

THE *RIDE* GUIDE TO ITALY



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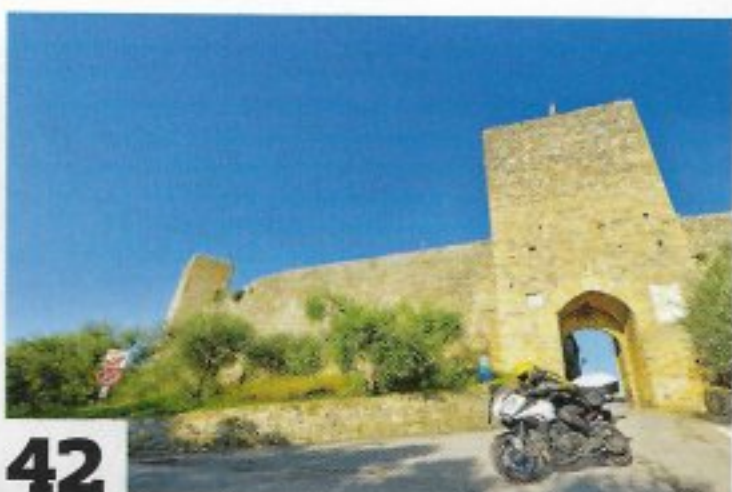
Liguria: sun, sea and spectacular riding



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Welcome



WELCOME TO THE RiDE

Guide to Italy – 60 pages packed with astonishing routes in Europe's most motorcycle-friendly country.

Italy is a fantastic place for a riding holiday, with spectacular mountains, golden beaches, rolling hills and fascinating towns.

When it comes to sights to see, this is a country loaded with heritage – from the Romans to the Renaissance, history has enriched the landscape of Italy like no other country in Europe. Better still, that landscape – mostly hilly, largely rural – is criss-crossed by some utterly amazing roads. True, the surface quality is variable, but that's where this guide comes in, helping you avoid the rough roads and find the best ones – and the best roads in Italy make a good case for being the best roads in Europe. The riding there really is that good.

But I don't need to tell you that: just download our routes for your sat-nav and you can see for yourself. Enjoy the RiDE Guide to Italy – and enjoy discovering its amazing roads.

Simon Weir

RiDE Guide to Italy editor

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Free with the September 2015 issue of RiDE magazine

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Bella

Welcome to Italy – a land blessed with spectacular scenery, fabulous food and mind-blowing roads. In other words, it's touring heaven

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE RIDING IN ITALY?

Italy has everything you could wish for in a touring destination – whether you want golden sandy beaches, towering mountains, gently rolling hills or intriguing cities crammed with history. The summers are warm and generally extremely sunny, the people are friendly and the food... Let's just say that you won't eat badly on a trip to Italy.

What we particularly like about the country is that each region is slightly different to its neighbours. The landscape, the food, the place names, the roads – everything changes as you move around Italy. From the Germanic northern provinces to the laid-back south, it's a country packed with character. This makes it a hugely rewarding destination.

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Italia

It's also well set-up to receive motorcycle tourists. It's a massively bike-friendly country and, as Europe's third-largest economy, has excellent facilities. Hotels, cafes and garages are plentiful. It's easy to tour in comfort, even in the wildest corners of the country.

SO WHERE SHOULD I GO?

It does depend on what kind of riding you want. Mountain-lovers are spoilt for choice, with sublime passes to ride in the Dolomites, the Aosta Valley and around the Italian Lakes in the north, as well as in the high Alps and Piedmont in the north-west, not to mention the Apennine range that extends south down the spine of the country.

The rolling hills of Tuscany, Umbria and Emilia-Romagna are criss-crossed by mazes

of serpentine roads, fragrant with fields of lavender, vineyards and citrus groves. They have high enough hills to offer passes of their own, usually topped by ancient walled towns, while the plains hold historic cities. And for race fans there are the modern attractions of the Monza, Mugello, Imola and Misano tracks.

The further south you head, the higher the average temperature gets and the closer Italy's history rises to the surface. It's not just the Colosseum in Rome and Pompeii outside Naples – there are monuments everywhere and the countryside is far quieter than the bustling north or the teeming cities.

If you want a bit of seaside sunshine on your riding holiday, with the option of a day lazing on a beach, Italy's the ultimate destination. From the Italian Riviera to the Adriatic coast,

or the broad bays of Puglia and Campania and the amazing islands of Sardinia and Sicily, there are miles and miles of amazing rides beside the glistening blue Mediterranean.

To help you pick precisely where to go, just flick through this magazine. We've picked base towns all across Italy, with a number of daytrip loops radiating out from each one. We also have five short regional tours that will fit with a week off work – as well two complete tours of Italy if you take a two-week holiday.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO?

September is perfect: much of Italy takes its summer holidays in August, so prices rise, hotels get full and roads get busy. Also, high summer can be scorchingly, almost oppressively hot in the middle of the day. ➤



Now with Hands-Free Calling



What are the roads like?

Italian roads come in all conditions: from spectacular stretches of race track-smooth tarmac to cracked, rippled, rutted, pot-holed or gravel-strewn horrors. Sometimes, all in the space of one corner...

Road quality turned out to be the major challenge when planning our routes: we've aimed to avoid the worst-maintained roads and keep to the better ones. However, the reality is that most of the roads in Italy are of good British B-road quality. Plenty are considerably better... but others

are a fair bit rougher. It's important to keep an eye on the surface and adjust your riding accordingly, accepting that even the best route might involve a mile or two on a rough road.

What we would flag up is that the roads do get extremely slippery if you're unlucky enough to be caught in the rain. Great care needs to be taken in the wet, not just because there's less grip but also because water can sit on roads that lack camber, concealing potholes.

We'll live with the odd pothole on a great road

By September, temperatures are merely deliciously warm and the roads are quieter. It's the ideal time to visit Italy.

DO I NEED AN INTERNATIONAL DRIVING LICENCE?

No. Your standard British driving licence is all you need, because we're all part of the European Union. Remember, changes to UK licencing laws have done away with the paper counterpart as of June 8, 2015 – so you only need to take the plastic ID card (in fact, you should have destroyed the paper bit).

WHAT ABOUT INSURANCE?

Most motorcycle policies nowadays will cover you for riding in Europe for a number of days – on some it's 14 days, on others 30. All will require you to notify the insurer of the dates when you will be in Europe. You can check your policy documents or simply pick up the phone and check with your insurer when you call to notify them that you plan to go abroad. If you need any extra days' cover for a longer trip, or if your policy doesn't cover you to ride in Italy as standard, your insurer will probably be able to provide that for you – in return for a small supplementary fee. The most important thing is that you don't set off without talking to your insurer first.

'RIDING BIKES IN EUROPE IS EASY. JUST TAKE CARE SETTING OFF'

WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL INSURANCE?

We do strongly recommend taking out a travel insurance policy that includes medical cover with repatriation. Don't rely on travel insurance that comes free with credit cards: check its terms, as it may not cover you for motorcycle trips. If you are covered, great – but if not, you will have to shop around to find a policy that will cover you for riding big bikes (many cover only 125s). This is where a high street insurance broker might save you a lot of time, if not money – but better to get the right policy than buy the wrong thing online.

As a citizen of a European Union member state, you should be able to get medical treatment in Italy, as long as you have a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC – the E111 card – free from www.ehic.org.uk). However, if you get seriously ill or have an accident then you really want to be

repatriated to the UK for treatment, and for that you need medical or travel insurance. As with all insurance, you don't want to need it – but it's best to have it just in case.

AND BREAKDOWN INSURANCE?

The same thing applies. You hope you won't need it, but if your bike does pack up or you have a crash in Italy, then having breakdown insurance could save your holiday. Again, you need to get a policy that includes provision to repatriate both you and the bike to the UK. If your bike can't be fixed over there, you don't want to have to pay for shipping it back to Britain out of your own pocket.

WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO TAKE WITH ME?

You don't need to have the original logbook (V5) document in Italy, but we'd recommend it – you'll definitely need a copy. You also need your insurance certificate, your driving licence, your passport and EHIC (the E111 card). You should also have copies of your travel and breakdown insurance policies: no point having them if you can't remember who to call if you need them... We recommend taking colour photocopies of your licence, V5 and insurance certificate. If the police want them, for some reason, they can keep one of the copies.

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WHAT ABOUT MONEY? WILL MY CREDIT CARDS WORK IN ITALY?

We've only ever had trouble paying with plastic once (in an unmanned Agip petrol station), though smaller restaurants, cafes and shops often require a minimum spend. Very occasionally, you'll find a smaller cafe that doesn't take credit cards, but they're increasingly rare in Italy. Even so, we always carry cash as well, just to be on the safe side.

HOW MUCH MONEY WILL I NEED?

Italy isn't eye-wateringly expensive, but it's not a cheap destination like Spain. As a rough guide, we found our money went slightly further in Italy than it did in France, Germany or Britain when touring in 2014. Petrol prices are more or less the same as in the UK, but food and drink are usually slightly cheaper.

Prices do vary from region to region, though – particularly accommodation prices, which can fluctuate wildly. They also vary according to when you want to go and when you book. We found that seaside towns were more expensive than inland destinations – even those in popular biking/holiday areas like the Dolomites. Shopping around and pre-booking hotels is definitely the best way to get a good price. Beware posh hotels with cheap rooms: they often have expensive restaurants... Walking to a town-square eatery is usually better value.

I'VE NEVER RIDDEN ON THE RIGHT... SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

No – there's nothing to worry about. Riding bikes in Europe is easy. Just take a little extra care when setting off, especially turning out

Watch your speed

Generally, we've seen fewer police patrols or checkpoints/speed traps in Italy than in France or Spain in the past few years. What we have seen instead is a steadily increasing number of speed cameras; nearly to British levels in some areas, especially in the north, though they are mostly in towns or villages.

The police do still use speed guns. They can impose on-the-spot fines and also impound bikes if the offence is serious enough (or if you can't pay the fine on the spot). While it's illegal in Italy – as in most of Europe – to use a radar

detector to warn you of speed cameras, it's fine to use sat-navs that have camera locations marked.

One curious law: you're not allowed to accelerate while overtaking. In the UK, advanced-riding instructors suggest it's best to use speed to overtake quickly and safely, then return to your normal riding speed. In Italy, that's deemed rude/aggressive and we're told it's actually illegal. You'll see Italian riders going slowly by cars, then accelerating hard once they're past.

WHAT ABOUT TRAFFIC LIGHTS?

You'd be forgiven for thinking that traffic lights are optional in some cities, but there are rules. The standard red-amber-green rules apply but sometimes you'll see a flashing amber light: that means slow down and proceed if it's safe, observing the right-of-way at that junction.



Most speed cameras are easy to spot in Italy

ITALIAN SPEED LIMITS

Urban	Village centre	Open road	Motorway	Motorway in the rain
50kph	30kph	90kph	130kph	110kph



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Winding Roads

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.



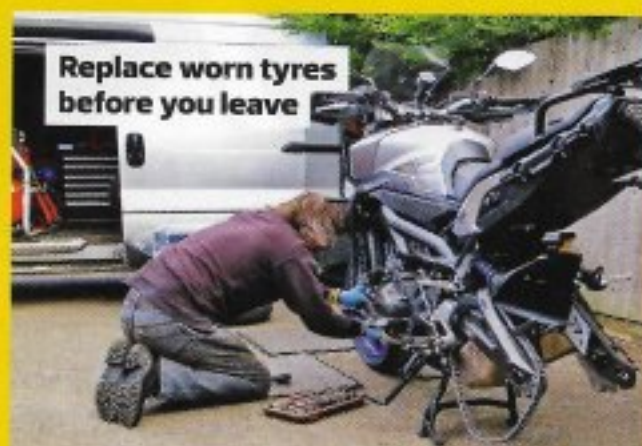
Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.



How do I prepare my bike for the trip?

As long as your bike's road-legal and mechanically sound, with a fresh set of tyres, all you need to do is add luggage and get going. If it's not mechanically sound, fix it! And fit a fresh set of tyres.

We stress the importance of fitting new tyres because Italy is a long way away: setting out with a well-worn or even half-worn set of tyres is asking for trouble. Apart from the safety aspect of riding a tyre until it's worn right down, replacing a tyre in the middle of your tour wastes time and money. It might not ruin your holiday, but it will ruin at least one day of it.

Start the trip with a fresh set of sports touring tyres. If you have an adventure bike and want to look for unpaved roads in the Alps, you may need a dual sport tyre – but if the plan is to ride only on tarmac, we'd fit sports touring tyres to an adventure bike, too.

of that first junction of the day. The other time to watch yourself is after filling up, especially if you had to cross the road to get to the petrol station: don't pull out and ride on the left. Roundabouts are easy as you're fed onto them in the correct lane and bigger ones have chevrons telling you which way to turn. Our top tip might sound stupid: just say, "Ride on the right" to yourself before selecting first gear. Otherwise, it's straightforward – exactly like riding at home, except you check over your left shoulder before pulling out to overtake.

ARE THERE TOLL ROADS?

Most Italian motorways have a toll. You can usually pay for these with a credit card – but if you're travelling in a group, the lead rider can't pay for everyone as each card can be used only once at each pay station. If you want the leader to pay, you need a manned booth... but there are very few of those on Italian motorways, though all pay booths take cash.

