Cycling

ABOUT

Photo: Paulo Magalhães

Cycling

Exploring Portugal by bike is a unique experience. You can take it at your own pace, sensing the aromas and sounds that might otherwise pass unnoticed. Whether you choose the sea at your side, to go up and down mountains, or to meander through the towns and villages, the options are endless! Just get pedalling!

With a pleasant climate, without great extremes of temperature, and a sun that shines throughout the year, Portugal offers lovely conditions to be explored by bike. Within a few kilometres, you can go from the hills to the beach, from the hustle and bustle of the city to the peacefulness of the countryside since, in Portugal, there’s a great diversity of landscapes within a short distance of each other. And it’s even easier to make the necessary detours by bike to get to those places where the views are absolutely breath-taking.
A variety of routes enables you to have several experiences – from the road to the mountain trail, for touring and mountain bikes, quietly sauntering along or tackling more challenging trails that push adrenaline levels to new heights. Many itineraries are geo-referenced, and are available in podcasts or using smartphone apps. But even when you can’t access the roadbook, there are always friendly people available to help you find your way.
There are increasingly more cycle paths in Portugal. Along the coast, in natural parks and forests, and in towns, there are many signed cycle routes, as well as service areas and specific stores for cyclists. Some hotels are also equipped for cyclists, with all the services necessary for them to rest and for their bike, so that everything always works perfectly. It is even possible to combine cycling with public transport, and so increase your opportunities for touring the country.

If you don’t have your own bike with you, you can hire one for short trips or for a longer period. In many cities, bicycles are available free of charge - a healthy and green way to spend a day discovering the city’s attractions.

For those who want to get to know Portugal by bike with the convenience of an organised trip, there are several companies that offer package programmes where everything is included. From the best hotels to expert guides, from restaurants where the food tastes more authentic to visits to monuments and museums, there are packages for all tastes. And those who prefer to be independent can opt for "self-guided tours" and travel alone, without a guide or schedules, but taking advantage of the support services that they find more convenient. In short, a holiday with plenty of exercise but no worries!
It is also possible to combine bike tours with other nature activities such as horse riding or observation of flora and fauna. In this way, it’s possible to enjoy more experiences that give you a better opportunity to get to know Portugal’s many charms.

More information in:
www.portuguesetrails.com

CYCLING AROUND CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Exploring by bike provides a different perspective of the places. You can see the buildings up close, be in closer touch with their people, truly experience their everyday lives and immerse yourself in them. There’s an increasing number of towns in Portugal that have gone to great lengths to provide cyclists with all the facilities they need to tour, with exclusive, waymarked trails and paths, support and bicycle parks. And it’s easy to find workshops, services or specialist stores to solve those unforeseen problems.

You can also combine cycling and public transport, since you’re allowed to take your bike on trains, buses and even on the metro at no charge, as long as you stick to the limited routes and timetables. And in many places free bikes are available for short trips during the day, like in Aveiro, Cascais, Torres Vedras and Maia. The discovery of cities, towns and villages could well be the cue for a tour of the whole country, which a vast network of roads with excellent surfaces facilitates. Especially inland, where traffic is lighter, you will find the ideal setting for touring on a road bike, and in the Alentejo, a region of wide plains and few hills, this requires even less effort.

From mediaeval castles and walls to more recent buildings designed by world renowned architects, there’s much to enjoy in Portugal. In the north, where the Romanesque style predominates, you can follow various routes independently or as part of one of the many guided tours offered by specialist companies, to visit its more
emblematic landmarks. But you can also choose the wine routes that take you past winegrowing quintas and villages.

In the main cities, the areas most sought after by cyclists are the riverfront areas or the green spaces, such as the Monsanto Forest Park, in Lisbon, and the City Park, in Porto. But there are many more places where you can pedal leisurely, from the liveliest historic centres to the most peaceful districts.

Photo: © BTTour | Portugal Bike

In central Portugal, the historic schist villages deserve a special mention for the authenticity they pride themselves in, as do, to the south, the villages of pristine whitewashed houses where you’ll want to linger. In many of these places, there are signs of the passage of other peoples and cultures, such as the Jewish legacy of which there is ample evidence from north to south, or the traces of the Islamic presence which are still visible in the Algarve. In the towns on the islands of Madeira and the Azores, bike tours go hand in hand with sea views.

CYCLING THROUGH HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

Serra da Estrela is the highest mountain in mainland Portugal and the climb up to Torre is a challenge for any competitive cyclist. But from north to south, including the islands, Portugal offers a diversity of trails that go up and down mountains, affording breath-taking landscapes.

