

CRETE - The Magic of Monte Sante Marie

PERCORSO N° 1

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: MTB, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Asciano

Length: 29.48

Elevation gain: 440

Difficulty: high

Notes: This itinerary develops over the distance of 30 km., 17 of which are dirt and the rest being paved. It's not very long but the elevation gain isn't to be under estimated. In particular, the beautiful dirt road between Asciano and Monte Sante Marie has a couple of stretches which are pretty challenging. In the case of rain the stretch of road between Torre a Castello and Mucigliani could present real problems in that it's not covered in gravel but rather is of a clay base and becomes extremely slippery when wet.

Description: From the center of Asciano you will leave in the direction of the cemetery which you can reach traversing the Ponte del Garbo bridge over the Ombrone river. Once at the cemetery you will proceed on the beautiful dirt road which, in a series of climbs and descents, comes to the "borgo" of Monte Sante Marie, about 7 km. From here the terrain becomes a little easier until reaching Torre a Castello (5 km) where the asphalt ends and you'll turn left, passing in front of a cheese producer called "La Fonte" which, by the way, sells a very good pecorino cheese. Follow the S.P. 8 downhill for 1 km. until reaching the dirt road that will be on your left, the path is marked with white and red paint and is identified with " number 501 Torre a Castello-Mucigliani". After exactly 1.5 km. in front of a wooden fence the road forks, take the left fork following the white and red sign. After 2.8 km. you will pass the Faule farm and reach the final climb which will take you to the Mucigliani estate. Yet one more kilometer of dirt road and you'll be back on the paved road S.S. 438 "Lauretana" where you will turn left in the direction of Asciano (10km.) passing through the villages of Vescona and Peivina.

CRETE - In the Heart of the Crete

PERCORSO N° 2

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: MTB, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Asciano

Length: 24.36

Elevation gain: 430

Difficulty: high

Notes: The central part of this itinerary (dirt road, 4.5 km.) has no road signs or marking and it's therefore essential that you carry either a local map of 1:100.000 or that you pay VERY close attention to the directions.

Description: From the train station of Asciano you will turn left taking S.S. 438 "Lauretana" up hill which will cross the train tracks. After 800 meters there is a crossroads where you will go straight on, go past two more train track crossings until reaching the area of the travertino carries (2.8 km.) and another intersection where you will continue on until the sign for Poggio Pinci (500 meters, on the right); here you will take the dirt road which begins on your right. You'll go through the antique estate of Poggio Pinci following the dirt road up hill (900 meters) until the large farm house of Montalceto (an agriturismo) which is in a very panoramic position and famous for its thermal springs. Continue on towards the agricultural sheds and then, shortly after, the road takes a sharp right turn following a panoramic ridge road that looks out on the crete and on the left, the Castle of Gallico. Exactly 1.1 km. from Montalceto the road forks, take the left fork, first descending and then climbing (steep but short) until reaching an intersection where you'll turn right and proceed for 1.3 km. reaching another T intersection where you'll turn left this time. Here you'll turn left taking another beautiful ridge road and arrive, uphill, at an isolated farm house which marks the short but steep descent down to yet another T intersection (200 meters) where you will turn left towards Chiusure (5.5 km.) a fascinating hamlet that looks out on the crete and their beautiful formations. To return to Asciano you must proceed towards Monte Oliveto Maggiore (2 km.) and then ride the road on rolling terrain that will take you the 9 km. back to where you began.

CRETE - Travertino Quarries and Thermal Waters

PERCORSO N° 3

Type of road: asphalt

Type of bicycle: road, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, families

Point of departure and arrival: Rapolano Terme

Length: 18.07

Elevation gain: 210

Difficulty: medium

Notes: An easy itinerary from both a mileage and elevation stand point, adapted for cyclists of all levels. It evolves in the heart of the Crete and passes close to the quarries of travertino, the white stone which is a trade mark of this zone. Rapolano Terme is a great spot to take a relaxing pause in the thermal center of the Antica Querciolaia.