DO I NEED A GB STICKER?

Yes. If you don't have a European-spec licence plate with the 'GB' in a blue panel on the side, then you must put a GB sticker on the bike, so it's clearly visible from behind.

WHAT ABOUT THE LOCAL ITALIAN DRIVERS?

Ah. Well. Yes. About them... Unfortunately, after riding thousands of miles all over the EU, we have concluded that the Italians are the worst drivers in Europe. The majority are ill-disciplined, aggressive, recklessly fast and given to tailgating – apart from the 10 per cent who creep along at 15mph in ancient Fiat Pandas or three-wheeled Piaggio Apes.

Driving standards seem to be worst in cities and around the Italian Lakes – and on Sicily and Sardinia (island driving always seems to



be a bit special). But that's why our routes avoid big cities and stick to quieter roads. And that's the blessing: generally, when you're outside the cities, the roads are usually *really* quiet. Basically, if you can avoid riding across Naples in rush hour you'll be fine.

DO I NEED TO TAKE TOOLS?

You shouldn't need loads of tools or spares if you're riding a well-prepped modern bike. If you're planning to tour on a classic, you'll probably already know what you need...

If there's space in a pannier or (better) under the seat, take a puncture repair kit, a multitool, half-a-dozen cable ties and some gaffer tape, just in case. But we wouldn't leave clothes out just to squeeze this stuff in: Sod's Law says the surest way to ensure you don't need them is to pack them, after all...

WHAT ABOUT SECURITY?

Definitely take a disc lock. If you can fit a chain somewhere, so you can lock the back wheel to a lamppost (or something similar) with a disc lock on the front wheel, even better. If travelling in a group, not everyone needs a chain but it is best if you can chain the bikes together. But your main security is being canny about where you leave the bike. We would always aim to stay in places that have secure parking, ideally avoiding city centres.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

If you're cunning about it, you can get away with packing far less than you think. We swear by lightweight baselayers that can be rinsed at the end of the day: they help regulate your temperature, keeping you cool when it's hot and warm if it gets cool; and a rinse keeps them fresh. Wearing those on the bike means you can save a shirt to do a couple of evenings, not just one. Don't pack huge walking boots – baseball boots or even flip-flops take up a fraction of the space.

If you're staying in hotels, you should be able to take a minimal washkit as they'll have all the soap and shampoo you need. You shouldn't need a towel, unless you're also packing your swimming trunks. Don't forget your phone charger. Or a European plug adaptor – if you'll need to charge lots of things, take one plug adaptor and a short four-gang extension lead. And don't forget your sunglasses...



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From the freedom of cruising the open road, to the thrill of leaning into the tightest curve on the highest peak, now you can create your own perfect adventure.

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Getting to Italy

Riding to Italy isn't like nipping out for a weekend breakfast run – so what's the best way to get there? Here's how to make your tour transit painless

SOME PEOPLE MIGHT see the distance between the UK and Italy as a problem. At the risk of sounding like a management consultant... it's not a problem, it's an opportunity. It means getting there can be as much of a part of the tour as the riding you do there – because sitting on motorway all day is not the only way to get to Italy.

How you choose to get there will depend on where you're coming from as much as where you're going to. Those taking a ferry to Rotterdam or the Hook of Holland have a real choice – between heading across German or France. Otherwise, it's best to cross France from Calais or one of the other Channel ports. We'd favour Calais, though the ride across France from Caen is good if you have time.

That's if you ride the bike all the way to Italy, of course. For years, canny riders have been going to Holland and putting bikes on overnight trains, getting off in Italy in time for lunch the following day. The Dutch service stopped in the spring of 2015... but a new service from Dusseldorf to Verona was launched just days later.

There are two other left-field ways to get out there – in both cases sending the bike ahead while you take a plane. First is to use FlyBikeFly to ship your bike to Nice (www.flybikefly.com) then take a budget-airline flight out to collect it. You can easily leave your house in the morning and be riding on the Ligurian Riviera by

mid-afternoon. The catch is that you don't have the bike for a week after dropping it off, while it's on the transporter.

The other option is the newly launched Bike Shuttle that runs overnight once a week between the Silverstone and Geneva (www.bikeshuttle.co.uk). Ride down, put your bike and kit on the purpose-built transporter, then jump on a plane. Stay the night in Geneva then collect your bike first thing in the morning and ride to Italy. It's a doddle.

RIDING OUT

If you don't have time to plan your own routes, we've plotted routes to three of our destination towns: Aosta; Borgo San Dalmazzo; and Vipiteno. These also the starting points for three of our tours. We've set routes to run from Calais and Rotterdam, with a Caen route to Borgo San Dalmazzo. For some routes we have both entirely toll-free options and faster alternatives that include some tactical stretches of motorway to cover a bit of ground. Note that going to Vipiteno, that means buying an Austrian motorway vignette at a petrol station close to the border.

KEY

BIKE

PLANE

Shipping your bike

We shipped our bikes to the south of France with FlyBikeFly. We took them to a local depot on a Wednesday, strapping them onto crates. It's easy to do, but takes a little time. The bikes arrived in Carros the following Wednesday.

It's worth pre-booking a car from Nice airport to the FlyBikeFly depot in Carros: airport cabs are much more expensive. Unloading the bikes and getting ready to ride is a simple process, but allow an hour. By 4pm on the day we set out, we were riding across the border into Italy.

■ Prices to Nice range from £445 one way to £795 return (from Glasgow). FlyBikeFly now offer a home pick-up service, for an additional £90. See www.flybikefly.com



Unstrap your bike in the South of France and ride into Italy

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Training wheels

We returned from Italy on the now-defunct Dutch Autoslaap service from Livorno to Den Bosch. A service ran between between Verona and Dusseldorf this summer and should run again next year – but was unconfirmed at the time of going to press.

It's very easy. Arrive at the station in plenty of time and check in. Ride the bike onto the transporter, park the bike in gear, then wait until one of the train staff comes and straps it securely into place. Then get into the sleeper cars and get out of your riding kit.

What do we wish we'd known? The basic three-berth sleeper on the Dutch train didn't have a shower. Food and drink on board were good, if a little

Not much headroom so take care when riding on



expensive. Next afternoon, we got off the train in Holland, rode to the Eurotunnel and headed home. From Livorno at 1pm on a Friday, we were home by 9pm on the Saturday night.

■ A one-way trip in 2015 cost £155 for the bike, plus your transport – from £99 in a shared cabin to a maximum of £490 for a five-bed cabin. For information, see www.railsavers.com



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² Source: The survey was conducted by Mortar - sample size 3,000, the research was conducted across Sept and Oct 2014.

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Our routes

Where do you want to ride?
We have it covered. All of it

WE HAVE ROUTES radiating out from 25 locations – from the very north of Italy to Sicily in the south.

As Italy is a fair ride from the UK, we have weighted our coverage to the northern areas, most easily reached from Britain.

Rather than just one circular ride in each location, we've planned two, three or sometimes four different daytrip routes in most locations. This gives you the option of riding to a base destination and then

enjoying a couple of days' riding, cloverleafing out from your hotel each day, rather than having to keep moving.

However, if you want to see more of the country, we have also planned a series of three-day tours across popular riding areas. Why three-day tours? To allow you to take a relaxed three days to ride to the start point from Britain, take three days doing the tour, then spend three days returning – so the tours can fit in with just one week off work, using both weekends.

Of course, if you have more time you can extend any one of the tours by adding one or two of our daytrips, as our tours link together the towns where we've based our other routes. We also have two two-week tours of Italy, crammed with brilliant riding.

All our route descriptions include the mileage, a riding time and some suggested stops. The riding time does not, however, include time spent at those stops – so if a route is five hours long, expect to add two hours to that by the time you've had lunch, a few coffees, filled up and stopped for pictures. Our routes are structured to be full days in the saddle and we have provided some long-day options as well as shorter ones, but if you take long stops that will make even short routes into long days.

Rather than filling these pages with long directions, we've created sat-nav files for all the routes. These can be downloaded from www.ride.co.uk/Italy



Quick guide

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- Hilly Roads**
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- Round-trip Planning**
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14 THE RIDE GUIDE TO ITALY

Liguria is rich in flowing roads like the SP582 – and our routes use the best of them



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ROUTE

1

A ride around...

Imperia

Verdant valleys and the sparkling sea:
Liguria is the perfect introduction to Italy

IT'S BAKING HOT. A sparkling blue sea shimmers beside the road and there's not a cloud in the sky. But it's the heat on my back that I'm relishing most. Yesterday Weeble and I left a foggy, drizzly England, flying to Nice to collect our bikes. Now we're riding in the perfect 27° heat of Liguria and it's as sweet and addictive as sherbet. I can't get enough of it. I'm fizzing with pleasure, torn between the desire to slow down to savour it and the need to speed up to generate more of a breeze to cool down again.

Luckily, when we turn inland at Albegna, we're on the kind of road where speeding up and slowing down is not a problem. In fact, holding one constant speed is practically impossible. The SP582 twists and turns like a garden hose dropped from a plane — looping over hillsides, climbing higher and higher in turns as tight as the best bits of the Alps, but without the yawning roadside drops of the high mountains.

This is a green land, well wooded, the patches of shade from the trees offering brief respite from the heat. The roads are quiet, the villages quieter. I'd been worried about the road surfaces, but most of the roads are fine — broad and in decent condition. OK, one tight, single-track stretch has seen better days, but I can forgive that because the scenery is so beautiful and the weather so perfect. Turning back towards the coast at Bagnasco, the sat-nav tells me it's 4.4 miles to the next turn, 4.5 miles to our destination. For a moment my heart sinks, before I realise... the SS28 isn't a main road like the A13. This is a main road built for fun, whooping and swooping down to the seaside. It's the perfect finish the day — and the perfect way to start exploring Italy.



OUR ROUTES

IMPERIA HILLS

- Start/finish: Imperia
- Distance: 125 miles
- Riding time: 4.5 hours
- Suggested stops
- AM coffee: Zuccarello
- Lunch: Osiglia
- PM coffee: Ponte di Nava

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- Route 2: 180 miles, 6 hours
- Tighter, hillier, with more single-track roads
- Route 3: 225 miles, 7.5 hours
- More seafront riding, with some higher roads



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ROUTE

2

A ride around...

Borgo San Dalmazzo

Want an adventure in an unspoilt mountain wilderness? You've come to the right place

IF IT WASN'T for the pink line on the GPS, I'd have said we were lost," says Weeble when we stop. He takes a second to look around at the scenery. "It's not bad here, though, is it? What did you say this place was called?" It's called the Colle dei Morti: the Hill of the Dead. It's tucked away in the high hills of Piedmont, outside the tiny town of Demonte. I was shown it years ago and I've been itching to come back ever since.

The road is exactly as I remember: narrow, bumpy, gravelly... rough. In other words, perfect terrain for an adventure bike like the Tiger Explorer. Riding this road is an adventure, as it spirals upwards past grazing cows and fat marmots, running along a rock ridge high above the valley to reach a statue of Italian cycling hero Marco Pantani at the top.

Just past the 2481m summit we turn left, heading to Marmora to pick

up the Colle di Sampeyre. This really is adventure-bike territory, as the road surface degenerates from average to awful to absent. While I'm nervously threading my way down a short but steep and genuinely unpaved slope on the Tiger Sport, Weeble's standing comfortably on the pegs of the Explorer, laughing. "Someone needs to call the Italian minister for roads and tell him his pass is broken," he jokes. Progress is slow, not helped by having to thread our way through a herd of donkeys roaming free among the trees and across the road.

"I enjoyed that," says Weeble. "It's not the kind of road you'd want to take a pillion on, but it's perfect for adventure bikes." For me, it sums up what riding a bike is all about: unlocking the kind of wild, beautiful and unusual places you'd never bother visiting in a car. Despite the name, the Colle dei Morti makes you glad to be alive – and on two wheels.



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OUR ROUTES

PIEDMONT ADVENTURE

- Start/finish: Borgo San Dalmazzo
- Distance: 200 miles
- Riding time: 6.5 hours
- Suggested stops
- AM coffee: Sampeyre
- Lunch: Col d'Izoard
- PM coffee: Col de Vars

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2:** 180 miles, 5 hours
Smoother roads, including Col de Tende, Gorge du Cians and Col de la Lombarde
- **Route 3:** 190 miles, 5.5 hours
Smoother roads, including Col de la Bonette and Col Agnel

ROUTE 3

A ride around... **Bardonecchia**

High in the Alps, this ski resort unlocks amazing riding in France as well as Italy

I FIRST CAME to Bardonecchia in 2004, when the town was gearing up to host the Turin Winter Olympics. There seemed to be dust, cranes and half-built hotels everywhere. Returning now, it's lovely – just a nice-sized Alpine town snoozing through the summer, happy to see bikers to keep things ticking over until the skiers return in winter. But thanks to its Olympic legacy, it has fantastic facilities...

