



TUSCANY

CYCLING SEASON

*The events, people, stories and landscapes
that shape cycle culture in Tuscany*



TCS 02
SEASON 2017/18



TUSCANY

CYCLING SEASON

The *Giro di Toscana* is a classic cycling competition that was first held in 1923. Its list of winners includes legendary riders such as Costante Girardengo, Learco Guerra and Alfredo Binda, champions born at the turn of the twentieth century and winners of the Giro d'Italia as well as international competitions at a time when just taking part in a sporting event abroad was an adventure. It would take a generation, however, for the all-time wins record to be established by the modest, fierce and gracious champion Gino Bartali. He won the *Giro di Toscana* five times on the same roads on which he trained endlessly, outclassing even Fausto Coppi, himself a winner of one edition.

In this issue of Tuscany Cycling Season, we look back on, and bring to life, some of the most vital and interesting moments from Bartali's life - the hills surrounding Florence that legend has him conquering riding with no hands, his greatest victories and his civic commitment during the war. The legend of Gino Bartali is the inspiration for *l'Eroica*, the event profiled in the first article and ever present in the hearts of the "heroic" thousands who love to share the beauty of fatigue on the rolling white roads of Tuscany.

Then we move to beauty hidden just around the corner, easy to reach yet intimate and secluded. Beyond the competition itself of the *Giro di Toscana* lies the idea of a "grand tour" along splendid routes that lead past villages, churches and farmhouses amidst landscapes, forests and places recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. Meanwhile, secondary routes like country roads, ancient streets, mountain ridges or trails through the Mediterranean scrub seduce riders off the beaten path. The sense of joy comes not only from the beauty, but also from travelling by bicycle through this infinite horizon of possibilities.

SEASON 2017/18
ISSUE
02

CYCLING SEASON
1960

Gastone Nencini,
the "Lion of Mugello",
winner of the 1960
Tour de France.
Photo • Famiglia Nencini



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VETTA MARE

The journey begins at the peak of the Amiata and ends with a jump in the sea at the Argentario promontory. In between are the hills and farms of the Maremma.

• Gino Cervi

Working in publishing for thirty years, he has written tourist guides and books on sport. He loves to write, ride and play sports in no particular order, at times leading to confusion.

• Mariateresa Montaruli

Journalist, web writing expert and travel writer, she created the first blog dedicated to female cycling, "Ladra di biciclette", as well as the "lato Bici" column of the website Io Donna.

• Matteo Pierattini

Architect, cyclist and back roads investigator. Lives and works in Florence; together with Cicloidi, he organizes the Muretti Madness.

• Enrico Caracciolo

Journalist and photographer, he has collaborated with industry magazines publishing reportages on cycling tourism, trekking and outdoor travel. Founder of Viatoribus, a website for tourist guides.

• Simone Massoni

Visual artist (pre)occupied by anything that is visually stimulating. The works he produces in Florence travel the world as parts of shows, publications, books and installations.

• Giorgio Fratini

Illustrator, graphic artist and cartoonist, he lives and works in Florence. He owns a signed picture of Gino Bartali, but mainly moves around in his car.

• Paolo Martelli

Photographer generally drawn more to smells than to colors, but who has yet to figure out how to photograph the former.

• Valter Segnan

Naturalist photographer with a deep knowledge of the nature, forests and mountains that surround his home in Casentino.

• Roberto Ridi

Nature journalist enamoured by the lights and colours of the Tuscan Archipelago islands.

• Mario Llorca

Spanish photojournalist and long-time resident of Siena, he is also an Italian representative for international news agencies.



MURETTI MADNESS 2016

Cyclists engaged in the strenuous ascent up Via del Bigallo and Apparita, Bagno a Ripoli, Florence.
Photo • Tornanti.cc



WORDS • GINO CERVI
PHOTOGRAPHS • PAOLO MARTELLI

THE BEAUTY OF FATIGUE

Until twenty years ago, the word “Eroica” brought to mind images of Beethoven, of the Third Symphony, of music merged with the epic, of Napoleon who at the dawn of the nineteenth century, when the symphony was composed, “rode the spirit of the world,” as Hegel said.

Today, the word “Eroica” evoke images of the white roads of Chianti, of the Val d’Orcia, of the Crete Senesi and of the thousands of amateur cyclists — in the true sense of the term: “bicycle lover” — who each year for the past twenty arrive in Gaiole on the first Sunday in October to “ride the spirit of cycling,” both epic and ordinary, that never dies



Year-round, all at once or in parts

L'Eroica is not just one Sunday in Autumn, nor is it solely the biggest happening in the world of vintage cycling. L'Eroica is year-round with a permanent itinerary to cycle and enjoy alongside the changing colors and tastes of the seasons.

You can start the course from any point on the circuit. Cyclists who wish to complete it in its entirety, breaking it into different stages, and to receive a formal certification of "heroism on pedals" may request a road book and the stamps that attest to the completion of the five zones: Chianti, Siena and the Val d'Arbia, Montalcino, the Val d'Orcia and the Crete Senesi.

Chianti, set, go!

Gaiole in Chianti, the "capital" of l'Eroica, is a historic village built around a piazza named after the Baron Ricasoli, a winemaking pioneer in Italy. The circuit's first destination is the Brolio Castle, the "Ricasoli home," with its adjoining wine cellars where the Chianti Classico was baptized. The ride to the old manor leads up through the cypresses, skirting the old walls before descending and "meeting" the first strip of dirt road that runs through the velvet-like vineyards.

From Siena to Buonconvento

The spectacle of Siena from a distance, with its red stone and red towers, is alone worth the effort of cycling this stretch along the white roads. With the piazza del Campo and the Duomo behind you, the route rises and falls through the soft hills of the Val d'Arbia, past farmhouses and tiny villages before reaching Buonconvento, a historic junction along the via Cassia.

Montalcino and the Val d'Orcia

The road to Montalcino, the next destination, rises towards Castiglione del Bosco surrounded at first by golf courses, then by the heart of the forest, where the inclines can become severe, but no one will penalize you for putting a foot on the ground to help push your bike.



Montalcino, a noble sanctuary of fine wine, awaits you for a pause in the shade of its mighty fortress. The Val d'Orcia (UNESCO Site), from Torrenieri to Lucignano d'Asso, is a spectacle for the eyes and the soul with its rolling hills dotted with farmhouses, sunflower fields, oak trees and more vineyards.

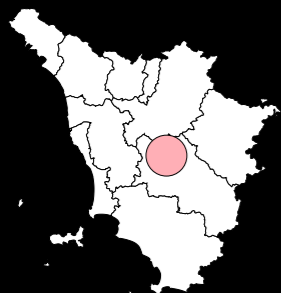
Back to Chianti through the Crete Senesi

The green horizon slowly gives way to

the almost lunar landscape of the Crete Senesi, amidst cliffs of white clay, ravines and clusters of pointed cypresses to mark the farms on the ridges. Just beyond Asciano, the slope of Mount Sante Marie propels you towards Castelnuovo Berardenga and back into Chianti along a spectacular downhill glide into Gaiole, where even those who finish towards the back raise their arms to celebrate their heroic feat.



Pg. 4: the red ochre earth and white roads typical of the Chianti.
Pg. 6-9: some moments of L'Eroica, the faces of the participants and the colours of their jerseys.
Pg. 10: vineyards in Chianti.



TO RIDE

GAIOLE IN CHIANTI
Spring / Summer / Fall

The permanent route measures 204 kilometers in length, with an elevation profile of 3,370 meters. The ideal bike is a hybrid with gears with dirt road tires. Splitting the itinerary into 4-5 stages is recommended. The steepest inclines are between Bibbiano and Montalcino and on the slope of Mount Sante Marie along the stretch that links Asciano and Castelnuovo Berardegna.

