

Guided Piedmont Bike Tour
Duration: 7 Days/6 Nights

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hiking and cycling in italy

Piedmont, Slow Food and Wine

Italy's second-largest region is arguably its most elegant: a purveyor of fine dining, great wines, regal palazzi and an atmosphere that is superficially more français than italiano. Not surprisingly the Slow Food movement got its start here. Slow Food is an international organization dedicated to preventing the disappearance of local food cultures and counteracting the rise of fast processed foods. The landscapes, castles, cuisine and fabulous wines are just as stunning as anything you'll see in Tuscany. This bike tour starts in Saluzzo, a town of Roman origin at the base of the Alps. Our warm-up ride goes to a castle. We shuttle you and the bikes up Monte Rosa and let you enjoy the thrilling ride down. We cycle to Pollenzo and stay at a 4-star hotel situated in the renovated residence of an Italian King. An integral part of the Slow Food movement, this former royal residence hosts the hotel, the University of Gastronomic Sciences, and a wine bank. While there we participate in a cooking class presented by one of the University's lecturers. We cycle into the Langhe, perhaps the most beautiful winemaking area in Italy. This is a land of rolling hills and ancient hamlets surrounded by noble vineyards. The Langhe are synonymous with white truffles and red wines. We stay at a 5-star resort on a steep hill in the heart of the Langhe. This tour is all about food and wine. To delve deeper into this culture, we tour a Barolo winery and try their exception reds. We join a truffle hunt guided by truffle sniffing dog. We cycle to a hazelnut farm where we see the nuts being harvested and transformed into a rich hazelnut chocolate spread. This tour is deliberately scheduled in the fall so you can experience the grape harvest, the hazelnut harvest, and with some luck, a successful truffle hunt.

Route Rating

Moderate: 7-34 miles (11-54 km) per day cycling over hilly terrain.

Meet / Finish

Turin / Turin

Highlights

- Cooking class at the University of Gastronomic Sciences
- Truffle hunt with truffle dog
- Guided cheese tasting
- Hazelnut farm visit with tasting
- Slow Food Wine Bank visit and tasting
- Barolo winery tour with tasting
- Spectacular wine country rides

Cooking Class

We have organized a cooking class at the University of Gastronomic Sciences which is part of the Slow Food organization.





Day 1

Saluzzo

Saluzzo to Manta Castle

Distance: 7 miles (11 km)

Total Ascent: 390 feet (119 mt)

We rendezvous at the Turin train station. Turin is a main hub in the Italian railways system and is just 1 hour by train from Milano. We shuttle together to our first hotel in Saluzzo. After lunch (not included) we do a warm-up ride to the Manta Castle, a 12th century noble residence. The castle is right out of a fairy tale with vaulted frescoed ceilings, oversize fireplaces, and large windows with endless views over the valley below. For dinner we join the locals at a lively family restaurant located in a 16th century palace. The food is traditional Piedmont fare. Olives don't grow well here and so the local cooking relies more on butter and lard, ingredients which lend a silky texture and hearty aroma. Rather than the pizzas and tomato-based pasta sauces familiar from elsewhere in Italy, here you're more likely to find risotto, polenta, and even cheese fondue.

Hotel

Antico Podere Propano
Saluzzo (2 nights)

The hotel is in a large farmhouse dating from 1525. The rooms overlook an internal courtyard with an ancient well.

www.anticopoderepropano.com

The Ride

Day 1: A short warm-up ride leads to a castle on a hill. We tour the castle and visit the historic center of Saluzzo.

Day 2 **Saluzzo**

Monviso to Saluzzo

Distance: 24 miles (39 km)

Total Ascent: 128 feet (39 mt)

Total Descent: 3,107 feet (947 mt)

It would be a shame to be so close to the Alps and not get to experience those great Alpine views. However, it's a big climb up. To make things easier we offer a shuttle, with the bikes, to the top of the mountain. Monviso mountain looks just like the Paramount Pictures logo. In fact the logo is probably Monviso. Our shuttle ends below a ski area where the views are breathtaking. After a short alpine stroll, we carefully ride downhill and back to Saluzzo. For those wishing to ride more we have an optional ride to the Staffarda Abbey, a large medieval monastery. Piedmont is also known for its cheeses. Before dinner we meet the self-proclaimed, "cheese storyteller". Maria Cristina, her real name, is a former cheese maker who leads a guided cheese tasting. The woman knows her stuff and has a passion for local artisanal cheese.

The Ride

Day 2: We shuttle you and your bike up a steep Alpine road. The ride is then downhill and flat back to the hotel. If you want to ride more we have an optional ride to an abbey.