Description: From Rapolano Terme follow directions for Serre di Rapolano-Montisi by taking the S.P. 26 "Asciano-Rapolano": you'll pass under the railway bridge and then turn left in the direction of Serre di Rapolano. Once past the historic center and after a steep descent (direction Asciano 13% gradient) you will turn left following indications for the Pieve of Sant'Andreino on S.P. 64 "Serre di Rapolano" that passes close by the travertino quarries on your right, and near the Pieve as well. A gradual descent will bring you to another cross roads where you'll turn left and proceed along the quarry road. After about 2 km. you'll reach another T intersection and turn right towards Asciano; after the second train crossing you can go into the center of the town or turn right and follow the scenic road 10 km. back to Rapolano Terme.

CRETE - The scent of wine near the Chianti border

PERCORSO N° 4

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: MTB, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Rapolano Terme

Length: 31.64

Elevation gain: 400

Difficulty: high

Notes: There are 26 km. of paved road on this itinerary and 10 km. of easy dirt roads, the more challenging sections are the brief climb towards Serre di Rapolano and when you top out on the climb to S. Gemignanello and the climb to Rigomagno.

Description: From the thermal springs of the Antica Querciolaia you will turn left towards Rapolano Terme. Once past the village keep riding in the direction of Serre di Rapolano, proceeding for 3.5 km. on the quarry road until reaching the T intersection with S.S. "Lauretana" heading for Sinalunga. Go past the locality of Poggio Pinci and climb lightly through a forested area with vineyards and olive orchards. Continue on this road and come out on top near the hamlet of San Gemignanello (a 150 meter detour) and then descend steeply until reaching the busy artery Siena-Betolle which you'll cross taking the road on the right that goes to Rigomagno Stazione running alongside of the railway 5.3 km. Continue riding to Rigomagno (2 km. or steep climbing) and from there proceed on a dirt road in the direction of "Il Calcione" (the road begins at the cemetery). The first part will be uphill in the midst of oaks, olive tress and ginestra plants and will arrive at a cross-roads at Santa Lucia where you will take a right turn going downhill until arriving at the paved road. Here you'll turn left and after 150 meters, near an old mill, take another left on dirt towards Rapolano. After 1.2 km. you'll crest the hill and exit from the forest near the vineyards and olive trees of the Castle of Modanella, an agriturismo that sells wine and olive oil. This dirt road continues on down hill and reaches a fork, proceed right here and keep going down hill in the midst of the vineyard. After 3.5 km. a possible detour right will take you to the mid-evil hamlet of Poggio Santa Cecilia or you can proceed directly to the monumental entrance to the Villa Buoninsegna, another agriturismo with sales of both wine and oil. Shortly thereafter the paved roads ends and you will proceed for Rapolano Terme, passing underneath the highway and will arrive at the Antica Querciolaia.

CRETE - Scenic Art in the Val d'Asso

PERCORSO N° 5

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: MTB, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer, families

Point of departure and arrival: San Giovanni d'Asso

Length: 26.65

Elevation gain: 290

Difficulty: medium

Notes: The more challenging sections of this itinerary are the brief climb on a dirt road after the bridge on the River Asso and the section of climb, again on dirt that goes to Lucignano d'Asso. You may organize this itinerary with the Nature Train: you get off in San Giovanni d'Asso and ride to Torrenieri (18 km. and 240 meters of elevation gain) where you may rendezvous with the train.

Description: From the train station in San Giovanni d'Asso you'll want to find the State road where you'll turn left in the direction of Montisi, passing the train crossing and the bridge and after 200 meters, you'll turn right on the dirt road, going uphill (signs for the agriturismo "Trove"). Climb on this dirt road for 800 meters until reaching a cross roads where you'll take the ridge, following the trail marked "number 560 A". At the next intersectin (200 meters) stay to your right, coming to an old farm house where the road proceeds on, in the midst of rich vegetation. You'll come to a gate for sheep, go through it and closeit behind you. At the next intersection go left, uphill on a dirt road for Lucignano d'Asso (1.6 km.) From here you proceed in the direction of Montisi-Pienza until reaching a T intersection where you'll go right, proceeding on the beautiful road that passes in the middle of farm houses of the frazione of Cosona until reaching the paved road (6.5 km). Here you'll go downhill towards Torrenieri (2 km.) where you'll ride along the Val d'Asso for 8.5 km. until reaching San Giovanni d'Asso.

