

## 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*

- 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.

## 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 Daily Mileage:** 7 - 37

**Average Cycling Time:** 01:15 - 04:00

**Group size:** 20 max

## 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 / Travel to Canale / Warm-up ride / Hunt for truffles / Welcome reception and dinner

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 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 travel 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.

Today's Ride Choice

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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 12 km (7 miles)

Accommodation: Querce del Vareglio, Canale d'Alba

Included Meals: Dinner

## DAY 2: Ride to Pollenzo / Discover Langhe / Gourmet dinner

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.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: La Morra to Hotel Vigna Magica – 14 km (9 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 44 km (9 - 28 miles)

Accommodation: Hotel Vigna Magica, Serralunga d'Alba

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## 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*!

#### Today's Ride Choices

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) | 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 6 – 38 km (4 – 23.5 miles)

Accommodation: Hotel Vigna Magica, Serralunga d'Alba

Included Meals: Breakfast

## 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 Napoleon 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, 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.

### Today's Ride Choices

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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 59 km (15 – 37 miles)

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## 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 Sea. 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.

#### Today's Ride Choices

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 well-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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 50 km (15 - 31 miles)

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **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.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Taggia – 14.5 km (9 miles)

Afternoon: Taggia to Hotel – 14.5 km (9 miles) | 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.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14.5 – 29 km (9- 18 miles)

Accommodation: Hotel Riviera dei Fiori, San Lorenzo al Mare

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 7: VBT Bicycle Vacation ends / Travel to Nice / Free time**

After breakfast transportation is provided 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 transportation to the airport for your flight home. If you would like to travel to Nice, France, let us know in advance and you are welcome to board our coach at 8:30 a.m., arriving at our Nice hotel around 10:00 a.m., and there make your connections on your own.

Please note: If you opt to travel by train, we suggest that you check the Trenitalia train timetable in advance as the train schedule changes mid-June.



Included Meals: Breakfast