For information on the route, road book and services:
www.eroicagaiole.com/permanent-route

WORDS • MARIATERESA MONTARULI
 PHOTOGRAPHS • VALTER SEGNAN

SACRED FORESTS

Across the centuries, monks, saints and poets all have passed through what is now the Casentino Forests, Mount Falterona and Campigna National Park, leaving their sacred traces. Its ancient beech trees are today a UNESCO World Heritage site. Explore it by mountain bike: ride alongside old railroad tracks, on the trails of the Lama forest, on the coalmen's cobbled paths and end with walnuts from a particular spicery

The hermits who came to study solitude in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines devoted great care and attention to the woods, to ensure they never lost their bearings nor sight of the precise aim of their research: isolation. In these mountain woods, where on the most wind-blown ridges even the beech trees bow as if in prayer and the Etruscans once made offerings to the cult of the water, all it takes as you pedal through is one small hill or a coalmen's clearing to suddenly behold the oldest beech and fir trees in Italy. In this safeguarded, serene parallel world of the Casentino Forests, Mount Falterona and Campigna National Park, Dante imagined his precipitous landscape of Hell, and Francis, Saint of the common man, shed all of his possessions and sang to the birds and meditated with the wolves. The

predators are certainly no strangers to the Sasso Fratino Nature Reserve, the unspoiled heart of the Park where they dance, roam and care for their young. At night, to get a head-count, recorded sounds transmitted from covert blinds elicit howls in response. But do not fear — it's not bicycles that these wolves seek. In this Park, a mostly forested 36,000-hectare gem of solitude, monks from the Camaldoli Monastery in 1520 printed the Rules of the Hermit Life, the first known "code of the forest." Care of the forest was not solely a spiritual necessity: from the Camaldoli Fir Forest came the trunks of the white fir trees transported along the Arno river, which springs from below Mount Falterona, and used in the construction of the Duomo of Florence. By mountain bike, the nature's effect

is truly superb, especially now that the Sasso Fratino Reserve, accessible only to researchers and the wolves, has been inscribed, with its protected area, on the UNESCO list of "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe." The Tuscan side of the Park has a softer topography while the more impervious Emilian territory is marked by deep valleys with steep, eroded cliff faces between patches of forest that in Autumn become pentagrams of ochre, yellow and bordeaux colors. Overall, the Park has 600 kilometers of trails along the old mule tracks open to bikers and trekkers that offer an uninterrupted "forest bathing" experience on dirt roads closed to all motorized traffic. Roads like the 20-kilometer stretch through the forest, gorgeous throughout, that retraces the tracks of



the narrow-gauge railroad built in the early 1900s to connect the village of Cancellino, where the old stone railway station today still stands, to the Lama Forest. With a descent of over 500 meters and the parapet built from the old rail tracks, the green road cuts through the protected area of the Sasso Frantino Reserve, now a World Heritage Site. In the summer months, the entrance is accessible by a Wild Bus that leaves from both Badia Prataglia and Bagni di Romagna. Another exceptional mountain bike trail begins in the Lama Forest, a steep uphill climb on cobbles that leads directly to Prato alla Penna and to the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli, a sharp, quick ascent of 554 meters amidst the forest and accompanied by only the music of the streams. The village of Camaldoli is home to both the Holy Hermitage and the Monastery, with its cloisters, its guest quarters and their tiny windows, the ancient spicery and its medicinal laboratory with its shelves full of walnuts. Cyclists, please take care of the forest, and don't ask for energy bars here...



Pg. 12: in the Casentino Forests. Pg. 13: view of the Municipality of Bibbiena at sunrise. Pg. 14: the Franciscan sanctuary of La Verna, nestled among cliffs and woods.

G A R F A G N A N A E P I C

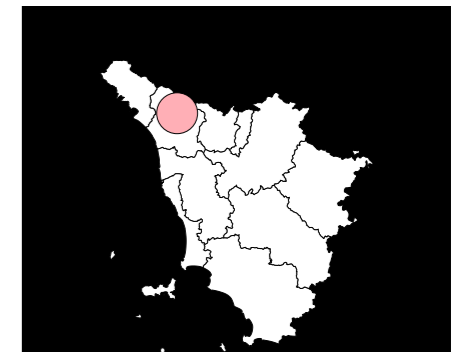


You don't need to be epic, just well-trained, but in the end, as you ride through the Garfagnana's landscape, it's true you will feel very special.

The "Epic" trail is one of the many mountain bike trails that give you a glimpse of the true nature of this immensely green mountain, inland and all up for discovery, close by to detours that head to the coast and sea, with the beauty of the Apuan Alps always on the horizon providing constant bearings. Amidst medieval villages, ghost towns and film-worthy scenery

It's not a race, but rather a gathering of nature and mountain bike enthusiasts, two excellent reasons to spend two days together amongst the charm of Garfagnana's nature, history and strong local traditions. Of course, a bit of technique and adventure cravings are necessary to complete the 160 km "Epic," a demanding trail that boasts much to see, including incredible views of the Apuan Mountains as you climb. Finishing the first day is rewarded with the unique experience of spending the whole night under the stars with 300 other cyclists more than 1000 meters above sea level in the Arsegna's green high plain, with camping and mountain huts, including the Sanctuary dedicated to the Madonna della Guardia, said protect cyclists. Awake to the smell of nature around you on the second day, which promises a ride through a truly epic landscape.

The Garfagnana offers trails for all levels. For a taste of "Epic," leave from Lago di Vagli, where a ghost town hides at the bottom of its waters, re-emerging only when the lake is emptied. Crossing over the dam is thrilling, but you will soon leave the ghosts behind you as you climb up to the village of Roggio, where you can jump on a dirt track that leads all the way to Campocattino. Here, the view looks out over the large field, left over from an ancient glacial basin, with the imposing Apuan mountains standing out before it. Take a break before heading back down to complete the circle, which crosses the suspended bridge over Lago di Vagli, from which you can practically imagine its submerged town.



TO RIDE
GARFAGNANA
Spring / Summer

The Medieval village of Barga, the Ponte del Diavolo, Lago di Vagli and its ancient submerged town, typical dishes made with chestnut flour: the Garfagnana is the ideal territory for combining cultural and culinary interests with active tourism (biking, hiking, trekking and canyoning) far from the tourist masses.

www.turismo.garfagnana.eu

To explore the Garfagnana's itineraries by bike:

www.bikesharing.garfagnana.eu

WORDS · MATTEO PIERATTINI
PHOTOGRAPHS · MARIO LLORCA

RIDE WITH A VIEW

Heading south from Siena, the view extends across a clayey and barren sea, dotted with cypresses, farms and small villages: these are the Crete, an endless series of hills that taper off under the majestic Monte Amiata. At the foot of the mountain sits a UNESCO World Heritage Site: the Val d'Orcia, surrounded by villages and small cities, an amazing paradise for rough and uninhibited cycling





Idealized in the Renaissance, the image found in Good Government, the landscape of the Val d'Orcia is the ideal scenery for those looking for a one-of-a-kind experience by bike, characterized by white roads, gravel dust and continuous ups and downs across hills that are yellow with grain, grey with clay or green with vegetation, according to the season. The shape of the land offers the unique possibility to ride along gravel roads, asphalt, and cobblestoned streets of historic city centers, all within just a few kilometres. No matter which terrain you choose to take on, you're guaranteed to enjoy it thanks to the almost complete absence of cars, a fairly common feature of the rural roads found throughout the province of Siena.

