



This is a truly unique European cycling vacation: the French and Italian Riviera, the Cinque Terre hilltop villages, the Ligurian interior countryside, the Tower of Pisa. Even better—it's a route that largely remains off the radar of bicycle tours. Coursing thread-like mountain roads above the Mediterranean, and venturing into remote and tranquil Liguria, you'll experience some of the finest coastline cycling, scenery and cuisine Europe can offer.

You'll begin at the classic French Cote d'Azur destination of Nice and proceed along the rugged coastline, through Monaco, before turning south entering Italy. The impossibly beautiful villages and terraced vineyards of the Cinque Terre enchant, while the serene Ligurian countryside beckons. Wrap this up with the famous stop in Pisa, and you have all the ingredients for a remarkable bicycling vacation! Bon Appétit!

You'll marvel at the worlds of contrast within a mere two weeks of bicycling. From the hustle-bustle of Nice to the interior of Liguria the contrasts are striking. The cerulean waters of the Mediterranean, compelling in both clarity and intensity, easily distract. Yet we are quickly reminded of the nearness of an enterprising economy. The coastal roadways are often exciting—people, scooters, cars and trucks—yet everyone cooperates and shares the road in such a way that North American bicyclists dream of when considering an ideal cycling getaway.

Meanwhile, Liguria is a terrain of field and forest. Locals gather funghi (mushrooms) used liberally in the delicious local cuisine. The serenity of the interior is a welcome complement to the bustling energy of the seaside—and you're sure to treasure the "secret" roads as much as the local cyclists who ride them on the weekends. Your bicycle tour will explore inland over four days, with out-and-back loop rides, as well as point-to-point routes, before moving back to the Mediterranean.

Next we'll explore the reknowned Cinque Terre by bike, foot or boat. The seafood is fabulous, and the views from the villages perched on cliffs above the sea are breathtaking. From the Cinque Terre we'll cycle quiet roads to the outskirts of La Spezia, and ride around Poets Cove to Lerici, to Marina di Carrara and then to the walled city of Lucca. Finally, we ride on roads lined with olive groves and old castles to the leaning tower of Pisa.

You'll have much to contemplate, and plan for next year, as the cool fall weather descends upon us as we return home

Tour Details

<p>2009 Dates: Arrival day: 4 October Departure day: 18 October</p> <p>Prices: 2200 Euro (double occupancy per person) 500 Euro (single supplement-limited spaces)</p> <p>Note: Special prices good until 15 January, 2009. After 15 January, 2009 prices at retail rate, currently 2650 Euro (double occupancy per person).</p>	Highlights	Italian Riviera, CinqueTerre villages, Fresh seafood meals, Piemonte wines, Ligurian olive oil, Dramatic seascapes, Italian hospitality, Fresh funghi (mushroom) sauces
	Includes	14 nights, 14 breakfasts, 12 dinners, 2 grand picnics, maps and route descriptions, luggage transfers, on-the-road ride guides, van support
	Gateway	Nice, France
	Begin/End	Vence, France
	Total Distance	763-1089km (473-676miles) depends on choices
	Daily Distance	37-117km (23-73 miles) depends on choices
	What to expect	Italian Riviera, Cinque Terre, great scenery, Lucca, Pisa, Nice, exceptional meals, climbs of 8-12km at 5-9%, some short steeper sections
	Bicycle Rentals	None Riders bring their own bikes.

Day 1 – Arrival after meeting your flight into the Cote d’Azur airport we will help get you settled into our gateway hotel in nearby Vence. Riding, reading, resting or roaming the Old Town; you decide, we are here to help. Welcome dinner will introduce you to the flavors of Provence.

Day 2 – San Remo 93-114km

We ride on quiet roads to the outskirts of Nice, then follow the newly designated bike lane along the Promenade des Anglais to the Port of Nice. The road along the coast passes thru numerous old towns with red tile roofs, numerous bike shops and gelato shops. We arrive in San Remo for a well deserved post-ride refreshing beverage.

Day 3 – San Remo 36, 78, 109km options

We will explore many of these wonderful roads leading to hilltop villages near San Remo

Day 4 – Alassio 55,102,127km options

We start the day riding along the Mediterranean before climbing into the hills to enjoy another day of quiet roads linking tiny villages, vineyards and olive groves to Alassio where we will enjoy a nice quiet location near the marina.

Day 5 – Alassio 76, 147km, sensible or epic, you decide

The roads are so much fun to ride near Alassio that we are compelled to linger another day for great rides into the high meadows of Liguria. At the end of the you will wonder why you have never heard of riding in Liguria until now.

Day 6 – Sassello 114km

We criss-cross the Alta via dei Monti Liguri on the way to Sassello. It is funghi season here, so we can expect to savor delicious mushroom-flavored meals. Sassello is also famous for a delicious soft pastry called Amaretti—enjoy!!

Day 7 – Sassello 77km

Today is simply a rider’s treat as we take a loop ride that includes a one of the smoothest, twisty, roads that you will wish you could do again and again. We will descend into the wine-producing region of Piemonte.

Day 8 – Montoggio 97km

We leave our delightful hosts to ride where we are nearly suspended in the sky as we traverse the coastal side of the high ridges separating the interior from the sea.

Day 9 – Sestri Levante 114km

We continue riding over hills connecting remote valleys and descending dramatically to the sea at Ricco. Here we MUST sample the local specialty, focaccia of Ricco. Finally, we arrive in picturesque Sestri Levante and the Bay of Silence.

Day 10 – Monterosso 60km

The ride from Monterosso to the top of Passo del Braco is one of the most popular routes for local cyclists before descending into the Cinque Terre region. We arrive early enough to wander the and relax on the beach.

Day 11 – Monterosso

Today is a “rest day” for riding, but there too many choices for activities to really rest. The famous trail that connects the 5 villages is certainly high on the list of to-do’s. Or go by boat; regularly scheduled boats connect all of the villages.

Day 12 – Marina di Carrara 98km

We leave the Cinque Terre behind and descend to La Spezia and take a short diversion to Portovenere for mid-ride café and snacks. From Portovenere we look across the Poets Bay to Lerici. A flat spin along the beach to our hotel.

Day 13 – Lucca (Pisa) 70km

Riding along from beach-resort to beach-resort is a favorite among local cyclists and the local drivers are amazingly cooperative. We will enjoy fine Tuscan cooking at a special restaurant near our hotel within the walls.

Day 14 – Pisa 29km

We ride to Pisa for a morning of seeing the sights and shopping for last-minute Italian gifts. Then we van transfer back to Nice for bike packing and our farewell dinner.

Day 15 – Departures Nice, France