of medieval Mertola.

Saturday: Day 11 Mertola to Tavira

Distance: 57 miles / 91 km
Elevation: 4560 ft / 1389 m

With the last few days having been more sedate, your legs should be nice and ready for the last dramatic day as we head through the low altitude Caldeirao mountain range today.

We eventually pop out on the other side to a lovely descent followed by our final approach to the sea and victory at one of the Algarve's most charming towns, Tavira.

A nice route with silky smooth road surface and stunning views will see you winding down towards the sea to the finish point where your guides will be waiting to cheer you on as you complete your end to end Portugal tour. Skinny dipping and naked conga along the beach is optional.....

"This is a fantastic tour which I thoroughly recommend. The quietness of the route, the spectacular scenery, interesting and high quality hotels, often with pools, and the wonderful flora and fauna all added to one of the best Peak Tour trips I have completed, if not the best! Portugal must offer some of the best cycling in Western Europe." Vivienne



Tour Logistics

The start of the tour

The tour starts in Porto (transfer to the Spanish border to begin cycling) and finishes at Tavira (transfer to Faro at the end).

There will be a welcome meal at approximately 7.30pm on the first evening. There are different options for arriving in Porto:

Plane: There are many flights to Porto airport.

Train: Porto also has a large train station.

Let us know if you would like collecting from the airport or train station, and we will meet you and transport you and your luggage to your first night's accommodation.

The end of the tour

The tour ends on Saturday where we will stay for the final meal. The following morning we will arrange a transfer to Faro for you to continue with your onward travel.

If you are taking your bike back with you then we will transport your bike to Faro for you or we can take it back to our HQ in Glossop for you to collect at a later date.

If you choose the 'return transport' option then your bikes will be packed & couriered back to your address for you.

Support

Usually each tour has 3 guides:

- One driving the 'brew van' - each day will usually have a morning and afternoon 'brew stop,' with a table full of snacks and drinks. You will also bring a small bag/rucksack to the morning brief and leave this in the 'brew van' which can be accessed throughout the day.
- One driving the 'luggage / lunch van' - transporting your luggage from hotel to hotel, as well as setting up your lunches.
- One riding at the back of the group - you will have detailed route notes so that you can go at your own pace. Using the sweeper guide for navigation isn't always possible so you should be self-reliant for navigating.
- Mechanical support: we carry a range of spare parts so that repairs can be made en route and we also have spare bikes available in the event that your bike has a serious breakdown. If we can't fix your bike then we will get it to the nearest bike shop.
- Each guide will be contactable by phone during the day so if you have any issues you can get straight in touch with them.
- For smaller groups you might only have one guide that cycles with the group and one back-up driver or for groups of 12 or less just one tour leader will provide back-up for you.



What's Included?

- 12 nights' accommodation, 12 breakfasts, 10 lunches
- Refreshments from the brew van
- Mechanical support including spare bikes should these be needed
- GPS files and route notes
- Full logistical planning and support from the first to the last night including luggage transfers
- 2 back up vans
- A guide cycling at the back of the group
- Pick up from airport / station on arrival day (Tuesday) and drop off on departure day (Sunday)
- A Peak Tours cycle shirt and certificate
- Lots of fun!

Food

Breakfast

Breakfast is included in the cost of the tour, and will vary slightly between the various hotels and B&Bs that we use, but you can usually expect have a choice of some cooked breakfast options, as well as toast, cereals, fruit juices, tea, coffee etc.

Lunch

Lunches will be provided each day and will generally be a buffet at a cafe or restaurant.

Evening meals

Evening meals can be bought at your accommodation or in a nearby pub. On the first and final evenings of the tour we will have a group meal at the hotel.

Dietary requirements

Please let us know of any dietary requirements you have and we will ensure that all lunch stops and places we eat evening meals are informed.

There will also be snacks on the 'brew van' to suit any and all dietary needs!

