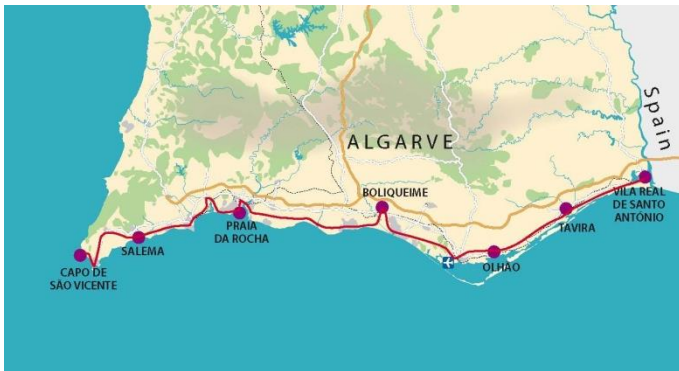


# Cycling Safaris

## The Algarve Coastal Cycle Route ~ Ecovia do Litoral Self guided 2024 235 km | 7 nights / 8 days



We have put together a comprehensive cycling package to enable you to get the most out of the new Algarve Coastal Cycle Route called Ecovia do Litoral.

The Ecovia do litoral is a new dedicated cycle route in Portugal that links Cabo de S. Vicente (Sagres) in the west to Vila Real de S. António on the Spanish border.

This new cycle route combines trails in nature protection areas with linking stretches on traffic calmed or car-free routes. With a total of 235 km, runs across the Algarve municipalities and is designed to provide you with moderately challenging days of cycling.

### TOUR ITINERARY

#### Day 1 Arrival at Vila Real de Santo António

Upon your arrival in the Algarve, we will collect you and take you to Vila Real de Santo António an interesting old town on the banks of the Guadiana River, which forms a natural border between Portugal and Spain.

Largely redeveloped after the great earthquake of 1755, the town still retains a character of its own. It has a relaxed atmosphere and the central square, edged with orange trees and host to an array of shops and cafes, is an ideal place to spend your first evening; enjoy a spot of people watching as you tuck into some fresh local food and wine. This should get you in the mood before you set off on your trip across the Algarve.

#### Day 2 Cycle to Tavira: (31km/214m elevation gain)

Your first day's cycling takes you through a number of seaside towns, all with their own special characteristics. The first of these is Monte Gordo, a resort that has been popular since the 70s. There's a wide promenade that's popular with cyclists of all description, and a vast, flat sandy beach that is the town's main attraction. It's a pleasant start to your ride, though in the hotter months you may be relieved to reach the shade of one of the largest forests in the Algarve, the Mata Nacional da Dunas Litorais. Cycling along sandy trails, with the aromas of pine and other wild flora will give you a real zest for the day ahead.

Next comes a pleasantly sleepy town, Manta Rota. It's worth a quick stop to look at the unspoilt beach, but if you can hold out a little longer continue to Caçela Velha, a tiny whitewashed village set on a hill overlooking the lagoon with a little church and the remains of an 18<sup>th</sup> century fort. You will certainly want to linger here to take in the view. It's neighbour, Fabrica, is also a worthwhile diversion; sipping coffee by the water's edge, you can take in the boats dipping in the gently ebbing water and watch locals collecting shellfish.

From here you'll enjoy a relaxing ride along dirt tracks and quiet roads, through the picturesque fishing village of Cabanas, before passing by the salt flats into Tavira. Home to a castle, an old Roman bridge and a wealth of traditional architectural styles, Tavira is built either side of the River Gilão, which creates two distinct halves to the town. Several cafés and many restaurants make the town an easy place to visit and have a relaxing wander around. The hotel overlooks the river and all that the town has to offer is within easy walking distance.

### **Day 3**      **Cycle to Olhão:**      **(31km/182m elevation gain)**

After a fairly gentle route along the coast, through the quaint seaside village of Santa Luzia, famous for octopus fishing, you will continue to Pedras del Rei, where you may spot the little train that takes sunbathers to the beach of Barril and the old tuna fishing village.

Your next stop is Fuseta, where several fish restaurants with outdoor charcoal grills and excellent views across the water will make this a tempting place to stop for lunch. From here you join the Ecovia Litoral (a dedicated cycling path that spans across the Algarve from East to West). You are now in the Ria Formosa Natural Park, a UNESCO heritage site situated on low lying coastline amidst a maze of lagoons, channels, salt marshes and islands. The views across the salt flats, (where salt is still cultivated using traditional methods), are simply breathtaking. It is a gentle, flat ride along the coast and you can enjoy the cooling sea breeze coming from the Atlantic ocean.

Your final destination is Olhão, still the hub of the fishing industry, but with a charming old town, renowned for its Moorish style architecture. It's the perfect place to sample local specialities at local prices! If time allows you can take a ferry to one of the small islands, just a short hop, where deserted beaches and more great fish restaurants can be found.

