Top 10 Things to Know on Your First Santana Adventures Cycling Cruise

If this is your first Santana Adventures cycling cruise, ***Welcome!*** - you're in for a wonderful week.

A Santana trip may feel a little different from other cycling vacations you've taken. Your hotel moves with you, the daily schedule follows both the ship and the cycling routes, and each day offers a blend of riding, sightseeing, meals, briefings, and time aboard. There are a few routines that may be new at first, but they exist for a good reason: they help the trip run smoothly, keep the group moving comfortably, and make it possible to enjoy world-class cycling without the hassle of changing hotels every night.

Once you settle into the rhythm, most first-time participants quickly discover what returning guests already know: this style of travel is a lot of fun. You get to unpack once, wake up somewhere new, ride beautiful routes, enjoy great meals, meet other cyclists, and see the world from both the saddle and the ship.

With that in mind, here are ten things to know before your first Santana Adventures cycling cruise.

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1. Embrace the adventure — *and the unexpected*

No two Santana cruises are exactly alike. Cycling cruises involve ships, weather, ports, traffic, road closures, local rules, festivals, tides,

and the occasional surprise. Most days go as planned, but part of successful travel is staying flexible when something changes.

Santana's team has decades of experience adapting on the fly, and we work hard behind the scenes to keep each day running smoothly. Sometimes the adjustment is small. Sometimes Plan B leads to an experience we never could have planned.

Bring your sense of adventure, trust the process, and come ready to go with the flow. Flexibility is one of the secret ingredients to a great trip, and a good attitude goes a long way toward making the adventure memorable for all the right reasons.

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2. This is a cycling cruise, not a race

There is no podium, no finish line, and definitely no prize for suffering. Each day is designed so you can enjoy the ride, the scenery, the ship, and the destination.

Some cyclists ride every mile. Others choose a shorter route, linger over coffee, take a detour, or enjoy a café break that turns into lunch. Some take a day off when the mood strikes and spend it aboard our non-rider coach bus, relaxing on board, or settling into a quiet corner of the ship with a good book.

This is your vacation. There is no pressure to prove anything. Pick the route — or the day — that feels right to you, and ride in the way that makes you happiest.

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3. You'll have route choices every day

Each day has a choice of routes: Short, Medium, or Long. Each morning you'll be welcome to select whichever route suits your desires. On Santana's cruises, there's no reason to be the fastest, the slowest, or having to ride alone… unless you want to! Our participants are pretty evenly dispersed across the Short, Medium, & Long routes.

- **Short Routes:** typically 30-35 miles, typically quite flat, no long climbs or steep hills.
- **Medium Routes:** typically 40-50 miles, typically rolling, with the possibility of a steep hill.
- **Long Routes:** typically 55+ miles, with multiple summits, always includes the most content & best views.
- **Challenge Routes:** typically an add-on to the Long Route, will have a climb that will be difficult yet rewarding. We are always delighted to provide longer routes for participants looking for a challenge, just let us know!
- **Non-Ride Day:** (for non-cyclists or those looking for a day out of the saddle) — for most events, we offer a panoramic-windowed coach bus for a scenic day featuring many of the same sights and activities the cyclists enjoy on our routes. You're also welcome to stay onboard and have your run of the ship or go explore the town on your own—all we ask is that you're back onboard before the ship needs to leave.

It is perfectly normal to skip a ride. Some participants take a day off to enjoy the ship, join a walking tour, explore town, or simply rest. Santana trips are built for cyclists, but they are also vacations. Your best trip may include a mix of riding, sightseeing, and relaxing. That

being said, ***the more you participate in our planned activities, the more you'll get out of your vacation.***

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4. All Itineraries Are Provisional

Santana Adventures' Team will always do our best to provide the itinerary as planned. However, by their very nature, all bicycle cruise itineraries are provisional — The world is constantly changing around us, and we must adapt. Santana Adventures reserves the right to improve upon our itineraries and make changes. By and large, this is to provide a better cycling itinerary for our participants.