So long as you avoid the expressway at the bottom of the valley, you will find yourself pedalling along, immersed in silence, nature and history. In geographical terms, the Val d'Orcia is akin to a sea of hills surrounded by low mountain chains. On the tops of the hills are cities and villages, dating back

●
FROM A CYCLING
POINT OF VIEW, THE
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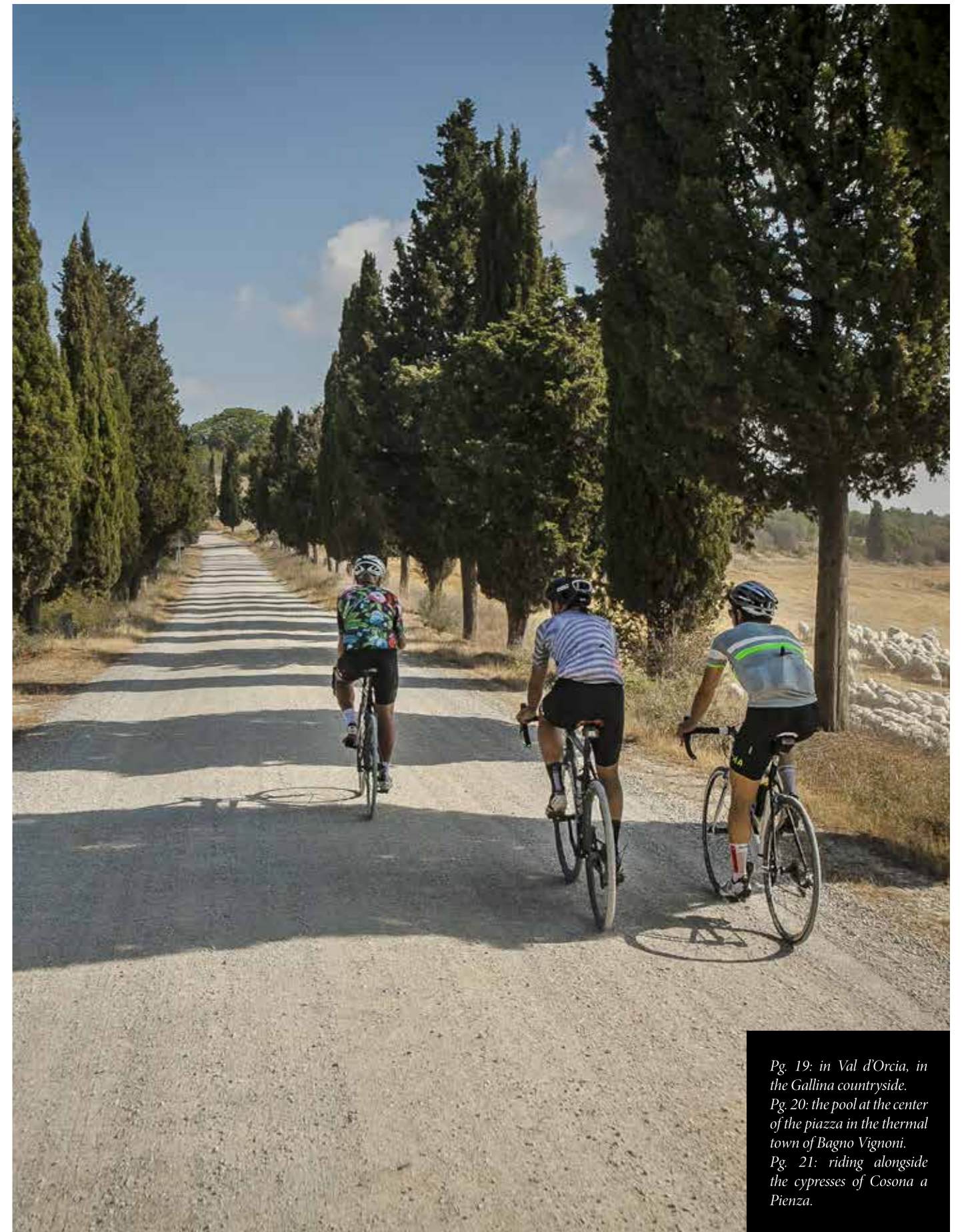


to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, while all around, a dense network of roads connects these places to the open countryside, with its farms and occasional houses. The territory is perfect for bike excursions, both for those interested in a day outing and those aiming for a longer journey with stops



along the way. There are numerous choices for where to start and end your trip: Montalcino, S. Quirico d'Orcia, Castiglione d'Orcia, Pienza, Radicofani; these are just a few of the places where you can stay before beginning your explorations. For those who love to experience the wilder side of life, "vacation" farms are dotted across the countryside, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the hills' rugged and barren landscape, where you can take to the dirt tracks immediately from your lodging. From a cycling point of view, the extensive presence of a dense network of white roads is the most beloved feature of this territory. You can ride surrounded by dreamlike landscapes, in complete silence, along well kept dirt roads. The immense beauty of these places and the increasing presence of slow tourism has led to the development of thematic itineraries, with dedicated sign postings that provide constant support for getting your bearings, as well as providing

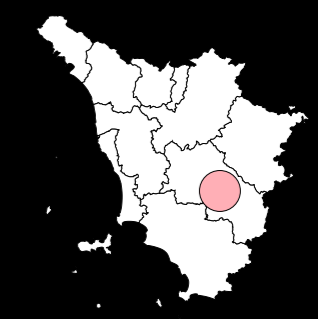
a meaning to the roads you're riding on. The wheels are now spinning down the *L'Eroica* route, running north towards the Senese Chianti; now on a stretch of the Via Francigena, running south towards Rome; now on other thematic tracks that criss-cross the land. With a variety of road surfaces, the Val d'Orcia boasts a terrain for all types of bikes, including road bikes. The perfect, thick ground of the white roads allows for every kind of road bike to cycle down them without risking puncturing the tires, as long as they are at least 25 mm thick; one must love rough cycling and be ready to get covered in dust, but apart from that, this sport was born on these trails, and with terrible quality bikes! To guarantee a perfect outing, agile gears are recommended; level ground is scarce around these parts and the ascents point straight up to the blue sky above the hills, creating demanding inclines.



Pg. 19: in Val d'Orcia, in the Gallina countryside.
Pg. 20: the pool at the center of the piazza in the thermal town of Bagno Vignoni.
Pg. 21: riding alongside the cypresses of Cosona a Pienza.



Pg. 22-23: a rest stop in the historical center of Castiglione d'Orcia; amidst the cypresses of San Quirico d'Orcia.

TO RIDE
VAL D'ORCIA
Spring / Summer / Fall

In the Val d'Orcia, you can ride across a variety of tracks, immersed in a landscape recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The silence and beauty of the white roads are one of the best reasons to ride in this part of Tuscany, as well as the chance to explore the small Renaissance and Medieval town dotting the tops of the hills.