It also has some fantastic roads on its doorstep. Not the Frejus Tunnel – these are the Alps and there are passes everywhere. Our route starts with the climb over the tight and spectacular Col de l'Echelle, into France (much more fun than any tunnel). From France's highest city, Briançon, we head along a stretch of the Route des Grandes Alpes, over the majestic Col du Galibier and Col du Telegraphe, before returning to Italy over the pass my friend Rich described as "the best road I've ever ridden": the Col du Mont Cenis.

For a half-day ride, you could return to Bardonecchia from Susa after crossing Mont Cenis. But our route has more thrills in the foothills of Piedmont rather than over high peaks. Not that there's any shortage of altitude and challenging corners, especially sweeping past the ski areas of Colle Sestriere. It's a fantastic ride – a gold-medal candidate for sure.



OUR ROUTES

PIEDMONT PEAKS

- Start/finish: Bardonecchia
- Distance: 205 miles
- Riding time: 6.5 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Col du Galibier
- **Lunch:** Col du Mont Cenis
- **PM coffee:** Cumiana

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2:** 200 miles, 6hrs
Includes Col du Mont Cenis, Col de la Croix de Fer and Col du Galibier
- **Route 3:** 220 miles, 6hrs
Includes Col de l'Iseran and Col de la Madeleine

- **Route 4:** 100 miles, 4.5hrs
Adventure-bike route with extended stretches of unpaved roads. Not suitable for road bikes

Pass baggers take note: Colle dei Morti is the ninth highest pass in the Alps

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Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE

4

A ride around...

Varazze

Forget lounging around on the beach: the roads are the best bit of the Ligurian Riviera

ON ONE SIDE there are a million shades of blue – from the sky to the sparkling sea to the hazy distant shore glimpsed across the bay, jagged hill-shapes hinting at hairpins and panoramic views. On the other, there's the muted off-white and grey of the rocks rising high above the road. Ahead, the view is tarmac black, edged with white lines and rich with promise – for this is not straight ahead. Oh no. This is left curve followed by gently climbing right, terminating in blind left, as the road disappears around the cliff-face.

The SS1 – the Via Aurelia – is one of those unsung roads that everyone should know about, but nobody does. That's close to a crime. "Why on earth haven't I been here before?" marvels Weeble, who's spent years travelling around Europe for work. "This road is amazing." It is. The original Via Aurelia was built by the Romans in the third century BC, but has been comprehensively updated for the automotive age,

with this most northerly stretch stringing the seaside towns of the Ligurian Riviera together like pearls on a windswept necklace.

Even better, it's no longer a main highway, as the motorway takes the passing traffic – though the SS1 can still get busy with tourists in the August holiday season. Better come when it's quieter, like this. Still, let's not pretend it's mile after unspoilt mile of empty asphalt. There are short, inspiring sections that separate picture-postcard towns lined with beach-front cafes, sunbathers stretched out on the sand.

For the quiet roads, you need to head inland: take a breather in the green, fresh hills that rise behind the coast. Well, "breather" is perhaps not quite the right word, either. These are demanding roads – serpentine and sometimes less than perfectly surfaced but always involving. And the views are spectacular. Pause at the top of any viewpoint where the trees part and look back to the sea, then turn the key, thumb the starter and carry on. Perfect.



OUR ROUTES

LOVELY LIGURIA

- **Start/finish:** Varazze
- **Distance:** 190 miles
- **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Ricca
- **Lunch:** Acqui Terme
- **PM coffee:** Martina

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2:** 175 miles, 6 hours

Includes Monte Carmo and Monte Fignona

- **Route 3:** 180 miles, 6.5 hours

Includes Monte Orditano,

Monte Lecco, Finale Ligure and Via Aurelia

- **Route 4:** 230 miles, 8 hours

Adventure-bike route with narrower, twistier roads

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What have the
Romans ever done
for us? Er... roads
like Via Aurelia



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The RiDE Tour of...

Piedmont and

Sun, sea, sand, mountain passes... here's our three-day tour of north-western Italy

THE JOY OF Piedmont and Liguria is that they're so accessible – if you can ride to the South of France, you can ride there, too. Indeed, many riders might choose to do France's Route Napoleon or the Route des Grandes Alpes on the way down. Alternatively, you could ship your bike to Nice and fly out... It's an easy afternoon's ride from Nice to our tour's start in Borgo San Dalmazzo.

This three-day trip links Borgo San Dalmazzo with Bardonecchia, Varazze and Imperia so can be easily extended by adding any of our routes based in those towns. Or you could take three days to reach the start, ride these three days, then have a leisurely three days to get home – and it can still be done with just a week off work.

There are two options for the first day's ride: adventure-bike riders can take the mind-blowing Colle dei Morti (see p16), while road-bike riders take the better-surfaced Col de Larche and enjoy the memorable road above Lac de Serre-Ponçon on the way to Bardonecchia. The second day heads to Varazze on the Ligurian Riviera, with the third day leading to Imperia, as the tour links together many of the best of the roads from our other trips through Piedmont and Liguria.



DAY ONE (Adventure bike route in brackets)

- **From:** Borgo San Dalmazzo
- **To:** Bardonecchia
- **Distance:** 250 miles (230 miles)
- **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Jausiers (Sampeyre)
- **Lunch:** Col d'Izoard
- **PM coffee:** Col du Mont Cenis



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iguria



DAY TWO

- **From:** Bardonecchia
- **To:** Varazze
- **Distance:** 215 miles
- **Riding time:** 7.5 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Savigliano
- **Lunch:** Acqui Terme
- **PM coffee:** Monte Figogna



DAY THREE

- **From:** Varazze
- **To:** Imperia
- **Distance:** 215 miles
- **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Osiglia
- **Lunch:** Ponte di Nava
- **PM coffee:** Molini di Triora



Watch paragliders taking to the skies above Mont Cenis on day one of the tour

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Round-trip Planning

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ROUTE
5

A ride around...

Bormio

It's the mountain-rider's Mecca – but are you ready for the pilgrimage to the Stelvio Pass?



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The final assault on the summit: this is Everest for Europe's motorcycle tourists

ONCE YOU START taking an interest in touring, especially touring in the mountains, it's not long before you get to hear about the Stelvio. Italy's highest pass has a fearsome reputation: 75 hairpins, with 48 on its northern slope – 14 crammed tight into the final, steep two-mile run to the summit. It can be daunting – and for some riders, it's just too much.

"It's a terrible road. Just U-turns," says Weeble over breakfast, before we set off. He's ridden it once, in the wet, when he'd had a bike licence for only three years. And he hated it. Whereas I love the Stelvio. But I'd been riding for more than 20 years before I finally had a crack at it and now I can't get enough – this is my third visit of the year...

It's chilly as we start the climb: this is the second highest pass in the Alps (just 13m lower than France's Col de l'Iseran) and the surrounding peaks are casting dark shadows on the lower slopes. Up and up we climb, twisting and turning, making good progress on the well-surfaced southern slope. It's pretty quiet this early in the morning – sometimes Stelvio gets busy with cyclists and, especially, motorcyclists.

There's a bustle of shops at the top, selling snacks and souvenirs to the steady stream of visitors. Weeble and I both buy stickers, then head for a coffee at Tibet – the restaurant with the best views – before tackling the famous 48 hairpins of the north slope.

This side of the pass is easier to ride as a climb than as a descent, but it's brilliant in both directions. It's technically demanding, stringing so many tight corners together so they flow, but that's what I love – the challenge of it, with the most amazing mountain backdrop.

When we get to the bottom, Weeble flips up his helmet. "You know what? I really enjoyed that. It's actually a pretty good road," he admits. It's better than that: Stelvio is amazing – as long as you're ready for it.



OUR ROUTES

STELVIO AND THE HIGH PASSES

- **Start/finish:** Bormio
- **Distance:** 205 miles
- **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

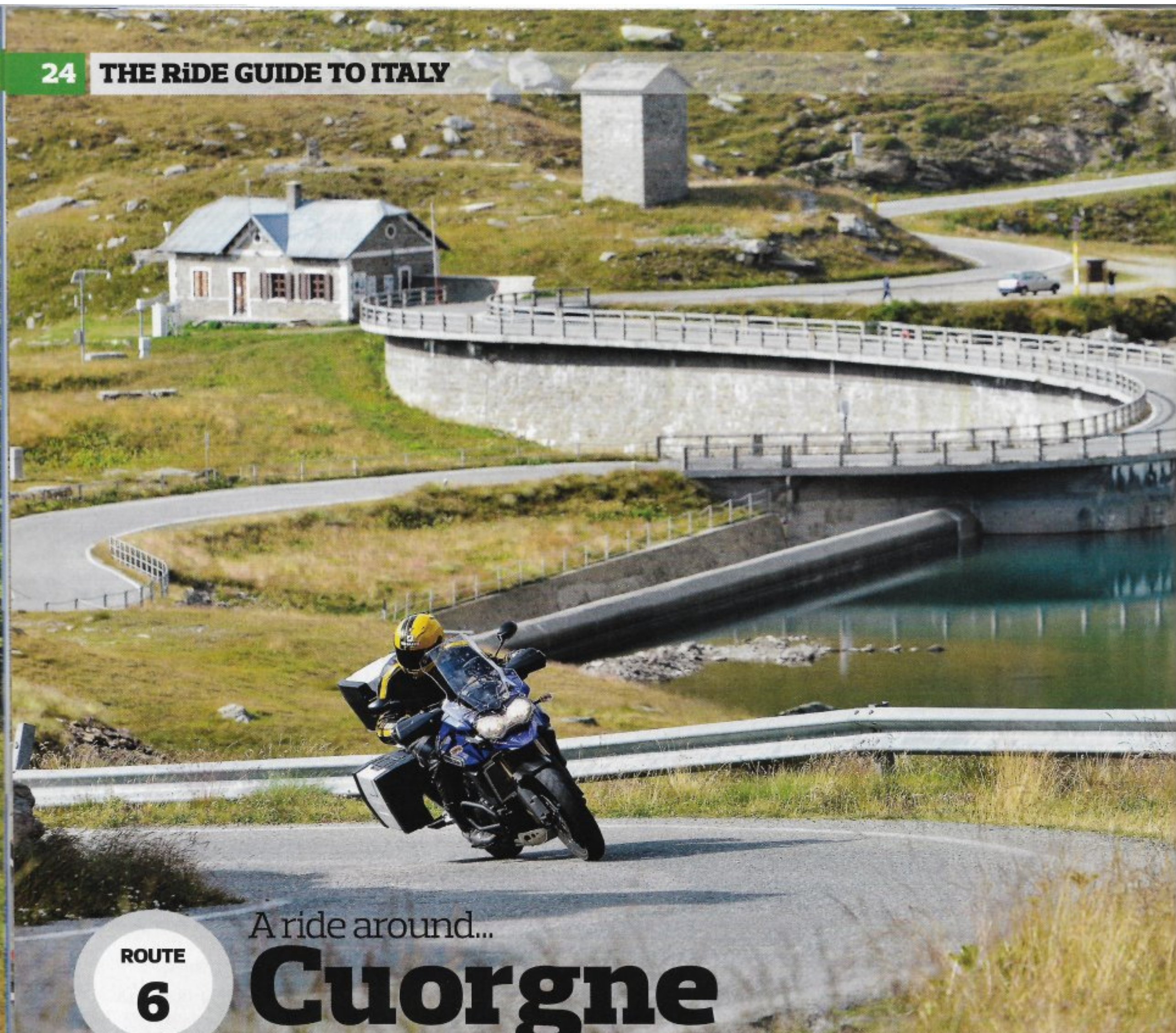
- **AM coffee:** Resia
- **Lunch:** Fluela Pass
- **PM coffee:** Julier Pass

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 150 miles, 4 hours**
Includes Albulia Pass, Fluela Pass and Stelvio
- **Route 3: 220 miles, 7 hours**
Includes Gavia Pass, Val Rendena and Stelvio
- **Route 4: 240 miles, 8 hours**
Includes Stelvio, Umbrail, San Marco and Gavia passes



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ROUTE

6

A ride around...

Cuorgne

Never mind blowing the doors off... this road from *The Italian Job* will blow your mind

YOU HAVE TO really want to ride this road. It's a dead end – and not one that's handy for anywhere you'd normally tour. The Colle del Nivolet climbs up into the Gran Paradiso mountains above Turin but while it is a pass, it's closed to motorised traffic at the top. That means going out of your way to reach the start... then after riding to the top, you have to turn round and come back.

So why would you bother riding it? Well, I got curious because this was where the final bus scene in *The Italian Job* was shot. Plus it looked amazing on a map, so I really wanted to ride it... Let me tell you, this is not a road you resent riding up and down again. From the village of Noasca the road climbs four broad but steep hairpins, enters a long tunnel and emerges in mountain-riding heaven.

I've ridden some twisty roads, some steep roads, some scenic

ones... but never one that's so steep, so twisty and so scenic. Up and up it climbs, ever tighter, past first one reservoir, then another. Every time you glance over your shoulder there's a staggering vista of spiralling tarmac. Just don't look over the sides of the road unless you have a good head for heights. But because it's a dead-end road, it's deserted.

As with so many Italian passes, there's a refuge at the summit – this one's a walk from the road. Ideal for a quick coffee before heading back. The road is different on the descent – if anything, it's even more involving, the views even more breathtaking. Never mind riding it twice, I could ride it again and again, all day long. I had to wait a long time to ride Colle del Nivolet, but it was worth it – and I can't wait to ride it again.

