

Self-Guided Eroica Dirt Roads Bike Tour

Duration: 8 Days/7 Nights

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hiking and cycling in italy

The Dirt Roads of Tuscany

"Strade bianche" means "white roads" and in Tuscany this expression refers to the network of unpaved back roads that wind through vineyards and olive groves. The strade bianche used to be regarded as inconvenient relics from the past in dire need of pavement. Today awareness of their unique beauty has led to a preservation effort. Much awareness has been generated by an annual cycling event called the Eroica where thousands of cyclists gather to ride vintage bikes on these ancient roads. Riding these dirt roads can be challenging but they provide an ideal means for exploring rural Tuscany. The strade bianche are traffic free and the vistas are spectacular. Because these roads are old there are some steep ups and downs. For safety reasons we provide mountain bikes. This tour travels 143 miles (230 km) through central Tuscany. Sixty percent of the riding is on unpaved roads. The tour starts in Chianti, home of the Chianti Classico wine. Winery visits are available. You then pedal south spending the night in majestic Siena. Just outside Siena's gates you enter a territory known as the Crete Senesi, a landscape of gently undulating hills lined with cypress trees and covered by a patchwork of fields. You stay in the towns of Montalcino, home of the sublime Brunello wine, and Pienza, known for its hearty pecorino cheese. Pedaling off the beaten path you ride through tiny rural villages and fascinating hill top towns. The dirt roads are challenging, but they lead to quiet, quintessential Tuscan views.

Route Rating

Moderate: 60% of this tour is on dirt roads. 10-33 miles (15-53 km) per day cycling over hilly terrain.

Meet / Finish

Florence / Radda in Chianti

Highlights

- Explore the Brolio Castle
- Brunello winery tour
- Climb the walls of the Montalcino Castle
- The Tuscan hill towns of Siena, Montalcino, Pienza, and Radda
- Beautiful vistas of vineyards and olive groves
- Peaceful country roads

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418
info@charnestours.com





Castello di Spaltenna Hotel

Day 1 Gaiole in Chianti

The Badia a Coltibuono (the Abbey of the Good Harvest)
10 miles (15 km) Optional Ride

We meet in the center of Florence and shuttle together by private van to Gaiole in Chianti. The drive takes approximately 1.5 hours. You check into your hotel and go to a restaurant for lunch (included in the tour price). Over lunch your tour coordinator explains the details of your bike trip and answers any questions you may have. After lunch your tour coordinator returns to Florence. Today's ride is optional and is entirely on paved roads. The ride goes to the Badia a Coltibuono (the Abbey of the Good Harvest). You can tour the abbey, explore their winery, and visit their Renaissance garden. Dinner is on your own in Gaiole.

Hotel

Castello di Spaltenna
Gaiole (1 night)
The Castello di Spaltenna is an ancient "castle" turned luxury hotel nestled among vineyards.
www.spaltenna.it

The Ride

Day 1: 10 miles (15 km)
Long gradual uphill to the Badia a Coltibuono.
Quick downhill back to Gaiole in Chianti.
(optional ride)

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Siena, Tuscany

Day 2 Siena

Gaiole in Chianti to Siena

22 miles (36 km) with 12 miles (19 km) on dirt roads

After seven miles of pavement you arrive at the first dirt road. A winding uphill takes you to the Castello di Brolio, a 1,000 year old crenellated castle surrounded by Chianti vineyards. For a fee you can tour the castle grounds. From the castle's ramparts you can see the towers of Siena. To sample the Brolio wines visit the large wine shop in their renovated cellars. A winding dirt road leads to the edge of Siena. You pass through a gate in the city walls and enter a magnificent medieval town. Siena's center is delightfully car free. Every street leads to the dazzling Piazza del Campo, one of Europe's greatest medieval squares. Your hotel is in the historic center within walking distance of all the major sites.

Hotel

Hotel Athena

Siena (1 night)

A modern four-star hotel with all of the comforts. The Athena is located in the historic center and offers a beautiful terrace with views of Siena.

www.hotelathena.com

The Ride

Day 2: 22 miles (36 km)

You ride the first dirt roads, including a short steep climb up to the Brolio castle. Later there is a climb to the edge of Siena.

Day 3 Buonconvento

Siena to Buonconvento

24 miles (38 km), with 18 miles (29 km) on dirt roads

Leaving a southern gate you enter the Crete Senesi, one of the most beautiful landscapes in Italy. The Crete Senesi are a photographer's paradise. Artists return regularly to capture the beauty of the countryside as it changes with the seasons. In spring the wind blows through lush green wheat fields creating waves in the hillsides. Green hills turn golden brown under the summer sun. Vibrant yellow sunflowers reach for the sky in July. Your hotel is in Buonconvento, a walled village with bastions and a lovely town hall. Like Siena, Buonconvento is a red brick medieval town.

