Italy: Piedmont, Langhe & the Italian Riviera

Bike Vacation Only

Mountains, vineyards, coastal villages; riveting Riviera rides await you during this spectacular culinary bike tour of Italy. Begin your journey with a lesson in truffle hunting from a local farmer and his dog. Continue across the Tanaro River en route to La Morra, known for its beloved Barolo vineyards, castles, and *cascine* farmhouses. Cycle an ancient route into Alta Langa, basking in panoramic views of the Alps. Pause for lunch along the banks of the Bormida River and sip *vino* in the regal wine estate of Fontanafredda. Trace the azure waters of the Ligurian coast, ride into quaint seaside villages, and prepare fresh pesto pasta with locals. Each magnificent day ensures there's no slice of Northern Italian culture left unseen or untasted.

Cultural Highlights

Join a farmer and his trusty dog on a hunt for precious truffles during your stay at an authentic *agriturismo*
Savor a tasting of Arneis and Favorita wines produced on your *agriturismo* grounds, accompanied by local cheese.
Enjoy a two-night stay at the historic Tenuta di Fontanafredda, whose winery was founded by a king.
Discover hilltop La Morra and the quaint medieval village of Barolo, famous for their eponymous wines.
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 like the locals do during a fun and informative cooking class.
Visit Taggia, one of the most beautiful villages of Liguria

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with some moderate hills and is ideal for beginners and experienced cyclists. Our VBT van support shuttle is always available.

Tour Duration: 7 Days
Average Cycling Time: 00:45 - 04:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

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

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

Your tour starts at 12:30 p.m. at our Turin hotel (Grand Hotel Sitea, Via Carlo Alberto 35, Turin. Tel +39 011 517 0171 info@grandhotelsitea.it). 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 going to be 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 one hour southeast of Turin), in Piedmont's lovely Roero/Langhe region. Arrive at your beautiful *agriturismo*, a country resort and working farm set on an estate of 86 acres (34.8 hectares). After a safety and bike-fitting session, don your bike gear and follow your trip leaders on a short warm-up ride through the hotel's surroundings.

Your culinary bike tour of Italy begins with truffle hunting. Join an expert farmer, or *trifolao*, and his dog Willy on the property grounds. Together, you 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, sampling local Arneis and Favorita wines and local cheese. Your welcome dinner is at the estate's restaurant, complemented with wines from their farm. Their delicious array of products fresh from their gardens offer a wonderful introduction to Piedmont's locally sourced cuisine.

Accommodation: Querce del Vareglio, Canale d'Alba
Included Meals: Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:
Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)
Afternoon
Warm-up: 12 km (7 miles)

What to Expect: After an initial downhill from your agriturismo, enjoy an easy ride toward Canale and into the countryside. You may tackle the steep hill on the way back or avoid it by walking a very short

distance.

DAY 2: Ride to Pollenzo / Discover Langhe

This morning's hearty breakfast features jams preserved 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, birthplace of the great wine Barolo. The breathtaking hilly landscapes you'll traverse, or langa, are famous for wines, cheeses and truffles. Here, the winemaking culture, traditions and terrains 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. It is truly a privilege to cycle here.

Continue cycling these gorgeously landscaped routes, mostly downhill. As you coast through the valley, you'll savor spectacular views of the hilltop villages of Verduno and Roddi, each crowned by stately castles. Your destination is the majestic Tenuta di Fontanafredda. Spread over 296 acres (120 hectares) of vineyard-cloaked land, this sprawling estate and wine village incorporates several historical buildings, wine cellars, a beautiful park with rare plants and trees, a lovely pristine lake, and meditation zones.

This evening browse through the hotel's unique library or stroll the trails of its vast park, the Wood of Thoughts. Later enjoy dinner at the Gourmet Bistrot Guido, set in the beautiful Cascina Rosa villa on the hotel grounds. This elegant building hosts the Michelin-starred restaurant Guido, a gracious Italian

kitchen committed to using the finest Piedmont ingredients.

Accommodation: Hotel Vigna Magica, Serralunga d'Alba
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Today's Ride Choices:
Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 44 km (9 - 28 miles)
Morning:
Canale to Pollenzo: 30 km (19 miles)
Afternoon:
La Morra to Hotel Vigna Magica: 14 km (9 miles)

What to Expect: Departing from the hotel, you'll ride into the Roero forested region on an undulating route with little car traffic, arriving in Pollenzo before lunch. In Pollenzo, we offer an 8-km (5-mile) shuttle to avoid traffic and the long uphill into La Morra, your lunch stop. The afternoon ride is mostly downhill and flat, with only one rolling hill, on paved country roads. On the final stretch you will cycle through a village with some car traffic.