www.parcodellavalorcias.com

VAL D'ORCIA ROUTE

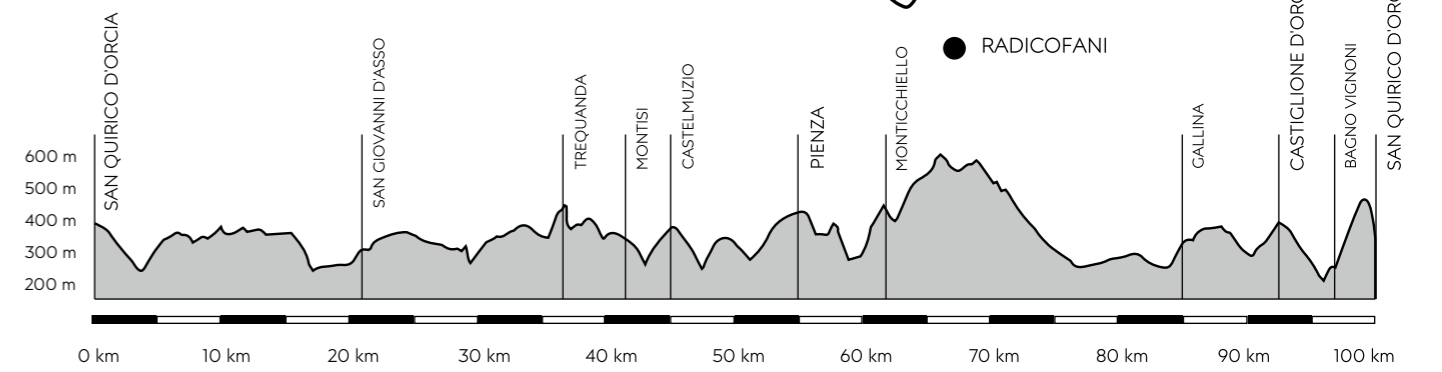
From S. Quirico d'Orcia, follow the Sp137 in the direction of Siena. The first stretch of the dirt track brings you to Lucignano d'Asso, where you pick up the asphalt road that leads to Trequanda, Montisi and Castelmuzio. You reach Pienza from the north, then Monticchiello on the second stretch of white road. From Castelluccio, descend toward the Orcia, until Gallina, where you can cut across the hills on white roads until Rocca d'Orcia. From Bagno Vignoni, the most tenacious riders can return to the point of departure by way of the dirt-lined and ruthless Vignoni ascent, while those who would like to follow an easier path can head along the asphalt country road.



INFO

Length: 101 km
Difficulty: medium
Roads: asphalt / dirt
Elevation gain: 2.050 m
Maximum incline: 18%

Download the route on the website:
www.tuscanycyclingseason.com



CYCLISTS IN RESIDENCE

INTERVIEWS • KAYLEE BLEVINS

Andy Hampsten and Ashley Gruber are both American and involved in world professional cycling with a deep passion for cycling in all its forms and, apparently, for the Italian Dolce Vita, considering they both spend much of their time living in Tuscany. Hampsten is a renowned champion and the first-ever American to win, in “heroic” fashion, the Giro d’Italia, while Gruber’s work as a professional photographer has made her famous worldwide

ANDY HAMPSTEN

The long career of Andy Hampsten is linked to one legendary stage of the 1988 Giro d’Italia, which after thirty years returned to the Gavia. That day, the roads of the alpine pass were flanked by walls of snow that continued to fall steadily. Amidst fearful cyclists shivering from the cold and threatening to withdraw, Andy rose to the occasion, finishing second and claiming the Pink Jersey that he would hold until Milan to become the first American to win the Giro.

You won the Giro d’Italia and now you organize bike tours in Tuscany. You seem to know Italy very well...

I visited Italy for a few weeks with my dad and older brother Stephen when I was 15. I was riding as much as I could then, but I did not have a bike on our trip. I remember looking out the window on our train trips and seeing packs of men riding in the spring sunshine. And a 10-year-old boy riding be-

hind a Vespa driven by his trainer. It was paradise. My racing started in Italy when I was 19, and I continue to look at the riding in Italy as the best in the world.

Where did the idea of organizing cycling tours in Tuscany come from?

I was living in Tuscany in the mid-90s when my racing career was ending, restoring a farmhouse. My mom asked me what I would be doing next and suggested I make a plan. I had been showing family and friends my favorite discoveries of the terrain and culture in Tuscany, and that was what I was interested in doing next. I named the company Cinghiale, in honor of the wild boar that Tuscans respect and love eating.

What is your favorite ride or scenery here?

My favorite rides are discovering a road for the first time. But some roads I like more every time I ride them. So the number one is from Sassetta to Suvereto in the Livorno



province, near my village of Castagneto Carducci. One of my favorite rides is into Florence on tiny roads that end among the old palaces of the historic center. Another just outside of Florence passes a tiny chapel on a tiny road with faded graffiti from the ‘40s: “Victory to Bartali, Death to Fascism”. If I was a retired cyclist without a care, I would ride the provinces of Tuscany until I knew every road. Starting with Siena and Grosseto, which would take 5 years.

ASHLEY GRUBER

Alongside her life companion Jered, Ashley Norris Gruber has helped change the image of cycling through her race photographs, which have earned her a following 50 thousand strong on Instagram. Her perspective captures the epic side of cycling, the magnificence of the mountains, portraits of cyclists’ true character and the ordinary beauty found in the smallest gestures that make this sport great.

On your Facebook profile it says that you live in Gaiole in Chianti, close to Siena — is this true?

Honestly, it’s something I did so long ago, I forgot I did that! We spend lots of time in Lecchi in Chianti, about 10 km from Gaiole, and it is a place that’s very close to our hearts.

I’ve also just finished shooting Strade Bianche, which starts and finishes in Siena. It is one of my favorite races of the year, and the 2017 edition was no exception.

What has been your favorite cycling experience in Tuscany to photograph and why?

I loved the first time I shot *l’Eroica*. I knew that people were enthusiastic about participating, but I was completely blown away by what that actually meant. I loved the older Italian men who were obviously locals, out with some of the equipment they’ve had in storage since they were teenagers. Watching them attack these monster hills with tiny little cogs was so much fun. I think more than anything, you could see that they were having fun.

As a photographer, what cycling moments fascinate you the most?

That’s easy: whenever someone I really like wins a race. The day Steve Cummings won the Tour de France stage on Mandela Day, riding for a South African team, will go down as one of my favorite victories ever.

What is your favorite part of traveling?

I think my favorite part of traveling is a uni-



versally loved part of traveling, maybe even the most universally loved part of traveling: finding new things and people. During my latest time in Tuscany, I had pappa al pomodoro for the first time. We’ve spent years here, but somehow we’ve just learned about this amazing food.

What is your favorite ride in Tuscany?

Any ride on the white roads!

WORDS • CHIARA MAZZEI

LUNIGIANA BY BIKE

In the far North of Tuscany, nestled between the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines and the Ligurian Sea, lies Lunigiana, a wild, still unspoiled territory that welcomes you with its gentle peaks, breathtaking nature, old villages and thousand-year-old history that tells of a proud and untamed land of transit. In autumn, the colors of the season combine to offer an unforgettable spectacle

Welcome to Lunigiana is the greeting that awaits you in this land that has long stood as the doorway to Tuscany. Along the region's Northern border, between Emilia-Romagna and Liguria, sits a mountain range full of forests, streams, villages and castles overlooking the Versilia Sea and the Cinque Terre and surrounded by the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines and Apuan Alps National Parks. This unique geography has helped forge both the area's natural history as well as that of its inhabitants, whose character has long struck a balance between the close-knit nature of mountain communities and the need for openness typical of zones of transit. The setting is perfect for mountain bike exploration, where the nature is still wild and doesn't resemble in the least the landscape generally associated with Tuscany — here, the forests and streams fill riders with a sense of adventure and discovery, far off the beaten track. Autumn reveals the area at its finest, as the forests paint themselves shades of orange and red to showcase its true charm and allure. Nothing here is catered to tourists, nothing is artificial or neatly wrapped and packaged — Lunigiana welcomes you as it is, with all its sincerity, its range of landscapes, its castles and churches of ancient rock,

through the richness of its trails and the moments when time seems to stand still. Mountain bike and e-mountain bike rentals are available for solo rides or for the "Pedal and Enjoy" guided tours organized by Sigeric that climb over a thousand meters through beech and chestnut trees. The chestnut tree, known here as the "tree of bread," lends its name to the area's most exciting two-

●
 AUTUMN REVEALS THE AREA AT ITS FINEST, AS THE FORESTS PAINT THEMSELVES SHADES OF ORANGE AND RED TO SHOWCASE ITS TRUE CHARM AND ALLURE

○
 wheel event, *Castagna Bike*, which takes place the second Sunday in October. The non-competitive gathering unfolds on three trails, each a different level, and perfectly embodies Lunigiana's passion for cycling adventure.