CRETE - Dirt roads

PERCORSO N° 6

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: MTB, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Buonconvento

Length: 43.2

Elevation gain: 600

Difficulty: high

Notes: This itinerary is right in the heart of the Crete so you'll be able to enjoy not only seeing places like the abbacy of Monte Oliveto Maggiore but one of the most beautiful roads in the province, the via di Pieve a Salti, a famous dirt road that sums up the wonder of the Crete. The route is not too challenging and wants to be ridden calmly in order to take in all the beauty.

Description: From the center of Buonconvento you'll follow directions for Pieve a Salti. Go past the train track crossing and climb two steep hills that will take you to the wonderful dirt road (about 10 km.) which will take you past Pieve a Salti (agritourism) and eventually to a paved road where you'll turn left for San Giovanni d'Asso, know for its white truffles. From San Giovanni you'll climb gradually for 4 km. following directions for Asciano, you'll be on a ridge road. Continue on until reaching the intersection for Chiusure where you'll go straight on, beginning the descent into Asciano. From here you'll take the road for Buonconvento (18 km.) which starts right off with a good climb and continues with an up and down profile until reaching the abbacy of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. The abbacy is perched on these crete overlooking the valley. After visiting the abby follow the road downhill until reaching Buonconvento.

CRETE - In flight on the ridges of the Crete

PERCORSO N° 7

Type of road: asphalt

Type of bicycle: road, hybrid

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Buonconvento

Length: 78.97

Elevation gain: 1240

Difficulty: very high

Notes: This itinerary is decidedly difficult due to the continuous climbing and descending on the hills of the Crete. The elevation profile isn't full of long, hard hills but it is very rolling and some of the climbs are indeed steep. The flat sections are few and far between. This is good terrain for those riders who are looking to test their fitness and aquire a change of rythm. For those cycle-tourists who choose this route you'll be rewarded by unforgettable scenes of beauty.

Description: Once leaving Buonconvento you'll be riding uphill for several kilometers, in the direction of the Abbacy of Monte Oliveto Maggiore on S.S. 451. Continue past the Monastery and after 1 km. turn right for the village of Chiusure, the panorama here is stupendous. Turn right again for San Giovanni d'Asso going downhill this time. From San Giovanni d'Asso you'll proceed towards Montisi, climbing, and the village of Trequanda (5km.). From the intersection at Trequanda follow signs for Asciano, downhill, and after 5 km. (at the train crossing for the nature train) you will start climbing again (2km.) until the junction with the road that will take you shortly into Asciano. Ride through town and once past the bridge over the Ombrone river, turn left on the road that will take you to Monteroni d'Arbia, over 15 km. of rolling terrain. Proceed for 2 kilometers on the S.S. 2 Cassia but don't enter into the hamlet of Lucignano d'Arbia, turn right instead towards Quinciano. From here the road will intersect the two valley's of the torrents Sorra and Stilo (a double climb) before climbing back up towards Vescovado and Murlo (about 8 km. from the intersection of the Cassia). The final part of the itinerary descends (9km.) towards Buonconvento passing the hamlet of Bibiano.

CHIANTI - The Val d'Arbia towards Vagliagli

PERCORSO N° 8

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: hybrid, MTB

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Gaiole in Chianti

Length: 28.71

Elevation gain: 520

Difficulty: high

Notes: This route is short but with a constant change of terrain, typical of the Chianti area. It doesn't present technical difficulties but in the second half of the route there are a couple of brief climbs that are decidedly challenging. Also, the crossing of the Arbia river just after Vagliagli, in case of abundant rains, could create some problems.

