

The 10 best cycling holidays for autumn

Pedal-powered journeys in Cornwall, on the Rhine, in Albania and more.
By Katie Gatens

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The key

★ = **Easy** (less than 25 miles a day)

★★ = **Moderate** (about 25 miles a day)

★★★ = **Tough** (more than 25 miles a day)

Unless otherwise stated, prices are per person, based on two sharing, including luggage transfers

→ Dodecanese

★★

You'll hop around the Aegean by boat and bike on this seven-night guided tour, starting in Kos and stopping at five of the most unpronounceable Dodecanese islands, including volcanic Nisiros, verdant Kalymnos and uninhabited Pserimos. You sleep on a gulet and cycle an average of 20 miles a day, with a few steep climbs (don't panic: a refreshment van is on hand). There's time to potter around Kos's ancient Asclepeion (healing temple) and to visit Greek Orthodox monks at Panormitis monastery on Symi. Expect long lunches in bougainvillea-draped tavernas where you're often the island's only tourists, plus dips from the gulet in hidden coves.

Departs September 1-8, October 6-13; from £5,321, full-board (duvine.com). Fly to Kos with British Airways, easyJet, Jet2, Tui or Thomas Cook

Burgundy



There are more than 600 miles of cycle trails in Burgundy, a region that comes alive during the September harvest. This leisurely six-night self-guided itinerary starts in Beaune, the cobbled wine capital, and follows a scenic flat route through bucolic landscapes, with stops including the Hôtel-Dieu, a 15th-century almshouse, and the hilltop castle of Berzé-le-Châtel. There's a list of 26 vineyards to choose from for tastings en route (probably not wise to go to all of them). You'll cover about 20 miles a day, including a stretch on the Voie Verte, France's first cycle path.

Any date until October 31; from £663 for six nights, B&B; bike hire £112 (freedomtreks.co.uk). Fly, or take Eurostar to Paris, then take the train to Beaune. You can also fly to Lyons

The Rhine



On this seven-night river cruise with daily cycling excursions, you'll travel on Uniworld's SS Antoinette from Basel to Amsterdam, and cycle through the burnt-orange autumnal Black Forest to go wine tasting at Kaiserstuhl. The ship will also drop anchor for urban rides in Strasbourg and chocolate-box Heidelberg, with its 14th-century university and timber-clad *Fachhallenhaus* farmhouses. You'll be riding along the Rhine through towns dotted with medieval castles and have the opportunity to explore the gothic cities of Cologne and Amsterdam, with dinner and dancing on board ship by night. The cycling is a manageable 20 miles a day, and there's the option to stay on the boat, explore on foot or extend your ride with longer routes.

Next sailing September 30-October 7; £5,807, full-board (butterfield.com). Fly into Zurich and back from Amsterdam with airlines including British Airways and easyJet

Puglia

★★

Starting in Bari, you ride down the heel of Italy's boot on this six-day guided tour, where you'll see round, conical-hatted trullo houses, eat oil-slathered orechiette pasta and inch your way down the Adriatic coastline to the Salento peninsula and the baroque star of the show, Lecce. Averaging about 35 miles a day, there are multiple routes you can take and optional e-bikes. Out-of-saddle activities include pizza-making, Pugliese wine tastings and a visit to the 11th-century, honey-hued Otranto Cathedral. Accommodation is a cut above, in luxury masserie.

Departing on September 23, 30, October 7, 14; from £3,559, B&B, plus three lunches and four dinners ([trektravel.com](https://www.trektravel.com)). Fly to Bari with British Airways, easyJet or Ryanair



Easy-wheeling: Salento, Puglia
ALESSANDRO SAFFO

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly



Your legs will thank you for the e-bike you'll be riding on this eight-day self-guided tour around Cornwall's wind-beaten cliffs. Starting in St Ives, with a visit to the Tate and the Barbara Hepworth Museum, you then head west to Pendeen for a Poldark-inspired visit to the Geevor tin mine, with the option of taking a helicopter day trip to the Isles of Scilly. On your return, you'll cycle across the Lizard peninsula, then head to the north coast, where you'll visit a lobster hatchery in Padstow and end in the fishing village of Port Isaac. Along the way, you can pop into country pubs, wander through gardens of wild garlic at the Bonython estate and stop for ice creams in Porthleven. There are two optional hiking days, with cliff walks at Port Quin and a trip across the tidal causeway to St Michael's Mount.

