

## 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 Sanremo, where you'll experience the beauty of the Ligurian coast while riding on a scenic new bike path. 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:** 4-42 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: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Travel to Canale / Truffle Hunt / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception and Dinner**

Your tour begins at 12:30 p.m. at our Pre-Tour hotel, the Grand Hotel Sitea in Turin. A VBT representative will meet you in the lobby. Please be sure to have lunch before departing the hotel. If you expect to arrive later than 12:30 p.m. or experience any delays, please call the hotel and ask the front desk to relay the message to the VBT representative.

All guests will then travel to Canale—approximately one hour southeast of Turin—located in Piedmont's beautiful Roero region. Upon arrival at your charming *agriturismo*, a country resort and working farm set on 86 acres, you'll enjoy a safety and bike-fitting session. Then, gear up for a short warm-up ride through the scenic surroundings with your trip leaders.

Your culinary biking adventure begins with an authentic truffle hunt. Join an expert *trifolao* (truffle hunter) and her dogs—Alba, Teo, and Edvige—as you search the property grounds for this prized underground delicacy. During the outing, you'll learn how to identify and preserve truffles, with your efforts rewarded by a tasting.

This evening, gather at the hotel for a welcome cocktail featuring local wines and cheeses, followed by a welcome dinner at the estate's restaurant. Enjoy a delicious meal made with fresh ingredients from the on-site gardens, perfectly paired with wines produced on the farm—a flavorful introduction to Piedmont's rich, locally sourced cuisine.

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride — 12 km (8 miles)

### What to Expect:

After an initial downhill from your *agriturismo*, enjoy an easy ride through the countryside toward Canale.

On the return, you can choose to tackle the steep hill or simply walk a short distance to avoid it.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (8 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

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

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

Today's route takes you through some of Piedmont's most beautiful farmlands and natural landscapes, leading to the ancient Roman city of Pollenzo—now a timeless village whose architecture spans the centuries. While most Roman ruins have been lost, the outline of the ancient amphitheater is still visible, as you'll notice while walking among the terraced houses built upon the site. In the central piazza, admire the neo-Gothic monuments commissioned by the Royal Savoy family, whose King Charles Albert once made Pollenzo his favorite holiday retreat.

Pollenzo is also home to the internationally renowned University of Gastronomic Sciences, founded in 2004 by the Slow Food organization. Located in the historic Corte Albertina, the university promotes sustainable agriculture and biodiversity. Adjacent to the university is the Wine Bank, where more than 300 Italian winemakers select, store, and preserve their finest vintages—creating a living archive of Italy's wine heritage. During a short stop, you'll have time to explore Pollenzo and its treasures on your own.

Afterward, shuttle across the River Tanaro—the natural northern border of the Langhe—into the birthplace of the famed Barolo wine. The breathtaking hills of the Langhe, or *langa*, are known for their world-class wines, cheeses, and truffles. This UNESCO World Heritage site is celebrated for its winemaking traditions, harmonious landscapes, and the deep cultural connection between people and the land. Arrive in the hilltop village of La Morra and enjoy lunch on your own. It's truly a privilege to cycle through this exceptional region.

Continue your ride along gently rolling and mostly downhill routes, passing scenic valleys with views of the hilltop villages of Verduno and Roddi, each crowned with impressive castles. Your destination is the majestic Tenuta di Fontanafredda. Spanning 296 acres (120 hectares), this historic wine estate includes vineyards, centuries-old buildings, wine cellars, a peaceful lake, rare trees, and tranquil walking trails in the Woods of Thoughts. Take time to browse the hotel's unique library or simply relax and explore the grounds.

This evening, enjoy dinner at the hotel's Cascina Galarej restaurant, which offers sweeping views of the surrounding hills. The chef is dedicated to using the finest Piedmont ingredients, prepared with care and integrity in line with Slow Food principles.

#### Today's Ride Choices

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

Afternoon: La Morra to Hotel — 15 km (9 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Departing from the hotel, you'll ride into the forested Roero region along an undulating route with minimal car traffic, arriving in Pollenzo before lunch. From Pollenzo, we offer an 8-km (5-mile) shuttle to help you avoid traffic and a long uphill climb into La Morra, your lunch stop. The afternoon ride is mostly downhill and flat, with just one rolling hill, following paved country roads. Toward the end of the route, you'll pass through a village with some car traffic.