Cheese Tasting

Piedmont is known for its cheeses. This tour includes a guided cheese tasting run by an artisanal cheese maker.

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com



Day 3 and 4 **Pollenzo**

Day 3, Saluzzo to Pollenzo

Distance: 34 mi (54 km)

Total Ascent: 446 ft (136 mt)

Day 4, Pollenzo to Barolo

Distance: 27 mi (43 km)

Total Ascent: 1,447 ft (441 mt)

Piedmont is a mix of mountains, rolling hills, and flat farmland. On Day 3 we ride through the flat farms. We stop halfway at the Racconigi Castle, a massive holiday estate built for Italian royals. The bikes come in handy to tour the sprawling castle grounds. We ride through the center of Bra, home of the Slow Food movement. Slow Food began in Italy in 1986 with a campaign to resist the opening of a McDonald's restaurant near the Spanish Steps in Rome. Today McDonald's is well settled at the Spanish Steps, but at the same time Slow Food has grown to include over 100,000 members in 150 countries. Just outside of Bra the Slow Food organization has transformed the neo-Gothic country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy into a hotel, a University of Gastronomic Sciences, and a wine bank. We spend two nights at this property, indulging ourselves in a wine bank visit, wine tasting, and an exclusive cooking class. We cycle to the town of Barolo, the center of Barolo wine production, and tour the ancient cellars of the Marchesi di Barolo winery. If you would like you can tour the Barolo castle, now a wine museum. We have two dinners in Pollenzo, one after our cooking class and one at the exceptional hotel restaurant.

Hotel

Albergo dell'Agencia

Pollenzo (2 nights)

Albergo dell'Agencia once belonged to the King of Savoy. It has 2 hectares of gardens, a pool, a gym, and a great restaurant.

www.albergoagenzia.it

The Rides

Day 3: We ride through flat farmland stopping halfway at a former summer estate of the King of Italy.

Day 4: A big uphill leads us into a winemaking area called the Langhe. We stop in the town of Barolo for a winery tour and lunch.

Slow Food Cooking Class





Day 5 Serralunga D'Alba

Pollenzo to Serralunga D'Alba

Distance: 18 miles (29 km)

Total Ascent: 1,765 feet (538 mt)

A rolling ride through the Langhe hills passes through a series of hilltop villages before arriving at a modern 5-star resort and spa. This area is protected and so very little gets built, but somehow this spectacular property slipped through the cracks. The Boscareto Resort & Spa opened in 2009 in the middle of a hillside vineyard. The property has been designed as a modern castle where the massive use of glass brings the landscape inside as part of the interiors. A heated pool, whirlpool, Finnish sauna, Turkish bath, and frigidarium make up a well-appointed spa. Before sunset we meet a licensed truffle hunter and his trusty canine sidekick. This dog has been trained to sniff out the precious white truffle, even under one meter of dirt. We follow the dog, its nose to the ground, as it zigzags through a field. With some luck the dog will hit pay dirt and dig up one of those treasured mushrooms. As the sun sets we head to a nearby farmhouse where we are treated to a country feast, including pasta with a grating of fresh white truffles.

Hotel

Boscareto Resort & Spa

This hotel has beautiful views across the vineyards in the Langhe. It features an excellent restaurant and a free wellness center with swimming pool and gym.

www.ilboscaretoresort.it

The Ride

Day 5: We ride directly into the Langhe. The ride is hilly, but gorgeous. For many the Langhe is the most scenic wine making area in Italy.

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Day 6 and 7 **Serralunga D'Alba**

Serralunga D'Alba to Hazelnut Farm

Distance: 18 miles (29 km)

Total Ascent: 1,936 feet (590 mt)

This area is not all wine. While olives don't grow well here, hazelnuts do. We cycle to a family-run hazelnut farm. This time of the year the hazelnut harvest is in full swing. Modern machines use laser beams to sort the nuts which are then roasted and sorted. Different products are made including minced hazelnuts, hazelnut paste, and of course chocolate hazelnut cream. The paste is sold to gelaterias throughout Italy to make hazelnut gelato, a beautiful thing in a world of artificial flavors. You can compare this family's hazelnut cream with the ubiquitous Nutella. Later we picnic in a field with a view before returning to the hotel. We finish our Piedmont adventure with 4-course dinner. On Day 7 we shuttle you back to the Turin train station.

The Ride

Day 6: A long gradual uphill leads to a hazelnut farm. The ride back to the hotel is mostly downhill.

Hazelnut Farm

We visit a hazelnut farm during their harvest. We see the harvesting, sorting, toasting, and food processing. We sample a variety of hazelnut products.

Boscareto Resort Pool