Departs weekly throughout September and October; from £1,700, B&B (thecarter-company.com). Take the train to Penzance or fly to Newquay airport with Flybe from Gatwick, Birmingham or Manchester

Istria



Far from the tourist-clogged islands, Croatia's lesser-known Istrian peninsula gives nearby Italy a run for its money with its hilltop towns stacked with pastel houses, truffle-heaped pasta dishes and gravel tracks through cool pine forests. On this seven-night self-guided trip, you average about 20 miles a day, starting in Italy at Muggia, below Trieste, travelling through a sliver of coastal Slovenia and into Istria proper, with a day off in Porec to visit the 6th-century basilica, before riding to the seaside port town of Rovinj, with its pebble beaches. Finish off at Pula's Roman amphitheatre, one of the best preserved in the world.

Until October 7; £741, B&B; bike hire £101 (flexitreks.com). You can fly to Trieste with Ryanair and back from Pula with various airlines, including easyJet and Ryanair

Holland



This seven-night guided tour of a country synonymous with cycling takes you through a checklist of classic Dutch scenes. By day, see the 18th-century wooden windmills of Kinderdijk, leafy *hofjes* (almshouse-surrounded courtyards) in Haarlem, and the town of Delft — famous for its distinctive blue-and-white pottery. At night, climb aboard a cosy wooden barge as it meanders through scenic waterways to the next stop (that's another classic Dutch experience ticked off). This leisurely tour is an ideal introduction to cycling holidays. At an average of about 20 miles a day, you might not even need to change gear.

Departures until October 6; from £950, full-board; bike hire £120 (skedaddle.co.uk). Fly to Amsterdam with Jet2 or KLM, or take Eurostar



Rehydration stop: taking time out in the Dodecanese
GWEN KIDERA

→ Douro Valley



It's harvest season in the Douro Valley, and this moderate six-day guided tour takes you through northern Portugal's vine-laced valleys with their zigzagging terraces. You'll start in medieval Guimaraes: kick off with a drink in Largo da Oliveira, the cobbled central square built round the ancient olive tree after which it is named. Luxury accommodation is the order of the day on this trip and another highlight is a dinner prepared by Portugal's star chef Ljubomir Stanisic. You'll finish in Porto, where you should go straight to Livraria Lello, a neo-gothic bookshop so beautiful that it charges for entry (£4.90, redeemable against purchase; www.livrarialello.pt).

Departs September 16-21, October 14-19, October 28-November 2; from £3,881, full-board (duvine.com). Fly to Porto with easyJet or TAP Air Portugal

Madeira

★★

And now for something completely different. The thought of cycling on volcanic Madeira's steep slopes might give you the shudders, but on this eight-day self-guided trip, you'll be provided with an e-bike to take the edge off those otherwise muscle-burning climbs. You'll be rewarded for your (semi) hard work with sweeping views of cloud-tipped peaks and deserted bays. Plus, there's the fun bit: freewheeling down the mountains. The moderate climate makes it ideal for an autumn trip, and stops include neolithic caves and villages where the people practise traditional basket-weaving. There are transfers to take you past harder portions of the route, and because it's self-guided, you can at least ride at your own pace.

Any date from September 29 to December 15; from £799, half-board

(freewheelholidays.co.uk) Fly to Funchal with British Airways, easyJet or Jet2

Albania

★★★

Albania is shedding its slightly rough-around-the-edges reputation as it welcomes a hiking and cycling boom. This challenging nine-night guided trip will take you from the buzzy capital of Tirana through the jagged grey Grammoz mountain range, stopping off at thermal springs and finishing on the gloriously unglitzy Albanian Riviera, at the seaside city of Vlore. You'll stay in three- and four-star hotels throughout. As it's outside the eurozone, you'll get plenty of bang for your Albanian lek — the cost of a pint of beer is about £1.

Departs September 13-22, October 2-11, October 20-29; from £912, full-board

(freedomtreks.co.uk). Fly to Tirana with British Airways or Wizz Air