



Challenging Rides for Discriminating Cyclists

GREATCYCLING.COM

Tuscany



Our Rolling Tour 2008

Where our tour of Tuscany takes place...

Val d'Orcia

The Val d'Orcia region of Tuscany extends from the hills south of Siena to Monte Amiata. Gentle, carefully-cultivated hills are occasionally broken by gullies and picturesque towns and villages such as Pienza (rebuilt as an "ideal town" in the fifteenth-century under the patronage of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini), Radicofani (home to the notorious brigand-hero Ghino di Tacco) and Montalcino (the Brunello di Montalcino is counted among the most prestigious of Italian wines). Its landscapes have become familiar through works of art from the Renaissance paintings to the modern photographs. In 2004 the Val d'Orcia was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

GreatCycling.com

Tel. 416.564.4991 Fax. 416.783.9588 info@GreatCycling.com
GreatCycling Inc., PO Box 30056, 1027 Finch Ave. W. Toronto, Canada M3J 3L6

Monte Amiata

Approximately two-thirds of the Italian boot is covered with mountains. The Alps run across its northern borders and the Apennines down its centre to the toe. Only two of the most important peaks stand alone: Mount Etna in Sicily and Monte Amiata in the Tuscan provinces of Grosseto and Siena. Although Tuscany is certainly one of Italy's most popular tourist destinations, Monte Amiata, unlike Chianti to the north and the Maremma to the south, remains off the beaten path. This extinct volcano, 1,738 meters at its summit, with enough geothermal activity to heat the baths of little-known, but bijoux spas at Bagno Vignoni and Bagni San Filippo, is a worthwhile discovery for Tuscany explorers and Italophiles in search of unspoiled nature, down to earth, hospitable people, and genuine traditional cuisine. It is a perfect place to unwind after a great day of cycling!

Maremma.

Maremma amara - "bitter Maremma" - this is how a traditional Tuscan song describes the area in the province of Grosseto that makes up the southernmost part of the region. The poet Dante Alighieri in his *Divina Commedia*, identifies Maremma between Cecina and Corneto, the former name of Tarquinia:

*Non han sì aspri sterpi nè sì folti
quelle fiere selvagge che 'n odio hanno
tra Cecina e Corneto i luoghi colti*

It was traditionally populated by the *Butteri*, cattle-breeders, who used horses until recently, with a distinctive style of saddle.



Day 1

Arrival Day



The group will be picked up at the airport. Our minibus and personal escort will take the group to the first hotel located in Pienza, close to the historical centre. The transfer will take 2.5 hours. Check in and dinner with local Tuscan's dishes.

(photo at left: main square of Pienza).

Day 2

Level:

Distance:



km 75 / 44 miles

“The Nobile di Montepulciano Wine Road”



After breakfast you will have a briefing of the entire tour and bike testing. The first tour takes the group through the smooth hills and medieval towns of the Val D'Orcia reaching Montepulciano, which is famous for its two excellent wines, Vino Nobile di Montepulciano and Rosso di Montepulciano. (photo at left: Wine cellar of Montepulciano).

Montepulciano is packed with interest and charm. To reach the first town requires a final climb to reach the medieval centre. After Montepulciano the rest of your ride will take you through the rolling hills of Monticchiello. The castle and walled town of Monticchiello was the fiefdom of the local family of the Lombardi. The village within the fortifications remains intact, with medieval characteristics. Walking along its alleys is like ‘breathing’ Tuscan medieval life). Bagno Vignoni contains the ruins of a famed Roman bath and San Quirico d'Orcia is

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info@GreatCycling.com

Tel. 416-566-2322 Fax. 416-783-9588

the quintessential heart of Tuscan's typical landscape. You will stay in Pienza for the night.

Day 3

Level:

Distance:



km 60 / 43 miles

The Orcia Valley

After Breakfast you will check out and place your luggage in the bus. Your ride starts with a smooth and long descent of 6 km, followed by a climb of 9 kms reaching Montalcino with its breathtaking view from the castle ([photo at right](#)) is known for the highly recommended Brunello wine. In Tuscany there are only 6 D.O.C.G Wines, which mean that the wine has the denomination



of verified and guaranteed origin. Spend some time sightseeing in Montalcino: step onto the fortress fortifications to take in the beautiful view . Visit of the historical *centro*, the main *piazza* with its small café and wine shops. After a strong Italian Espresso or cappuccino we continue our ride to the Abbey of Sant'Antimo ([photo below](#)).



The route is mostly flat and downhill and after 9 km we reach the abbey, a suitable place to enjoy a light lunch. In the Middle Ages this abbey was the site of one of the richest cloisters in Tuscany. By the end of the 13th century the Benedictine abbey had begun to decline. Today, only the church remains. Many architectural details of the church are not typical of Tuscany and reveal influence of the French Romanesque style. This is as a result of the connection of the Benedictine order with France. Your cycling route continues keeps on for 10 km, mostly flat and downhill, where you

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will enjoy the curves and rolling hills until you reach Monte Amiata Scalo, an old train station constructed in the 19th century. From here your climbing skills will be tested again. You will climb for 8 km reaching Castiglione d'Orcia 520 meters. From Castiglione D'Orcia you can enjoy the views of the Orcia Valley and the delicious 6 km descent (your reward after the climb!), riding to the final stop of Bagno Vignoni. (photo at right: Bagno Vignoni).

Besides the thermal waters, Bagno Vignoni remains unchanged by time. Indeed, the main *piazza* is completely distinct from those in other Tuscan towns. A thermal water basin flowing at 52°C is in the middle of the square. From here you will be transferred by bus to your next hotel, Albergo Le Macinaie.