Every other destination we feature in this magazine has multiple routes – but here there's only one, which should tell you how good this road is. If you need a new mountain destination, I've got a great idea...

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Colle del Nivolet has lakes, hairpins and virtually no traffic. It's amazing



OUR ROUTE

COLLE DEL NIVOLET

- > **Start/finish:** Cuorgne
- > **Distance:** 175 miles
- > **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Colle del Nivolet
- > **Lunch:** Aquila Bianca
- > **PM coffee:** Groscavallo

ROUTE 7

A ride around...

Aosta

In the shadow of Europe's tallest mountain are roads that will be the highlight of any tour

IF YOU COULD ride across the Colle del Nivolet (left) you'd end up in the Aosta valley. It's a fantastic place, snuggled down between the high peaks with France on one side, Switzerland on the other and Monte Bianco – aka Mont Blanc – sitting proudly at the end of the valley, like the head of the family presiding over a lunch table.

What delights get served up here – especially when you take the passes into the neighbouring countries. Our main route is the classic St Bernard loop over the – to give them their Italian names – Gran San Bernardino and Piccolo San Bernardino passes (coincidentally the locations for the opening scenes of *The Italian Job*).

This is one of the must-ride routes in the Alps. As well as the Grand and Petit St Bernard passes, it includes France's Cornet Roselend and Col des Montets, as well as Switzerland's Col de la Forclaz. Sublime roads, amazing views... it's a popular route.

Our alternative route is quite different. The views and corners are every bit as spectacular, but it's a 'spider' route, extending legs to the quieter corners of the Aosta valley, using minor roads that only dedicated Alpinists normally explore. This isn't so much off-the-beaten-track as stalking through the bushes beside it...



ST BERNARDINO LOOP

- > **Start/finish:** La Thuile
 - > **Distance:** 200 miles
 - > **Riding time:** 6 hours
- Suggested stops**
- > **AM coffee:** Lac de Roselend
 - > **Lunch:** Chamonix
 - > **PM:** Col de la Grand Saint Bernard

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

- > **Route 2:** 195 miles, 7 hours
- Minor roads high into the Gran Paradiso, suitable for adventure-bikes



Winding Roads

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.



Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE
8

A ride around...

Riva del Garda

The quietest and most charming of the Italian lake towns is surrounded by amazing roads



Bond crashed cars here in Skyfall... Normally it's more quiet and relaxing

THERE'S A STILLNESS in the early morning. There are joggers on the path along the shore, even one brave swimmer taking an early dip in the lake, but the overwhelming sense is one of peace and calm. Ducks drowse, standing one-legged, on the slip at the harbour, the cool waters of Lake Garda lapping at their feet. It almost feels a shame to fire up a motorcycle and shatter the peace.

Almost... but it is worth getting the bike started. The roads around Garda are never quiet – but they're not Deathrace 2000 busy, like the roads around Lake Como. You have time to admire the spectacular views, without worrying that every other vehicle is trying to kill you.

Our route heads out along the west bank of Lake Garda, before climbing into the mountains – but not on demanding, narrow, bumpy roads. This route strings together broad, flowing, smooth roads that deliver epic views with relaxed riding. And that's the appeal of Riva del Garda: it's a soothing, calming place to be. Our pick of the Italian Lakes.

OUR ROUTES

LAKESIDE RIDES

- **Start/finish:** Riva del Garda
- **Distance:** 200 miles
- **Riding time:** 6.5 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Anfo
- **Lunch:** Ponte di Legno
- **PM coffee:** Spiazzo

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 180 miles, 6 hours**
Includes the east bank of Lake Garda and Monte Baldo
- **Route 3: 180 miles, 6.5 hours**
Includes Monte Bondone,

Monte Baldo and the east bank of Lake Garda

- **Route 4: 170 miles, 6 hours**
Includes more challenging roads, suitable for adventure-bikes



Follow Garda's west bank before climbing to the mountains



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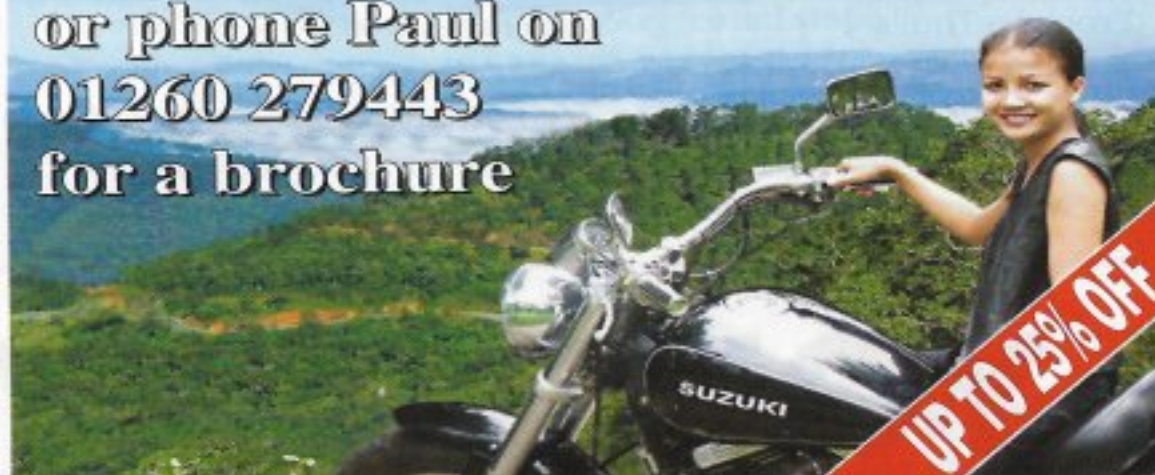
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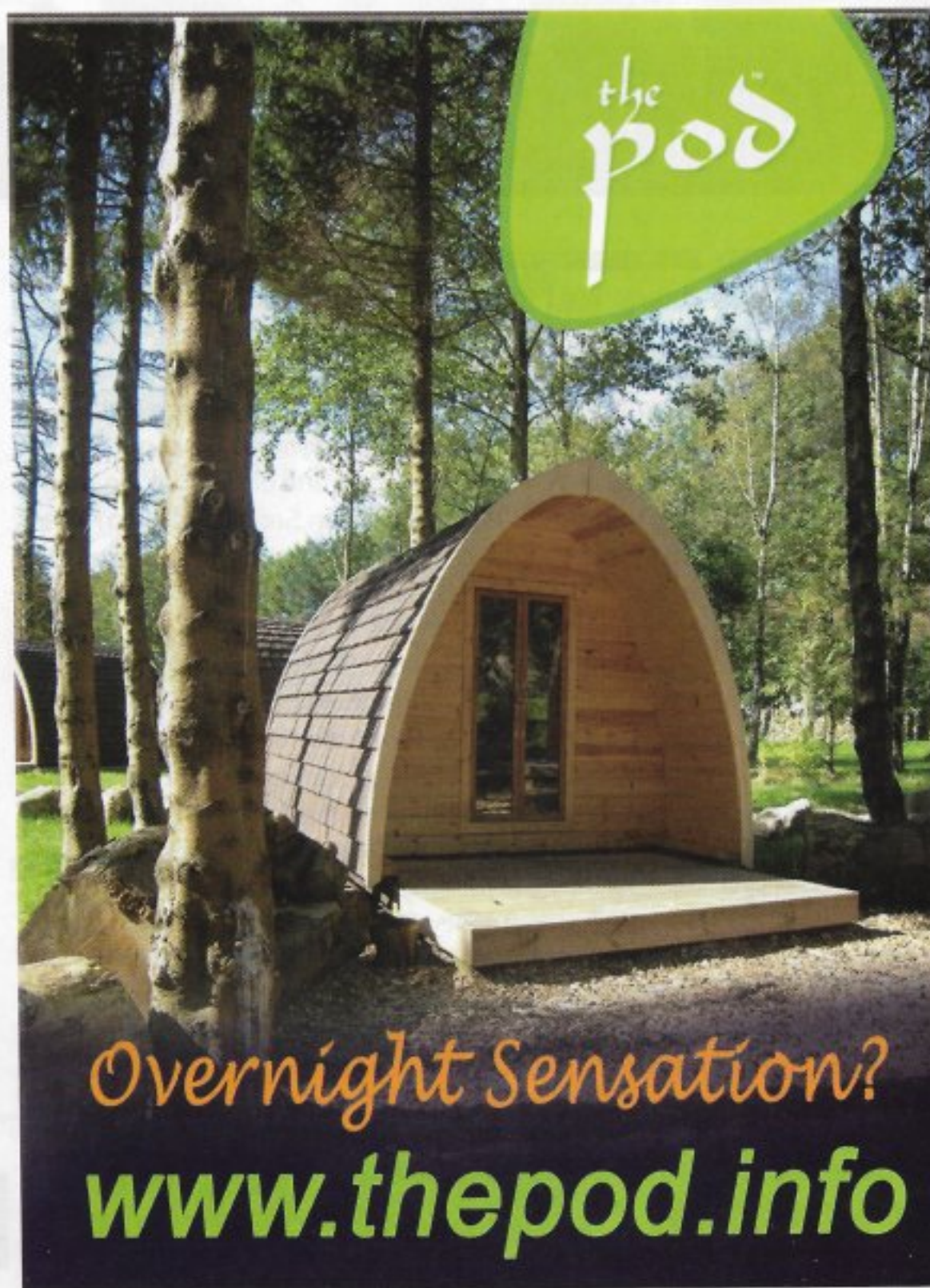
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The RiDE Tour of...

The Italian Lakes

A three-day trip from the highest peak to the highest pass, past the playground of the stars in

THIS THREE-DAY TOUR takes in some of the most astonishing high-mountain riding in Europe – as well as the elegant sophistication of the Italian Lakes. Our starting point of Aosta is easily reached from the UK in a comfortable two-day ride from Calais (see p10) or even one long motorway day if you're short of time... but it's meant to be a holiday – take two days and enjoy the ride.

From Aosta, the first day heads over the Gran San Bernardino Pass into Switzerland. Those prepared to buy a Swiss motorway vignette at the border can save about an hour on the day's ride, but we've plotted both motorway and non-motorway routes to the Simplon Pass. This leads to Lake Lugano and we hug the shore to return to Italy, heading for an overnight stop in Menaggio on the shores of Lake Como.

The second day starts with a ride around Lake Como to the millionaires' playground of Bellagio. Our route includes part of the course of the old Bellagio hillclimb road race on the way to Lecco, where we head into the hills. Through the quiet roads of Val Tallegio and over the unspoilt San Marco Pass, the route leads to Bormio.

The final day starts with the mighty Stelvio pass, before sweeping into the Dolomites, passing through Cavalese and crossing Passo Manghen to reach Riva del Garda. If you want to spend more time in Italy, the tour can be easily extended by adding our day trips around Aosta, Bormio or Riva.



DAY ONE

> **From:** La Thuile
 > **To:** Menaggio
 > **Distance:** 240 miles
 > **Riding time:** 7.5 hrs (6.5 hrs with Swiss motorway vignette)

Suggested stops

> **AM coffee:** Grand St Bernard pass
 > **Lunch:** Simplon pass
 > **PM coffee:** San Bartolomeo

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es and Alps

Italian Lakes

Passo San Marco:
an unexpected treat



DAY TWO

- > **From:** Menaggio
- > **To:** Bormio
- > **Distance:** 220 miles
- > **Riding time:** 8 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Bellagio
- > **Lunch:** Vedeseta or San Marco
- > **PM coffee:** Passo Gavia



DAY THREE

- > **From:** Bormio
- > **To:** Riva del Garda
- > **Distance:** 215 miles
- > **Riding time:** 6.5 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Stelvio
- > **Lunch:** Fondò
- > **PM coffee:** Molina



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A ride around...

ROUTE
9

Cortina d'Ampezzo

Welcome to the Dolomites – towering peaks, amazing roads and a coffee stop waiting whenever you want it. In other words, bike-touring perfection

THE THING WITH the Dolomites is that you're never alone. They're busy. Not busy like the Italian Lakes, but there is traffic. Usually you can hop past in a corner or two, but the main passes do see plenty of tourists – in cars and camper vans, as well as on two wheels (whether in lycra or in leathers).

Thing is, it doesn't matter. These roads aren't busy as in "my ride was ruined by the traffic". This is busy as in, "a couple of sweet overtakes enhanced my ride". Busy as in, "about 30 bikers waved to me as they passed going downhill while I was climbing the pass". Busy as in, "this was definitely the right place to come – everyone agrees". And of course every pass has a café ready to refresh thirsty visitors...

The big attraction of the Dolomites is what I've come to think of as The Magic Circle – a loop of four passes between Canazei and Corvara in Badia – the Sella, Gardena, Campolongo and Pordoi. Passo Pordoi is the highest pass in the Dolomites, but the most scenic and the best to ride is... well, possibly whichever one you're on at the time.