TO RIDE
 LUNIGIANA
 Spring / Summer / Fall

Gateway and key to the Apennines" is the definition given to Lunigiana by Emperor Frederick II. A land of transit between the mountains and the sea, straddling three regions (Tuscany, Liguria, Emilia-Romagna), with alluring landscapes and pristine, uncontaminated nature begging to be discovered on mountain bike. The *Castagna Bike* event in October is the perfect opportunity to experience this splendid land on two wheels.
www.turismoinlunigiana.it



APPENNINO ULTRA TRAIL

SEPTEMBER

Pistoia

A 135 km trail through the beautiful Tuscan-Emilian Apennine mountains, almost always above 1,000 meters.

www.appenninoultrail.it

STRACCA BIKES

SEPTEMBER

Arezzo

A race for mountain bikers in one of the most beautiful Tuscan areas, through the Casentinesi National Forest Park.

www.straccabike.it

TOSCANO ENDURO SERIES

SEPTEMBER

Abetone (Pistoia)

Second Apennine high-altitude leg of the Tuscan enduro circuit at Abetone Gravity Park, home of enduro and downhill enthusiasts.

www.toscanoenduroseries.it

GRAVEL ROAD PUNTA ALA

SEPTEMBER

Punta Ala (Grosseto)

Gravel race on dirt roads mixed with asphalt of the fantastic Maremma coast, with timed stretches and pit stops with refreshments.

visitpuntaala.bike

ELBAMAN

SEPTEMBER

Elba Island (Livorno)

Competition for triathletes, now in its 12th edition, on the roads and in the sea of the beautiful Elba Island.

www.elbaman.it

GF COLLI DEL TARTUFO

SEPTEMBER

San Miniato (Pisa)

Non-competitive rally suited for road bikes, departing from beautiful San Miniato crossing the truffle hills.

www.colli deltartufo.it

TUSCANY ROAD

SEPTEMBER

Tuscany

A cycling adventure along the roads of Tuscany, with a 100% paved route, ideal for road bikes.

www.tuscanyroad.it

GIRO DELLA TOSCANA

SEPTEMBER

Entire Region

Stage competition for road bikes, successor of the annual classic held for the first time in 1923.

www.girodellatoscana.com

L'EROICA

OCTOBER

Gaiole in Chianti (Siena)

The world renowned classic. 5,000 cyclists on vintage bikes on the dirt roads of the Chianti and the Crete Senesi.

www.eroicagaiole.it

TOSCANO ENDURO SERIES

OCTOBER

Punta Ala (Grosseto)

Sixth and final leg of the Tuscan Enduro Series. A race mostly on dirt roads and single tracks, with 4 special timed stages.

www.toscanoenduroseries.it

MURETTI MADNESS

OCTOBER

Florence

A get-together for climbing "saddists" in the hills surrounding Florence: about 3,000 m of cumulative climbs in just over 100 km.

www.cicloididi.it

CASTAGNA BIKE

OCTOBER

Villafranca in Lunigiana (Massa Carrara)

Non-competitive mountain bike rally, also open to e-bikes, through the mountains and chestnut trees of Lunigiana.

www.castagnabike.it

SERCHIO COUNTRY RACE

DECEMBER

Nozzano (Lucca)

Dirt road enthusiasts' gathering in the Serchio River valley. A 50 km route, even more challenging during wintertime.

biciclettasblues.blogspot.com

STRADE BIANCHE

MARCH

Siena

The classic straight-line race for professionals (UCI Europe Tour) opening the Tuscan dirt roads season, starting and ending in Siena.

www.strade-bianche.it

GRANFONDO STRADE BIANCHE MARCH**Siena**

The long-distance race open to enthusiasts, covering the same roads of the professional race that takes place on the previous day.

gfstradebianche.it

GIRO DELLA PIANA

MARCH

Florence

A non-professional country race that takes place in the Florentine plains and through the parks that skirt the Arno River.

girodellapiana.wordpress.com

MASSA MARITTIMA SUPERENDURO MARCH**Massa Marittima (Grosseto)**

Part of the official Enduro World Series: 40 km long and 1.500 m of total climbs, and 6 special tests, for a race with high competitive value.

www.superenduromtb.com

GRANFONDO MTB MONTERIGGIONI MARCH**Monteriggioni (Siena)**

52 km with 1,500 m of climbs for this MTB long-distance race, ending at Monteriggioni's beautiful medieval castle.

www.teambikepionieri.it

TOSCANO ENDURO SERIES

MARCH

Monte Serra (Pisa)

First leg of the 2017 Tuscan circuit. It takes place on Monte Serra. A 21.7 km route with a 812 m difference in altitude and 3 special tests.

www.toscanoenduroseries.it

KEY

- ROAD BIKE
- MTB • ENDURO
- GRAVEL • CICLOCROSS
- FIXED BIKE
- VINTAGE BIKE



FALL WINTER

CYCLING SEASON
2017/18



SPRING SUMMER

CYCLING SEASON
2017/18

TIRRENO-ADRIATICO

APRIL

Tuscany

The first major race in stages of the UCI World Tour season, starting from Versilia and crossing Italy coast-to-coast.

www.tirrenoadriatico.it

**GRANFONDO BETTINI**

APRIL

Florence

Long-distance race designed by world champion Paolo Bettini, with a route running through the Val di Cecina hills.

www.greenfondopaolobettini.com

**GRANFONDO FIRENZE**

APRIL

Florence

A long-distance race drawing 2,000 participants every year from Florence's center along the routes of the 2013 World Cycling Championships.

www.granfondofirenze.it

**GF VAL DI MERSE**

APRIL

Rosia (Siena)

Mountain bike Gran Fondo in the natural scenery of Val di Merse featuring both a competitive and non-competitive event.

www.rosiabike.it

**RAMPICHIANA**

APRIL

Cortona (Arezzo)

An MTB long-distance race at its 12th edition and covers 45 km of forest trails in the woods of Val di Chiana.

www.rampichiana.com

**GIRO D'ITALIA**

MAY

Tuscany

Since 1909, along with the Tour, it is one of the most renowned events worldwide. The 2016 Giro d'Italia included 3 legs in Tuscany.

www.giroditalia.it

**GF 7MURI**

MAY

Sicci (Florence)

A long-distance race with a route ideal for climbers, and another one suitable for cycling tourists, along the Val di Sieve's 7 "walls".

**GF DELLA VERNACCIA**

MAY

San Gimignano

The traditional long-distance race that year after year brings more than 1,000 participants to the roads of San Gimignano.

www.granfondodellavernaccia.it

**FIORINO CRIT**

MAY

Florence

Fixed-gear bike criterium along a 1,250 m route in the Cascine Park in Florence, a stone's throw away from the city's velodrome.

www.fiorinocrit.it

**IRONLAKE**

MAY

Barberino del Mugello (Florence)

Triathlon competition with two main formats, an Olympic one and a sprint one, in the Bilancino Lake area.

www.ironlake.it

**DA PIAZZA A PIAZZA MTB**

MAY

Prato

A technical MTB marathon and a fascinating journey around Prato that sees more than 800 bikers at the starting line.