DAY 3: Barolo / Barolo Wine tasting / Alba

Today, shuttle to the hilltop town of La Morra to begin an invigorating ride along an easy route, tracing a crest that offers beautiful sweeping views of manicured vineyards and farms. You pass 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.

Before lunch 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 the cozy streets, full of little quaint shops and cafés. You may also visit the interesting WIMU, the wine museum located in the castle of Barolo.

Later, cycle downhill back to your hotel or add miles for a scenic ride to Sinio in the Talloria Valley.

During today's culinary bike tour of Italy, follow our expert guide Monica through the underground historic wine cellars of Tenuta di Fontanafredda, among the 100 finest cellars in the world. The king of Italy Vittorio Emanuele II bought the estate in 1858 and 12 years later decided to cut most of the forest to plant the first vineyards. His son, the Prince Emanuele Alberto, later transformed the estate into a

formidable wine business by partnering with the Marques Falletti and Count Cavour to create the now-famous Barolo wine.

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!

Accommodation: Hotel Vigna Magica, Serralunga d'Alba
Included Meals: Breakfast
Today's Ride Choices:
Cumulative Distance Range: 6 – 38 km (4 – 23.5 miles)
Morning:
La Morra to Barolo: 12 km (7.5 miles)
Fontanafredda to La Morra (Challenging): 9.5 km (6 miles)
Afternoon:
Barolo to Hotel: 6 km (4 miles)
OR
Barolo to Sinio and Hotel: 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect: Enjoy a panoramic and easy ride along the crest of a hill through the villages of Novello, then to Barolo. Instead of shuttling, avid cyclists may enjoy a challenging 6-mile bike ride to La Morra. The afternoon short ride is easy and downhill, taking you back to your hotel. The optional longer ride in the Talloria Valley includes a long and very gradual uphill to Sinio, followed by a gradual downhill back to the hotel. All routes are well paved with little car traffic.

DAY 4: Ride to Millesimo into Liguria

Today your ride follows a high route into Alta Langa, a stunning patchwork of hazelnut trees, towering oaks, and wide-open views of the Alps. You cycle an ancient road that Napolean travelled during his first war campaign in the region. Later, you descend into a valley that follows the ancient Roman trade route linking France and Italy. Coastal Ligurians traded wine, cheese, honey and especially salt in Piedmont and France. Pause for lunch in one of the most beautiful villages of Italy: sleepy Millesimo, reclining on the banks of the Bormida River. Its ancient bridge dates to the 12th century, sure to be one of the best photo ops of your vacation.

Continue your ride on an easy winding route along the Bormida into the Italian region of Liguria. At ride's end, join a shuttle to our next hotel, built on the sandy beach of San Lorenzo al Mare on the Italian Riviera. Enjoy a welcome *aperitivo* and settle in, perhaps relax in the hotel spa, stroll on the beach, or swim in the

azure waters of the Ligurian Sea. 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.

You dine at the hotel restaurant tonight.

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare
Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:
Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 59 km (15 – 37 miles)
*Morning:*Bossolasco to Millesimo: 35 km (22 miles)
Afternoon:
Millesimo to Calizzano: 24 km (15 miles)

What to Expect: Your ride is particularly scenic this morning as you cycle an easy rolling panoramic route in Alta Langa, at an altitude of about 2,000 feet. There'll be little traffic, with the exception of some motorbikes. After about 28 km (17 miles), you descend into the Bormida River valley and stop for lunch. The afternoon ride is almost flat or very gradually ascending as it follows the river upstream. You are picked up at the end of the ride to shuttle to your next hotel. Routes are well paved, with little car traffic.

DAY 5: Bike along the Ligurian Sea / Explore San Remo and Riva Ligure

After breakfast, cycle from your hotel on an easy scenic bike path, built on former railway tracks that trace the breathtaking Ligurian coast. The path is paved and well maintained, enjoyable for fast riders, beginners, and locals. This leisurely and utterly pleasant ride offers a feast for the eyes as you pass Mediterranean shrub, vibrant flowers, palms, little villages, high belfries and of course the blue waters of the Ligurian. You later coast into pretty, seaside San Remo. This resort town has hosted emperors and empresses and was the site of the San Remo Conference after World War I. If you wish, stop here to visit the synagogue and stroll the shop-lined pedestrian zone.