Description: You will leave from Gaiole taking S.S. 408 in the direction of Siena for almost 10 km. Once you're past the intersection for San Sano you will turn right on the dirt road in the direction of Vagliagli-Pievasciata. After an initial stretch that runs along the river Arbia the road will become steep and climb up to a restructured farm house where you will find a large dirt road, turn right riding constantly uphill, continue past the intersection that goes towards the castle of Selvole (a farm and agriturismo). The road continues on to Vagliagli and just before entering the village it becomes asphalt. The itinerary proceeds taking the road on your right (about 1 km. before entering the village there is a place to eat) which has a sign for the Dievole farm. The descends steeply and near the farm bends left, coming to the Arbia river near the San Polo mill, pay attention here to the rough road surface. Here you must cross the river and then there is a stretch of very challenging climbing; the climb ends near the fortified Pieve of San Polo in Rosso, the road continues on and then is paved again about 1 km. later. Shortly afterward you will come to a crossroads where you will turn right and then, immediately after, left onto a dirt road that will take you to the country hamlet of Andine. A little more climbing and then, once you're through the locality of San Bastiano, the road will descend steeply (pay attention here) towards the valley where you will cross over the paved road following directions for San Piero a Venano (a rare example of a church with gothic influences) from where you can return to Gaiole which is nearby, 3 km.

VAL D'ORCIA - From Pienza to Montepulciano

PERCORSO N° 4

Type of road: asphalt

Type of bicycle: hybrid, road

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Pienza

Length: 29.72

Elevation gain: 500

Difficulty: medium

Notes: Apart from Pienza, a splendid example of a renaissance town, a visit to Montepulciano is highly recommended in order to visit the historic center and the breathtaking Duomo, or cathedral, just outside of town. As well, there is the tower of the Commune (antique municipal building) and the stupendous subterranean cantinas where it's possible to taste the wine that Montepulciano is famous for, Vino Nobile.

Description: From Pienza you'll be riding east on S.S. 146 for Montepulciano which is about 13 km. away. The road is along a ridge the entire length and rolls up and down the contours. Montepulciano is on the edge of the Val d'Orcia and represents the border with the Val di Chiana. From the center of town you'll ride out in the direction of Chianciano and after about 2 km. you'll turn right onto a small side road in the direction of Monticchiello. Once you're past the hamlet of San Carlo you'll come to an junction, take the right branch which descends down through a row of cypress trees towards Monticchiello which you'll have to then climb up to. From this small jewel of a hamlet, the itinerary will take you back up to Pienza passing through the estate of the Lucignanello.

VAL D'ORCIA - The land of Brunello

PERCORSO N° 1

Type of road: asphalt, dirt road

Type of bicycle: hybrid, MTB

For who it is: cycletourist, racer

Point of departure and arrival: Montalcino

Length: 25.14

Elevation gain: 460

Difficulty: medium

Notes: This is one of the more accessible itineraries of the Val d'Orcia that will take you through the typical woods and vineyards of the hillside of Montalcino, famous for its legendary Brunello wine. There aren't any technical difficulties and the climbs aren't too long or steep but as always, it's a good idea to have some training miles in ones legs.

Description: From Montalcino you'll ride for about 3 km. in the direction of Sant'Angelo in Colle on S.P. Traversa dei Monti (the name of the road) until reaching the junction on your right that will take you to Castiglion del Bosco. Descend for about 1 km., pay no attention to the deviation that goes to Tavernelle, proceed straight on for Castiglion del Bosco on a nice, wide dirt road for about 4 km. until the next junction. Here you'll bear left for the Castelgiocondo castle (nearby, in Quercecchio you may see thousand year old Holm Oak trees) and continue on past the castle and their cantina, the road winds its way through olive orchards until reaching the Corriente farm (on your right); keep on going down hill past the creek bed which is almost always dry. Follow a long line of cypress trees until coming to an intersection on a paved road (which isn't in good shape) and go in the direction of Tavernelle, there will be a slight climb up to the village. Once you're at Tavernelle, right where you'll see the sign for the Banfi Cantina, turn left in between two vineyards. After 1.1 km. turn right at the junction for the Mocali farm and continue uphill as the road narrows, you'll pass nearby the Brizio agriturismo. The climb will last for 2.7 km. and at the wider road you'll turn right and immediately after, right again towards the San Lorenzo farm. From here you'll climb the last challenging hill which is about 700 meters long and will take you back to the road "Traversa dei Monti" where you'll turn left for Montalcino, 3 km. away.