**GF COSTA DEGLI ETRUSCHI**

MAY

Cecina (Livorno)

MTB long-distance race with both a marathon and a tourist cycling itinerary in the Mediterranean scrub of the Tyrrhenian coast.

mtb-cecina.it

**TUSCANY TRAIL**

JUNE

Tuscany

A 560 km off-road and scenic journey across Tuscany. From the sea to the mountains and the cities' historic centers.

www.tuscanytrail.it

**TUSCANY GRAVEL
RADICONDOLI**

JUNE

Radicondoli (Siena)

A 100-mile-long gravel race on the hidden and beautiful roads of Val di Merse, between Siena, Pisa and Grosseto.

www.100miglia.it

**B KING**

JUNE

Florence

MTB long-distance race on a technical and challenging yet spectacular route around Fiesole, crossing FirenzeFreeRide's Bike Park.

www.b-king.it

**GF CICLOTOUR MUGELLO**

JUNE

Barberino del Mugello (Florence)

An original starting point in the Mugello Circuit for this long-distance race that runs along the Apennine's hills and mountains.

www.ciclotourmugello.it

**TOSCA GRAVEL RACE**

JULY

Lucca

Fun gathering for gravel enthusiasts covering 160 km, to be ridden un-supported between Lucca and Pisa.

toscagravelrace.wordpress.com/

**GRANFONDO CIPOLLINI**

JULY

Capannori (Lucca)

Long-distance race on the roads of the province of Lucca, promoted by one of the best sprinters of all time: Mario Cipollini.

www.granfondomariocipollini.it

**DIAKKA CUP DOWNHILL**

JULY

Abetone (Pistoia)

Top Class Downhill Regional Racing Competition held at the Abetone Gravity Park.

www.diakkacup.com

**FIRENZE-MARE**






AUGUST

Tuscany

A straight-line race that has been going for over 70 years, now restricted to Under 23s. Starting from Florence and ending on the Versilia seafont.

www.firenzemare.net

**KEY**

-  ROAD BIKE
-  MTB • ENDURO
-  GRAVEL • CICLOCROSS
-  FIXED BIKE
-  VINTAGE BIKE

WORDS • GINO CERVI
ILLUSTRATIONS • GIORGIO FRATINI

FINDING GINO

*The boy, the man, the champion,
the Righteous Among the Nations...
The career milestones of
Gino Bartali, the national hero
known as "Ginettaccio"*



Gino on the Mòccoli

At the end of the 1920s, word began to spread in Florence of a young boy who would ride his bicycle up Mòccoli hill, the final stretch of via Fortini, where even the cart horses gave up, without even putting his hands on the handlebars. His name is Gino Bartali, from Ponte a Ema.

The French infuriated

July 22, 1938, *Tour de France* stage 14. The boy is now not only a man, but a champion. After twice winning the *Giro d'Italia*, he now dominates across the Alps: during the Briançon stage, on the roads of Izoard, he overtakes everyone and holds the yellow jersey until Paris. "While the French are infuriated" as the song goes...



The arrival of "that guy"

At the 1940 *Giro*, Bartali fell while Fausto Coppi soared. As Legnano teammates, Gino was captain with the twenty-year-old rookie as his assistant. Bartali didn't take it well, and soon enough "that guy" became a burden. In the Dolomites and leading the *Giro*, Coppi breaks down and wants to retire from the race, but Gino waits for him, urges him on, insults him and then rubs a fistful of snow on his neck to get him back on the bike. And Fausto wins his first *Giro*.

Villa Triste

One night during the war, Gino was brought before Major Carità, leader of the fascist thugs who at Villa Triste, along via Bolognese, captured, beat and sometimes executed opponents of the regime. Bartali, a friend of Cardinal Elia della Costa, was suspected of helping the partisans. He was interrogated, threatened. But Italy's champion couldn't come under arrest, and that night, they let Gino go.



A Bartali victory and down with the revolution

The attack on Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party, on July 14, 1948, sets aflame the already exasperated national political tension. On July 15th comes the news via radio: Bartali wins the Briançon stage at the *Tour de France*; and a day later: Bartali takes the yellow jersey at Aix-les-Bains. Ten years later, Gino again "infuriates" the French and brings joy to Italians, who flood the piazzas in celebration, but not to start a revolution.

Gino as a pillar and the museum

For forty years Bartali was a pillar of cycling. First as a sporting director, then as a columnist and a spokesperson always following the *Giro* in his car with a cycling cap on his head and a cigarette in his mouth. People would stop him, wave to him, ask for an autograph. Bartali died on May 5, 2000 in his home in Florence in Piazza Elia della Costa, named after his friend the Bishop who had officiated his marriage and then brought him into the resistance. Just a few kilometers away, in Ponte a Ema, the Bartali Museum today celebrates his life.



"Good is done but not said"

Only after his death did it emerge that during the war Gino Bartali had acted as a courier for the resistance, riding between Florence and Assisi with false documents concealed within his bike frame and saving the lives of dozens of Jews destined for deportation. For this clandestine activity, Bartali was awarded the Gold Medal for Civilian Valor in 2005 and in 2013 received the distinction of Righteous Among the Nations from Yad Vashem.



Ginettaccio's seven lives

He'd already won the Milano-San Remo race three times, but no one would have bet he'd do it again at 36 years old by beating sprint legend Rik Van Steenberghe down the final stretch.





Pg. 34: aerial view of the beaches of Mangani and Rio nell'Elba.
Pg. 35: on the Legend Cup trails, in the mining area of Monte Calamita in Capoliveri.

WORDS · ENRICO CARACCILO
PHOTOGRAPHS · ROBERTO RIDI

COAST TO COAST

The Etruscan Coast and the Island of Elba, separated by a stretch of sea, offer itineraries and places where visitors are reconnected with nature in its purest form. Routes wind not only past enchanting beaches, pines and oaks scratched by the breeze and scented by the sea, but through the worlds of art, fine cuisine and local culture, from the Etruscans to modern times. Ride your bike straight onto the ferry to embark on this extraordinary “coast to coast” journey

The horizon paints itself blue along the Livorno coastline that faces the ethereal contours of the Island of Elba. Soft breaths of Mediterranean breeze and libeccio wind contrast with the harsh scrub, the large pines, extravirgin olive groves and noble vineyards. Roads and trails tell the story of a land tied to mineral extraction, from the Etruscans to our own times, a symbol of the environmental diversity that make this a great place to live and even better to visit. Some of the areas' must-see spots include Piazza Bovio in Piombino, one of the most beautiful piazzas in the world, literally surrounded by the sea; the stone pines along the Gulf of Baratti, the most beautiful in all of Tuscany; the road from Sassetta to Suvereto, coveted by cyclists for its twists and turns; and the heavenly, ancient acropolis of Populonia. The Piombino promontory is a wide-open gateway to the Mediterranean. On clear days, Elba looks so close that you could touch it. From the Populonia acropolis to Cala Moresca, passing by the Buche delle Fate site, the 2,500 years that separate us from the Etruscans become centimeters. The path towards the coast is lined with Etruscan tombs just a few paces

away, while the bike route traces a trail of beauty through the Mediterranean scrub to reach the *Land's End* of Tuscany. Then it's onto the ferry from Piombino to Portoferrario, just long enough for a rest filled with light. The first pedal strokes on the Island prove that the road to the Mediterranean leads through Elba with spectacular routes along the deserted coastline, through vineyards, olive groves and the smell of herbs and spices that connect towns of miners, fishermen and farmers. Spring and Fall may be the preferred seasons, but the roads are rideable year-round making the Island a true cyclist's dream with an





Pg. 36: the colours of Spring in Serraventosa, on the Raggio Verde route.
Pg. 37: the Laconella beach; below, the descent down to the Patresi beach.

incredible network of courses for bikers of any level — road bike lovers in search of technical courses, riders who enjoy trails and dirt roads, and tourist cyclists who are happy simply to discover the territory and won't object to a break at a bar or restaurant.

