

## Italy: Piedmont, Langhe & the Italian Riviera

### Bike Vacation Only

If you can't decide between a trip to the Mediterranean seaside and a visit to Barolo wine country, this innovative cycling vacation has it all! Pairing the opulence of Langhe with the beauty of Liguria creates unparalleled experiences in wine, cycling, and gastronomy. Get the royal treatment during a stay in an 18th-century Barolo estate—now one of the region's most acclaimed vintners. Here, you'll learn the secrets of truffle hunting during an invigorating afternoon with a local *trifolao* and his trusty dog. Later, spin along the Italian Riviera to storied San Remo—where avid cyclists can test themselves against famous climbs of the famed bicycle race Giro d'Italia. And the food! Between dinner prepared by a Michelin-starred chef and a cooking class in local pesto-making techniques, you may never want to leave the table.

### Cultural Highlights

- Join a farmer and his trusty dog on a hunt for precious truffles on the trails of one of the last unspoiled woods in the area.
- Enjoy a two-night stay at the historic Tenuta di Fontanafredda, whose winery was founded by a king.
- Sip Barolo where it was born when you head into a majestic underground cellar, named one of the 100 most beautiful in the world.
- Learn to prepare pesto as the locals do during a fun and informative cooking class.
- Relax at the private beach at your Riviera hotel, where you spend three nights.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for beginners and experienced cyclists. The rides are on paved roads with little car traffic and undulating terrain for the first four days, with scenic mountain views. It follows a panoramic easy bike path along the sea for the final

part. Our VBT support vehicle is always available. However, if you opt to ride with a VBT E-bike (free of charge), the tour is also ideal for beginners.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 7-37 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-4 hours

**Group size:** 14-22 max

## Climate Information

### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 62°/42°, May 70°/50°, June 77°/57°, July 82°/61°, August 80°/60°, September 74°/55°, October 63°/45°

### Average Rainfall (in.)

April 4.1, May 4.7, June 3.8, July 2.6, August 3.1, September 2.8, October 3.5

## DAY 1: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Travel to Canale / Warm-up ride / Hunt for truffles / Welcome reception and dinner

Your tour starts at 12:30 p.m. at our Turin hotel. A VBT representative will be in the lobby to meet you. Please have lunch before leaving the hotel. If your arrival at our Turin hotel is going to be later than 12:30 p.m. or if you are delayed, please call the hotel and ask the front desk to pass the message on to the VBT representative.

All guests will travel to Canale (approximately one hour southeast of Turin), in Piedmont's lovely Roero region. Arrive at your beautiful *agriturismo*, a country resort and working farm set on an estate of 86 acres. After a safety and bike-fitting session, don your bike gear and follow your trip leaders on a short warm-up ride through the hotel's surroundings.

Your culinary bike tour of Italy begins with truffle hunting. Join an expert farmer, or *trifolao*, and his dog Willy on the property grounds. Together, you set out in search of the precious underground fungus. During this invigorating outing, you will learn how to choose truffles and how to preserve them. Your hunt will be rewarded with a tasting.

This evening, gather for a welcome cocktail back at the hotel, sampling local wines and cheese. Your welcome dinner is at the estate's restaurant, complemented with wines from their farm. Their delicious array of products fresh from their gardens offer a wonderful introduction to Piedmont's locally sourced

cuisine.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

After an initial downhill from your *agriturismo*, enjoy an easy ride toward Canale and into the countryside. You may tackle the steep hill on the way back or avoid it by walking a very short distance.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

## DAY 2: Ride to Pollenzo / La Morra / Gourmet dinner

This morning's hearty breakfast features dishes cooked with fine local ingredients.

Your route today leads you through some of Piedmont's stunning farmlands and natural beauty to the ancient Roman city of Pollenzo, today a timeless village whose architecture spans the ages. Though most of the remains of ancient Rome have been destroyed, the shape of the ancient amphitheater is still visible, as you'll see by walking among the terraced houses built upon the site. In the town piazza, admire the neo-gothic monuments built by the Royal Savoy family, whose King Charles Albert made Pollenzo his favorite holiday resort.

Today Pollenzo is home to the internationally known University of Gastronomic Sciences, established in Corte Albertina in 2004 by the Slow Food Organization. The university embraces the latest models of agriculture and the preservation of biodiversity. At the adjacent Wine Bank, more than 300 winemakers regularly select, store and preserve their best vintages, making the history of Italian wines available for future generations. Discover Pollenzo and its treasures on your own during a short stop.

