

Intro for Cycling Italy book I authored for Lonely Planet's activity guide series – Publish date: 2009

# Cycling in Italy

Dear cyclist, let Italy be your muse. To a bike tourist, she is one of the fairest in the world.

Between her gastronomic superiority, long and venerated history of cycling, immensely diverse landscapes, and vivacious culture, Italy entices the cyclist to rear up on one wheel and plunge into the unforgettable adventures to be had within her borders.

On a bike, you can access far-flung areas like Friuli-Venezia Giulia where you soar through sun-soaked vineyards. All day, you smell the freshly tilled earth, feel the wind cooling the sweat off your face, and are lulled by the quiet rustling of the land. Then that evening, on a sunset-rosy piazza, you sip wine created by the land you courted intimately all day.....a juicy, dripping-from-your-mouth experience. Later, someone might ask, "Do you know Friuli wines?" And you smile, like remembering an old lover, and you say, "Yes, I know them."

With a bike, you can get stuck in a tiny train station in rural Umbria and decide to take a spin around town while waiting for a connection. You might run into a crowd of socializing strollers embarking on the ritual *passigata*, an evening amble on the main strip. When you ask a young couple for directions, you end up laughing, joking, and eating pizza with them while yelling about politics over a bottle of wine until the wee hours. This small village now holds more charm for you than that of even the great city of Florence.

By bike, you can slug it out with a 15 km ascent of an Alpine pass. You reach the summit, legs thrashed and endorphins pumping, and peer out over a desolate Alpine range that teaches you a little more about the depths of inspiration.

So, go ahead, perk your ears and open your senses to the call of your honey-voiced muse who lures you to pack your bike and get ready for the best of the best.