The Island also offers several off-road trails, the best-known of which make up the Capoliveri Bike Park found next to Mount Calamita and criss-crossed with over 100 kilometers of roads and trails. The route that circles the mountain is a stunning journey between sky and sea amidst the intense Mediterranean scrub and unforgiving red rock. Mount Calamita's cycling baptism dates back to 1994 when the first generation of professional bikers gathered here for a World Cup trial. It was during that competition, held as one of the most exciting ever, that Ned Overend and John Tomac discovered the California of Italy. The areas surrounding the mountains of Capanne, Perone and Orello are also particularly beautiful



●

THE BIKE ROUTE
TRACES A TRAIL OF
BEAUTY THROUGH
THE MEDITERRANEAN
SCRUB TO REACH
THE LAND'S END OF
TUSCANY

○

and, unlike Calamita, feature non-specific trails, leaving road bikers and tourist cyclists to share and plot their own routes: routes such as the loops that explore Porto Azzurro, Cavo, Rio Elba and the Voltorraio ruins on the eastern part of the Island or the *grand tour* of Elba's western side running alongside splendid beaches and granite mountains.



TO RIDE
LIVORNO / ELBA ISLAND
Four Seasons

The Livorno coastline and the Island of Elba are rideable year-round for mountain bikers, road bikers and tourist cyclists. Due to seasonal tourism, the summer months offer the most in terms of services and accommodation.

For useful information on the seven islands that make up the Tuscan Archipelago National Park visit: www.islepark.it and for Elba visit: www.visitelba.info



GRAND TOUR VALLEYS

Just turn a corner and you'll find yourself biking a Grand Tour in the most intimate and unknown parts of Tuscany. Two valleys, the Val di Merse and Val d'Elsa, bring the back roads to life, allowing riders to discover a beautiful and hidden land, the natural scenery for a hub dedicated to bike tourists in search of emotions and local traditions



Letting yourself get drawn in by the back roads is one of the most charming aspects of taking your bike for a spin, that is, giving in to nature's encouragement to veer off onto one of those roads that are just a small part of a larger labyrinth, too large indeed to discover in its entirety, and hardly even in one single valley. The outing gets complicated when there are two valleys, the Val di Merse and the Val d'Elsa, the two green lungs of the Senesi, where the morphing landscape boasts a variety of roads – asphalt, white roads and trails – letting you choose the best surface to suit your ride, whether you're on a road bike, a mountain bike, a gravel bike or e-bike.

The Grand Tour of the Val di Merse was established to link these valleys hill by hill, as well as their villages, which are often little more than 500 m. in altitude, enough to please those looking for a bit of elevation gain and some reinvigorating descents. The nature reserves and rivers along the route, populated with wild boars and local game, are a cure-all for taking a breath and staying refreshed during the ride across this 170-km circular route, which should be undertaken over several days. The village of Sovicille is a good point to start, given its proximity to Siena and its train station. From the village, you can take off north, where you will soon find yourself immersed in the Montagnola Senese; if you prefer to go south, you'll come across the castle in Stigliano, before reaching the lower part of the Val di Merse, nearby the Terme di Petriolo. The circuit climbs back up toward Chiusdino, where a roofless, massive cathedral rises solitarily in the middle of the countryside. The Abbey of San Galgano merits a rest stop: you'll be hard pressed to find another set of ancient walls with the sky as a roof boasting the same allure.

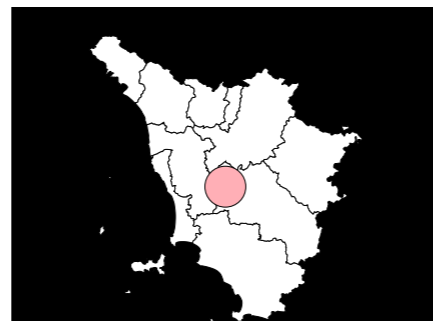
A little further up and you'll arrive at the top of the Colline Metallifere in Radicondoli. The village is known for



having the best dirt trails and ups and downs in the area, which is why it was chosen to host the Tuscan Gravel Race 100 Miglia, held every May.

You've now reached the Val d'Elsa, which opens up like a hidden treasure, located at the center of an area equidistant from Siena, San Gimignano and Volterra. Here, the Municipality of Casole d'Elsa launched the project Terre di Casole Bike Hub, a network of cycling tourism services spread throughout the territory. It's a cyclist-friendly village, the ideal destination for bike tourists looking for local experiences and a bike itinerary for every taste, even culinary-based.

Casole dominates over the Val d'Elsa and Montagnola Senese, so cast a final glance before heading down hill to end the Grand Tour circuit through Tuscany's small treasures.



TO RIDE

CASOLE D'ELSA
Spring / Summer / Fall

The Grand Tour through the Val di Merse is 170-km long and has a 3000-meter elevation gain. The circuit is an adventurous one, almost completely covered by asphalt except for a few beautiful stretches of white road. Therefore, it is perfect for all types of bicycles. The route is marked and was extended recently, absorbing the Val d'Elsa to the north and the white roads to the south. For information on the whole route or other, shorter circular routes, see the website:

www.grandtourvaldimerse.it





*Pg. 38-41: a view of Val d'Elsa looking towards Volterra; the village of Casole d'Elsa and the hills.
Pg. 42: riding alongside the Abbey of San Galgano, in Chiusdino (Photo by Costantina Pozzi).*

R I D E & F O O D



Three ancient routes for three bike excursions. Kilometers and kilometers of Tuscan landscape inspire a culinary tradition where simple recipes exalt the authenticity of flavours. From peasant dishes to unexpected tastes that speak of a distant past

LA VIA DEL SALE / THE SALT ROAD

An ancient road from the salt in Volterra to the saffron in San Gimignano



The solitary charm of Volterra dominates the irresistible rural landscape from above, a vertigo that invites you to hop on your bike and explore the Via del Sale, a route that has been used since the Middle Ages by donkeys and mules pulling carts full of salt. Salt, a fundamental ingredient both in dish preparation and food conservation, was extracted from the surrounding hills along with other important minerals, making Etruscan and Medieval Volterra rich and driving Siena and Florence to fight for control over the area. The road continues along dirt tracks, with traces of ancient cobblestones, all the way to the towers of San Gimignano. In addition to vineyards producing good white wine, saffron was also cultivated at the foot of the walls, a spice used to season the meats eaten by the *Podestà* and his soldiers, as well as an important commodity for San Gimignano's economy. Salt mining and reinvigorating spices: that's what a cyclist wants after a day on the road.

THE VIA FRANCIGENA

A slow journey through the flavours found along the Tuscan stretch of the ancient road

Slowness is the best travel partner when it comes to savouring every aspect of the landscape along the via Francigena, the Tuscan stretch of which you can cross by bike, with 380 km of history. Since the days of Sigeric, the Archbishop of Canterbury who travelled the route on his return from Rome, pilgrims would fill their sacks with the many local products they encountered at every stop. Beginning in the north, the valleys of the Lunigiana mountains contain a wealth of taste in the "poor" recipes for testaroli pasta, made with a dough that comes from nothing more than water, salt and flour, according to the peasant tradition. Toward the south, you will find the same simplicity and the same ingredients in pici, a must-try in Siena: water, salt and flour mixed by hand into long, thick spaghetti, which blends wonderfully with ragu made with wild game or aglione with tomato and garlic sauce. All that's left is the dessert. And those from Siena, made with honey and dried and candied fruits, offer the perfect energy for cyclists.