Hotel

Hotel Ghibellino

Buonconvento (1 night)
The Ghibellino is a small modern hotel located next to the historic center. The rooms are modern, quiet, and air-conditioned.
www.hotelghibellino.it

The Ride

Day 3: 24 miles (38 km)
A long gradual uphill on a dirt road leads to Buonconvento.

Montalcino, Tuscany



Day 4 Montalcino

Buonconvento to Montalcino

14 miles (22 km), with 9 miles (14 km) on dirt roads

A big climb on a dirt road leads to Montalcino, a spectacular hill town surrounded by the breathtaking Val d'Orcia Natural Park. You can visit the Montalcino castle and its well-stocked *enoteca* or wine bar. Be sure to climb the steps to the top of the castle walls for panoramic views. Montalcino is best known for its Brunello wine, Italy's most famous red. Because of its characteristics Brunello can be aged for long periods, improving as the years go by. If you are interested in learning more a winery visit can be scheduled.

Day 5

Montalcino to Pienza

23 miles (37 km), with 12 miles (19 km) on dirt roads

A rolling dirt road leads to Pienza. Ochre-colored Pienza is a rare example of Renaissance town planning. The town was built in just three years, between 1459 and 1462. The finest architects of the time set out to design harmonious, utopian spaces centered around a dazzling piazza. Remarkably what they created has been perfectly preserved. Pienza also features a pair of outstanding family-run restaurants serving authentic Tuscan fare made with the freshest local ingredients.



Hotels

Hotel Dei Capitani

Montalcino (1 night)

This hotel features incredible views, a swimming pool, and beautifully renovated rooms. The hotel is located in an 18th century building on the edge of the historic center.
www.deicapitani.it

Hotel Corsignano

Pienza (1 night)

The Corsignano has breathtaking views of the Orcia Valley and offers a terrace with a hot tub. Rooms are spacious and modern.
www.hotelcorsignano.it

The Rides

Day 4: 14 miles (22 km)

The highest climb of the tour takes you to Montalcino. The climb and descent are unpaved and include some sections with a 15% grade.

Day 5, 23 mi (37 km)

The ride begins with a long downhill from Montalcino and ends with a big uphill to Pienza.

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Day 6 Asciano

Pienza to Asciano

32 miles (52 km), with 20 miles (32 km) on dirt roads

Pedaling through wheat fields and chestnut forests you arrive at a small country inn. Just down the road is Tuscany's grandest monastery – the Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore, renowned for its absorbing Renaissance frescoes. The abbey is guarded by a fortress complete with a drawbridge. Sheep's milk cheese, called pecorino, is a local specialty. The slight saltiness of the cheese draws out the explosive fruit flavors of the local wines.

Day 7 Radda in Chianti

Asciano to Radda in Chianti

33 miles (53 km), with 18 miles (29 km) on dirt roads

Rolling dirt roads lead you through the medieval towns of Asciano and Castelnuovo Berardenga. After a final uphill push you arrive in Radda in Chianti, a hill town protected by massive stone walls. Your hotel is in a converted ancient manor house in the historic center.

Hotels

Hotel La Pace

Asciano (1 night)
Three-star Hotel La Pace is located just outside the historic center of Asciano.
www.hotellapace.net/

Palazzo San Niccolo

Radda in Chianti (1 night)
This four-star hotel is located in a 15th Century palace.
www.hotelsanniccolo.com

The Rides

Day 4: 32 miles (52 km)
Rolling dirt roads in open countryside lead to Asciano. Arrive early to leave time to visit the Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore.

Day 5, 33 mi (53 km)
Rolling terrain with a steep final uphill to Radda in Chianti.

Brolio Castle and Winery





Montalcino Castle

Day 8 Bike Tour End

After breakfast in the hotel check out and continue your travels. We can help you with your travel plans.

DEPARTURE ON LAST DAY OF TOUR

Your bike tour ends in the town of Radda in Chianti. You can take a bus to continue your travels. Private car transport can be arranged if you prefer. Busses are limited so you will need to plan accordingly.

Bus travel times are listed below:

Bus, Radda to Firenze: 1 hour 30 minutes (3 per day)

Bus, Radda to Siena: 1 hour (5 per day)

Sites of Interest

Winery Tours

Optional winery tours are available at the Badia a Coltibuono (Chianti Classico) and Biondi Santi (Brunello).



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