Additionally, certain events outside of Santana's control may cause our team to adjust the itinerary at any time to best accommodate our planned vision for each event. While different than a Force Majeure situation, which could end or postpone a trip entirely, many of the same circumstances in the force majeure section above may only warrant an adjustment of the itinerary. Examples of a few of these changes are, but are not limited to:

- Changing the planned route due to: bridge and/or ferry closures, rock and/or mudslides, road closures, road construction, lock closures, pier and/or dock construction, etc.
- Changing the planned day due to: better cycling options, port access, tides, port and/or dock changes, port authority restrictions, government restrictions, etc.
- Altering the daily schedule: if continuing with our itinerary as planned would put participants in danger, we will do our best to make changes and find suitable alternatives. Rough seas can make tendering operations unsafe on an ocean cruise; we will defer to the ship's captain for guidance.

- Rainy days — If there is enough rain to make conditions unsafe or inhospitable for cyclists, we may rearrange days to try to “dodge” the storm, or we may plan non-cycling activities as an alternative.

When route changes are necessary, updated routes are typically distributed during breakfast, once our team has had time to fully vet and recheck the alternate plan. We know last-minute changes can require patience, and we appreciate your understanding while our team works diligently to produce the best possible ride day under the circumstances.

Our team has decades of experience and works around the clock to make last-minute adjustments and plans to ensure our participants have the most enjoyable cycling vacation possible.

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5. Support is there when you need it

Santana provides ride support, but it is a little different from the traditional “sag wagon” model some cyclists may be used to.

We do **not** operate sag wagons that follow riders throughout the day or pick up cyclists simply because they are tired, running late, or chose a route beyond their comfort level. Instead, Santana provides **SOS Vans with professional bike mechanics**. These vans are there to help when something goes wrong — for example, a mechanical problem, a flat tire, a bike issue that cannot be easily solved roadside, or another unexpected situation that requires assistance.

Because of this, we ask each participant to choose the route that best matches their ability, fitness, and comfort level for that day. Most riding days include multiple route options, and there is no prize for choosing the longest one. Selecting the right route helps keep the day enjoyable for you and helps our support team focus on participants who truly need mechanical or emergency assistance.

The best days happen when everyone chooses a route they can enjoy, rides at a comfortable pace, and knows that Santana's team is there if something unexpected comes up.

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6. The evening overview and morning route talk are important

Each riding day is introduced in two parts: an evening route overview and a morning route talk.

The **evening route overview** sets the stage for the following day. This is the fun, big-picture preview of where we are going, what makes the destination interesting, and what you can look forward to along the way. We'll highlight the scenery, towns, landmarks, cafés, viewpoints, cultural stops, and other experiences that make the day memorable. When helpful, we'll also share a bit of background or history so the ride feels like more than just a route on a map.

The **morning route talk** takes place during breakfast and focuses on the practical details for that day's ride. This is where we review the maps, mileage, elevation, route options, timing, road surfaces, turns or intersections to watch for, and any special instructions that will help the day run smoothly.

Both briefings matter. The evening overview helps you understand why the day is special; the morning route talk helps you ride it confidently. Even experienced Santana participants pay close attention to both, because together they give you the full picture of the next day's adventure.

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7. Meals are your decision

One of the pleasures of a Santana cycling cruise is that you have room to shape the day around what feels right to you.

On most riding days, lunch is served onboard the ship, often after the ride. On some days, Santana may also include a hosted meal, tasting, picnic, or snack stop along the route. We'll let you know what is planned during the evening overview and morning route talk.

That said, your meals during the ride are ultimately your decision. Many experienced Santana participants learn to listen to their body — or simply follow their nose. If you pass a café that looks inviting, see a bakery window full of local pastries, or find a sunny terrace that feels like the perfect place for coffee, a snack, or lunch on your own, go for it. *And don't be shy about taking a small extra item or two from the ship's breakfast buffet — a piece of fruit, a roll, or another easy snack can be great to have in your pocket or frame-bag for later in the ride.*

These independent stops are not included in the trip price, of course, but they are part of the fun and flexibility of our events. Some of the best travel memories happen when you pause somewhere

unexpected, order what the locals are having, and enjoy a destination at your own pace.

Just keep an eye on the day's timing, the ship's schedule, and the route ahead. A spontaneous stop can be one of the highlights of your day, as long as it still fits comfortably within the plan.

