

Italy: Coastal Villages of Tuscany

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Tuscany's stunningly beautiful coast begs to be explored by bicycle, and we've mapped out our Tuscany bike tour to offer the most breathtaking experiences. Picturesque towns dot the countryside with a patchwork of colors, surrounded by cypress, cork, and pine forests that hug the azure waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Discover Etruscan and medieval history in magnificent hilltop villages 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. Finally, rejuvenate in the natural pool and springs of an Etruscan Calidarium. This is Tuscany, VBT style.

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 phrases during a language lesson with your bilingual trip leaders

Sample freshly pressed olive oil and enjoy lunch and a tour at the Fonte di Foiano olive-oil mill

Cycle to 10th-century Suvereto via the breathtaking Etruscan Coast

Rejuvenate in the 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 - 48

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 home / Fly overnight to Florence

Depart 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. Please be sure VBT luggage tags are attached to your bags so your representative can identify you. He or she will be waiting outside the customs area in your arrival terminal, holding a VBT sign and will help you transfer to your hotel (approximately 30 minutes).

If you are going to be late meeting our transfer representative by 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, but they might be able to reschedule your transfer if they are aware of the delay. You may also contact Allianz Global Assistance, 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.

Accommodation: Hotel Santa Maria Novella, Florence

DAY 3: 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, and walk across the Arno River on the famous Ponte Vecchio, browsing the goldsmith and silversmith shops that line the bridge as 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 trip leaders dressed in VBT garments in the hotel lobby. Once the entire group is assembled, you will transfer by private coach (approximately two hours) to Collemezzano. During the transfer, the coach will stop so you can buy lunch.

On arrival in Collemezzano, you will 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 a safety and bike-fitting session before a short warm-up ride over gentle hills, past old farmhouses shaded by cypress trees. Later this afternoon, our gregarious host Luigi will take you on a guided tour of his wine cellar which in Italy is called a cantina. Here, sample some of Luigi's varietals while sharing the day's stories with your small group. Dinner is at the hotel restaurant.

Accommodation: Agrihotel Elisabetta, Collemezzano

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (8 miles)

Afternoon

Warm-up Cecina: 14 km (8 miles)

What to Expect: A pleasant countryside loop around our agriturismo traversing 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 foothills of the Cecina Valley. Your view from these splendid hills 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 ride through the rolling countryside, you will pass the "3 Comuni," or three hilltop towns, and pedal your way to Casale Marittimo, the most picturesque of the trio. You'll admire its medieval castle and the 12th-century Sant'Andrea Church. For lunch, you will gather at 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 sea waters, giving you a chance to go for a swim if you wish. If you prefer, you may return in the shuttle. This evening is yours to spend at your leisure at Agrihotel Elisabetta, where dinner is on your own.

Accommodation: Agrihotel Elisabetta, Collemezzano

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cumulative Distance Range: 23 – 62 km (14 – 39 miles)

Morning

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

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

Afternoon

Casale Marittimo to the Etruscan Coast and hotel: 30 km (19 miles)

What to Expect: After a 20-minute shuttle up to Castellina Marittima, enjoy a long scenic downhill ride 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. Those with additional energy can 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 on an unpaved, but well-beaten path. Your ride finishes with paved city streets and bike paths heading to your hotel.

DAY 5: Cycle Cecina Mare and the Strada del Vino / Visit an olive oil mill / Spa and beach time

Begin your day by pedaling the Cecina Mare promenade on 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. You will stop at the family-owned and operated Fonte di Foiano olive oil mill. During your visit, you’ll meet the Di Gaetano family, who will 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 will explain the differences between the various flavors of Italy’s olive-growing regions. Afterward, find your place at the table on the farm’s grounds for a delicious vegetarian lunch prepared by Simone’s brother and chef, Paolo, using fragrant, organic vegetables.

This afternoon, shuttle to the Tombolo Talasso Resort, your deluxe hotel right on the Tyrrhenian Sea, or continue cycling on easy back roads.

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. Filtered water is pumped directly from the sea into the pools.

Tonight, you'll gather together for an Italian *aperitivo* with your VBT trip leaders. They can suggest a restaurant for dinner on your own in the lovely seaside village of Marina di Castagneto.

Accommodation: Tombolo Talasso Resort, Marina di Donoratico

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 – 47 km (7 – 29 miles)

Morning

Collemezzano to Fonte di Foiano Oil Mill: 36 km (22 miles)

Afternoon

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

What to Expect: This morning's ride is initially flat and includes a stretch through a pine forest on three miles of well-packed, unpaved terrain along the beach and sea. After the first 10 miles, the route meanders past vineyards on a moderately rolling route and along the famous 'bolgherese' road, named after the medieval village of Bolgheri. These panoramic routes are very popular also with local cyclists. The last miles are flat as you approach the sea and continue to the hotel.