Afterward, shuttle across the River Tanaro, the natural northern border of the Langhe, birthplace of the great wine Barolo. The breathtaking hilly landscapes you'll traverse, or *langa*, are famous for wines, cheeses and truffles. Here, the winemaking culture, traditions and terrains are among Europe's finest examples of man's harmonious relationship with nature and are considered an aesthetic archetype of

European vineyards, earning this entire area a place as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Arrive in La Morra and enjoy lunch on your own. It is truly a privilege to cycle here.

Continue cycling these gorgeously landscaped routes, mostly downhill. As you coast through the valley, you'll savor spectacular views of the hilltop villages of Verduno and Roddi, each crowned by stately castles. Your destination is the majestic Tenuta di Fontanafredda. Spread over 296 acres (120 hectares) of vineyard-cloaked land, this sprawling estate and wine village incorporates several historical buildings, wine cellars, a beautiful park with rare plants and trees, a lovely pristine lake, and meditation zones. Browse through the hotel's unique library or stroll the trails of its vast park, the Woods of Thoughts to relax and explore this unique place.

This evening, enjoy dinner at the hotel restaurant of Cascina Galarey, with open views of the surrounding hills. the chef is the same of the Michelin-starred restaurant Guido, a gracious Italian kitchen committed to using the finest Piedmont ingredients.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Canale to Pollenzo — 30 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: La Morra to Hotel — 14 km (9 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Departing from the hotel, you'll ride into the Roero forested region on an undulating route with little car traffic, arriving in Pollenzo before lunch. In Pollenzo, we offer an 8-km (5-mile) shuttle to avoid traffic and the long uphill into La Morra, your lunch stop. The afternoon ride is mostly downhill and flat, with only one rolling hill, on paved country roads. On the final stretch you will cycle through a village with some car traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 41 km (9 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 3: Monforte / Barolo / Wine tasting / Alba

Today, ride or shuttle to the hilltop town of Roddino. Your invigorating ride, initially uphill till Roddino, will

continue along an easy route, tracing a crest that offers beautiful sweeping views of manicured vineyards and farms. You will cycle through the medieval village of Monforte, worth a stop and stroll along its scenic and picturesque alleyways. En route to Barolo note the region's rectangular *cascine* farmhouses, unique to Piedmont. The longer sides of these buildings face the sun for warmth in winter and are embellished with an arcaded terrace, stone floors and iron railings overflowing with colorful flowers.

Before lunch, pedal into Barolo and admire its impressive castle. This quaint medieval village gave the world-famous, light-colored red wine its name. You will have time to explore and enjoy lunch on your own at a local café. Perhaps you'll sample wine at one of the many cantinas or stroll the cozy streets, full of little quaint shops and cafés. You may also visit the interesting WIMU, the wine museum located in the castle of Barolo.

Then, cycle downhill back to your hotel or add miles for a scenic ride to Sinio in the Talloria Valley.

Later today at the hotel, follow our expert guide through the underground historic wine cellars of Tenuta di Fontanafredda, among the 100 finest cellars in the world. The King of Italy Vittorio Emanuele II bought the estate in 1858 and 12 years later decided to cut most of the forest to plant the first vineyards. His son, the Prince Emanuele Alberto, later transformed the estate into a formidable wine business by partnering with the Marques Falletti and Count Cavour to create the now-famous Barolo wine.

This evening shuttle to Alba, the capital of white truffles, for a stroll or maybe some shopping before dining on your own. You must try the delicious *ravioli del plin* or *tajarin* pasta!

