

## The Tuscan Coast

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

Tuscany's lavish coast begs to be explored by bicycle, and we've mapped out the most breathtaking routes to help you do so, including the storied Strada del Vino, or wine road. Along the way, we bring you close to a rich and rustic culture. Ride through a canvas of cypress, cork, and pine forests hugging azure Tyrrhenian Sea waters. Uncover Etruscan and medieval history in magnificent hilltop villages. Savor farm-fresh cuisine with gracious hosts and the hospitality of fine agriturismos. Sample freshly pressed olive oil and celebrated wines. This is VBT's Italy.



## Cultural Highlights

- Tour an agriturismo's wine cantina with its owner, Luigi Brunetti
- Ride Italy's renowned wine route, the Strada del Vino
- Savor a meal and learn how to prepare it with the founder of Cooking in Tuscany at her home

- Pick up some key Italian during a language lesson with your bilingual Trip Leaders
- Sample freshly pressed olive oil and enjoy lunch and a tour at Fonte di Foiano olive-oil mill
- Cycle to 10th-century Suvereto via the breathtaking Etruscan Coast
- Taste the celebrated Super Tuscans of the Bolgheri region
- Experience the countryside by horse during a thrilling optional tour
- Marvel at medieval Castiglione della Pescaia, a stunning walled coastal city

## What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills, and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Our VBT support shuttle is always available for those who need assistance with the hills.

**Tour Duration:** 10 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 18 - 45

**Average Cycling Time:** 00:45 - 04:45

**Group size:** 20 max

## Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

Apr 68°/46°, May 75°/53°, Jun 84°/58°, Sep 81°/58°, Oct 69°/51°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

Apr 2.9, May 3.0, Jun 2.7, Sep 3.3, Oct 4.0

## DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Florence

Depart from home for Italy. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

## DAY 2: Arrive in Florence

Upon arrival at the Florence airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, you must fill out a PIR form before leaving the customs area; VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. Also, make sure that your VBT luggage tags are attached to your bags so that your representative can identify you.

The representative will be waiting outside the customs area in your arrival terminal and will be holding a

VBT sign. He or she will help you transfer to your hotel (approximately 30 minutes).

If you are going to be delayed meeting our transfer representative for more than 15 minutes due to delayed or lost luggage, please let our Airport staff know by calling or sending a text message to +39 347 85 74 265. Our drivers are generally able to wait for up to 45 minutes from the time your flight lands, after which you will be responsible for your own transfer. However, they might be able to reschedule your transfer if they are aware of the delay. You may also contact our One Call travel assistance to advise of your delay, and they will contact our transfer service.

Please note: Your hotel room may not be available until 2:00 p.m. If you arrive early, you may store your luggage with the reception desk.

You have the rest of the day free to explore the historic city of Florence and enjoy its Renaissance architecture and famous museums, using VBT's City Information as your guide. In the evening, relax in one of the city's restaurants and sample the local cuisine.

Hotel: Hotel De La Ville

## **DAY 3: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Florence / Transfer to Collemezzano**

VBT Air Package and Pre-Trip Extension guests: This morning, spend more free time exploring Florence's wonderful museums, shops and cafés. Take in the spectacular Duomo, the centerpiece of the city. Perhaps walk across the Arno River on the famous Ponte Vecchio, browsing the goldsmith and silversmith shops that line the bridge, modern-day replacements of the butchers and grocers of centuries gone by. See works by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Botticelli and Raphael at the Uffizi Gallery (reservations are required). Or just relax and enjoy a cappuccino or espresso in the Piazza della Repubblica, the perfect place for people watching in this vibrant city.

At 12:00 p.m., meet your VBT Trip Leaders in the hotel lobby. They will be easy to recognize, as they will be wearing VBT staff garments. Once the entire group is assembled, you transfer by private motorcoach (approximately 2 hours) to Collemezzano. During the transfer, the coach will stop so you can buy lunch.

