

Road & Gravel Cycling The Val di Merse Grand Tour

4 days guided cycling tour

October 11-14th, 2018



ATWS 2018 Montecatini Terme

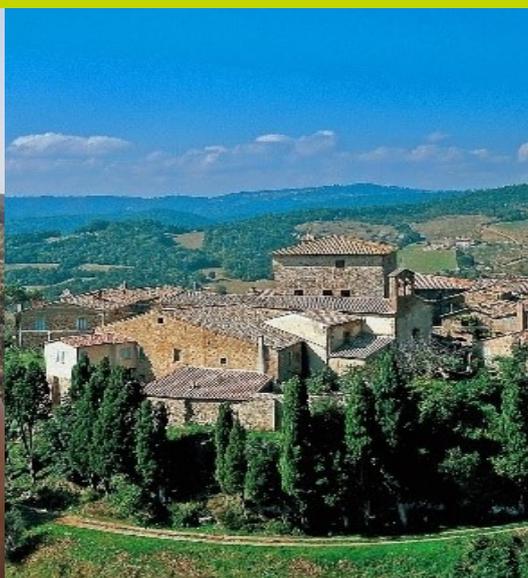
Pre-Summit Adventure



Classic Road and Gravel Cycling through Tuscany

Val di Merse is not a well-known area of Tuscany, but with its wide-open spaces and magical atmosphere it is definitely a hidden gem. The valley lays South-West of Siena, the city of the Palio horse-race, among the densely wooded Montagnola range, a verdant lung that bridges the Mediterranean landscapes and fragrance of the Maremma with those of Siena and the Val d’Orcia. A land of passage, whose unbroken solitude has always attracted thinkers, hermits and peace-seeking travellers. Medieval hamlets emerge as islands amidst a sea of greenery, conserving an archaic nature still untouched by the masses. The Grand Tour of Val di Merse is a marked circular road and gravel cycling itinerary with very little traffic, running through pristine natural reserves, Medieval abbeys and villages including Murlo and Casole d’Elsa, a town rich in history dating back to the Etruscans.

This 4-day Grand Cycling Tour covers the highlights of this marked cycling route: roofless San Galgano Abbey, where according to legend the knight and Saint Galgano left his sword in a stone, the decorated vaults of the “Torri Cloister”, ancient, timeless villages and lush natural scenery



TRIP SUMMARY

Dates:	October 11th - 14th
Duration:	4 days
Group size:	4-14 participants
Difficulty:	4 out of 5

Dates		Meals	Technical info
Day 1 11th Oct.	Arrive in Montecatini Terme, briefing and Feldenkrais method class. Overnight in Montecatini	dinner	-
Day 2 12th Oct.	Transfer to Stigliano, coffee and bike fitting Ride to Casole d'Elsa with a stop at the Torri Cloister. Guided visit Casole d'Elsa. Overnight in Casole d'Elsa	breakfast picnic lunch dinner	Km 51.00 M up 950 M down 850
Day 3 13th Oct.	Ride from Casole d'Elsa to San Galgano; visit the abbey and hear about the sword in the rock legend. Overnight in San Galgano	breakfast picnic lunch dinner at hotel	Km 53.00 M up 1500 M down 1580
Day 4 14th Oct.	Ride from San Galgano to Murlo, farm lunch, wine tasting and transfer to Montecatini	breakfast lunch	Km 44.00 M up 1140 M down 1190

HIGHLIGHTS

- . Cycle on minor roads with an almost total absence of traffic
- . Pristine and intimate landscapes
- . Ancient hamlets and villages, some over 2500 years old
- . Gothic abbey of San Galgano, with the Saint's sword still in the rock
- . Locally sourced culinary specialties, winery visit and tasting



Day 1 Arrival in Montecatini

The trip begins in Montecatini Terme, an 18th century Spa town famous for the healing properties of its drinking waters, which acquire beneficial mineral-salts on their way to the surface.

In the afternoon, we gather for a short briefing and then a 1-2 hour Feldenkrais class that will help you stretch, relax and prepare for the trip. Strolling through town and parks of the 18th century Spa town of Montecatini we reach the old funicular tram that goes to Montecatini Alto, an ancient hamlet where we have dinner.

