

Italy: Coastal Villages of Tuscany

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Tuscany's lavish coast begs to be explored by bicycle, and we've mapped out our Tuscany bike tours to offer the most breathtaking experiences. Picturesque hill towns dot the countryside and its patchwork of colors, blanketed by a canvas of cypress, cork, and pine forests that hug the azure Tyrrhenian Sea waters. Uncover Etruscan and medieval history in magnificent hilltop villages, farmhouses, and hamlets. Dine alongside gracious local hosts, enjoying seasonal, farm-fresh cuisine from their organic gardens. Sample smooth olive oils while learning about different pressing methods. Taste varieties of celebrated wines along the picturesque Strada del Vino, the picturesque Wine Road. Finally, rejuvenate in the natural pool and springs of an Etruscan Calidarium. 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
Rejuvenate in the natural pool of Etruscan hot springs

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: 7 - 49

Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 03:15

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 68°/40°, 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 representative 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 Allianz Global 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

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 11:30 a.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 two 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 to officially begin your Tuscany bike tour with 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: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (8 miles)

Afternoon

Collemezzano Warm-Up: 14 km (8 miles)

What to Expect: A pleasant countryside loop around our *agriturismo* traverses slightly rolling terrain. Enjoy bucolic vistas and little car traffic.

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

After breakfast, today's Tuscany bike tour takes you on a jaunt along a scenic road from Castellina Marittima across 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: Breakfast, Lunch

Today’s Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 – 62 km (14 – 38.5 miles)

Morning

Castellina Marittima to Casale Marittimo: 23 km (14 miles)

Castellina Marittimo to Casale Marittimo Plus: 32 km (20 miles)

Afternoon

Casale Marittimo to Agrihotel Elisabetta: 30 km (18.5 miles)

What to Expect: After a 20-minute shuttle up to Castellina Marittima, enjoy a long scenic downhill reel into the Cecina Valley. Then climb up to Montescudaio to begin riding the rolling ‘Strada dei 3 Comuni’, connecting the three hilltop villages of Montescudaio, Guardistallo, and Casale Marittimo. If you wish, ride a longer moderate loop in the hills before lunch. Then thrill to an exhilarating descent to the sea, riding through a cool, fragrant pine forest along the sea on an unpaved, well beaten path. Finally end at your hotel on paved city roads and city bike path.

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: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 47 km (9 – 28 miles)

Morning

Collemezzano to Bolgheri: 29 km (17 miles)

Afternoon

Bolgheri to Tombolo Talasso Resort: 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect: This morning's ride is initially flat and includes a ride through a pine forest on three miles of soft and well-packed unpaved terrain along the beach and sea. After the first 10 miles, the route meanders past vineyards on a moderately rolling route to medieval Bolgheri, where we stop for lunch. Later, the hills are gentler and easier along a fantastic cycling road. The last miles are flat as you approach the sea and continue to the hotel.

DAY 6: Visit an olive-oil mill

After breakfast, your Tuscan bike tour continues through 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. Sea water is pumped in the pools directly from the sea after been filtered. 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: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 – 40 km (7 – 25 miles)

Morning

Hotel Tombolo to Fonte di Foiano: 12 km (7 miles)

OR

Hotel Tombolo to Fonte di Foiano Plus: 29 km (18 miles)

Afternoon

Fonte di Foiano to Hotel Tombolo: 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: The morning ride sets a relaxed pace for the day, with a short and long option along the Strada del Vino to our lunch stop. You will bike on country roads lined with hundreds of olive trees. After lunch, follow a different route that includes 1.6 km (1 mile) of unpaved bike path in a pine forest, back to our hotel.

DAY 7: Cycle Castagneto, Sassetta, and Suvereto / enjoy natural hot springs

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. You stop for lunch in Suvereto before continuing on a beautiful rolling and mostly downhill road, free from car traffic, into the peaceful Cornia Valley.

A longer loop takes you further south to Cura Nuova on a countryside road. Our destination and home for the next two nights is the peaceful Hotel Calidario. The hotel treasures a unique feature: a natural open air pool of 3,000 square meters, formed by the hot springs flowing from a granite basin situated deep in the rocks behind the hotel and rich in minerals. All the area is protected by the Natural Reserves of the Cornia Valley Parks that also protects the several Roman and Etruscan finds. The waters of the area were used by the Etruscans to melt metals.

After a long day of cycling, settle in, relax and enjoy the springs and hotel spa. Tonight, try the wooden-fire pizza of the hotel, here prepared with different organic doughs, or select from the menu.

Hotel: Hotel Calidario Terme

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 78 km (12 – 48 miles)

Morning

Hotel Tombolo to Suvereto: 31 km (19 miles)

Sassetta to Suvereto with Shuttle: 15 km (9 miles)

Afternoon

Suvereto to Hotel Calidario: 20 km (12 miles)

OR

Suvereto to Cura Nuova and Hotel Calidario: 47 km (29 miles)

What to Expect: Today's morning reel begins after a shuttle or uphill climb to Castagneto Carducci, then follows a scenic and undulating stretch to Suvereto. If you wish, you may instead shuttle to Sassetta to begin your ride to Suvereto, trimming 16.1 km (10 miles) off your morning reel. Our lunch stop is Suvereto. The afternoon ride follows an easy and downhill route to our Hotel Calidario. The longer extra ride is mostly easy or slightly rolling and far from car traffic, in the beautiful hills of the Cornia Park.