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Fontanafredda to Barolo — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Barolo to Hotel — 6 km (4 miles) OR Barolo to Sinio and Hotel — 26 km (16 miles)

### What to Expect:

A steady and gradual uphill takes you through the hilltop wine village of Serralunga to Roddino. To skip these first 10 km, you can ask for a van shuttle. From Roddino enjoy a panoramic ride along the crest of a hill through the village of Monforte on your way to Barolo. The afternoon short ride is easy and downhill, taking you back to your hotel. The optional longer ride in the Talloria Valley includes a long and very manageable uphill to Sinio, followed by a gradual downhill back to the hotel. All routes are well paved with little car traffic.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leaders for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 – 50 km (4 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 4: Ride to Alta Langa into Liguria

Today your ride follows a high route into Alta Langa, a stunning patchwork of hazelnut trees, towering oaks, and wide-open views of the Alps. You cycle an ancient road that Napoleon traveled during his first war campaign in the region. Later, you descend into a valley that follows the ancient Roman trade route linking France and Italy. Coastal Ligurians traded wine, cheese, honey and especially salt in Piedmont and France. Pause for lunch in one of the most beautiful villages of Italy: sleepy Millesimo, reclining on the banks of the Bormida River. Its ancient bridge dates to the 12th century, sure to be one of the best photo ops of your vacation.

Continue your ride on an easy winding route along the Bormida into the Italian region of Liguria. At ride's end, join a shuttle to our next hotel, built on the sandy beach of San Lorenzo al Mare on the Italian Riviera. Enjoy a welcome *aperitivo* and settle in, stroll on the beach, or swim in the azure waters of the Ligurian Sea. In 2020, the Foundation for Environmental Education awarded this stretch of sea with the Blue Flag for the cleanliness of its beaches and seawater and its sustainable tourism.

You dine at the hotel restaurant tonight.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bossolasco to Millesimo – 35 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Millesimo to Calizzano – 24 km (15 miles)

### What to Expect:

Your ride is particularly scenic this morning as you cycle an easy rolling panoramic route in Alta Langa, at an altitude of about 2,000 feet. There'll be little traffic, with the exception of some motorbikes. After about 28 km (17 miles), you descend into the Bormida River valley and stop for lunch. The afternoon ride is almost flat or very gradually ascending as it follows the river upstream. You are picked up at the end of

the ride to shuttle to your next hotel. Routes are well paved, with little car traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 59 km (15 – 37 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 5: Bike along the Ligurian Sea / Explore San Remo and Riva Ligure

After breakfast, cycle from your hotel on an easy scenic bike path, built on former railway tracks that trace the breathtaking Ligurian coast. The path is paved and well maintained, enjoyable for fast riders, beginners, and locals. This leisurely and utterly pleasant ride offers a feast for the eyes as you pass Mediterranean shrub, vibrant flowers, palms, little villages, high belfries and of course the blue waters of the Ligurian Sea. You later coast into pretty, seaside San Remo. This resort town has hosted emperors and empresses and was the site of the San Remo Conference after World War I. If you wish, stop here to visit the synagogue and stroll the shop-lined pedestrian zone.

Continue your journey to the fishing village of Ospedaletti, known as the pearl of this colorful “Coast of Flowers.” You arrive here by riding through a tunnel that doubles as a gallery of portraits from the famous Milano-San Remo Spring classic cycling race. This sprinters classic—a one-day, 185.2-mile competition—held its inaugural in 1907 and today is one of the five prestigious “Monuments” of the bike racing circuit. En route back to your hotel, explore the quaint coastal villages of Riva Ligure and Santo Stefano al Mare at leisure. You might stop to stroll the maze of *caruggi*, the characteristic narrow medieval streets, or perhaps pick a café for lunch on your own. And nothing goes with an Italian bicycle ride like a delicious gelato.

Dinner is on your own this evening in San Lorenzo al Mare. You have many eateries to choose from and a lovely seaside setting for an after-dinner stroll.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: San Lorenzo to Ospedaletti — 24 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Ospedaletti to Borgo Prino and San Lorenzo — 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

Enjoy a relaxing flat ride, on a dedicated well-paved bike path. There are four well-lit tunnels along the 24 km (15 mile) route. You retrace much of the same route on the way back to the hotel, with the exception of a few miles along the coastal road that passes through two villages.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 56 km (15 – 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 6: Ride to Taggia / Torre Paponi / Pesto cooking class / Oil tasting

Your culinary bike tour of Italy leads you into the Argentina River valley on your last day, where you'll follow an easy bike path that leads to Taggia, one of the most beautiful villages in Italy. Here, local guide and food expert Roberta introduces you to the Mediterranean culture and diet. During a visit to an old olive oil mill still in operation, you'll taste fragrant Canestrelli bread and *borage grissini* with extra virgin olive oil and olive tapenade. Then enjoy a special treat as you head into the heart of an authentic medieval village—complete with fortified portals and coats of arms identifying past noble families. Here, with the help of Roberta and other local cooks, you prepare the region's renowned pesto sauce, using local basil and other fresh ingredients, a marble mortar, and a wooden pestle. Then, learn to prepare fresh handmade *parpaiui*, butterfly pasta that perfectly matches the sauce. Then it's lunchtime as you savor the meal you've helped prepare. Later, Roberta leads us on a short walk on the cobbled street of Taggia.