LA VIA DEGLI DEI / THE WAY OF THE GODS

By mountain bike, paths and ancient stones weave through chestnut forests



It's difficult not to be inspired by this route that ventures through the Apennines, where mountain bikers can ride and breathe in its spiritual nature. Mounts Venere, Adone and Luario recall the "Gods" and sit at the center of this route divided between Renaissance Florence and Medieval Bologna. But this road has truly ancient traditions, harking back to when the Etruscans wanted to connect ancient Fiesole with the trade taking place beyond the Apennines, something that was later pursued in Roman times by Consul Flaminio. And indeed, it can be thrilling to find the old cobblestones of the via Flaminia Militare along the route, well-preserved and visible. From the splendid view of Fiesole, the road weaves through the Mugello, where the chestnut forests have inspired local recipes made from, you guessed it, chestnuts. Take a quick pause to taste these "burned" delicacies, according to the classic open fire recipe. Chestnut cake can be very invigorating, a dessert made from chestnut flour seasoned with oil, rosemary and sometimes raisins. Chestnut flour is also used in tortelli pasta, even if it would be much easier to taste one of the most typical dishes of this area along the route, the *tortelli mugellani*, filled with potatoes: an excellent warm comfort food, because in these parts the wind can be chilly even in the summer.

T O S C A N A T R I A T H L O N

More than a sport, the triathlon is a way of life. A community of athletes comes together around these sporting events. Indeed, these competitions can also provide the perfect opportunity to embark on a new journey



The primary goal is to be a finisher, but not without enjoying the journey before, during and after the race. Three sporting events in Tuscany serve as the perfect inspiration to discover settings of captivating natural beauty. In May, hundreds of triathletes dive into the water of the Barberino del Mugello Lake, a summer destination for local residents, before facing the cycling and running stages amidst the natural landscape of the Mugello, an area known for its many routes and trails dedicated to both road and mountain bikes (mugelloinbike.it). Following the race, it's a smooth downhill ride into Florence for a visit.

Shifting southwards towards the coast of Grosseto and the town of Punta Ala, the competition begins to resemble something like an active vacation. Spring is Triathlon X-Tri season, and



here an Olympic-level course awaits, featuring a pristine second leg on mountain bike that runs through the trails of the Bandite di Scarlino nature reserve alongside the alluring Cala Violina bay. Just a ferry-ride away, the sea itself takes center stage for Elbaman, the event that concludes the summer of competition on the beaches of the Is-

land of Elba, pearl of the Tuscan Archipelago and the entire Mediterranean.

Photo by Matteo Oltrabella



P I S T O I A F R E E R I D E

Skiing and snowboarding in the winter, mountain biking, trekking and trail running in the summer. Starting from the Abetone and Doganaccia ski areas, the Pistoian mountain offers a spectacular variety of nature trails along the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines that range from the relaxing to the adrenalizing



The seasons change, but the trails, peaks and ridges are the same. Lovers of "gravity" mountain biking will find a home at the ski areas at Abetone and Doganaccia, thanks to the many trails that in the summer months are equipped to offer bikers a free-ride adrenaline rush through forests of beech woods and red firs. The ski areas are also the starting



points for several mountain bike-specific itineraries, allowing riders to pedal through the surrounding natural beauty and fill their lungs with the fresh mountain air.

Doganaccia (1,550 m.) is located above the ski area in the village of Cutigliano (700 m.). As with the ski slopes in winter, the colors blue, red and black indicate the difficulty level of the trails, allowing riders to choose the downhill or free-ride route that best suits them, all with 850 meters descents. Several mountain bike trails radiate out from the ski area (e-bikes can be especially helpful for exploration), the shortest of which leads to the spectacular mirrored surface of Lake Scaffaiolo (www.doganaccia2000.it).

Not far away, the newly-built "gravity park" next to the Abetone ski area has

become a landmark for downhill and free-ride lovers (www.abetonegravitypark.it), and each year hosts a stage of the Toscano Enduro Series. All this at the refreshing altitude of nearly 2,000 meters and surrounded entirely by a marvelous mountain panorama.

Photo by Apennine Free Ride





WORDS • ENRICO CARACCILO
PHOTO • MARIO LLORCA

The journey begins on the peak of the Amiata and ends in front of the Argentario's sea. From the ancient volcano that looks over both the Val d'Orcia and the Maremma, crossing through monumental beech trees and centuries-old chestnuts before reaching the clearness and reflection of the Costa d'Argento, this 150-km biking trail in the heart of the Maremma narrates Tuscany's most fascinating features

From the peak to the sea. Mountain bike, gravel, street, it doesn't make a difference: there is only one direction and the various roads indulge different passions and wheels, from dirt trails, including the adrenaline-inducing downhill slope from the peak to Prato Macinaie, to the white road, to the asphalt stretches for thin and elegant tires. Air, water, earth and fire. These are the elements that make up the heart and body of the Amiata, a dormant volcano in the south of Tuscany that in one single, large territory summarizes the profoundly human characteristics of miners and lumberjacks.

Roads and paths mark the fertile terrain, grey, ochre and red, home to enormous trachytes that have exploded forth from the volcano and which fosters ancient farms and nourishes the roots of centuries-old chestnut and beech trees. The villages of Castel del Piano, Arcidosso and Santa Fiora tell the story of the mountain and overlook hills and islands. In Seggiano, a high-quality extra-virgin olive oil is produced, and on the hills that peter out toward the Maremma, the excellent Montecucco is made, a DOC that

VETTA MARE



has strict connections to the blends of the famous Brunello di Montalcino. From Castell’Azzara, with its nature reserves of Monte Penna and Santissima Trinità, the descent leads into a world of tuff and Etruscan mysteries. Sorano is splendid, seen from the valley of the River Lente or from above from the Fortezza Orsini; from below, the town appears to be suspended in a precarious balance. The journey passes through the Vie Cave, canyons carved out by man, dark wounds cut into mountains of tuff. Originally built to reach the burial sites, they were later used as communication roads when Sovana became a hub of commercial exchange. Here, the Peak-Sea route slips through the scrub and farmed fields, reaching Poggio Murella and Saturnia, famous for their thermal waters.



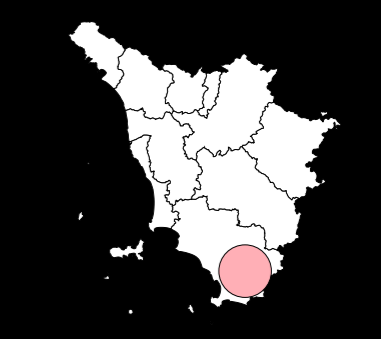
WELCOME TO THE
FAR WEST OF ITALY:
MAGNIFICENT ROADS,
OLD FRONTIERS,
AND PATHS THAT AID
TRANSHUMANCE



The landscape opens, shining, toward the sky, drawing wavy profiles of land against the bright background. The Maremma route is a sensorial journey: begin with a taste of the legendary Manciano pecorino and end with an authentic glass of Morellino. From Montemerano, a rustic and elegant stone village, you can reach Manciano, known as the “Spy of the Maremma”. Welcome to the Far West of Italy: magnificent roads, old frontiers, and paths that aid transhumance, all winding until they reach Capalbio and Porto Ercole: the Argentario, the island linked to the mainland thanks to a fascinating and fragile strip of land that follows the Costa d’Argento, carved with simple roads perfect for carefree cyclists.



Pg 48: trails through the chestnut forest on Monte Amiata. Pg. 50: the hills of the Maremma and the village of Sovana. Pg. 51: farmed fields around Saturnia in the Maremma; arrival at the Argentario sea.

TO RIDE
AMIATA / MAREMMA
Spring / Summer

The Peak-Sea route, 1738 meters up Monte Amiata, through the hills and farms of the Maremma, to the Argentario’s sea, was designed to be a trekking course around 140 km in length, largely along dirt tracks, but it is now possible to cross the trail on bike. You can undertake the entire or make simple detours from the local adjacent roads, asphalt and with low traffic, that is, better adapted to road bikes and bike tourists.



COLOPHON

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CYCLING SEASON
1951
*Giro d'Italia, arrival at
the Velodromo Vigorelli:
Magni wins the Pink Jersey,
next to him, Gino Bartali.
Photo • Archivio Museo del
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