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 45 km (9 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

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

Today, ride or shuttle to the hilltop town of Roddino. Your invigorating journey begins with an uphill climb to Roddino, followed by a gentler ride along a scenic ridge offering sweeping views of manicured vineyards and farmland. You'll cycle through the medieval village of Monforte, a perfect place to pause and wander its picturesque alleyways.

As you make your way toward Barolo, take note of the region's distinctive *cascine*—traditional Piedmontese farmhouses with long, sun-facing sides for winter warmth, arcaded terraces, stone floors, and balconies bursting with colorful flowers.

Before lunch, arrive in the charming village of Barolo, home to the world-famous red wine that bears its name. Admire the impressive castle, then enjoy time to explore and have lunch at a local café. You might choose to sample wines at one of the many *cantinas*, browse quaint shops, or visit WIMU, the innovative

wine museum located in the castle itself.

After lunch, cycle downhill back to your hotel, or extend your ride with a scenic loop through the Talloria Valley and the village of Sinio.

Later today, join an expert guide for a tour of the historic underground wine cellars of Tenuta di Fontanafredda—ranked among the 100 finest wine cellars in the world. The estate was purchased by King Vittorio Emanuele II in 1858, and twelve years later, he cleared much of the surrounding forest to plant the first vineyards. His son, Prince Emanuele Alberto, later transformed the property into a thriving wine business through partnerships with the Marquis of Falletti and Count Cavour, contributing to the creation of the now-celebrated Barolo wine.

This evening, shuttle to the nearby town of Alba—the white truffle capital of Italy—for a stroll or a bit of shopping before enjoying dinner on your own. Be sure to try the region's signature pasta dishes, such as *ravioli del plin* or *tajarin*.

#### 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, gradual uphill leads you through the hilltop wine village of Serralunga to Roddino; if you prefer to skip the first 10 km, you may request a van shuttle. From Roddino, enjoy a scenic ridge ride through the village of Monforte on your way to Barolo. The afternoon's shorter option is an easy, mostly downhill ride back to your hotel. For those looking to extend the experience, an optional longer route takes you into the Talloria Valley, featuring a long but manageable climb to Sinio followed by a gradual downhill return. All routes are well-paved with minimal car traffic. Today may also 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 into Alta Langa and Liguria

Today, your ride follows a scenic high route into the Alta Langa, a stunning patchwork of hazelnut groves, towering oaks, and sweeping views of the Alps. You'll cycle along an ancient road once traveled by Napoleon during his first military campaign in the region. Later, descend into a valley that traces the path of an old Roman trade route linking France and Italy—once vital for the exchange of wine, cheese, honey, and especially salt between coastal Liguria, Piedmont, and beyond.

Pause for lunch in one of Italy's most beautiful villages: sleepy Millesimo, nestled along the banks of the Bormida River. Its picturesque 12th-century stone bridge offers one of the best photo ops of your trip.

Continue your ride on a gently winding route along the Bormida River into the Italian region of Liguria. At the end of the ride, join a shuttle to your next hotel, located directly on the sandy beach of San Lorenzo al Mare on the Italian Riviera. Enjoy a welcome *aperitivo*, settle in, stroll along the beach, or take a refreshing swim in the azure waters of the Ligurian Sea. In 2023, this stretch of coastline once again received the Blue Flag award from the Foundation for Environmental Education for its clean beaches, pristine seawater, and commitment to sustainable tourism.

Dinner is included this evening at the hotel's restaurant.

### Today's Ride Choices

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

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

### What to Expect:

This morning's ride is especially scenic as you follow an easy, rolling panoramic route through Alta Langa, at an altitude of approximately 2,000 feet. Traffic is minimal, aside from the occasional motorbike. After about 28 km (17 miles), you'll descend into the Bormida River valley and pause for lunch. The afternoon ride is mostly flat or gently ascending as it follows the river upstream. At the end of the ride, you'll be picked up for a shuttle transfer to your next hotel. All routes are well-paved and have minimal car traffic.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 5: Bike Along the Ligurian Sea / Explore Dolcedo / Olive Oil Tasting

After breakfast, set out from your hotel on a scenic, easygoing ride along a beautifully maintained bike path built on former railway tracks, tracing the breathtaking Ligurian coast. This paved path is ideal for all levels—fast riders, beginners, and locals alike. The leisurely ride is a visual delight, with Mediterranean shrubbery, vibrant flowers, palm trees, charming villages, high belfries, and the sparkling blue waters of the Ligurian Sea lining your route.

