

## Italy: Piedmont, Langhe & the Italian Riviera

### Bike Vacation Only

Foodies and oenophiles, take note! World-famous wines and culinary delicacies are at the heart of this exceptionally scenic journey through northern Italy. Ancient castles, sleepy villages and the region's unique cascina farmhouses dot your path as you roll through breathtaking landscapes famous for their wines, cheeses and truffles. You'll savor lunch in a vaulted wine cellar, bake pizza in a wood-fired oven, sample grappa and more. Like the Slow Food Movement that took root in this region, you'll experience it all at a pace that lets you appreciate it fully.

### Cultural Highlights

Hunt for precious truffles on the grounds of your agriturismo—and enjoy a taste.

Savor a tasting of Arneis and Favorita wines, accompanied by local cheese.

Bite into a selection of homemade cookies prepared by your agriturismo's pastry chef.

Stroll the amphitheater and terraced houses of Pollenzo's ancient Roman settlement.

Visit the birthplace of the Slow Food Organization at the internationally renowned University of Gastronomic Sciences.

Explore the library and scenic trails of Fontanafredda, a historic Italian winery.

Stop in at Grinzane Cavour, a historic castle that is home to the World Auctions of Alba white truffles.

Enjoy views of manicured vineyards, castles and Piedmont's unique *cascine* farmhouses on exhilarating rides.

Discover the villages of Barolo and Barbaresco, famous for their eponymous wines.

Indulge in a very special lunch in an ancient vaulted cellars in Canelli, birthplace of Asti Spumante wines.

Learn to make pizza in a wood-fired stove—and delight in the results.

Sample Barolo and other great wines on an included tasting

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate and challenging hills and is ideal for experienced cyclists. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available. However, if you opt to ride with a VBT e-bike (free of charge), the tour is ideal for beginners, as well.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 15 - 45

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

## Climate Information

### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 62°/42°, May 70°/50°, Jun 77°/57°, Jul 82°/61°, Aug 80°/60°, Sep 74°/55°, Oct 63°/45°

### Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 4.1, May 4.7, Jun 3.8, Jul 2.6, Aug 3.1, Sep 2.8, Oct 3.5

## DAY 1: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Transfer to Canale / Hunt for truffles

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: Your tour starts at 12:30 p.m. at our Turin hotel. Your Trip Leaders will be in the lobby wearing VBT staff garments. Please have lunch before meeting them. If your arrival at our Turin hotel is 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 your VBT Trip Leaders.

All guests will transfer to Canale (approximately 1 hour southeast of Turin), in Piedmont's Roero/Langhe region. Arrive at your beautiful agriturismo, a country resort and working farm set on an estate of 86 acres (34.8 hectares), where you'll attend a safety and bike-fitting session. After you settle in and don your bike gear, follow your Trip Leaders on a short warm-up ride through the hotel's surroundings.

Witness the art of truffle hunting as you join an expert farmer, or *trifolao*, and his dog Willy on the property grounds, to 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, where you will sample local Arneis and Favorita wines and local cheese. Your welcome dinner is at the estate's restaurant, complemented with wines from their farm. This delicious array of products, fresh from their gardens are a wonderful introduction to Piedmont's locally sourced cuisine.

Hotel: Querce del Vereglio

Meals: B (for Air Package guests only), D

Daily Options: 7.3 miles (12 km)

## DAY 2: Ride to Pollenzo / Discover Langhe

This morning's hearty breakfast features jams prepared onsite and a selection of homemade cookies

prepared by the pastry chef with *nocciola gentile del Piemonte*, a locally grown hazelnut. Try a *Brut e Bon* (“ugly and good”), a *Langa* kiss or *Meliga* and *Code di Gatto* cookie—or one of each!

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, into the heart of the region. The breathtaking hilly landscapes you’ll traverse, or *langa*, are famous for wines, cheeses and truffles. The winemaking culture, traditions and terrains established 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. Continue cycling landscaped routes and later settle in and relax at your hotel, perhaps by the panoramic pool, before walking with your Trip Leaders to a local restaurant for a great Piemontese dinner.

Hotel: Hotel Villa Beccaris

Alternate Hotel: Hotel Corte Gondina

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 18.8 or 26.4 miles (30.2 or 42.5 km)

## DAY 3: Grinzane Cavour / Alba

Today, more of rural Piedmont unfolds. After breakfast, ride through beautiful, hilltop Serralunga d’Alba. Overseen by a majestic castle, this tidy village seems frozen in time. Later, cycle past the headquarters of Fontanafredda, a historic Italian winery. Its cellars are among the 100 finest in the world. Browse its unique library or stroll the trails of its vast park, the Wood of Thoughts, past centuries-old trees, a lake

and meditation zones.