The thing is, those are only four of the dozens of passes around here. One route can't take them all in – so we have four, so we don't miss the magical Passo di Giau and Falzarego, the flowing Valparola, the smooth Fedaila in the shadow of the Marmolada, the highest peak in the Dolomites. Or the sublime Passo Tre Croci and della Erbe. Or the Costalunga, with the amazingly blue waters of Karersee. And still there are more... How long did you say you had to ride down here?



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Don't miss the
Karersee – or
Lago di Carezza



OUR ROUTES

CORTINA'S MAGIC CIRCLE

- **Start/finish:** Cortina d'Ampezzo
- **Distance:** 150 miles
- **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Passo Sella or Passo Pordoi
- **Lunch:** Passo Cibiana
- **PM coffee:** Sega Digion

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 170 miles, 6 hours**
Includes Passo Duran, Passo Fedia and Passo di Glau
- **Route 3: 170 miles, 6 hours**
Not a figure of eight: a 12-pass

cat's cradle of amazing roads
➤ **Route 4: 160 miles, 5.5 hours**
Includes Passo Tre Croci, Passo della Erbe and Passo Campolongo



Passo Sella: one of the candidates for the title of "most beautiful" pass. With every other pass in the Dolomites...

Winding Roads

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.



Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE

10

A ride around...

Cavalese



Passo Rolle: the Dolomites but without the crowds of Swiss GS riders

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There's more to the Dolomites than the famous roads in the north. Much more...

EVERY DAY, IT seems, Weeble has a new favourite road. Today it's the wide and immaculately surfaced one that climbs through the ski resort called Passo Rolle, to our lunch stop at the summit. Our delayed lunch stop at the summit.

"But no, this one really is the best view," insists Weeble, as we stop to take yet another picture. "I mean, just look at it. It's beautiful. And the corners are great. And the surface is really good. And there's no-one here. That's the best bit – I can't believe how quiet it is."

It's true: this is an exceptionally quiet road for the Dolomites. Especially as it's relatively well-known and is fabulous to ride. It's not as high as the big-name passes like Sella and Giau and Pordoi further north, but it's every bit as involving and the granite peaks rising in the background are still spectacular.

It's also a good, long pass – cramming every kind of corner into the 25-odd miles between Predazzo and Tonadico. That means we keep stopping to take pictures, as the growls in my stomach grow louder. But it's worth it; it is beautiful.

And that's the joy of this southern region of the Dolomites: brilliant roads that are as scenic as their more famous northern neighbours, but with less traffic.



OUR ROUTES

PASSO ROLLE BRILLIANCE

- > Start/finish: Cavalese
- > Distance: 170 miles
- > Riding time: 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- > AM coffee: Passo Rolle
- > Lunch: Ponte Mas
- > PM coffee: Il Tastarin

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- > Route 2: 190 miles, 7 hrs
Includes Passo Manghen and Monte Grappa
- > Route 3: 140 miles, 4.5 hrs
Includes Carezza sea, Passo

Sella and Passo di Giau

- > Route 4: 220 miles, 7.5 hrs
Includes Passo Fedaia,
Passo Pordoi and Passo Duran

A ride around... **Vipiteno**

From Italy into Austria, there's a host of brilliant riding on the North Italian border

ROUTE 11

NOTHING SUMS UP this corner of the Alps better than the hotel: is it Der Schwarzer Adler or is it La Aquila Nera? Well, it's both... While we might call it The Black Eagle, the locals are busy hopping back and forth between German and Italian. You see, Vipiteno – or Sterzing as it's also called – is part of the land that Italy won from Austria in the First World War. That's good for us, because that means great Italian coffee, served with Teutonic efficiency...



Starting from Vipiteno means we can ride some of the best roads not only in Italy but also in neighbouring Austria. None is more famous than the Timmelsjoch – or Passo Rombo, to use its Italian name. There is a toll on the Austrian side, but it's worth it for the immaculate tarmac and the fact that they don't let lorries or caravans through the toll booths...

Is it the best road on the route? Maybe, though the run down the valley from Landeck in Austria to Martina in Switzerland and the short, twisty climb to Nauders are awesome. And as for final run back into Vipiteno over the Penserjoch, or Passo Pennes... it's an outstanding ride – in any language.



OUR ROUTES

STERZING STUNNERS

- > Start/finish: Vipiteno/ Sterzing
- > Distance: 230 miles
- > Riding time: 6 hours

Suggested stops

- > AM coffee: Timmelsjoch
- > Lunch: Arzl im Pitztal
- > PM coffee: Resia

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- > Route 2: 260 miles, 7 hours
Includes Gerlos Pass and Grossglockner Alpenstrasse (both tolls)
- > Route 3: 240 miles, 6.5 hours
Includes Monte Croce Carnico and Monte Zoncolan



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Perfectly surfaced,
broad, quiet roads:
heaven. This is Passo
San Osvaldo



ROUTE
12

A ride around...

Maniago

The foothills of the Dolomites are full of surprises and the biggest shock is how quiet the roads are

MANIAGO'S AN UNEXPECTED delight – an unspoilt old town at the foot of the mountains, with the best pizzas of the whole trip. We're only here because it was a convenient place to stop and the nearby roads looked good on the map. Within a dozen miles the next day it's clear the local bikers rate these roads, too. We even pass a café on the SP1 with a dozen bikes parked outside: rural Italy's version of the Ace Café.

We don't stop, though, hurrying onwards and quite literally upwards. Soon we're climbing back towards the heart of the Dolomites on a pass called Sella Ciampigotto. By the standards of these mountains, it's deserted. The road rises slowly at first, then rapidly, in steep traverses linked by broadening hairpins. It's a challenging climb, rocky walls on one side and vast views to distant mountains on the other. At the summit Weeble flips up his HJC. "I have a new favourite road," he shouts. "That was awesome." He's right – and it's all the better for being unexpected.

OUR ROUTES

STELLA SELLA

- **Start/finish:** Maniago
- **Distance:** 180 miles
- **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

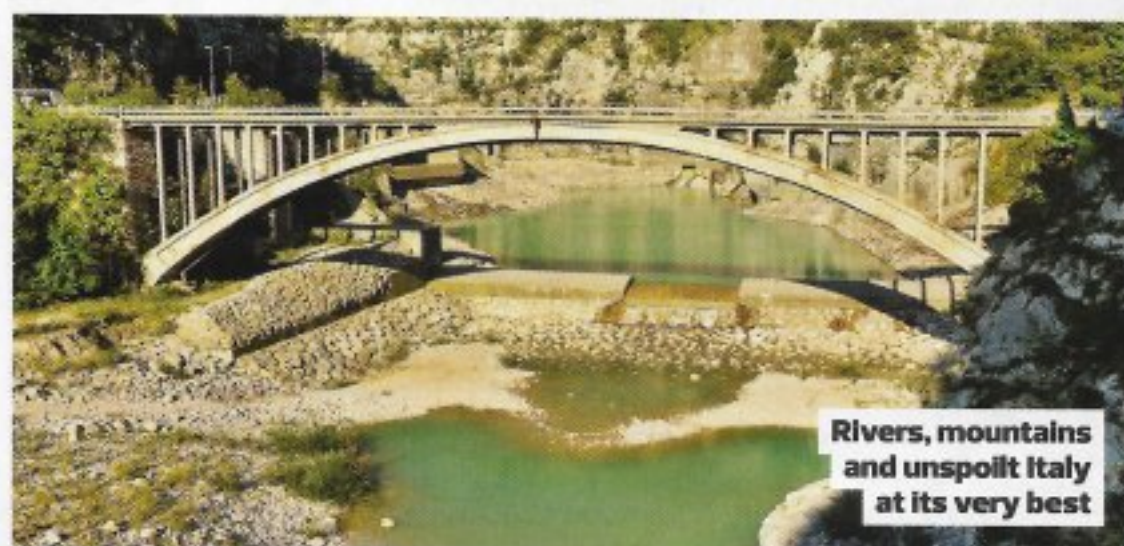
- **AM coffee:** The SP1
- **Lunch:** Sella Ciampigotto
- **PM coffee:** Agordo

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 130 miles, 3.5 hours**
Flowing half-day route on lower roads

- **Route 3: 155 miles, 5 hours**
Tighter and bumpier roads,

suitable for adventure-bikes
➤ **Route 4: 160 miles, 5 hours**
Includes the ascents of both Monte Zoncolan and Sella Ciampigotto



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and unspoilt Italy
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The RiDE Tour of...

The Dolomites

The Dolomites are one of Europe's foremost riding areas. Here's three days in bike heaven

WE'VE STRUCTURED THIS as a three-day tour, to allow three days to get to the start from the UK and three days to get back again – so the whole trip fits in with a week off work (and the two weekends). However, if you have more time, the tour can be easily extended as it stops at towns where we've based our daytrip routes.

The tour starts impressively and builds up fast. From Vipiteno it heads to the heart of the Dolomites, covering so many great passes – Passo di Giau, Falzarego, Gardena, Sella, Pordoi, Fedaia... It's hard to imagine a better day on a bike. From Cortina the roads get higher and narrower, over the Sella Ciampigotto, Passo Pramollo and Monte Zoncolan, on the way to Maniago. The tour ends with the gentle run through the Southern Dolomites from Maniago to Riva del Garda, including Passo Cereda and Weeble's favourite, Passo Rolle.

We have plotted an optional fourth day, returning from Riva del Garda to Vipiteno over the Stelvio and Gavia passes. In addition, you can download the tour to run in the opposite direction, from Riva to Vipiteno.



DAY ONE

- > **From:** Vipiteno
- > **To:** Cortina d'Ampezzo
- > **Distance:** 190 miles
- > **Riding time:** 6 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Meltina
- > **Lunch:** Passo Fedaia
- > **PM coffee:** Passo Gardena

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The Dolomites: just about the most scenic place to ride a bike. This is Passo Gardena



DAY TWO

- > **From:** Cortina d'Ampezzo
- > **To:** Maniago
- > **Distance:** 185 miles
- > **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Sella Ciampigotto
- > **Lunch:** Monte Croce Carnio
- > **PM coffee:** The SP1



DAY THREE

- > **From:** Maniago
- > **To:** Riva del Garda
- > **Distance:** 185 miles
- > **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** Longarone
- > **Lunch:** Passo Rolle
- > **PM coffee:** Lone Lases

inding Roads

and the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.



Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE
13

A ride around...

Monte Argentario

Think Tuscany is just lavender fields and plane trees? Think again – the coast is magnificent

THE SUN IS beating down on a spectacular sapphire sea from a cloudless blue sky. The air is fresh with the scents of salt, grass and maybe a hint of lemon. Winding its way between the water and the citrus groves is a ribbon of tarmac, dipping behind scrubby trees when it turns inland before swinging out again to drink in the perfect Mediterranean view.

Monte Argentario is a curious place – a tiny island tacked onto the Tuscan coast by a trio of causeways. There are two small towns – Porto Ercole and Porto Santo Stefano – and it's a sleepy place. A perfect, relaxing base for a holiday. Though most of our riding takes place on the mainland, devouring the madly twisty roads of rural Tuscany, the panoramic ride round the island is unmissable.

This is not a wide road, nor even a long one – but it's a beautiful one. Not just for the vistas across the sea to the isle of Giglio, but also for the bends. This is a super-twisty road, rising and falling as it clings to the

cliffs that ring the island. There's hardly any traffic, hardly any sound – stopping to take a picture, it's just the onshore breeze rustling the vegetation and the distant hush of the sea. Restful.

But I'm here to ride as much as to rest. Key in, the Triumph's exhaust disturbs the peace. On round the coast on the panoramic road, then over Punta Telegrafo, the central peak of Monte Argentario, then across the low causeway, scant feet above the water. The scenery on the mainland is beautiful, too – picture-postcard Tuscany with purple fields, shimmering green vineyards and avenues of plane trees. Crossing the narrow coastal strip, the land rises steeply, quiet roads twisting past isolated farmhouses and the occasional white-painted church.

As lovely as this vision of rural Italian perfection is, there's something especially magical about Monte Argentario. I return across the other causeway, passing through the fortifications of Orbetello as the afternoon sun sparkles on the waters of the lagoon. It's a view you'd never tire of – and one you'll see at the end of each ride based here.



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Lunch on the
Tuscan coast
is as lovely
as the roads



OUR ROUTES

THE FULL MONTE

- **Start/finish:** Monte Argentario
- **Distance:** 180 miles
- **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Scansano
- **Lunch:** Santa Fiora
- **PM coffee:** Catabbio

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 165 miles, 5 hours**
Flowing roads to Lake Bolsena
- **Route 3: 230 miles, 7 hours**
Quiet roads inland to Lake Bracciano, with a scenic coastal return leg

- **Route 4: 215 miles, 6.5 hours**
Smaller roads looping out to Lake Vico

The panoramic road
around Monte Argentario
sets the tone for the
riding on the Tuscan coast



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Well, when you see a giant helmet, you have to take a selfie... don't you?

autodromo del mugello

mugello

ROUTE
14

A ride around...

Borgo San Lorenzo

Spectators flock here once a year for the MotoGP at Mugello – but riders should come all year round for the brilliant roads

I KNOW A GREAT road round here," says Weeble. "It's somewhere round here, anyway. Great café at the top. It sells the best olive oil in Italy. Now, where is it?" The thing is, there are so many great roads around Mugello – the race track on the edge of Borgo San Lorenzo – that it almost doesn't matter which way we go.