Soon, you'll leave the coast and ride along a quiet country road flanked by stately olive trees, gradually ascending to a typical Ligurian village: Dolcedo. The village has ancient origins and, thanks to its olive oil production, once hosted a bustling market under the vaulted arcades of the Town Hall loggia. Today, you can still see and touch centuries-old tools—such as white marble jars once used to store, weigh, and measure oil.

Enjoy a walk across the ancient stone bridge over the Prino River, built by the Knights of Malta. On this side of the village, traces of medieval shops that once animated the area remain visible. From the bridge, take in postcard-worthy views of the valley. Beneath the stone houses, old mill wheels once channeled river water toward local olive presses. After lunch, you'll stop at one of these historic mills for an engaging visit and tasting.

Dinner is on your own this evening in San Lorenzo al Mare, where you'll find plenty of inviting eateries and a lovely seaside promenade for an after-dinner stroll.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: San Lorenzo to Dolcedo — 30 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Dolcedo to Hotel — 7 km (4 miles) OR Dolcedo to San Lorenzo and Torre Paponi to Hotel — 20 km (12 miles)

### What to Expect:

Enjoy a relaxing start along a dedicated, well-paved bike path for the first 7 km. Then, tackle a steady, gradual ascent with a 4% gradient—very manageable, though with some car traffic—for about 10 km. The

final morning stretch to Dolcedo is a pleasant downhill. In the afternoon, you can choose between two options: a short, easy downhill ride (with some traffic as you leave Dolcedo) back to the hotel, or a longer, moderate option to Torre Paponi that takes you up a narrow country road along a valley before returning to the hotel on the same route.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 – 50 km (4 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 6: Sanremo / Local Market Visit / Pesto Cooking Class**

Your culinary bike tour of Italy concludes with a scenic ride into Sanremo, the “City of Flowers and Music,” set along the stunning Riviera dei Fiori. Known for its elegant villas, palm-lined promenade, and vibrant markets, Sanremo offers the perfect blend of history and charm.

Park your bike and follow our food expert, Roberta, through the narrow streets of the medieval Old Town to the bustling local market. Each morning, farmers from the surrounding valleys bring in fresh fruits and vegetables, creating a colorful, aromatic feast for the senses. With Roberta, enjoy a delicious lunch crafted from local ingredients.

Later, join her for a hands-on culinary experience. Under her guidance, you’ll prepare Liguria’s famous pesto using fresh basil, a marble mortar, and a wooden pestle—the traditional way.

In the afternoon, ride back to the hotel for a relaxing break, or opt for a longer route to Imperia along a newly completed stretch of the scenic coastal bike path.

This evening, celebrate your unforgettable journey through Liguria with a festive farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Sanremo — 19 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Sanremo to Hotel — 19 km (12 miles) OR Sanremo to Imperia and Hotel — 39 km (24 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's route follows an easy, well-paved bike path.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 58 km (12 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7: Travel to Arma di Taggia or Nice\* / Your VBT Vacation Ends

After breakfast, transportation will be provided to the nearby railway station in Arma di Taggia, arriving around 9:00 a.m. Your tour concludes here. From the station, frequent train connections are available to Genoa, Milan, or back to Turin's Porta Nuova station. Please check the Trenitalia timetable in advance, as schedules are subject to change in mid-June. You are responsible for arranging your own train travel and transportation to the airport for your flight home.

If you would like to travel to Nice\*, France, please inform your trip leaders in advance. You are welcome to join our coach at 8:30 a.m., arriving at our Nice hotel around 10:00 a.m., where you can continue your onward journey independently.

*\*For guests on the May 18, 2026, departure, transportation is provided to the Arma di Taggia railway station only; the option to travel to Nice is not available on this date.*

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 Vareglia 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.