Day 4

Level:



Distance:

km 89,5 / 53 miles

The Etruscan's

Today's ride is the longest route of the tour, the first part being mostly downhill. Your first stop is Sorano, the oldest Etruscan town in the area.

After some sightseeing the tour proceeds 9 km to Pitigliano along mostly flat terrain. In the early 13th century Pitigliano belonged to the Aldobrandeschi family, and by the middle of the century it had become the capital of the surrounding county.



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The tour keeps on to Sovana which is your stop for lunch. Next stop, the hot spring of Saturnia (photo at right) which you will reach after 33 km rolling hills. There is a legend of the birth of Saturnia: the god Saturn, angry with the people who were always at war with each other, sent a thunderbolt to earth, giving life to a magic spring of warm sulphurous water which would pacify man.

At Saturnia the group will be picked up by bus and transferred back to Albergo Le Macinaie.



Day 5

Level:



Distance:

km 75 / 44 miles

The Bolsena Lake



After a hearty buffet breakfast, your departure by bike will take you through the castle town of Piancastagnaio to Cassia Street, the SS 2 (the old Roman road which connected Rome to Northern Europe). You will enjoy winding roads and the panoramic

view of the last part of the Orcia Valley. Following the main road you will cross a small bridge which is the boundary between Tuscany and Latium. After biking upwards for 5 km you reach the first town of Latium: Acquapendente. Follow the well marked signs for Orvieto and you will enjoy the hills and landscape of the Latium. After some effort, you reach the top of Orvieto, the capital of Etruscan culture. Wonderful sightseeing and great views from the walls of the city. After you depart from Orvieto your next town is Bagnoregio and 10 km further along, you will reach the tiny lakeside town of Bolsena. You will return to Le Macinaie by bus.

Orvieto: origins go back to the first Etruscan settlements, dating back to the 9th Century B.C. (photo) found inside the tuffaceous caves in the bedrock upon which the city sits today. Annexed to the territories of Rome in the 3rd Century B.C., Orvieto remained under the Roman domination until the decline of the Western Roman Empire after which it became a free municipality. During the struggles between Guelphs and Ghibellines, was a valiant opponent of Barbarossa, remaining faithful to the Pope. Riding on the support of the Papal State, it was allowed to prosper through the entire Medieval Period, reaching the top of its development in the 13th Century with the constitution of the General Council of the 400 and the election of the Captain of the People.



Bagnoregio: (photo) The origins of Bagnoregio go back to the pre-Etruscan era but, due to the large number of earthquakes it has suffered, very little has remained of its past. The area around Bagnoregio offers its visitors vast and luxurious vegetation where it is possible to enjoy relaxation and tranquility. Civita di Bagnoregio is also known as the "dying town". The tuffaceous hill upon which Civita stands is undermined by the continuous erosion caused by two streams flowing in the valleys below and by the action of rain and wind: thus it is crumbling away, slowly but inexorably. Today Civita is an enchanted place, where time seems to have stopped. From Civita, you can take a wonderful view over the lunar landscape

created by the Calanchi (big clay formations rising all around Civita). The complete absence of cars makes the atmosphere inside Civita even more unreal. Across from the Belvedere, linked to the world by a single, narrow bridge 300 meters long, stands Civita, set gently upon its summit, with its tuft of medieval houses.

Bolsena: Lake Bolsena, 114 sq. Km, with a perimeter of 43 Km, is the largest lake in Lazio and the fifth largest in Italy. It is the largest Italian lake formed from the crater of an extinct volcano. Sixty kilometers of panoramic road skirt the lake, at times down by the shore, at times up to the surrounding ridges. The lake has two islets where the typical Mediterranean scrub vegetation thrives. Around the edge of the lake oak and chestnut woods are interspersed with vine and olive cultivation.

Day 6

Level:



Distance:

km 47, 28 miles

“The Maremma”

Breakfast, check out and departure with our personal escort to Paganico. The luggage will be loaded up on the bus for the following hotel located in the Maremma area. We reach by bus the starting Point Paganico. The riding is mostly flat and the hotel is located in the middle of the Maremma landscape.

Check In, relaxing at the swimming pool and dinner at the Agriturismo.

Day 7

Level:



Distance:

km 59, 35 miles

“The Tuscan Coast”



The route is mostly flat, riding through rolling hills covered by sunflowers. It's in this land that, like a jewel, stands out the quaint village of Castiglione della Pescaia, a unique charming tourist place, characterized by its impressive medieval castle dominating the sea village, where time is measured by the song of the seagulls welcoming the return of the fishing boats.

While its history is mainly connected to the Etruscan people, whose traces you can find everywhere, nowadays its main property is the pureness of its unspoiled surroundings, extending from the clean beaches to places of great naturalistic importance, like the nearby Parco Naturale dell'Uccellina. For lunch recommended nice dishes of fish.

Back to the hotel. Relaxing at the swimming pool and Gala Dinner at the Restaurant.

Day 8

“Departure Day”

After Breakfast and checking out departure by bus to the airport.

Pricing 2008

Price per Person, Double Accommodation: \$2,575.00

Net Price per person, Single Accommodation: \$2,875.00

(All prices in U.S. dollars, land only)

Minimum 10 participants for group tours, routes for self-guided tours are the same, without a support van or cycling guide.

The price includes:

- 7 overnights with Half board treatment (beverages not included)
- 6 days escorted ride tours
- Following Van
- All mentioned bus transfers and luggage transfers
- Entrance tickets
- Maps and route notes
- Luggage handling

The price does not include:

- Bicycle rental with helmet and bag (20 Euro per day)
- Beverage for meals
- Lunches
- Laundry service
- Hotel extra charges (bar, phone, etc.)

Self guided: self guided departures can be requested any time.



Difficult Ride



Trained level



Easy Ride