Photo: © Caminhos da Natureza/Portugal Nature Trails

In addition to Estrela, there are other mountains in central Portugal that are ideal for cycling, such as Caramulo and Lousã, whose slopes offer unique downhill conditions. While the climb up to its summit at Alto de Trevim is labelled mythical, going down these tracks, many of which were created by wild boar, provides moments of pure adrenaline. It is also in this region that the schist villages are to be found, with mountain bike centres and cross-country, downhill and freeride track networks, marked with specific signs. With four levels of difficulty, they are suited to every type of user, from beginners to the most advanced.

Photo: © Paulo Magalhães

Following these trails that crisscross the country you can discover each region’s fauna and flora. There is so much to see, for instance, in Northern Portugal, from the National Park of Peneda-Gerês, with vegetation areas considered to be true natural sanctuaries, to the international Douro Natural Park, whose cliffs are nesting sites for birds of prey.

Further south, in the Natural Park of the Aire and Candeeiros Mountains, there are several trails which can be combined with caving so you can also explore inside the mountains. Close to Lisbon, the Sintra Mountain offers challenging all-terrain trails which cross the exuberant vegetation of this magical place. And in the Arrábida Mountain, another Natural Park, you can enjoy stunning views over the sea, as you inhale the aromas of the flowers, carried on the sea air.

Photo: © Turaventur

In the south, the Via Algarviana trail crosses the Algarve inland from east to west across the mountains, a less familiar area which preserves a traditional way of life. On the island of Madeira, you can follow the levadas trails or the trails that cross a fantastic million-year old forest - the Laurisilva. And the nine islands of the Azores offer countless trails for mountain biking and discovering the full force of nature. There’s no shortage of challenges all over the country for a cycling holiday full of adrenaline!

SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE ATLANTIC

Set against the ocean, with a pleasant smell of the sea and a lot of sun to warm your body and spirit, cycling along the coast is the ultimate pleasure. And it brings the added bonus of breath-taking landscapes and the opportunity to stop at will for a dive.
There are many cycling routes along the Portuguese coast. With defined and well-signposted trails, they were created with cyclists’ safety and well-being in mind. The longest one is the Rota Vicentina, which extends across the Alentejo and the Algarve, along one of the best preserved coastal stretches in Europe. Totalling 356 km divided into several legs, they allow you to plan your tour with a good balance of physical effort. And for greater convenience, you can organise your tour so that the various accommodation units along the way will take care of transporting your luggage.

In the Algarve, along the south-facing coastal strip, the coastal cycling route links Cape São Vicente to Vila Real de Santo António. This is an opportunity to admire in detail the diversity of the landscape, from the imposing, jagged cliffs on the westernmost side to the beaches of dunes and warm waters in the Eastern Algarve. Along the coast there are, however, many more panoramic routes and roads which unveil the full beauty of the Portuguese coast. Close to Lisbon, on the seafront road, the cycle path hugs the coastline as far as Praia do Guincho. Used by residents and visitors alike, it provides cycle parking areas and, in Cascais, also offers bikes free of charge.

Further north, between Sítio, in Nazaré, and Praia do Osso da Baleia, close to Pombal, the cycle path runs parallel to the Estrada Atlântica (Atlantic Highway) for 70km. Continuing along the coast, you will find other cycle paths which border the vast sandy beaches of Figueira da Foz, Ovar and Póvoa do Varzim. Near Porto, there are several cycle paths in the Vila Nova de Gaia area and in Matosinhos, as well as further north in the Espoeunde and Caminha areas. And on the islands of Madeira and the Azores, you will always be pedalling in view of the Atlantic.

USEFUL INFORMATION
More information in:
www.portuguesetrails.com
If you’re going for a walk or a bicycle ride, we suggest you check the recommendations about safety and fire prevention issued by the Portuguese authorities in the document “Portugal is calling. For you. For everyone.”

Bicycle transportation by car
Bicycles should preferably be transported on roof racks. Exceptionally they can be transported on the back, provided they do not exceed the width of the car or extend more than 450mm to the rear of the car, and do not obscure the registration plate or cover the indicators or lights.
For more information and clarification, visit the IMTT – Instituto da Mobilidade e dos Transportes Terrestres at www.imtt.pt

Bicycle transportation by public transport
Train - There is no extra charge for carrying your bike by train, and you can do it on city and regional trains every day and at all times, in the carriages designated for the purpose, depending on availability of space. The user must take care not to obstruct doors so as to not inhibit the entry and exit of passengers.
www.cp.pt

Lisbon city buses (Carris) - the 708, 723, 724, 725 and 731 routes allow the transportation of bicycles every day during working hours.
Bike Bus - www.carris.pt

Lisbon Metro - No more than two bicycles are allowed per carriage and as long as these are not overcrowded.
www.metrolisboa.pt

Porto Metro - bicycle transportation is allowed every day, on all routes and at all times as long as carriages are not full.
www.metrodporto.pt