

Italy: Ligurian High Mountain Tour

Saturday 13th May to Saturday 27th May 2023

A stunning route along the full length of the Italian Alpi Maritimi, maritime alps. We ride on quiet roads through the high mountains of the Italian coastal region of Liguria. We visit ancient villages and absorb the Ligurian culture and food. The tour runs the entire length of Liguria from La Spezia to Ventimiglia, we drop to the coast twice to spend rest days at the seaside. The tour is fully supported and stays mainly at 3* hotels, with dinner included on all nights.

Number of Days cycling - 10

Average distance per day - 60km

Average ascent per day - 1550m



Itinerary

Saturday 13th May; Nice.

Meet at hotel, overnight at Nice, time to prepare bikes.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 14th May; Nice to La Spezia

The train trip lasts about 3 hours, the train goes through the Cinque Terre, time to visit these iconic villages nestling between the cliffs and the blue Mediterranean.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 15th May; La Spezia to Levanto

We move away from the coast before returning to Levanto. Levanto is a lovely Ligurian coastal town. There are no coastal routes that we can ride.

- Route distance: 66.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 980.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 16th May; Levanto to Varese Ligure

We climb up into the Alpi Maritimi using tiny lanes to Varese Ligure in the heart of the mountains. Varese Ligure is a pretty village in the Val de Vara with a famous circular piazza and medieval tower and bridge.

- Route distance: 50.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1500.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 17th May; Varese Ligure to Centroanidra

The route goes through the hills to an Agriturismo, Centroanidra, nestling on the side of a mountain. Centroanidra was set up by a small cooperative to use local foods. We may need to share rooms here as it is the only accommodation in the area. It is a long climb up but the food and views are stupendous.

- Route distance: 55.0 km

- Route altitude gain: 1500.0 m
- Accommodation: Agriturismo
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 18th May; Centroanidra to Genoa

Leaving Centroanidra we immediately start climbing over the 900m pass. Great views, quiet roads.

- Route distance: 75.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1600.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 19th May; Genoa

Genoa is the regional capital and has an illustrious history. During the medieval to Renaissance periods it was a trading powerhouse. Visit the renaissance churches and palaces, the medieval lighthouse or simply wander the streets. You can take a boat trip to Portofino, a delightful Ligurian fishing village with limited road access.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 20th May; Genoa to Campo Ligure

Genoa is a busy metropolis; we use as many cycle paths as possible out of the city but the roads for the first few miles will be busy. We then climb back up into the Alpi Maritimi to Campo Ligure, a delightful small Ligurian town with a medieval bridge and small castle on a hill.

- Route distance: 50.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1150.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 21st May; Campo Ligure to Sassello

We ride through the hills to Sassello. Sassello is a stunning market town with a historic heart, well worth a wander around. The town is famous for its gastronomy. We will have time to wander and taste its specialities.

- Route distance: 45.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1050.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 22nd May; Sassello to Finale Ligure

We leave Sassello early to ride through the hills. The route takes us along the pretty Val Bormida, then we climb over the highest pass so far, 1000m Passo Melogno. In the afternoon we ride the lovely 1000m descent into Finalborgo the medieval walled town.

- Route distance: 90.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1700.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 23rd May; Finale to Finale

Finale Ligure is an ancient Italian Borgo (town). There are two parts, the lovely 18th century port town and the, even older, walled town inland, Finalborgo. Above Finalborgo there are two castles and a pretty castle walk. Swimming is possible even in May. The nearby village of Varigotti is the only village in the Riviera where the traditional houses are actually on the beach.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 24th May; Finale Ligure to Ormea

In order to climb back over the mountain, we use one of the prettiest climbs in the area, Passo Toirano. We ride through the ancient village of Toirano on the way up then through a number of typical Ligurian villages nestling in the mountains to end up at a small hotel just beyond Ormea. It is a long day, but we ride through some stunning scenery.

- Route distance: 75.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1500.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 25th May; Ormea to Molini di Triora

The route climbs steadily up from the hotel, we use the ancient Via del Sale, Salt route, over some tiny roads in the heart of the mountains and the highest pass of the tour, 1600m. There is a short cut that takes 30kms off the total, but I recommend the longer route. We end up in a pretty village by a mountain stream, Molini di Triora. The hotel is quite old, but it is the only accommodation till we get to the coast. The food is excellent.

- Route distance: 90.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 2000.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 25th May; Molini di Trora to Ventiliglia, then Nice.

We climb over a high pass straight out of Molini di Trora. The roads are delightfully deserted and we pass several stunning hilltop villages. The route drops down a long way to the coast and Ventimiglia. From there we take the train to Nice to our hotel. Train included.

- Route distance: 55.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1000.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 26th May. Nice to home

- No cycling
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: (B)



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £2050.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £200 per person is payable to complete a booking, with the final balance of £1,850 per person to be paid by Saturday 4th March 2023.

Price includes:

- 14 nights hotel accommodation and breakfast each day
- Evening meal on 14 nights
- Train from Nice to La Spezia and from Ventimiglia to Nice
- Luggage transfer and vehicle support
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from hotel at Nice
- Any other travel, for example trips to the Cinque Terre or Portofino
- Any entry fees
- Lunch, café stops, drinks
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Single supplement
- Bike transport from England, bikes need to be taken to and from the tour leader's address, max 8 bikes
- Travel Insurance

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge: Tour

- before Saturday 4th March 2023: £200 tour Deposit
- after Saturday 4th March 2023: £2,050 tour costs

Holiday Information

Area covered by the holiday

- The Italian Riviera is a beautiful area, mountains drop down onto the stunning mediterranean coastline. It is similar to the French Riviera, but has a totally different flavour.