DAY 8: Explore Baratti Bay and the ancient city of Populonia

After breakfast, shuttle or cycle to Campiglia Marittima. This was an ancient Etruscan center where metals were forged and melted. You will cycle by the Archeological Mines Park of San Silvestro, a protected natural park where copper, lead ores, and other minerals have been mined for centuries, and

today is a museum. You will then follow a winding panoramic route sloping down toward a plain, a thick pine forest, and finally the Tuscan sea. You park your bikes in the bay of Baratti and have time to explore the area, rich of archeological remains from the Etruscans, especially burial mounds. Baratti is a tiny hamlet of only 15 residents, but a very fascinating place that gets many tourists during week-ends and summer, seeking wind for their wind surfs or enjoying walking the trails and swimming. We will have lunch in one of the restaurants overlooking the bay. Early in the afternoon a short shuttle or a bike ride will take you up the hill for more views of the bay and to discover the neighbor Populonia. The city had a very active port during the Etruscan times and the Roman Empire, importing iron ore from the near Isle of Elba and trading finished metal goods. It was later abandoned leaving today a well-preserved walled city that we can visit.

Ride back to your hotel, enjoy more relax and maybe a massage in the hotel spa. Your Tuscany bike tour concludes here, and tonight you'll enjoy a memorable farewell dinner together.

Hotel: Hotel Calidario Terme

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 47 km (9 – 29 miles)

Morning

Hotel Calidario to Campiglia (moderate): 6 km (4 miles)

Campiglia to Baratti: 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon

Baratti to Hotel Calidario: 15 km (9 miles)

What to Expect: This morning you shuttle to start an easy valley ride from the hilltop town of Campiglia Marittima. You can ride from the hotel uphill to Campiglia an extra 3-mile moderate route. Today's gentle hills leave you ample time to explore seaside Baratti bay. You trace the same route back to the hotel.

DAY 9: Transfer to Rome / Free time / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

Air Package guests may enjoy free time in the Eternal City.

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 or Hotel Giulio Cesare

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: 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: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Calidario Terme Etrusche (Days: 7,8)

The hotel is part of a property built around the natural pool of the hot springs of Venturina. A 3,000 square meter lake channels the water, flowing almost constantly year-round and maintaining a temperature of approximately 32° C. Water comes from two outlets placed at one end, below the hill where the spring is located deep underground. The property has several special amenities, including a lovely, small stone church, quaint rooms, a cozy restaurant, spa, reception area, large sun terrace, and lushly landscaped walking trail. Although the air-conditioned hotel has 4-star services and amenities, it prefers to keep a lower profile and with an official 3-star rating due to the limited number of rooms, there is no 24-hour reception. The pace is relaxing and peaceful. The spa, with its brick vaulted ceiling and Tepidarium, is a

great complement to the thermal pool. Treatments can be booked. Entry to the pool is complementary to VBT guests but entry to the spa costs 20 Euros.

Agrihotel Elisabetta (Days: 3,4)

Luigi Brunetti's Agrihotel Elisabetta is situated on a hill in the village of Collemezzano, today part of Cecina in the province of Livorno. After many years as a successful chef across Europe, Luigi realized his dream of returning to Italy and purchasing a farm. Today, this farm and vintage farmhouse—surrounded by vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees—welcomes guests into 31 country-style rooms. While here you'll enjoy wine, fruit, and olive oil produced on the premises, as well as gourmet cuisine prepared by Luigi himself and served in the hotel's restaurant. Enjoy panoramic views from the terrace, take a dip in the pool, and retire to your comfortable room with air conditioning, television, telephone, minibar, and private bath with shower. WiFi is available in the lobby and in select rooms.

Hotel dei Mellini (Day: 9)

Hotel dei Mellini is located on a quiet back street near the Tiber River, convenient to the city's transportation network and within walking distance of the central Piazza del Popolo. Boasting a refined and elegant design, the hotel was once a pair of family palaces. It features air conditioning and a furnished rooftop terrace with an open view of Rome's extraordinary skyline.

Tombolo Talasso Resort (Days: 5,6)

The Tombolo Talasso Resort is set on its own private beach in the charming seaside village of Marina di Castagneto Carducci on the Etruscan Coast. During your stay, you'll be surrounded by enchanting views of green hills, vineyards, and olive groves. Indulge in the luxurious wellness center, where five thermal pools are fed by sea water and where massages and other treatments help soothe the soul and relax the body. All rooms are air conditioned and have a flat-screen TV with SKY channels, a minibar, telephone, hairdryer, and bathroom with shower or bathtub. WiFi is available throughout the resort. The hotel's private beach, sun chairs and umbrellas as well as the changing cabins are free for guests and there is a brand new restaurant on the beach.

Hotel De La Ville (Day: 2)

This hotel has been completely restored and sits in a convenient location in the heart of Florence, a few steps from the famous Duomo on the fashionable shopping street Via Tornabuoni, which is closed to car traffic and quiet. Enjoy spacious, comfortable, air-conditioned private rooms.