DAY 6: Bike shop / Cooking class

After breakfast, your Tuscany bike tour continues through the historic Strada del Vino to Bolgheri, one of the most prestigious wine regions in Italy. In addition to its own DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata or Denomination of Controlled Origin) wines, you will want to sample the Super Tuscans – red wines 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.

After lunch on your own, cycle back to your hotel, stopping at Daniela's excellent bicycle shop– a local treasure–along the way. In the evening, enjoy a home-hosted dinner in a typical Tuscan country house. Your host, Chicca (pronounced "Key-ka"), will open her home and you will have the opportunity to join her in cooking dinner. 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 traditional recipes, to use and emphasize seasonal products, and to promote the culture and tradition of the region through 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.

Accommodation: Tombolo Talasso Resort, Marina di Donoratico

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 18 – 52 km (11 – 31 miles)

Morning

Bolgheri and La Strada del Vino: 23 km (14 miles)

OR

Bolgheri and La Strada del Vino Plus: 34 km (20 miles)

Afternoon

Bolgheri to Il Tombolo: 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect: The morning ride sets a relaxed pace for the day, with either a short or longer 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) on an 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 sunflower fields, you will arrive in Suvereto, an ancient village whose origins date to the year 1000. Overlooking the Costa degli Etruschi in the green valley beside the Cornia River, it is a true jewel, rich in history and art. Suvereto displays remarkable architectural harmony: Its ancient walls enclose paved streets lined with stone houses, historic buildings, impressive churches and shadowy cloisters. You will stop for lunch in Suvereto before continuing into the peaceful Cornia Valley on a beautiful rolling and mostly downhill road, free from car traffic.

A longer loop takes you further south to Cura Nuova on a country road. Our destination and home for the next two nights is the peaceful Hotel Calidario. The hotel boasts a unique natural open-air 3,000 square meter pool, formed by the hot springs, rich in minerals, flowing from a granite basin situated deep in the rocks behind the hotel. The area is home to a number of Cornia Valley natural parks which include several Roman and Etruscan finds. The waters of the area were used by the Etruscans to melt metals.

After a wonderful day of cycling, settle in, relax and enjoy the springs and hotel spa. Tonight, try the wood-fired pizza of the hotel, prepared with several different organic doughs, or select another item from the menu.

Accommodation: Hotel Calidario Terme, Venturina Terme

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 78 km (9 – 47 miles)

Morning

Il Tombolo to Suvereto: 31 km (19 miles)

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

Afternoon

Suvereto to Calidarium: 20 km (12 miles)

OR

Suvereto to Cura Nuova and Calidarium: 47 km (28 miles)

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

DAY 8: Explore Campiglia Marittima, 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 follow a winding panoramic route sloping down through a plain, a thick pine forest, and finally to the edge of the Tuscan Sea. After parking your bikes at the bay of Baratti, you will have time to swim or explore the area's Etruscan archeological sites including burial mounds. Baratti is a tiny hamlet of only 15 residents, but that number swells on weekends and during the summer with people windsurfing, swimming, or walking the trails. We will have lunch in a former watch tower, turned into a fine restaurant, overlooking the bay. Early in the afternoon, a short shuttle will take you up the hill for more views across the water. You will discover the neighboring city of Populonia which had a very active port during the Etruscan and Roman eras, importing iron ore from the near Isle of Elba and trading finished metal goods. The remains of this once-thriving but abandoned area is preserved within this walled city.

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

Accommodation: Hotel Calidario Terme, Venturina Terme

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 – 47 km (9 – 28 miles)

Morning

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

Campiglia Marittima to Baratti: 26 km (15 miles)

Afternoon

Baratti to Hotel Calidarium: 15 km (9 miles)

What to Expect: This morning you can shuttle to start an easy valley ride from the hilltop town of Campiglia Marittima or ride from the hotel to Campiglia for an extra 4 miles of uphill challenge. Today's gentle hills leave you ample time to explore Baratti's seaside bay and then retrace your route back to the hotel.

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

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., but you may store your luggage at 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, VBT's Rome representative will 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.

Accommodation: Hotel dei Mellini, Rome

Included 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.

Included 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.

Hotel Santa Maria Novella (Day: 2)

Located on one of the most beautiful squares of Florence, a few steps from the famous Duomo di Firenze and Baptistry, the Hotel Santa Maria Novella boasts elegantly decorated rooms in the classic Florentine style with fine lacquered paneling and wooden flooring. Each air-conditioned room has a different décor and drapery with in-room WiFi. The duo-tone inlays in the marble bathrooms recall the Church of Santa Maria Novella, just opposite the hotel on the same square. An American breakfast is included and may be served on the top roof terrace.

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.