If you've ever watched the Italian GP on telly, you'll know that the crazy undulations of the Tuscan hills have produced a fantastic circuit – rising and falling with all kinds of corners and one super-fast straight. Those hills have done the same favour for us, producing roads that rise and fall with a bountiful profusion of corners and the occasional – OK, rare – long, fast, straight. And if the road surface isn't quite as pristine as the GP track, in many places it's pretty close...

I had so many roads recommended in this part of Italy that the

Rolling hills and empty roads



challenge was putting together just four routes – not 14. We arrive from the north, riding stretches of the Futa and Giogo passes. After pausing by the circuit, ears straining to work out what's thrashing round it, we're swinging north into the hills again on the Passo del Muraglione.

It's blissfully quiet – this would a great chance to stretch the bike's legs, but the road is steep and unbelievably twisty. Mugello's like a NASCAR oval by comparison. On and on we climb, working up a thirst. When I roll to a stop, Weeble rides alongside and flips up his helmet. "There it is," he points. "That's the café. I told you it was a great road..."

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ROUTE
15A ride around...
Citta di Castello

If you're looking for history, you came to the right place... It's all around you

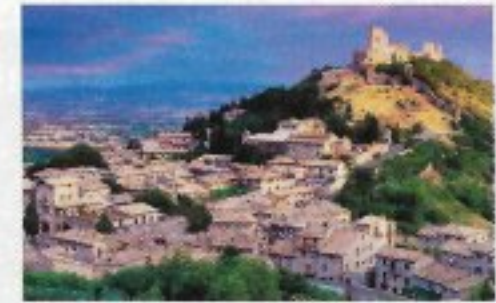
GENERALLY, WE TRY to

plan our routes to avoid going into the bigger towns or into cities wherever possible. The thing is, Italy is crammed with fascinating towns and cities... The trick is to pick ones where the traffic is a bit more civilised, so you can enjoy seeing the sights without feeling that you've crossed a war zone to reach them. We'd avoid taking a bike into Milan, Rome or Naples, but you can still see the history.

This route through Umbria is based in the small, beautiful city of Citta di Castello but heads out across spectacular roads to Assisi – famously home to St Francis. But there's much more to the town than just the monastery, the Sacro Convento. There are several other impressive churches, two castles, a Roman amphitheatre and a truly fabulous town square.

The return leg of our route heads to the less famous but, for our money, equally fascinating town of Gubbio. Its medieval centre, Ducal palace and cathedral are just stunning, but it also has some well-preserved Roman ruins.

Of course, this is not just a route to shuttle you from one tourist site to another. The riding between our destinations is just as important and it's spectacular, on twisting roads through beautiful countryside. How long you spend at each place is up to you: you could take an hour or two exploring or just view each as a high-quality coffee stop before getting back to the riding.



© J. Images / Alamy

**OUR ROUTES****MUGELLO'S PASSES**

- > **Start/finish:** Borgo San Lorenzo
- > **Distance:** 165 miles
- > **Riding time:** 7 hours
- Suggested stops**
- > **AM coffee:** Palazzo sul Senio
- > **Lunch:** Passo del Muraglione
- > **PM coffee:** Fornace

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- > **Route 2:** 165 miles, 5.5 hours
Includes Passo della Calla
- > **Route 3:** 210 miles, 7 hours
Includes Passo del Giego
- > **Route 4:** 190 miles, 6 hours
Includes the Passo della Futa

**OUR ROUTES****HISTORIC UMBRIA**

- > **Start/finish:** Citta di Castello
- > **Distance:** 160 miles
- > **Riding time:** 5.5 hours

Suggested stops

- > **AM coffee:** San Feliciano
- > **Lunch:** Assisi
- > **PM coffee:** Gubbio

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

- > **Route 2:** 195 miles, 6 hours

A full day of twisting roads and Apennine passes

Finding Roads

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.

**Hilly Roads**

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.

**Round-trip Planning**

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE

16

A ride around...

Siena

Ride through the historic heart of Tuscany – both real and imagined

THIS PLACE IS famous, is it?" asks Weeble, whose young son isn't playing the same video games as my teenage lad. I'd thought Monteriggioni – a key location in the best-selling Assassin's Creed games – was a fictional place... until researching these routes. I knew then that we'd have to visit this amazing fortified village, if only to make my son think I'd gone somewhere cool, at last.

The thing is, this whole area of Italy is full of cool places – all rich in history, all hijacked for all manner of fiction. Daniel Craig's James Bond kicks of the action in *Skyfall* with a fight in Siena, *The English Patient* recovered in Sant'Anna in Camprena just to the south of the city. EM Forster set his book *A Room With A View* in Florence. But none of the fiction comes close to the actual grandeur of these historic places.

We've based our routes from Siena because it's smaller than Florence, cleaner than Pisa and better suited for exploring the whole region than the lovely walled city of Lucca. While our routes focus on riding, you may want to plan a day off the bike to visit one of the cities.

Then again... why would you want to come down here and spend time off the bike? Coffee in an historic village square is all very well and good, but the riding's unbelievable. The country roads are generally pretty well-maintained and they're quiet: lovely long loops curling across hillsides, bathed in hazy sunshine. The views across the valleys are spectacular, distant towers rising to indicate the next potential coffee stop in another well-preserved ancient hilltop village.

"You know what? I'd definitely come here again," says Weeble, putting down his coffee cup. "There's so much to see." And so many brilliant roads to ride as well.



OUR ROUTES

SIENA THRILLER

- **Start/finish:** Siena
- **Distance:** 200 miles
- **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Monteriggioni or Forcoli
- **Lunch:** Lucca
- **PM coffee:** San Casciano

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 150 miles, 5 hours**

Twisty roads out towards the Tuscan coast

- **Route 3: 205 miles, 7 hours**

Flowing roads through Abruzzo wine country

- **Route 4: 230 miles, 7.5 hours**

Smaller, higher roads, suitable for adventure-bikes



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Tuscany is packed
with fabulous historic
villages and equally
stunning roads

ROUTE 17

A ride around...

Terni

Mountains, historic towns... and
the occasional home comfort

TERNI, THE CAPITAL of Umbria, is a good distance from the UK. Not that we don't have some very British weather on the way in – the only real rain of the trip. Frankly, by the time we're in dry kit and heading out from our hotel to find an evening meal, a bit of home comfort would be welcome... So discovering a Ronnie Scott's for dinner is the perfect tonic.

Next day, rested and refreshed, we're ready to get to grips with the amazing riding around here. The skies are slowly brightening and the roads are grippy: brilliant. We head out through the historic town of Amelia, on winding roads that climb into the hills. We grab a coffee in a tiny café in Civitella del Lago, the terrace overlooking the lake far below.

It's not just the weather; this riding does remind me of the best bits of Britain – the Peaks, perhaps, or the Dales. Not so much the views and definitely not the vegetation, but the relentlessly twisting roads that flow over the gentle hills. But in the UK there's always too much traffic – and when the sun breaks through the clouds, it doesn't seem to get any warmer.

Swooping down to Bolsena with its broad lake and turreted castle, we couldn't be anywhere but Italy – especially when we stop to order coffee... potent black espresso. It's a bit like what you get at home but much richer, more concentrated, more satisfying. Exactly like the riding...



OUR ROUTES

STAR TERNI

- **Start/finish:** Terni
- **Distance:** 200 miles
- **Riding time:** 7 hours

Suggested stops

- **AM coffee:** Civitella del Lago
- **Lunch:** Lake Vico
- **PM coffee:** Trevignano Romano

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2: 195 miles, 6.5 hours**
Flowing roads into higher hills around Monte Cervia
- **Route 3: 220 miles, 7 hours**
Flowing roads out to Lake Campotosto and the mountains
- **Route 4: 215 miles, 7 hours**
Adventure-bike route, on narrow roads in the Gran Sasso



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The RiDE Tour of...

Classical Italy

Tuscany, Umbria, Abruzzo... Our three-day route unlocks the highlights of central Italy

CENTRAL ITALY IS simply beautiful – not just Tuscany, which many regard as the prettiest sister. Every area you visit is stunning – and best appreciated on a bike. From the hills of Emilia-Romagna to the lakes of Lazio and the mountains of Umbria, there is terrific riding to be found on quiet roads everywhere you turn.

Our three-day trip starts from Borgo San Lorenzo, zig-zagging across Italy's Apennine spine down to Terni in Umbria. Looping out across the Gran Sasso mountains, the next destination is Monte Argentario on the Tuscan coast. The final day heads back inland, devouring amazing riding on the way to historic Siena.

To fit this tour in with taking just one week off work, you could freight the bike to/from Nice, which is one motorway or two relaxed days from the start and finish points. Alternatively, the ride from/back to the UK is easily done in three days, if part of each day is on motorways. The catch is that you'd have no scope to explore the historic sights or add one of our daytrip loops. Which seems a shame when the riding here is so good and there's so much to see. Don't you deserve a longer trip?



DAY ONE

- From: Borgo San Lorenzo
- To: Terni
- Distance: 225 miles
- Riding time: 8 hours

Suggested stops

- AM coffee: Rassina
- Lunch: Gosparini
- PM coffee: Castel Viscardo

Flowing roads,
historic towns and
cities, great weather...
Central Italy is fantastic

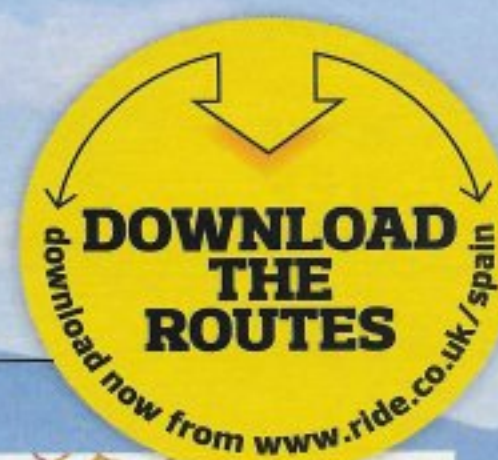
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**DAY TWO**

- From: Terni
- To: Monte Argentario
- Distance: 220 miles
- Riding time: 7 hours

Suggested stops

- AM coffee: San Giovanni
- Lunch: Trevignano Romano
- PM coffee: Bolsena

**DAY THREE**

- From: Monte Argentario
- To: Siena
- Distance: 210 miles
- Riding time: 7 hours

Suggested stops

- AM coffee: Santa Fiora
- Lunch: Montepulciano
- PM coffee: Roccastrada

**Winding Roads**

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.

**Hilly Roads**

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.

**Round-trip Planning**

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE
18

A ride around...

Chieti

Don't follow the herd for high-altitude thrills: head south to find the wilder, quieter mountains

THE CENTRAL APENNINES drop to the east coast of Italy like a hawk stooping on a rabbit. There's only one reaction: like a fleeing rabbit, jink left and right crazily, adrenaline-sharpening reactions... not because a giant killer bird is coming at you, but because the road is going headlong down the mountainside in a cascade of corners and hairpins that would set anyone's heart pumping.

You might have thought that getting as far south as Rome meant the mountains were behind you, but not at all. It's so high there's skiing in winter and the views down ice-carved valleys and across limpid lakes would be right at home in any corner of the Alps. The thing is, not so

many people know that, so the Majella Massif is surprisingly quiet – unlike the Alps, it doesn't draw hordes of pass-bagging riders, even though it's home to some of the highest peaks in the Apennines.

Our routes radiate from the town of Chieti – just outside the bustling port city of Pescara. The road quality is perhaps more variable this far south but you don't need an adventure-bike to enjoy these roads – especially not the well-surfaced sweepers carving along the valley floors and the runs of broad hairpins climbing the slopes. Particularly as you'll very likely have them to yourself: after all, who'd think you would find brilliant mountain riding so far south of the Alps? It's here... but the crowds of German-plated GSs aren't.



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OUR ROUTES

APENNINE WAYS

- **Start/finish:** Chieti
- **Distance:** 155 miles
- **Riding time:** 4.5 hours
- Suggested stops**
- **Morning coffee:** Casoli
- **Lunch:** Barrea
- **Afternoon coffee:** Pacentro

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- **Route 2** 235 miles, 7 hours
An extended loop through the Majella and Monte Genzana areas
- **Route 3** 180 miles, 5.5 hours
Flowing roads climbing into the Gran Sasso



From quiet towns to
deserted mountains
and placid valleys



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OUR ROUTES

ISERNIA SUPPORT

- Start/finish: Isernia
- Distance: 160 miles
- Riding time: 6.5 hours
- Suggested stops
- Morning coffee: Piedimonte Matese
- Lunch: Colle Sannita
- Afternoon coffee: Vinchiaturro

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- Route 2: 175 miles · 6 hours
Quiet roads across the Aurunci mountains to Gaeta on the west coast
- Route 3: 175 miles · 5.5 hours
Rolling mountain roads San Salvo Marina on the east coast

ROUTE
19

A ride around...