Continue your journey to the fishing village of Ospedaletti, known as the pearl of this colorful "Coast of Flowers." You arrive here by riding through a tunnel that doubles as a gallery of portraits from the famous Milano-San Remo Spring classic cycling race. This sprinters classic—a one-day, 185.2-mile competition—held its inaugural in 1907 and today is one of the five prestigious "Monuments" of the bike racing circuit. En route back to your hotel, explore the quaint coastal villages of Riva Ligure and Santo Stefano al Mare at leisure. You might stop to stroll the maze of caruggi, the characteristic narrow

medieval streets, or perhaps pick a café for lunch on your own. And nothing goes with an Italian bicycle ride like a delicious *gelato*.

Dinner is on your own this evening in San Lorenzo al Mare. You have many eateries to choose from and a lovely seaside setting for an after-dinner stroll.

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare
Included Meals: Breakfast

Today's Ride Choices:
Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 50 km (15 - 31 miles)
Morning:
San Lorenzo to Ospedaletti: 24 km (15 miles)
Afternoon:
Ospedaletti to Riva Ligure and to Hotel: 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect: Enjoy a relaxing flat ride, on a dedicated well paved bike path. There are four will-lit tunnels along the 24 km (15 mile) route. You retrace much of the same route on the way back to the hotel, with the exception of a few miles along the coastal road that passes through two villages.

DAY 6: Ride to Taggia / Torre Paponi / Pesto cooking class / Oil tasting

Your culinary bike tour of Italy leads you into the Argentina River valley on your last day, where you'll follow an easy bike path leads to Taggia, one of the most beautiful villages of Italy. Here, local guide and food expert Roberta introduces you to the Mediterranean culture and diet. During a visit to an old olive oil mill still in operation, you'll taste fragrant Canestrelli bread and *borage grissini* with extra virgin olive oil and olive tapenade. Then enjoy a special treat as you head into the heart of an authentic medieval village—complete with fortified portals and coats of arms identifying past noble families. Here, with the help of Roberta and other local cooks, you prepare the region's renowned pesto sauce, using local basil and other fresh ingredients, a marble mortar, and a wooden pestle. Then, learn to prepare fresh handmade *parpaiui*, butterfly pastas that perfectly matches the sauce. Then it's lunchtime as you savor the meal you've helped prepare. Later, Roberta leads us on a short walk on the cobbled street of Taggia.

After, you retrace your route back to the hotel to relax. A longer route takes you to up the San Lorenzo River to Torre Paponi. Avid cyclists can test their abilities on their own on the famous Cipressa and Costarainera uphill roads of the Milano-San Remo, right behind our hotel.

This evening, celebrate your Piedmont cycling discoveries during a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare
Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:
Cumulative Distance Range: 14.5 – 29 km (9- 18 miles)
Morning:
Hotel to Taggia: 14.5 km (9 miles)
Afternoon:
Taggia to Hotel: 14.5 km (9 miles)
OR
Taggia to Torre Paponi to Hotel (moderate): 25 km (16 miles)

What to Expect: Today's route is on an easy bike path. The afternoon longer option includes a very gradual ascent of about 5 km (3 miles) and is moderate. All roads and bike paths are well paved and far from traffic.

DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Transfer to Nice

After breakfast you transfer by private transportation to the nearby railway station of Arma di Taggia, arriving around 9:00 a.m. Your tour ends here; frequent train connections can take you to Genova, Milan, or back to Turin's Porta Nuova station. You are responsible for your own train travel and transfer to the airport for your flight home. If you travel to Nice, France, you are welcome to board our coach at 8:30 a.m., arrive at our Nice hotel around 10:00 a.m., and make your connections there on your own.

Please note: Check the Trenitalia train timetable in advance and be aware that the train schedule changes mid-June.

Accommodation: Hotel La Malmaison, Nice (France)
Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Le Querce del Vareglio (Day: 1)

Nestled on 86 acres of farmland, Le Querce del Vareglio 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 Vareglio 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.

Hotel Riviera dei Fiori (Days: 4,5,6)

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.

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.