OVERNIGHT MONTECATINI



Day 2 Ride Stigliano to Casole d'Elsa

A morning transfer brings us to Stigliano, in the heart of Val di Merse. After a coffee and a snack, we gather for the bike fitting and briefing and then hop on our bikes and cycle towards Casole d'Elsa. We immerse ourselves in the pristine nature of the Val di Merse, stopping along the way to visit the Santa Mustiola church in Torri: as a former Cistercian abbey, the church still preserves a beautiful Romanic cloister with capitols decorated with figures of flowers, plants and animals. We continue to Casole d'Elsa: once inhabited by Etruscans from 800BC. During the middle ages this land was fought over by Siense, Florentine and Volterrann forces. In 1259 the town was occupied by the Florentine army but following the battle at Montaperti and the Castelfiorentino treaty of 1260, it was definitively brought under Siense rule. The town's defensive walls were built by the Siense during this period. After admiring the town from its ramparts, we enjoy a great dinner in the historical centre.

OVERNIGHT CASOLE D'ELSA

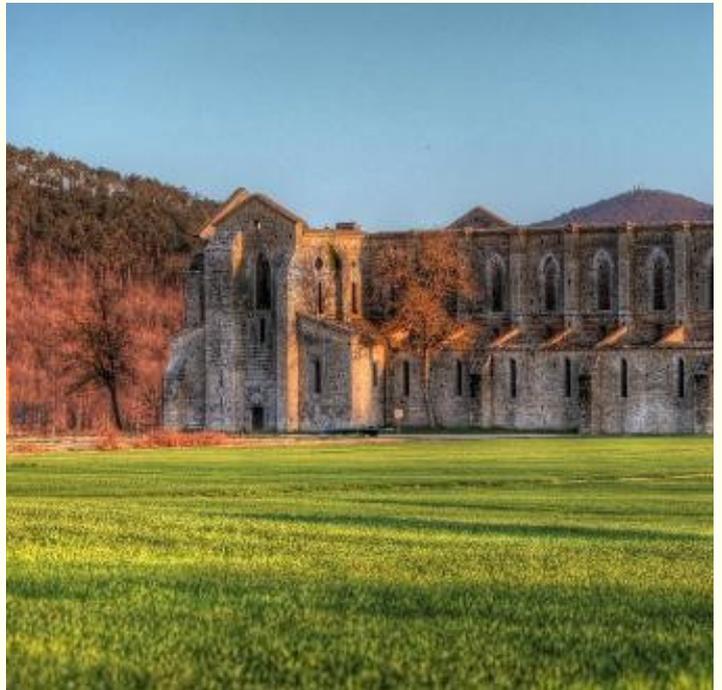
Day 3 Ride Casole d'Elsa to San Galgano

Today we set off towards San Galgano: we pass characteristic villages such as Mensano, Radicondoli and Montalcinello, to reach the highlight of the day and one of the symbols of Val di Merse: the 13th century Gothic style, San Galgano Abbey, one of the richest of the land during medieval times. It preserves only its walls after the last devastating fire. After hearing about San Galgano, a medieval knight who converted after a dissolute youth, and seeing his sword still planted in a rock we continue to Casale di San Galgano, a local farm, where we spend the night.

OVERNIGHT SAN GALGANO

Day 4 Ride San Galgano to Murlo

Our last ride from San Galgano runs on surfaced and compact gravel, traffic free minor roads through farmland and nature reserves. We stop for a brief visit of the Etruscan hamlet of Murlo, a tiny gem pocketed away in the Crete Senesi before lunch at Bosco della Spina, a charming farmhouse. Here we taste not only the excellent kitchen but also their olive oil and aromatic red wine produced by Brigida and her family. Later we return to Montecatini with a transfer.



**“We move according to our perceived self-image.”
(M. Feldenkrais)**

The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic education uses gentle movement and directed attention to help people learn more effective ways of living the life they want. By increasing sensitivity and awareness, the Feldenkrais Method assists you to live your life more fully, efficiently, and comfortably. You can increase your ease and range of motion, improve your flexibility and coordination, and rediscover your innate capacity for graceful, efficient movement.