Isernia

Head to Campania for some of the quietest, most stunning roads of the south

IT'S AS IF the mountains never end. Every time you think you've seen your last hairpin, Italy rises up and surprises you, delivering more stunning roads that blend amazing scenery with brilliant riding. Especially in Campania.

Finding routes in the south was challenging, though. Most of our Italian sources were born and raised in the north – and just as in the UK, there's a bit of healthy banter between the northerners and their southern neighbours. Ask most Milanese what the riding's like down here and they'll tell you it's all donkeys and dirt roads...

Then I bumped into Massimo – who cut his teeth thrashing

two-stroke trailies across the hills around Isernia. Now he's a more responsible, mature man with a more responsible, mature kind of motorcycle he sticks to the tarmac and he was kind enough to share some of his favourite roads around his old home town.

It's definitely worth the effort of getting down here to enjoy them. True, you may meet the occasional donkey, but there's hardly any traffic – whether on four wheels or four hooves. There's a maze of quiet roads to explore in the hills, though we also have routes that extend to reach the sea. Whatever kind of riding you want, Campania can surprise you with the quality of its roads.

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ROUTE 20

A ride around... Sorrento

The Amalfi coast has one of the most famous roads in Italy – for a very good reason

“AVOID THE CITIES”, they said. “Don’t get sucked into the tourism hotspots”, they said. Well, Sorrento isn’t a city, though it is dangerously close to the traffic Armageddon of Naples. However, it most definitely is a massive tourism honey-pot, attracting droves of visitors. But if the rule is to avoid places like that, this is the exception.

You need to approach riding the Amalfi Drive with some caution. Expect to see every kind of craziness, from scooter riders going three-up, or texting while riding, or overtaking on pavements to buses cutting blind corners and donkeys wandering about. It doesn’t matter. It’s genuinely stunning – one of the most beautiful places you can ever ride a bike (cautiously). It doesn’t just live up to the hype: it exceeds it.

Still, there’s only so much crazy you can cope with in one day, so after riding the spectacular coastline from Sorrento round to Salerno, our route loops up into the mountains, swings round in the shadow of Vesuvius, then returns to Sorrento. There’s loads to do off the bike as well – from visiting Pompeii (go on a coach, get a guide and allow a whole day) to taking a boat trip to Capri. Normally there are better alternatives to the well-trodden tourist routes... but not here.



© Euan Cherry / Alamy

AMAZING AMALFI

- **Start/finish:** Sorrento
- **Distance:** 180 miles
- **Riding time:** 7 hours
- Suggested stops**
- **AM coffee:** Vietri sul Mare
- **Lunch:** Montella
- **PM coffee:** Montevergine

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

- **Route 2** 150 miles · 7 hours
- A shorter ride on smaller, slightly quieter roads, but returning to Sorrento on the Amalfi Drive



Welcome to Campania.
Donkeys and dirt roads
not pictured...

Winding Roads

Find the most exciting winding roads and avoid the boring straights.



Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

ROUTE
21

A ride around...

Potenza

Unlock the potential of the far south of Italy: great roads, no traffic, constant sun

CHECKING THE PLAN for the Potenza route, Weeble shakes his head in dismay. "But I've ridden straight past here on the motorway!" he complains. "Why didn't I know there were roads like this I could have taken instead?" That's the trouble: by the time you've heard – or read – about the brilliant riding in the Alps, the Dolomites, Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany... well, you get the picture.

Every area north of Basilicata boasts about its brilliant roads, so it's easy for the further-flung locations to get overshadowed. However, there's equally great riding to be had in the instep of the great boot of Italy. Potenza is a pretty big city, the provincial capital, but it's the perfect base for breaking out to explore the most mountainous region of Southern Italy. We have three routes with everything from soaring high-altitude hairpins to sunny coastal cruises. And now you know these roads are here, there's no excuse for riding past them.



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OUR ROUTES

UNLOCKING POTENZA

- > **Start/finish:** Potenza
- > **Distance:** 180 miles
- > **Riding time:** 6 hours
- Suggested stops**
- > **AM coffee:** Venosa
- > **Lunch:** Candela
- > **PM coffee:** Pescopagnano

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

Route 2: 240 miles · 9 hours

A full day on twisty roads, looping out to the coast

Route 3: 220 miles · 7 hours

Flowing mountain roads. Easily adapted to provide a half-day ride



Sometimes the road is bumpy. Sometimes it's just sublime

ROUTE 22

A ride around...

Manfredonia

The quiet east coast of Italy has some brilliant roads – and some surprising hills

Brilliant seascapes and quiet hilly roads



STICKING OUT INTO the Adriatic Sea like the spur on the back of Italy's boot, the Gargano Peninsula is blessed with a sublime climate, numerous beaches and spectacular scenery. It's tourist heaven – which should make it a nightmare for bikes, but it's not. Resort towns like Vieste and Peschici draw plenty of visitors, but the roads remain – for the most part – blissfully quiet. They're great roads, too...

Our routes are based in the southern seaside town of Manfredonia. If you need a day or two relaxing on the beach, it's perfect for that, too... But we're here for the riding, taking the twisty coastal route round the promontory, skirting the huge lagoon of Lake Varano before heading across the hills to return to base.

The secondary route spends less time by the coast and more time criss-crossing the mountainous interior, traversing the slopes of Monte Calvo and Monte Sant'Angelo. This may be a small corner of Apulia, but it's crammed with character, scenery and brilliant roads.

GREAT GARGANO

- > **Start/finish:** Manfredonia
- > **Distance:** 160 miles
- > **Riding time:** 5 hours
- Suggested stops**
- > **AM coffee:** Vieste
- > **Lunch:** Rodi
- > **PM coffee:** San Marco in Lamis

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

- Route 2: 210 miles · 6 hours**
- Mostly flowing roads across the hills, some smaller lanes



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ROUTE
23

A ride around...

Cosenza

With brilliant roads all around it, Cosenza should be a destination, not a stop-over

MOST PEOPLE HEADING to Sicily just sit on the motorway from Rome all the way to the ferry from Reggio to Messina. Depending on the timing, they might stop off in Cosenza as they cross Calabria, the toe of Italy. But that's it: a bed for the night, then back on the motorway.

If riding past Potenza (page 50) is a mistake, then blasting by Cosenza is an utter disaster. The hills around this compact city are crammed with some of the most relentlessly twisty roads – not just in Calabria nor even in Italy, but in all of Europe. Better still, they're usually silent, but for the whisper of the wind and the occasional warble of birdsong.

We have three great routes here guaranteed to make your head spin, not with dizziness but with the sheer pleasure of getting to grips with these roads. Unlike the motorway drivers blasting south, we know how to enjoy ourselves – and that's by riding these roads.



OUR ROUTES

VIVA CALABRIA

- **Start/finish:** Cosenza
- **Distance:** 210 miles
- **Riding time:** 6.5 hours
- Suggested stops**
- **AM coffee:** San Bernardo
- **Lunch:** Sersale
- **PM coffee:** Soveria Mannelli

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- Route 2: 205 miles · 7 hours**
Extra-twisty roads down to the southern coast
- Route 3: 200 miles · 7 hours**
Adventure-bike route on twisty roads to the east coast



Miles of empty roads
baked by the fierce
sun of Calabria

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ITALIAN ISLANDS

ROUTE 24

A ride on SICILY

Mount Etna, great food, awesome climate... just watch out for the awful drivers

SICILY IS A DIVISIVE place. It's beautiful, especially the eastern end of the island, with Etna brooding on the horizon. Riding the immaculate roads across the lava fields and visiting the volcano is a sublime experience (and one we factor into two of our routes).

But it's also dirty, with litter strewn along many roadsides. It's manifestly poor, with beggars everywhere in the bigger towns. And the drivers are awful – you won't see an undented car on Sicily.

In other words, go to Sicily with your eyes open and keep your wits about you on the roads. It can be a fabulous place to ride a bike, but it can also shock the unprepared.

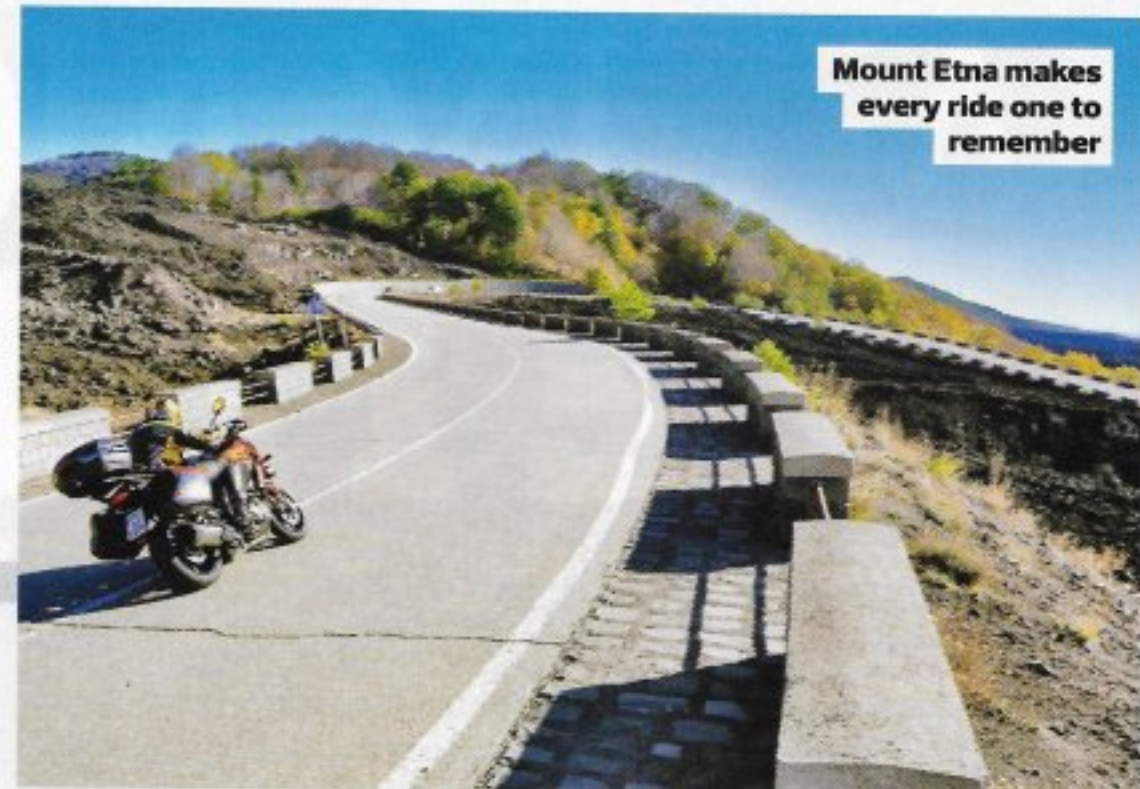
OUR ROUTES

GOING SICILIAN

- **Start/finish:** Taormina
- **Distance:** 135 miles
- **Riding time:** 4.5 hours
- Suggested stops**
- **AM coffee:** Etna
- **Lunch:** Etna (after visiting the crater)
- **PM coffee:** Cesaro

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- Route 2: 195 miles · 6.5 hours**
Flowing roads out along the north coast
- Route 3: 220 miles · 8 hours**
Adventure-bike route including Etna and some coastal roads



ROUTE 25

A ride on SARDINIA

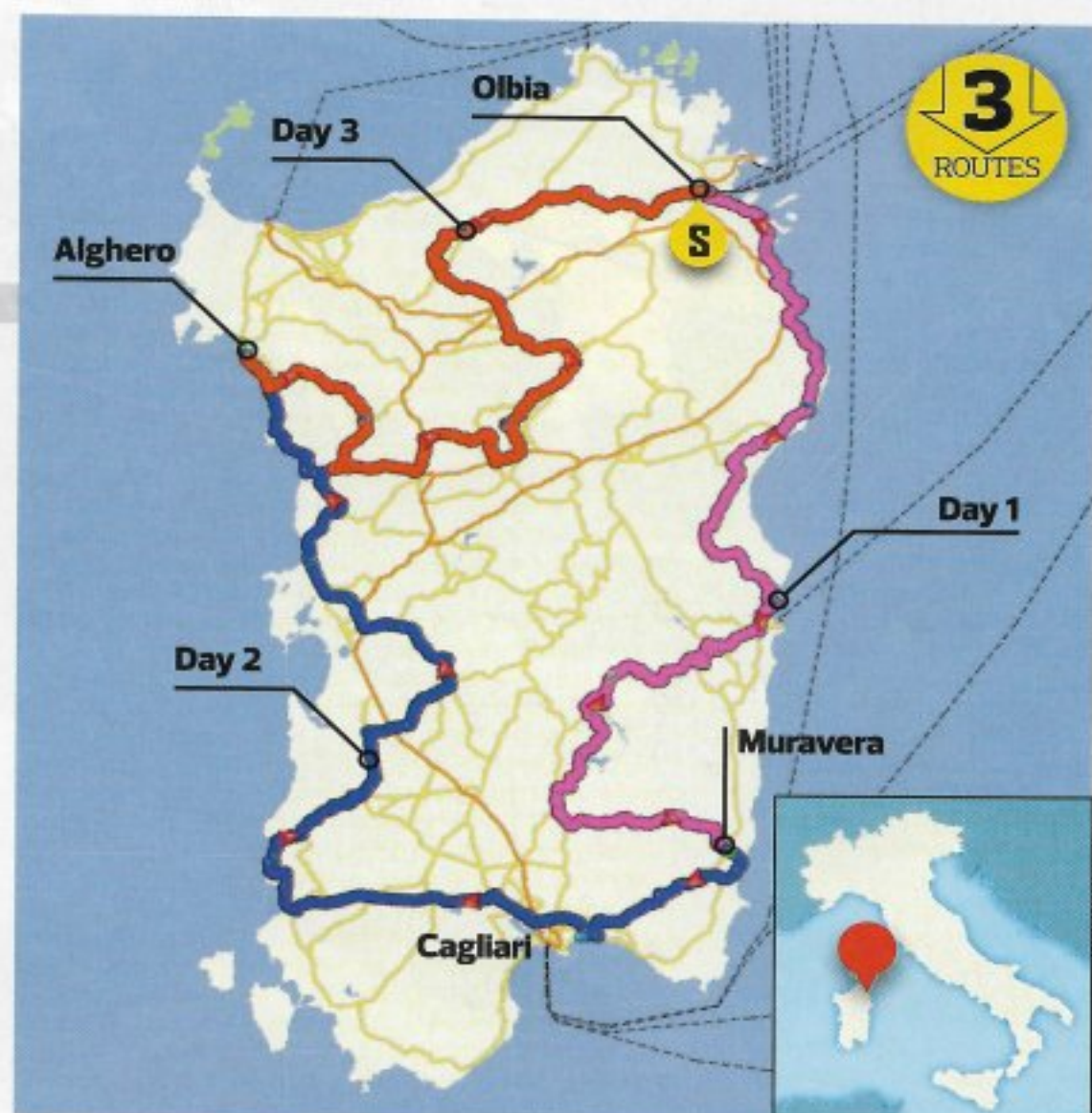
Where do Italian motorcycle testers for their biking holidays? Sardinia, apparently