Travel

- Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. Thus, it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Manager nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definitely going ahead. Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions are re-imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead. In the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us. Nice is easy to access both by plane and by train. There are regular and cost-effective TGVs from Paris to Nice. www.raileurope.com

It will be possible to take some bikes from the UK to Nice in the van, but you will have to deliver your bike to the Tour Manager, and the charge is £100, there is a max of 8 bikes that can be carried.

Accommodation

- Generally 3 star hotels, one Agriturismo and one 2 star hotel

Rooms

- Sharing rooms, single supplement of £300

Luggage transfer

- A van will be accompanying us and supporting us

Rest Day

- There are two rest days, both on the coast, one at Genoa and one at Finale Ligure.

Roads used

- The holiday is classified as grade 6 (energetic). This is due to the two longer days, otherwise most of the holiday would be classified as a 5.
The holiday is for 14 nights, of which 10 days are cycling and two rest days, one day

travelling to the start.

This is a moving on holiday generally staying 1 night at each hotel. The roads are mostly extremely quiet and used by rural traffic and it is very hilly. Detailed route notes will be provided before the tour, along with GPX tracks for those who want them.

Most of each day will be spent cycling. People will be expected to ride at their own pace and often in loose groups, at around 10-14 mph on the flat, slower up hills, usually meeting up at cafe's for morning coffee and lunch breaks. It is expected that you may want to stop for photographs, look at the view or explore some local point of interest and this is okay. You are on holiday.

The nature of the holiday.

Most of the holiday will be 50 to 60km days, but there is a lot of climbing every day.

Rest Days;

There are two rest days mid tour. The first one is at Genoa and the second one is at Finale Ligure, both on the coast.

Roads used;

Mainly quiet roads, most roads have good tarmac, but some of the smaller ones will be a little rough. There will be a few busier connecting roads especially on the coast.

The area covered by the holiday;

Liguria, or the Italian Riviera, is a top tourist destination; it is as pretty as the French Riviera but has a completely different feel. Liguria is the name of the Italian region of the Riviera, the culture and cuisine are typically Ligurian but it does vary from the coast to the mountains.

There are a number of pretty coastal villages some of which can be visited. The most famous are the Cinque Terre, which is a string of centuries old seaside villages clinging to the coastal cliffs. Near Genoa is Portofino, a charming fishing village with pastel coloured houses, a beautiful harbour with crystal clear water and limited road access.

Most of our tour will be in the beautiful remote mountains inland from the actual Riviera. The mountains are stunning with ancient villages and a strong cultural identity. The landscape offers rich contrasts and diverse flora and fauna. Expect spectacular views and quiet routes through them. The mountains are little visited as most people stay on the coast, the climbs and views are amazing. before, or at the beginning of the holiday, and again at daily briefings

Weather and Clothing

- The weather is usually good in Italy in May, Liguria tends to have a very even climate. However, we will be riding in the mountains so you will need to bring appropriate clothing for adverse conditions. I do not expect bad weather as Liguria has one of the best climates in Italy, however, mountains are mountains.

Cycles / Equipement

- A touring cycle, hybrid, tandem, recumbent or lightweight road bike would all be suitable for this holiday, since we will avoid tracks.
You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes.
A low bottom gear (eg. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended; if unsure about gears, please talk to the Bikexplore Leader about them.
Mudguards are optional but demonstrate respect to those who are following you in wet weather.
Lights are recommended in case of arriving back late, there are some tunnels, especially on the cycle path on day 4. A bell is advised and bring a bike lock for security. Water bottles are required to ensure you are hydrated at all times.
You will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs, including two inner tubes, a spare gear cable, quick chain link and spare brake pads. There are some bike shops on the route, but they will mainly cater for MTBs, the area is popular amongst mountain bikers.
You are advised to use 28mm tyres, or larger, to suit the road surfaces. You will not need to carry luggage except in case of car breakdown or medical priority. A rack-top pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, emergency rations and a map.

Maps & GPS

- I recommend bringing a paper backup, useful too for an overview of the area. The Touring Club Italia map of Liguria is adequate and easily obtainable in the UK. However, in Italy you may be able to get the more detailed Euro Carte maps of Riviera di Ponente and Riviera di Levante.
GPX routes for each day will be provided in advance of the tour.

Fitness and Health

- Please ensure that you are fit and healthy enough to cycle the distances (and ascents) planned for the tour. There are also some long and technical descents.

Travel Insurance

- Italy is in Europe, but Britain is no longer in the EU. Your EHIC card is valid until its expiry date, but it cannot be renewed. Instead a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) has been introduced (see <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>). However, at present Britain no longer has a reciprocal health agreement with Italy, though this might change before the start of the tour. Appropriate travel insurance is therefore essential; please check with your provider to ensure that they cover the revised conditions in Europe.

Although most travel insurance policies do not cover cancellation due to pandemic restrictions, the money you pay to us for the holiday is fully protected until we depart.

Tour Leader Details

- I am a keen cyclist, trained cycle instructor, ride leader and mechanic, able to support members of the group who require it. I have led a number of tours for Cycle Tours and Holidays and Bikexplore, and I have toured extensively in Europe and further afield. As I speak Italian and have lived in Italy for a number of years, I know the area very well. I have stayed at length in Finale Ligure, one of the towns we visit. I have also recce'd the area in autumn 2022, this is the reason why the photos are all autumnal.

Tour Leader Contact Details

- gregorywoodford@gmail.com