### **Day 4**      **Cycle to Vilamoura:**      **(40km/270m elevation gain)**

Your third cycling day on the Algarve Coastal Cycle Route takes you through the regional centre of Faro. Whilst it is the capital city of the Algarve, the central area is really quite compact. An impressive archway leads into the old town, where you will discover cobbled streets, with interesting shops and cafés. An imposing square lined with orange trees is home to a small cathedral; it was built on the site of a mosque and is worth a visit to see the beautiful tiles and gilt carved wood inside. There is a pedestrianised area, with lots of boutique shops and traditional Portuguese restaurants, and you can take a break on the edge of the small marina, where you can sip coffee and watch the world go by in what is an extremely laid back city.

Leaving the centre of Faro you are soon onto some dirt tracks heading towards the airport and Praia de Faro. Despite being at the back of the airport, you are treated to some pretty spectacular scenery and can often see Flamingos along the way. You head along the dykes towards the exclusive golf resort of Quinta do Lago, with its manicured golf courses amidst the pine forest and luxury houses of almost every architectural style imaginable.

As you head further west, you come to another similar resort, Vale do Lobo, and a short ride further takes you towards the beach, where you ride through a little pine forest along the cliff tops with views over the sand and surf. Passing along the sea front of Quarteira, one of the original tourist resorts of the Algarve, you continue to Vilamoura, with its marina full of luxury yachts and a good selection of cafes, bars and restaurants.

### **Day 5**                      **Cycle to Praia da Rocha:**                      **55km/494m elevation gain)**

From Vilamoura you travel along easy dirt tracks beside Falesia (meaning Cliffs in Portuguese) beach towards Olhos de Água and then onwards, through mainly quiet roads, towards Albufeira. In the busy summer months of July & August, Albufeira is the busiest resort in the Algarve. However, some of the Old Town still retains the essence of the village it once was, with narrow cobbled streets winding up and around the hillsides and typical single storey houses lining the roadside.

There are some hills on the way out of Albufeira and some interesting views of the coast and the candy coloured Marina, before you head on towards the boardwalks of Salgados. These purpose-built walkways (and cycle ways) take you across the lagoon, a protected nature reserve, where there are plenty of opportunities to see the many species of birds, including flamingos and storks, plus maybe even a few turtles who are easy to spot if you have some leftover crumbs to throw to them!

A short ride further on takes you down towards Armação de Pêra (named after a Moorish fishing boat). The pleasant pedestrianised area along the sea front overlooks the lovely beach close to the middle of the town. It's a lovely spot to stop for a coffee or an ice-cream. From here you will travel inland towards the town of Lagoa, a traditional rural town that is set in an agricultural and wine-producing area, whose centrepiece is a dominating church and pretty town square, home to cafés, cobbled streets and flower-filled lampposts. It is situated above the flatlands, which allegedly housed a lagoon (from which it got its name), so there are some hilly sections today. But, whilst the riding is more challenging, the hills are short and the scenery easily compensates for the extra effort required.

Leaving Lagoa there are some quiet tracks leading towards the old fishing village of Ferragudo, a pretty village overlooking the estuary. If you get here in time, there are some fabulous fish restaurants for a spot of lunch or an afternoon snack and you may wish to linger a while as this is your last haven of peace and tranquility before you head over the bridge into Portimão, the Western Algarve's biggest town. You will be struck by the sudden increase in activity but you can easily wend your way along the waterfront, avoiding the centre of town, around to the beautiful seaside resort of Praia da Rocha and your lovely guesthouse that overlooks the ocean.

### **Day 6**                      **Cycle to Praia da Luz:**                      **(39km/353m elevation gain)**

Today you head through the fishing village of Alvor, one of the quieter resorts, but growing in popularity. Although the earthquake wiped out most of the traditional Moorish village in 1755, you can still see remains of Alvor's history in places such as the 16th century church. Alvor's buildings are still mainly low-rise and the charm of the old town still remains, with the narrow cobbled streets leading down to the riverfront, where you can enjoy relax for a while and watch the fishing boats.

From here you will need to head inland briefly (unless you can find a friendly boatman!) to negotiate around the estuary and back down through country lanes to the 4km long Meia Praia beach and on towards Lagos. It's a bustling town with lots to offer; from the modern marina and waterfront restaurants, to the lively town square and the maize of cobbled streets within the old city walls, there is plenty to explore. It's also a great spot to have some lunch. But you will need to be decisive as there are plenty of places to choose from, including traditional local restaurants, tapas bars, cafes and bakeries, plus lots of international options. Many of these are concentrated around the marina, the river and the old town, all of which provide a very pleasant backdrop whilst you enjoy your meal.