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8. Immerse yourself in the places we ride

One of the best parts of a Santana Adventures cycling cruise is that you are not just seeing a destination from a bus window or the deck of a ship. You are riding through real towns, villages, waterfronts, markets, countryside, and neighborhoods — often at the perfect speed to notice the details.

Everywhere we ride, we are guests. A little local awareness goes a long way, not only because it is courteous, but because it makes the experience more rewarding. A smile, a wave, or a simple thank you can turn a passing moment into a friendly exchange. Better yet, learning just a few words in the local language — "hello," "good morning," "please," "thank you," or "two coffees, please" — can open doors in ways that surprise you.

You do not need to speak the language well. The effort itself is usually appreciated, and it reminds the people we meet that we are happy to be there. It can also make your day more fun. A café stop, a bakery visit, a market purchase, or a quick greeting on the road feels different when you make even a small effort to connect.

As you explore, give yourself permission to improvise a little. Some of the best experiences on a Santana trip are the unplanned ones: the bakery you noticed from the bike, the espresso stop that turned into a conversation, the quiet overlook that was too pretty to pass by, or the local specialty you decided to try simply because everyone else in the café seemed to be ordering it.

Our routes are designed to help you enjoy the day, not to rush you past it. Step into a local bakery. Try the pastry you cannot pronounce. Pause for coffee in the square. Wander through the market. Listen to the church bells. Watch how people spend their morning. These are often the moments participants remember long after the mileage and elevation have faded.

Of course, keep an eye on the day's timing, the route ahead, and the ship's schedule. But within that framework, you are encouraged to make the day your own. A little curiosity, flexibility, and willingness to stop when something catches your eye can turn a good ride into a travel memory you'll never forget.

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9. WiFi and Connectivity

It helps to set realistic expectations for internet access onboard the ship.

When Wi-Fi is complimentary, it is often quite slow and may be best suited for basic messaging. Paid Wi-Fi packages usually offer better speeds, but they can be expensive—often around $35 per day, depending on the ship. Many participants purchase an onboard Wi-Fi package on the first day, then discover they use it far less than

expected once they settle into vacation mode. Between cycling, sightseeing, meals, briefings, and time with fellow participants, you may find that unplugging is one of the better parts of the trip.

When the ship is in port or near shore, your phone's cellular connection will usually be faster and more reliable than the ship's Wi-Fi. Because Santana's cycling routes are GPS-guided, cyclists are required to have dependable calling and data service while ashore. We recommend budgeting first for reliable connectivity while on shore. After that, you can decide whether purchasing ship Wi-Fi for time spent sailing is worth the additional cost.

Our best advice: stay connected when you need to, but do not be afraid to embrace the opportunity to unplug while you are at sea.

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10. You're among friends

Santana attracts curious, adventurous people who love bicycles, travel, good food, and seeing the world in an active, meaningful way. Some participants arrive with longtime riding partners or a group of friends. Others arrive knowing no one. Either way, you will be in good company.

One of the things first-time participants often notice is how quickly the group starts to feel familiar. You may meet someone at breakfast, see them again at a viewpoint, compare notes after the ride, and end up sharing dinner that evening. By the end of the trip, you will likely know far more names than you expected.

So ask questions. Join a table. Ride with someone new. Swap stories about the day, compare favorite stops, or ask a returning participant what they have learned from past Santana trips. Some of the best parts of the week happen off the bike — over coffee, at dinner, during a walk through town, or while laughing about the day's little surprises.

A Santana cycling cruise is not just a collection of routes and ports. It is a traveling community. Come ready to be part of it, and you may leave with new riding friends, future travel companions, or even friends for life.

A final thought

Your first Santana Adventures cycling cruise may feel different from other cycling trips you have taken. That is part of what makes it special. You get carefully designed rides, a comfortable ship, interesting ports, great meals, and a community of people who love seeing the world by bicycle. Ride what you want, rest when you need to, and enjoy the rare pleasure of waking up somewhere new without ever repacking your suitcase. You and all of the participants around you are on vacation—***go have fun!***

Santana Adventures Traditions

Safety Brief for Cycling Cruises

eBike 101 *(if riding an eBike)*