Continue to Grinzane Cavour, an ideal stop for lunch. Take the time to visit its historic castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site and host to the World Auctions of Alba white truffles.

This afternoon, you will loop back to our hotel through Castiglione Falletto, past more stunning vineyards and gently sloping hills.

Back at the hotel, enjoy time to relax. Tonight you will shuttle to Alba, the capital of white truffles, for a stroll, some shopping and dinner on your own. You must try the delicious *ravioli del plin* or *tajarin* pasta!

Hotel: Hotel Villa Beccaris

Alternate Hotel: Hotel Corte Gondina

Meals: B

Daily Options: 14.9 or 22.8 or 27.9 or 35.9 miles (23.9 or 36.7 or 44.9 or 57.7 or km)

## DAY 4: Ride to Verduno / Discover Barolo

Today's route passes through beautiful hamlets. During an inspiring reel, marvel at incredible views of manicured vineyards and castles. You will also cycle by 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. Take in spectacular views of Verduno, Roddi, and other hilltop villages crowned by castles.

Later, 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 to the WIMU, the wine museum located in the castle where Barolo wine was born. Here, you can learn the history of the Marquis Giulia Colbert and Carlo Tancredi, both beatified.

Relax at your hotel's swimming pool, and discover this beautiful village on your own. Dinner is on your own tonight with either La Morra or Monforte offering many options.

Hotel: Hotel Villa Beccaris

Alternate Hotel: Hotel Corte Gondina

Meals: B

Daily Options: 23.6 or 28 or 37.4 miles (38 or 45.1 or 60.1 km)

## DAY 5: Explore Barbaresco / Ride to Canelli / Pizza making

After breakfast, take a 30-minute shuttle to the start of your route: the charming hilltop village of Barbaresco. Famous for its eponymous wine made from Nebbiolo grapes, the town's small former church hosts the Enoteca Regionale.

Your route unfolds among the hills overlooking the dreamy valley of the Belbo River. You'll enjoy magnificent vistas with little evidence of the wartime scars it bore when many of its villagers fell during WWII. Your destination is Canelli, famous as the home of the largest producers of Spumante d'Asti, the Italian sparkling wine created in this small city 150 years ago. Enjoy lunch in one of its most ancient vaulted cellars, a UNESCO World Heritage Site so vast, it's known as an "underground cathedral." While here, you can raise a glass to its 150th anniversary, celebrated in 2017. One of the proud owners, Giovanna Rivetti may join you for lunch and prepare local specialties like *friciule* bread and vegetable pies. Savor them with cooked salami, handmade grissini, salted hazelnuts from Cortemilia, and, of course, a tasting of selected *spumanti della casa*.

After, continue riding through the breathtaking countryside to Mombaruzzo and our next accommodation, a chic country retreat revived from the ruins of a 1600 villa. Your welcoming British host, Nicola, relocated here after falling in love with the region. At sunset, after you have time to relax and settle in, she invites you to join her in the manicured garden and barbecue area, where you'll learn to prepare pizza the traditional way, around the wood-fired oven. Customize your own pizza during this fun and relaxed class, and enjoy the results with a glass of wine and spectacular views from the terrace.

Hotel: Hotel La Villa

Alternate Hotel: Villa Prato

Meals: B, L, D

Daily Options: 18.8 or 32.8 miles (30.3 or 52.9 km)

## DAY 6: Ride to Mombaruzzo / Quaranti and Castel Rocchero / Barolo tasting

Today, your choice of routes includes a more relaxed and easy loop, a spectacular hilly ride with sweeping vistas, or both. The countryside south of Asti, in the Monferrato region, is dotted with sleepy hilltop villages. Explore it your own way, and you'll rejoin the group in Mombaruzzo at a local farm where the hosts prepare your lunch. Return to your hotel during the afternoon taking the short route or the long

and hillier panoramic option, then relax at the hotel pool and in the aromatic garden. This evening, gather for a wine Barolo tasting, followed by a special farewell dinner under the stars.

Hotel: Hotel La Villa

Alternate Hotel: Villa Prato

Meals: B, L, D

Daily Options: 18.6 or 22.1 or 31.2 miles (29.9 or 32.5 or 50.2 km)

## DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends/Rapallo

After breakfast you will be transferred by private motorcoach to the railway station of Alessandria, arriving around 9:30 a.m. Your tour ends here, and frequent train connections can take you back to Turin's Porta Nuova station in about an hour. You are responsible for your own train travel and transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Meals: B

## 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.