I'VE DONE A few bike launches on Sardinia and it always impressed me. I thought I'd just been shown the good bits. No: apparently, it's all good. Whenever I asked any Italian bike tester to reveal the best place to ride a motorcycle in Italy, they always gave the same answer: Sardinia. Some liked the east coast best, some the west, some preferred the centre, some the north...

With a bit more badgering, this three-day route came together, based around taking the ferry to and from the port of Olbia in the north-east of the island. You can get a ferry there from Livorno, Savona, Genoa or Civitavecchia. Or Corsica. Or Sicily. Hmmm... Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica... Now that sounds like a good idea.

THE RIDE TOUR OF SARDINIA

- **Day 1**
Olbia to Muravera
230 miles · 7.5 hours
- **Day 2**
Muravera to Alghero
240 miles · 7.5 hours
- **Day 3**
Alghero to Olbia
205 miles · 6 hours



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Hilly Roads

Stay at sea level or climb the highest peaks.



Round-trip Planning

Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

WHY NOT SEE IT ALL?

Not sure where to go in Italy? Take two weeks and visit all of Italy



IT SEEMS A shame to limit a trip to Italy to just one area, though cramming the whole country into one trip is a challenge. It's too large to do in a single week, but with a fortnight off work, you can take in all the amazing riding this fascinating country has to offer. We have not one but two complete 12-day tours. We've structured them both to start from Borgo San Dalmazzo, so they're easy to do if you freight the bike to Nice.

The mainland tour loops south as far as Potenza, before swinging out to the fabulous Gargano peninsula – the spur on Italy's boot. From there it heads north, through the Dolomites, taking in all the big-name passes as well as the lakes. With only two half-day stints of motorway in the entire 12-day trip, it's a stunning 3000-mile epic of a tour.

Not that the islands tour is any less majestic. It follows the same route as the mainland tour for the first four days, but carries on south from Potenza to Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. After 2600 incredible miles the tour reaches Bastia in Corsica, from where an overnight ferry will get you to Toulon, Genoa – both a half-day ride from Nice – or direct to Nice, if you wish to ship the bike back. Though from Nice, it's a pleasant ride back up the Route Napoleon.

'THE WHOLE OF ITALY IN ONE TRIP IS A CHALLENGE'

From Piedmont to Calabria to Sardinia: we have Italy covered

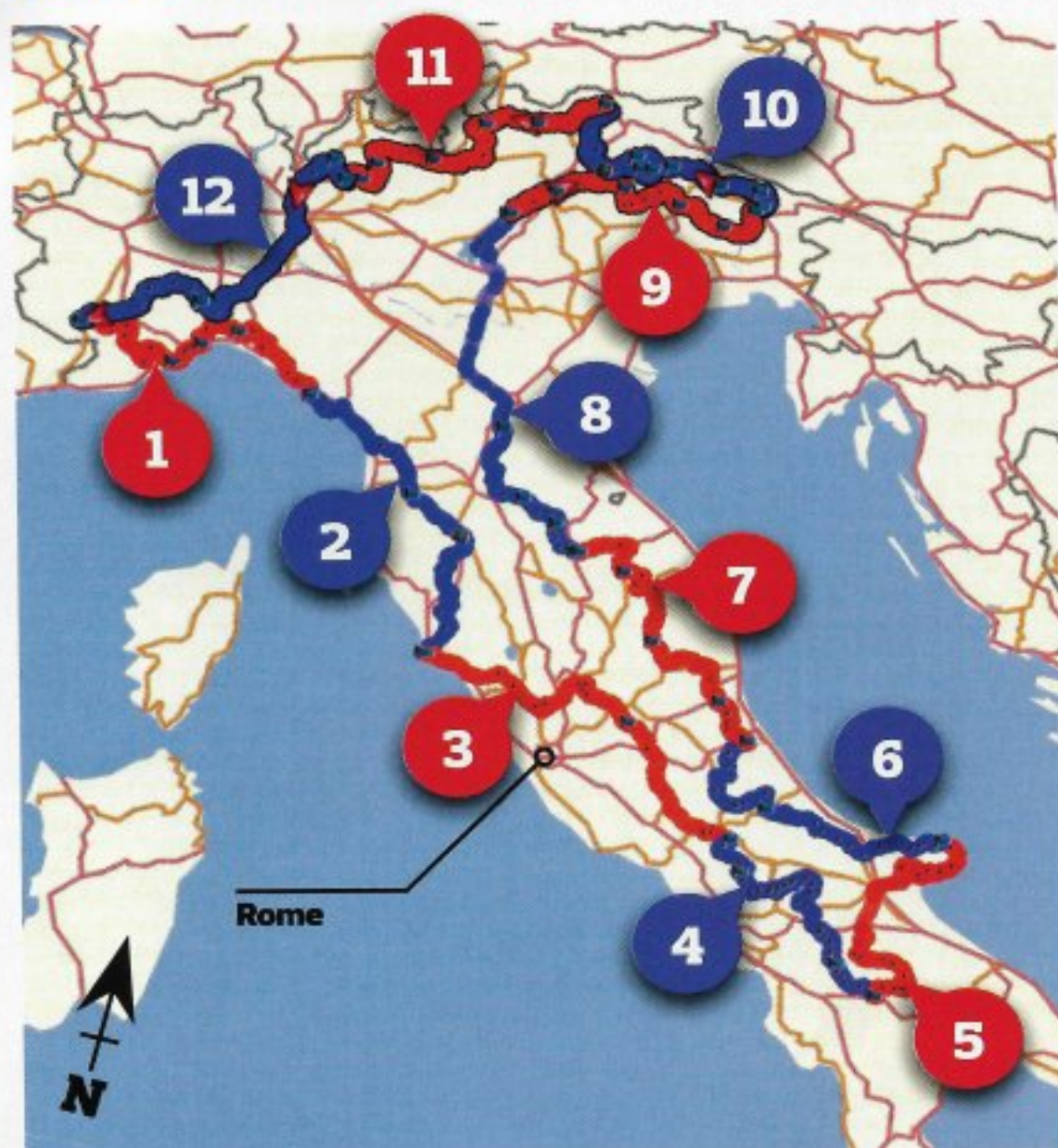
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Tour 1 The RiDE Tour of Italy



> Day 1
Borgo San Dalmazzo to Levanto
240 miles · 8.5 hours

> Day 2
Levanto to Monte Argentario
250 miles · 7.5 hours

> Day 3
Monte Argentario to Isernia
255 miles · 8 hours

> Day 4
Isernia to Potenza
250 miles · 8.5 hours

> Day 5
Potenza to Peschici
230 miles · 7 hours

> Day 6
Peschici to Chieti
250 miles · 8 hours

> Day 7
Chieti to Citta di Castello
250 miles · 8 hours



Enjoy the warmth of southern Italy

> Day 8
Citta di Castello to Riva del Garda
275 miles · 7.5 hours

> Day 9
Riva del Garda to Tolmezzo
225 miles · 7 hours

> Day 10
Tolmezzo to Vipiteno
235 miles · 7.5 hours

> Day 11
Vipiteno to Lecco
240 miles · 8 hours

> Day 12
Lecco to Borgo San Dalmazzo
230 miles · 6.5 hours

Tour 2 The RiDE Tour of Italy and the Islands

Routes are planned to coincide with evening or overnight ferry crossings as appropriate

> Day 1
Borgo San Dalmazzo to Levanto
240 miles · 8.5 hours

> Day 2
Levanto to Monte Argentario
250 miles · 7.5 hours

> Day 3
Monte Argentario to Isernia
255 miles · 8 hours

> Day 4
Isernia to Potenza
250 miles · 8.5 hours

> Day 5
Potenza to Cosenza
225 miles · 7 hours

> Day 6
Cosenza to Taormina (Sicily)
205 miles · 6.5 hours

> Day 7
Taormina to Palermo
200 miles · 5.5 hours
Overnight ferry to Cagliari (Sardinia)

> Day 8
Cagliari to Alghero
230 miles · 7.5 hours

> Day 9
Alghero to Tortoli
210 miles · 6 hours

> Day 10
Tortoli to Bonifacio (Corsica)
200 miles · 6 hours
Late afternoon ferry

> Day 11
Bonifacio to Porto
180 miles · 5.5 hours

> Day 12
Porto to Bastia
185 miles · 5.5 hours
Overnight ferry to Genoa, Toulon or Nice



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How we did it

YOU MIGHT HAVE thought we'd have learned by now. Having already produced the *RIDE Guide to France* and the *RIDE Guide to Spain* – which involved excessively long days in the saddle, wearing out tyres, breaking spirits and reducing us to physical wrecks – we should have known better than to try doing two weeks of high-mileage riding combined with hours of photography every day. But we did it again anyway.

Two things helped us. First, we shipped our Triumph Tiger Sport and Tiger Explorer out to Nice with FlyBikeFly. This meant we were taking our first pictures in Italy a few hours after setting off from home, rather than after a few days. Second, we returned on the overnight train from Livorno to Den Bosch. We disembarked in Holland and rode

to the Channel Tunnel, reaching home just hours after getting off the train. Easy. It was just the bit in the middle that was challenging.

Actually, the previous guides had taught us that doing 400 miles a day, every day, isn't healthy – so we restricted mileage on this trip. We were averaging only 280 miles a day, though as we used virtually no motorway and Italy's minor roads are mostly extremely wiggly, we were still riding for 10 hours most days. After which I had to write up the day's stories while Weeble processed the pictures.

We were lucky with the weather: one day of blinding rain, an overcast afternoon and morning... but really, conditions were superb. Unlike some of the roads – and we've excluded as many of the rough ones from our routes as we could. Even so, there's no way to cross Italy without finding some roads that could do with a little TLC.

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Torque 121Nm @ 6400rpm

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Seat height 837–857mm

Fuel capacity 20 litres

Fuelled weight 259kg



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It took months of research and hours of planning to prepare for our 14-day charge round Italy

Thankfully, there are many more roads that are simply brilliant. From Piedmont and Liguria, over Stelvio and through the Dolomites, we found staggering passes. The rolling hills of Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Umbria were every bit as rewarding, for all that the scenery was very different. The further south we got, the quieter the roads became. Everywhere we went, we found riding that was better than we could have hoped for. And the food was always amazing...

Italy's not the easiest destination for touring – neither as convenient as France nor as cheap as Spain, plus there's less English spoken and the road's aren't so consistently maintained. But I'd say it's even more rewarding because the high points are so high, the memories it gives are so memorable. We found some truly amazing roads in Italy – I hope you enjoy discovering them, too. *Simon Weir*



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Torque 104Nm @ 4300rpm

Transmission Six-speed, chain drive

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Discover new routes by simply tapping the area you want to explore.

THE BEST ROAD IN ITALY

All those miles, which ones were the best?

So many brilliant roads, especially in the Dolomites. I still love Stelvio and the even more extreme Colle dei Morti, but the best road on this trip – perhaps the best I've ever ridden – was the Colle del Nivolet (p24).

SIMON WEIR

No question about it: the road over Passo Rolle (p32). Just as brilliant as the big-name passes (and better than some) but without the crowds. Absolutely stunning scenery as well. I'd go back there in a heartbeat.

MARK MANNING

Is this the ultimate Italian road? It's the Colle del Nivolet

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