About S-Cape Travel

S-cape Travel is an Adventure Holiday specialist with over 20 years' experience operating unique FIT and small groups in Italy and the Mediterranean. Our local offices in Italy, France, Spain, Greece and the Netherlands personally designs walking, cycling, cultural and food & wine tours. We have a vast selection of self-guided adventures and guided tailor-made experiences and our programs feature gourmet food, hand-picked accommodations, stunning natural areas interspersed with jaw roping culture

Local adventurers and hosts



**Ernesto Benfari,
S-Cape Travel Italy**

Born in Verona from Tuscan mother and half Sicilian father, Ernesto has had all sorts of jobs, from being a chimney sweep, to cheese maker and goat herder in the Dolomites. His bike passion started 10 years ago, when he took off on a two wheels journey through the green and wet Irish hills. Ernesto is not only an enthusiastic bike traveller, climber and wine aficionado, he's also a great tour leader. Currently living on the North shore of Lake Garda with his splendid partner Margherita and their small sons, Bruno and Arturo; you can often find him riding uphill, smiling with a full bike trailer!



**Ingo Olie, tour leader and MTB guide
for Terre di Casole Bike Hub**

Ingo was born in Germany, but has lived in Italy for most part of his life. Sports enthusiast and good cyclist, he studied to become a certified tour guide and a mountain-bike guide.

"I fell in love with Tuscany because of its never-ending rolling hills, because of its art and history, the food, wine and olive oil culture, its lifestyle. Cycling is surely the best way to discover the most charming and interesting sites".

Join them on this adventure.

Accommodation

You will spend the night in 3* and 4* hotels and equivalent agriturismo (farm houses). All different in style (ranging from rooms to apartments) all rooms have private bathrooms, internet connection, hairdryer, TV, A/C and heating.

Agriturismo San Galgano has limited availability, you may need to share an apartment with other participants. In the apartments, rooms have their private facilities.



- 11 Oct.** Montecatini - Hotel Boston 4*
Montecatini - Hotel Da Vinci 4*
- 12 Oct.** Casole d'Elsa, Hotel Terre di Casole 4*
- 13 Oct.** Chiusdino, Agriturismo San Galgano



Prices
per person

sharing twin
Euro 795,00

single room
Euro 895,00

Included

- . 2 nights in 4* hotel and 1 night in Agriturismo
- . 2 picnics, 1 lunch in a local farm, olive oil and wine tasting
- . 3 dinners incl. wine, water, coffee
- . Return Cable car to Montecatini Alto
- . 1-2 hour Feldenkrais Method lesson
- . All people and luggage transfers from day 2 - 4, 1-piece max. 15 kg per person
- . 3 days Road Bike rental + helmet Ebikes available
- . Support van day 2 - 4
- . Guided tours of the San Galgano Abbey and Casole d'Elsa
- . 2 English-speaking cycling guides
- . Hotel City taxes

Not Included

- . Flights and public transport to/from the event and when not specified
- . Travel insurance
- . Admissions and entrance fees not specified
- . Tips and gratuities for guides and drivers
- . Personal expenses such as drinks, phone calls, laundry, transfers etc...
- . Any item not specifically mentioned in the programme



Gear List

- . 1 Day pack
 - . 1 Hand-luggage-sized bag (15kg max)
 - . Cycling shorts and layered short & long-sleeved tops
 - . A casual change of clothes for the evenings
 - . Rain/waterproof jacket and pants
 - . Fleece/insulating jacket
 - . Comfortable shoes (suitable for cycling)
 - . Lightweight gloves
 - . Water bottle
 - . Sunscreen / sunglasses
 - . Any personal items/medication you need
 - . Camera
 - . Phone & charger
- . Clearly mark all your belongings with your name.
- . Keep hydrated when cycling, take extra water if the weather is particularly hot.

Weather

We recommend checking the weather forecast before arrival so you pack accordingly. The climate in Tuscany is generally mild with differences depending on the geography of the region. In October, the weather is variable with warm sunny days and colder wet days coming in the form of heavy rain. Temperature can vary between 9°C & 22°C

How to get to Montecatini

The best airports to fly into are Pisa or Florence. Local transport from/to these airports is affordable and frequent.

