



Self-guided Cycling Tours in France & Vermont

Historic River Valleys 3-Stage Tour with Grafton

Tour Overview

Tour Dates: You may schedule your tour to begin on any date during our tour season, which extends from May 1 through October 31. See [Schedule](#) for additional scheduling considerations.

Distance: 81 miles required. 56+ miles of optional cycling loops.

Terrain: This is the least challenging of our Vermont circuit tours. The terrain is mostly easy to moderately challenging. However, there are stretches of the ride that will test your climbing mettle.

Location: Southeastern Vermont's lovely and historic Windham County, and small portions of Cheshire County, New Hampshire and Windsor County, Vermont. The tour starts and ends in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Highlights:

- Gorgeous scenery
- Mostly easy cycling along river valleys
- Visits to quintessential Vermont and New Hampshire villages, including Grafton, Walpole (NH) and Newfane, among New England's most beautiful
- Opportunities to supplement your cycling with hiking, swimming, or canoeing
- Five historic covered bridges

Daily Itinerary

Arrival Day: Free day in Brattleboro. Sightsee, Canoe, Kayak, Dine, Relax. Spend 1 or more nights.

You may arrive in Brattleboro at the time of your choosing, as there are no activities planned for your arrival day. Of course, the earlier you arrive, the more time you have to take advantage of the sights and charms of this wonderful New England town.

Brattleboro is a lively southern Vermont arts and cultural center, ideal for window shopping, gallery hopping, people watching, participating in a walking tour, canoeing on the Connecticut

River, hiking the trails of the Brattleboro Retreat or visiting the Retreat's Petting Farm, buying Vermont handcrafts, relaxing over a locally brewed beer, catching a movie or some live music, and of course, enjoying any one of a variety of exciting eateries and fine restaurants.

Accommodation options for your stay in Brattleboro include a downtown 1930's art deco style hotel, several lovely bed and breakfasts, and for the budget-minded, a variety of motels.

Required Cycling Day 1: Orientation & Bike Delivery - Cycle from Brattleboro, VT to Bellows Falls, VT - Distance: 27 miles. Spend 1 or more nights.

Following breakfast you will attend a brief orientation at your hotel or B&B, test ride your bicycle, and then begin your first day's journey from Brattleboro to Bellows Falls.

Today's route follows the mighty Connecticut River, which forms the border between Vermont and New Hampshire. Though cycling in the fertile, orchard-studded valley carved by the river, the terrain is gently rolling, with occasional rises providing beautiful views of the mountains just across the river. You arrive shortly in the quintessentially Vermont village of Putney, known as a Mecca for arts and crafts, and a wonderful opportunity to break and refuel.

Beyond Putney, your route takes you down to the riverside on a quiet dirt road before reaching Westminster. In Westminster, you cross the river to the New Hampshire side and the beautiful village of Walpole, another great opportunity to take a break and enjoy a tasty treat at locally renowned Burdick's Chocolates. Just ahead, the mountains begin to close in on you, creating Bellows Falls' dramatic setting. Crossing back into Vermont, you reach the day's final destination, Bellows Falls.

Bellows Falls was a manufacturing powerhouse in the 19th century, putting to use the massive energy of the falls for which it is named. The old factories are mostly gone now, but the vestiges of that prosperous era remain in the Victorian mansions that comprise the town's registered historic district. (You can even overnight in one, if you wish.) Bellows Falls is a wonderful place for strolling and soaking in the New England atmosphere.

Accommodation options for your stay in Bellows Falls include a Victorian bed & breakfast and an economy motel.

Optional Free Day(s) in Bellows Falls Area with Optional Cycling.

We encourage you to spend at least two nights in the Bellows Falls area to take advantage of additional cycling in the area. You have the choice of three circuits of 29, 26, or 18 miles. Each of these circuits allows you to visit more historic villages, as well as quiet, beautiful escapes into the forested hills. You may even choose to spend some time at a restored 18th century fort to experience the early, untamed days of the region's history.

In addition to these cycling options, you may also wish to return to Walpole for more exploration or make the short, beautiful ride along the Saxtons River to the small village of the same name. Or, you can take a break from cycling altogether and spend the day looking at Indian petrographs by the river, browsing in the local shops, or strolling the streets to become more familiar with the charms of Bellows Falls.

Required Cycling Day 2: Cycle from Bellows Falls to Grafton, VT - Distance: 22 miles. Spend 1 or more nights.

Today's ride combines bucolic beauty with the charm of Vermont villages. Shortly after leaving Bellows Falls, your route passes the Vermont County Store, THE place for Vermont products and crafts. Just beyond, you leave the main road, pass through the Bartonville Covered Bridge, and cycle a quiet dirt road through the woods, paralleling the Williams River on your way to Chester.

Chester is a village full of charm and good-natured Vermonters looking to share their portion of paradise with you. You'll definitely want to spend some time exploring Chester's artisan and retail shops, marveling at the grand Victorian homes, and perhaps swing by Chester's "Stone House

Village," named for the pre-Civil War houses constructed from locally quarried stone. Chester makes an ideal lunch stop, as there are several restaurants along the short main street.

After leaving Chester, you return to the shaded canopy of the forest for a relaxing, rolling, and gorgeous ride into Grafton. Grafton has to be one of Vermont's most beautiful villages, and is like a trip back to a simpler time. The restoration of its historic structures is magnificent, as is its setting. You will not want to leave.

Accommodation options for your stay in Grafton include one very historic inn and one B&B, as well as two B&Bs in neighboring Saxtons River.

Optional Free Day(s) in Grafton with Optional Cycling.

For your second day in Grafton we offer 3 very different cycling circuits. One is a short 8 miles, but is very strenuous as it takes you up into the mountains surrounding Grafton. It's a beauty, and concludes with an awesome downhill back into Grafton.

Another option is a 25-mile loop over quiet, wooded back roads, and provides the opportunity to see yet another covered bridge and the village of Saxtons River.

The final cycling option -- a fairly easy 27-mile loop -- takes you south to the pretty village of Townshend, in the West River Valley. Adjacent to Townshend are two wonderful parks for hiking: Townshend State Park and Townshend Lake and Dam Recreational Area. On this loop, you also visit the Scott Bridge, the longest wooden span covered bridge in Vermont.

Should you need a break from the saddle however, you may choose to stay closer to home, just soaking in Grafton's beauty, or taking the short half-mile ride to Grafton's cheese factory, covered bridge, and Grafton Ponds Outdoor Center.

Required Cycling Day 3: Cycle from Grafton, VT to Brattleboro, VT - Distance: 32 miles. Spend 1 or more nights.

Today's ride is another of exceptional beauty along quiet back roads. From Grafton, you follow the valleys of the Saxtons River, Bull Creek, and Grassy Brook on your way to the tiny village of Brookline, with its historic one-room, round schoolhouse. Then it's on to Newfane, the loveliest of Windham County's so-called 18th Century "White Villages". Newfane is the ideal place to stop for lunch and explore the beautiful buildings along the village green.

Beyond Newfane, your route follows the West River, where you have a number of opportunities to take a dip with the locals in one of several pristine swimming holes. At the West Dummerston Covered Bridge, Vermont's longest covered bridge still open to traffic, you have the option of continuing your flat route back to Brattleboro along the West River, or taking an exceptionally beautiful, but more challenging ride through the mountains for some incredible vistas of the West River Valley

In Brattleboro, you'll have a final opportunity to shop for keepsakes made by Vermont artisans and enjoy at least one more evening of fine dining before heading home.