On arrival in Collemezzano, you proceed to the Agrihotel Elisabetta, a family-run agriturismo hotel that produces much of its own wine, olive oil, fruit and vegetables. This inviting accommodation and its smiling owner, Luigi Brunetti, will surely enchant you. After settling in, meet your Trip Leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session before a short warm-up ride over gentle hills and past old farmhouses shaded by

cypress trees. Later this afternoon, our gregarious host Luigi takes you on a guided tour of his wine cantina. Here, sample some of Luigi's varietals while sharing the day's stories with your small group. Dinner is at the hotel restaurant.

Hotel: Agrihotel Elisabetta

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 8.7 miles (14 km)

## **DAY 4: Ride the road of the "3 Comuni" / Costa degli Etruschi**

After breakfast, cycle from Castellina Marittima on a scenic road of the Maremma Pisana, riding high in the hills of the Cecina Valley. Your view from these splendid seaside slopes extends from the coast and faraway islands to the valley nestled between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the mountains on Tuscany's Costa degli Etruschi—the Etruscan Coast. During this invigorating reel through the rolling countryside, you pass the "3 Comuni," or three hilltop towns, and pedal your way to Casale Marittimo, the most picturesque of the trio. Upon arrival, admire its medieval castle and the 12th-century Sant'Andrea Church. For lunch, you will gather in a scenic spot with your fellow riders for a delicious picnic prepared by your Trip Leaders.

Afterward, continue cycling downhill through the charming village of Bibbona, entering the fragrant Cecina pine forest. Your route back to the hotel traces the azure waters of the sea, giving you a chance to go for a swim if you wish. If you prefer, you may return in the shuttle. This evening is at leisure at Agrihotel Elisabetta, where dinner is on your own.

Hotel: Agrihotel Elisabetta

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 14, 20, or 33 miles (23, 34.1, or 52.7 km)

## **DAY 5: Cycle Cecina Mare and the Strada del Vino**

Begin your day by pedaling the Cecina Mare promenade en route to the Strada del Vino, one of the most beautiful of Italy's wine roads. Your route skirts the Ornellaia vineyard to Bolgheri, traversing gently rolling hills. Bolgheri is one of the most prestigious wine regions in Italy. In addition to its own DOC wines, you will want to sample the Super Tuscans that revolutionized the Italian winemaking industry. Bolgheri is also known for its Viale dei Cipressi, a cypress-lined avenue immortalized in the poem "San Guido" by Giosuè Carducci. You may want to stroll along this boulevard after enjoying lunch on your own.

This afternoon, shuttle to the Tombolo Talasso Resort, your deluxe hotel right on the Tyrrhenian Sea, or continue cycling on easy back roads. Whichever you choose, you'll gather together a bit later for an Italian aperitivo with your VBT Trip Leaders. In the evening, enjoy a home-hosted experience in a typical Tuscan countryside house. Your host, Chicca (pronounced "Key-ka"), will open her home and you will cook dinner with her. Chicca is the founder of Cooking in Tuscany, a culinary-gastronomic association that promotes traditional Italian and Tuscan cuisine in Italy and abroad. The goals of the association are to experiment with and research old traditional recipes, to use and emphasize typical products of the season, and to promote the culture and tradition of the region through the knowledge of local ingredients. And, of course, to share the hospitality and warmth of an Italian family! Chicca will present a one-hour, hands-on cooking class, after which you will have the chance to dine on your own creations at sunset under the pergola.

Hotel: Tombolo Talasso Resort

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 18 or 27 miles (28.8 or 43.8 km)

## **DAY 6: Visit an olive-oil mill**

After breakfast, continue riding the historic Strada del Vino to the family-owned and operated Fonte di Foiano olive-oil mill. During your visit, you'll meet the Di Gaetano family, who lead you on a private tour of the press and workshop. Taste the oil during a degustazione (sampling) on the terrace. During your tasting, Simone Di Gaetano explains the differences and varied flavors among Italy's olive-growing regions. Afterward, find your place at the table on the farm's grounds for a delicious vegetarian lunch—prepared by his brother and chef Paolo, using organic and fragrant vegetables.