- . From Florence airport, take the airport shuttle to Santa Maria Novella then the train to Montecatini Centro.
- . From Pisa airport, take the peplemover train to Pisa Centrale then the train to Montecatini Centrale.
- . For updated information on train times and connections, visit www.trenitalia.com.

Payment Conditions

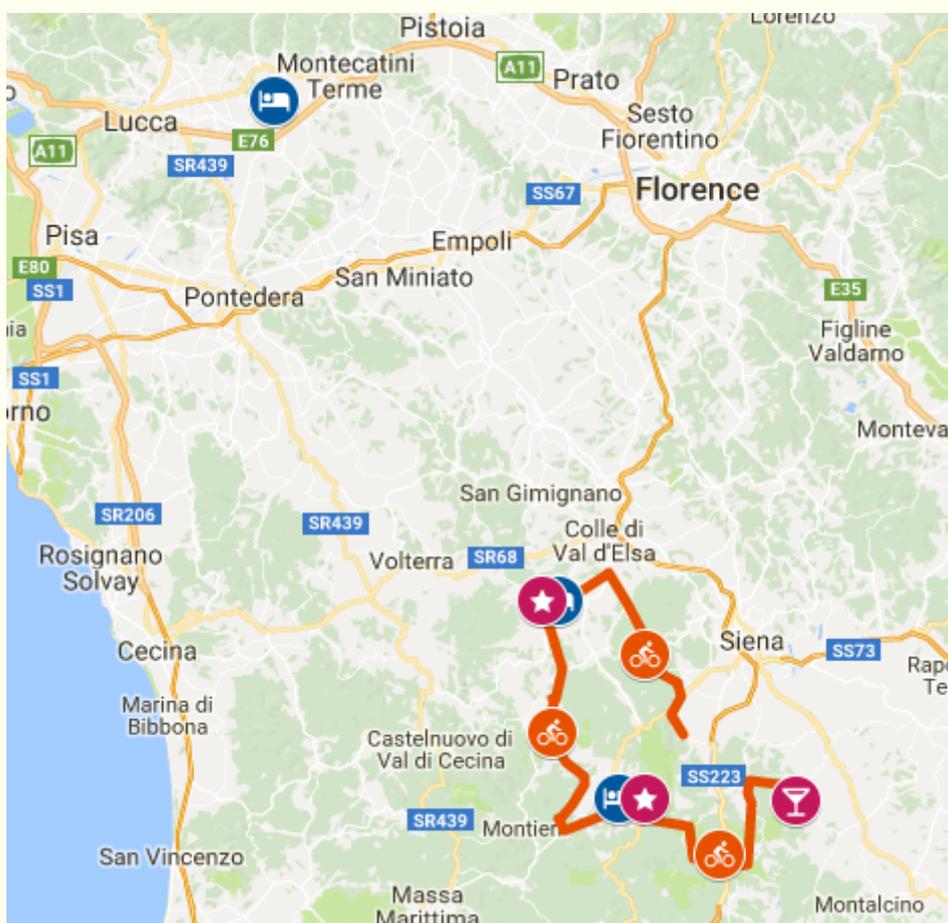
- . Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure via bank transfer or credit card.

Cancellation conditions

- . Cancellations must be made in writing and the following fees apply.
- . Should you need to cancel, you can transfer your reservation to a colleague.
- . Name changes can be made up to 21 days before arrival but confirmation will depend on hotel availability.

Cancellation penalties

- . More than 90 days before departure no cancellation fee
- . 89 to 61 days: 5% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee
- . 60 to 31 days: 15% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee
- . 30 to 21 days: 35% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee.
- . 20 to 14 days: 50% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee
- . 13 to 8 days: 75% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee
- . 7 and less days before departure: 100% of the tour price is held as cancellation fee.





Dream all night, Travel all day.

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This tour is organized in cooperation with

TERRE DI CASOLE LE
BIKE HUB

BIKE - EAT - LIVE

Foto Credits to:

S-Cape Travel
ATTA/Josiah Holwick
Terre di Casole Bike Hub
Casole d'Elsa, Hotel Terre di Casole
Chiusdino, Agriturismo San Galgano
Murlo, Agriturismo Bosco della Spina