After, you retrace your route back to the hotel to relax. A longer route takes you up the San Lorenzo River to Torre Paponi. Avid cyclists can test their abilities on their own on famous uphill roads of the Milano-San Remo race, right behind our hotel.

This evening, celebrate your Piedmont cycling discoveries during a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Taggia — 15 km (9 miles)

Afternoon: Taggia to San Lorenzo — 15 km (9 miles) OR Taggia to Torre Paponi to San Lorenzo — 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:



Today's route is on an easy bike path. The afternoon longer option includes a very gradual ascent of about 5 km (3 miles) and is moderate. All roads and bike paths are well paved and far from traffic.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 29 km (9 – 18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7: VBT Bicycling Vacation ends / Travel to Arma di Taggia or Nice

After breakfast transportation is provided to the nearby railway station of Arma di Taggia, arriving around 9:00 a.m. Your tour ends here; frequent train connections can take you to Genova, Milan, or back to Turin's Porta Nuova station. Please check the Trenitalia train timetable in advance as the train schedule changes mid-June. You are responsible for your own train travel and transportation to the airport for your flight home.

If you would like to travel to Nice\*, France, let your trip leaders know in advance and you are welcome to board our coach at 8:30 a.m., arriving at our Nice hotel around 10:00 a.m., and there make your connections on your own.

\*NOTE: if you are booked on the May 20, 2024, departure, transportation is provided to Arma di Taggia railway station only, as the option to travel to Nice is not available.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### Le Querce del Vareglia (Day 1)

Nestled on 86 acres of farmland, Le Querce del Vareglia was lovingly restored in 2004 from the ruins of a typical 17th-century *cascina*. Beautiful frescoed ceilings and beams preserve the old-world charm. You're sure to find your hosts' passion about the country and farming life contagious as you stroll the property's

trails, visit the horse stables, and even pause to visit the onsite wine cantina. Excellent wines are produced from the well-manicured vineyards of Barbera, Nebbiolo, and other grapes, and lush peaches grow in the orchard. You'll savor the harvest of Le Querce del Vereglio throughout your stay, as ingredients for your meals are plucked fresh from the soil, including the truffles dug up from under the oak and willow trees. At the end of a day, you can cool off in the swimming pool. Air conditioning and free WiFi are available throughout the property.

### **Le Case dei Conti Mirafiore (Days 2-3)**

Opened in the summer of 2017, the remarkable Hotel Le case dei Conti Mirafiore is part of the large historical village of Tenuta di Fontanafredda, where the celebrated Barolo wine was created. The estate spreads across almost 300 acres of land; 200 of them are blanketed with beautiful lush vineyards. The "Wood of Thoughts," a peaceful park with rare plants and trees and a small lake, offers a marked walking trail and benches. The onsite historic Royal Villa, once the residence of King Vittorio Emanuele II and his family, boasts a 1-star Michelin restaurant and its sister restaurant, Disguido. You'll find dining and breakfast here—a rare privilege.

Enjoy your stay at this luxurious air-conditioned hotel, and explore the property's majestic underground cellars, named one of the 100 most beautiful in the world.

### **Hotel Riviera dei Fiori (Days 4-6)**

Situated on a sandy shore of the tranquil San Lorenzo a Mare and located long a beautiful paved bike path, the 4-star Hotel Riviera dei Fiori boasts a unique pagoda-style architecture. A private beach, sun chairs, and umbrellas invite you to relax and admire the views of its intimate bay. The hotel's owner is a collector of rare bicycles and his passion has inspired the design of this little cyclist's haven. Bike-themed artwork, old posters, and even several 19th-century velocipedes adorn the interiors. Air-conditioned rooms are gracious, modern, and elegant. In 2020, the Foundation for Environmental Education awarded this stretch of sea with the Blue Flag for the cleanliness of its beaches and sea water and its sustainable tourism.