After, cycle back to your hotel, stopping at Daniela's excellent bicycle shop along the way, a local treasure. Once you've returned, you might stretch out in the sand at the hotel's private beach, or relax in one of the five thermal swimming pools at the Wellness Center at an extra cost. Tonight, your Trip Leaders can suggest a restaurant to try for dinner on your own in the lovely seaside village of Marina di Castagneto.

Hotel: Tombolo Talasso Resort

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 7, 18, or 25 miles (11.8, 29.1, or 40.5 km)

## **DAY 7: Cycle Castagneto, Sassetta, Suvereto and Maremma**

Today's adventure from Castagneto follows one of the most picturesque routes in Europe. Cycling past

chestnut, cork and pine trees, medieval estates, and fields of sunflowers, you arrive in Suvereto, an ancient village whose origins date to the year 1000. Overlooking the Costa degli Etruschi, it is a true jewel, rich in history and art, set in the green valley of the River Cornia. Suvereto displays remarkable architectural harmony: Its ancient walls enclose paved streets lined with stone houses, historic buildings, impressive churches and shadowy cloisters.

Continue on a countryside ride to Montioni and Cura Nuova where you stop for lunch on your own. Then continue riding through the scenic Maremma, a beautiful area of flat grazing lands, or join our shuttle. Your destination today is a welcoming country retreat, Agriturismo Montebelli. An extra challenging and scenic option has been designed by our Trip Leaders for avid cyclists.

Situated on immaculately maintained grounds blanketed with olive trees, vineyards and wildflowers, tonight you may explore all that your hotel has to offer. You will be greeted by the friendly owner Alessandro Tosi, who will take you to visit the vineyards and let you taste some of the wines that he proudly produces - two of which (Acantos and Fabula Riserva) won a gold medal. Dinner tonight is a barbeque buffet, freshly and sumptuously prepared on the beautiful hotel grounds.

Hotel: Agriturismo Montebelli

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 20.8, 30.8, or 47.2 miles (33.6, 49.7, or 75.5 km)

## **DAY 8: Explore Castiglione della Pescaia**

After breakfast, cycle the soft foothills of the high Maremma, a scenic, lush landscape traversed mostly by locals. Later in the morning, you'll arrive in the lovely seaside resort of Castiglione della Pescaia. This city's layers of history extend from Roman occupation through its many subsequent rulers. In the Middle Ages, the city suffered repeated pirate attacks, so a fortress was built to defend the city. You may walk up to the castle and explore the Old Town, taking in spectacular views of the islands of Elba and Giglio. Castiglione della Pescaia is an ideal spot for last-minute shopping or, in the summer, sunbathing on the beach.

If you prefer not to cycle today, you may enjoy leisurely pursuits at the Agriturismo Montebelli, perhaps strolling the vineyards or relaxing at the intimate spa.

Tonight, you'll enjoy a memorable farewell dinner together.

Hotel: Agriturismo Montebelli

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 14 or 28 miles (23 or 46 km)

## **DAY 9: Transfer to Rome / Free Time / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends**

VBT Air Package & Post Trip Extension guests: After breakfast, transfer to your central Rome hotel for your final overnight stay. Your hotel room may not be available until 2:30 p.m. You may store your luggage with the reception desk.

If you have chosen the independent Post-Trip Extension to Rome, you will remain at this hotel for three nights. When you arrive today, VBT's Rome representative can answer your questions and offer optional city walks to help you make the most of your time in Rome. VBT's City Information includes recommendations for restaurants, attractions and transportation in Rome, and will help you explore on your own.

Hotel: Hotel dei Mellini

Meals: B

## **DAY 10: Bicycle Vacation ends / Depart for home**

After breakfast\* this morning, you will transfer to the Rome airport (approximately 40-60 minutes, depending upon traffic) for your departing flight\*\*. Please ensure you are ready in the hotel reception area at the designated transfer time.

\* Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

\*\* Please note: VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your "Transfer Reminder." VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: B