From here you leave town along the old coastal road for a short hop (just under 12km) to the popular resort of Praia da Luz. There are lots of cafés and shops along the promenade and often market stalls and artists displaying their work, so it's worth getting here in time to explore. And if you have some energy left over from your cycling, there's a challenging hike up to the top of the cliff at the end of the beach, where you can take in a spectacular view of the town and surrounding area.



## **Day 7**      **Cycle to Cabo de São Vicente:**      **(39km/570m elevation gain)**

Your final day takes you through some dramatic and interesting scenery and on to the southern most point of Europe, Cabo de São Vicente.

Just a few kms West of Luz are the tiny villages of Burgau and Salema, which have few amenities in comparison to Luz, but both exude a specific charm that attracts day visitors throughout the year, so worth a swift diversion.

The next stage of your ride today will take you along some quiet back-roads and tracks towards Vila de Bispo, where you will join the final leg that transports you across a dramatic, weather beaten landscape towards Sagres. Sagres is a truly tranquil town with beautiful beaches, a picturesque harbour, a very pretty town square and stunning views. It is very popular in summer with visitors, but all year round with fishermen and surfers because of the western Atlantic waters creating such good waves for surfing. It is mostly known as the place where Henry the Navigator brought together great mariners, astronomers, ship-builders and cartographers to build and navigate great ships in the period of the Age of Discoveries. Sagres is also home to Henry's fortress, which was originally built in the 15th century.

Further along from the fort, is the headland, Cabo de São Vincente ("Cape St. Vincent"). There is a lovely lighthouse (claimed to be one of Europe's most powerful lighthouses) and the views from the point are simply breathtaking. It is the end of continental Europe and also of your cycling trip!

We will collect you and return you to a quaint boutique hotel, set in a quiet square in the heart of the old market town of Loulé. Loulé is an explorer's haven, with its narrow cobbled streets leading off the central Avenida, tiny shops and hidden away bars and restaurants.

## **Day 8**      **Departure**

We will transfer you from your accommodation for your journey home.



## 2024 SELF GUIDED TOUR PRICE

<b>Prices for January</b> €1130 per person sharing	<b>Prices for July</b> €1595 per person sharing
<b>Prices for February</b> €1130 per person sharing	<b>Prices for August</b> €1690 per person sharing
<b>Prices for March</b> €1165 per person sharing	<b>Prices for September</b> €1575 per person sharing
<b>Prices for April</b> €1305 per person sharing	<b>Prices for October</b> €1300 per person sharing
<b>Prices for May</b> €1325 per person sharing	<b>Prices for November</b> €1250 per person sharing
<b>Prices for June</b> €1550 per person sharing	<b>Prices for December</b> €1250 per person sharing

The above prices are based on 2 people sharing a room and luggage transfer  
Prices for single occupancy and solo tour supplement on request.

You can start this tour any day of the week.

## WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- Good quality hotels/apartments along the route, incl. breakfast
- Quality bike and equipment hire
- Detailed maps and route details
- Luggage transfer
- Route assistance where necessary (helpline)
- Airport transfers from/to Faro airport

We can also organise a guided tour with a support van, for prices please contact our office.

If you have a large group that prefers to have the services of a dedicated guide and/or a support vehicle that can be provided as well. Please don't hesitate to contact us for a quote.

## WHAT TO BRING

Here is a checklist of items we suggest to take with you:

- Cycling clothing: 2 jerseys, 2 padded shorts, waterproof jacket, and gloves.
- If you decide to take cycling shoes please bring your own spd pedals as our bikes are fitted with standard pedals
- Cycling helmet (these cannot be hired)
- Sunglasses, sunhat, high protection sun cream, after sun cream.
- Swimming costume (essential for those afternoon dips!)
- Casual evening dressing

## TRAVEL INFORMATION

It is best for you to arrive and depart in Faro Airport. Please let us know your flight details and we will arrange a transfer on arrival for you.

From your last night in Boliqueime you are 20 mins away from Faro Airport. Alternatively you can get the train to Lisbon or the bus to Seville. The train from Lisbon to Faro is approximately 3 hours.

## BACK UP SERVICE

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As this is a self led trip you do not have the back-up of a guide and support van. Our aim is to allow you feel like an independent traveller, free to cycle each day at your own pace while at the same time having the security of knowing that your luggage will be waiting for you in your next accommodation.

If you experience small problems with the bike (e.g., a puncture) you will have a spare tube, pump and tyre lever. You also have access to a 24 hour helpline.

## BIKE RENTAL - INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE

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SCOTT SUB Comfort 20 features comfortable geometry intended for everyday use. With a Shimano 21 Speed transmission, Brakes: Promax TX 123 and a custom Racktime carrier, this bike has it all with regards to trekking around.

The advantage of this self guided cycling safari is that you can enjoy each day's cycle at your own pace. To get the most out of your holiday we would recommend that you do take a few practice rides before this tour.

E-Bike supplement: on request