Accommodation

You have a choice sharing a double or a twin room. If you would like your own space then you can choose the single room option, or sole occupancy of a double. Most of the rooms are en suite however there may be a few nights where your room isn't en suite (sole occ of a double & double is guaranteed en suite). Generally on the Portugal tour we stay in hotels or smaller bed and breakfasts.

What's not included?

- Evening meals / dinner
- Drinks at lunchtime
- Insurance
- Cycle hire (available for a fee)
- Garmin hire (available for a fee)
- Transport to the start and from at the end of the tour for you and your bike (available for a fee)

Kit list

Clothing for all weathers is recommended so waterproofs are essential.

A full recommended kit list is provided and we are always happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can see details of a kit list [here](#).

Luggage is restricted to a maximum of 18kg per person—we have to look after our guides and their backs as they will be carrying your luggage in and out of the hotels!

Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out adequate insurance for your tour which, as an absolute minimum should cover accident & medical expenses if you are travelling outside the UK, cover for your bike and belongings and cancellation cover in the event that you have to cancel your tour for unforeseen circumstances.

You should be aware that if you have an accident or fall ill while on the tour you will lose the money paid for the trip. A travel insurance policy would allow you to reclaim most of the money as well as providing insurance in case you lose your bags or if your bike is stolen, broken etc.

Your policy should also cover cancellation costs if you cancel the tour within 8 weeks of departure. If this happens we will try to fill your space and return your funds to you but if we are unable to fill your place you will lose the funds paid for the tour.

We have partnered with Yellow Jersey who provide Travel and Cycle insurance for UK residents. You can find further details [here](#).

Am I fit enough?

Difficulty

This Portugal end to end tour is suitable for someone with a good level of fitness and who wants a challenge. The mileages are less than on many of our end to end tours which allows more time for relaxation in the afternoon/evening. This tour is classed as a grade 7 tour so similar our 14 day LEJOG tour. See details of difficulty rating [here](#).

You will be expected to be able to complete an average of 56 miles / 90 km per day.

Most people on the tour will be active cyclists, and cycling the above distances on consecutive days will not be too challenging for them.

How fast do I need to be?

Generally, most cyclists completing this tour will be capable of cycling at 10 miles / 16 -19 kmph over the whole day, keeping in mind that some days are hillier than others, and you will be stopping for breaks and lunches

Most days start at 8:30 and we ask that all riders are finished by 19:00 at the latest if possible, to allow you time to relax and explore the places that you stay in the evenings

Are there any hills on the tour?

This is a hilly trip in parts, especially in the first four or five days and should be prepared for with adequate training, but the gradients are generally much more manageable ranging from around 2% to 5% typically but there are a number of steep climbs up to 10% and the first 4 days are as hard as any of our End to end tours with a number of long climbs so please ensure that you have done plenty of training to allow better enjoyment of your tour.

Training

The fitter you are and the more training that you do beforehand will add to the enjoyment of your tour and improve your chances of succeeding the challenge.

If you need any advice about fitness please contact us and we will be happy to discuss any questions and concerns that you may have.

We have a training document which has a suggested training programme, which you can access [here](#)

Bikes

The Portugal end to end tour can be completed by people on all types of bikes: it is important you ride on a bike on which you are most comfortable. Most people choose to ride on road or touring bikes for this tour.

The roads in Portugal are generally of a good quality with the occasional rougher section on some of the narrower back roads, more notably the "C" roads, although these are some of the most pretty. One other quirk about towns and villages in Portugal is that almost every town centre still have cobbles so there are many short sections in town centres that have unavoidable cobbles. Hard wearing 25mm tyres and up are fine and a road bike or hybrid are both suitable for this trip.

You can transport your bike in the following ways:

- we can transport your bike for you if you can get your bike to us in Glossop in the Peak District
- bringing your own - most people using this option will arrive by hire car or train.

Please ensure that your bike is fully serviced and in good working order before the start of the trip. It is advisable to have your bike service a few weeks before the start of the tour. This will allow time to 'bed in' before you start your ride

Alternatively you can hire a bike from us, please see our website for more information

