



Independent cycling tour (BCILBV)

Paestum & the Heart of the Cilento National Park

-Best Value Tour-

Inn-to-inn cycling through one of Italy's last unspoilt landscapes: from the Greek temples of Paestum into the amazing landscapes of the Cilento, along the coast and into the heartland



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

The region of Campania has been known as a paradise on earth since ancient times. The Greeks built some of their most impressive temples here and under the Romans it became known as 'Campania Felix', or the Happy Land. When travelling through this region, one becomes overwhelmed by its wealth of cultural and natural attractions, from the great city of Naples to the well-known Costiera Amalfitana, with its towering cliffs and picturesque coves.

But Campania's real secret is located south of Salerno. Here the coastline bulges out into an expanse of mountainous landmass known as the Cilento, now one of Italy's biggest National Parks, with World Heritage listing. This is an area of amazing natural beauty, where crystal-clear water laps at uncontaminated rocky coasts, and wild untamed forests cover high mountain peaks.

This tour brings you into the real 'Heart of the Cilento', from ancient Paestum up to the impressive Alburni Mountains and down to the pristine coast near Monte Stella again. Inland the Cilento is largely undisturbed by the 21st century and you will encounter few other tourists along your way. You will cycle past world-famous cultural sites, through pristine natural areas and dreamy coastal scenery. Your trip will take you on small country roads passing through rough mountain scenery, as well as attractive countryside, with vineyards and olive groves.

At the beginning of your tour you will pass the archaeological site of Paestum, visit a genuine mozzarella farm, and climb up to some nice viewpoints on the coastal plain. You will then cycle on through the Calore Valley, located in the very heart of the Cilento National Park. Here you'll visit some of the nicest medieval villages in the area, where the traditional way of life is still evident. And you'll enjoy visiting some of the Cilento's greatest (but unknown) cultural treasures, like St. Michael's cave church in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia and the castle of Laurino.

You then turn towards the coast again, passing through the rolling foothills around lovely Ceraso, where you visit the Greek site of Velia. You then continue along the coast of Monte Stella, dotted with several typical medieval hamlets and tiny fishing villages, such as Acciaroli and Pioppi, on your way to San Marco di Castellabate. Here you have time to explore the peninsula of Punta Licosa, and you can climb up to the medieval village of Castellabate with its imposing castle, offering wonderful views over the coast.

We are sure that during this tour you will learn to know and love the Cilento area, discovering its many natural and cultural treasures. Even more so you will be pleasantly surprised by the hospitality of its people, who will make you feel like a welcome guest.



Please note: this is a moderate tour which is suitable for all those who have some experience of bicycle touring and are in a good general physical condition. On some of the inland stretches you may encounter some steeper climbs. Average cycling times: approx. 3-5 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival at Paestum

After arriving at the Paestum train station, located near the world-famous Temples of Paestum (UNESCO World Heritage), you can make a short walk (or take a taxi) to your hotel, where your bicycles will already be waiting for you. In case you have arrived early you can make a short trip past the temples and city walls of Greek Paestum, to visit the temples already today, leaving more time for the cycling trip tomorrow. You can also take your bikes to the beach for a quick dip before returning to the hotel.

N.B. It is possible to include an extra night here. Descriptions for an extra ride will be provided!!!

Accommodation: Hotel * - Paestum**

Distance: 6,5 km. – Cycling time: 0,5 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 30 m.

Day 2 – From Paestum to Felitto

If you didn't visit the archaeological site of Paestum yet, you should take your time to do so before leaving Paestum. Make sure you visit the museum as well, to admire the so-called 'Tomba del Tuffatore' (Diver's Tomb), a unique example of Greek funeral painting. After your visit you then head East, cycling through the plain in the direction of Capaccio, passing by several mozzarella farms where you can see grazing buffaloes and taste fresh buffalo mozzarella. After a first climb up to Capaccio, you continue underneath the slopes of Monte Soprano to the charming village of Trentinara, spectacularly situated on top of a high near-vertical cliff, an amazing viewpoint over the plain and coast. After a short break for a coffee or a cappuccino, you pedal on along quiet roads, snaking through the lush countryside to the medieval villages of Monteforte Cilento and Magliano Vetere. Make sure to climb up to Magliano Nuovo – a challenging ride, rewarded by awesome views over the canyon of the Calore River. You then descend into the Calore Valley, cycle past the village of Felitto, with its nice old town and pass near the medieval bridge over the river, where you can walk through the impressive gorge. A last few km. bring you to your agriturismo. In the evening you eat a hearty dinner based on local specialities.

Accommodation: Agriturismo - Felitto

Distance: 66 km. – Cycling time: 5 h. – Ascent & descent: + 600 m./- 500 m.

Day 3 – Calore Valley roundtrip

Today you have the choice of several different roundtrips exploring the Calore River valley. You can cycle to Castelcivita for a visit to the impressive 5 km-long limestone caves. Or you could visit the church of St. Michael at Sant'Angelo a Fasanella, built inside a cave. You could wander through the abandoned village of Roscigno Vecchia, known as "the Pompeii of the 20th century", and visit its small museum. You can also cycle to Sacco, situated underneath the high rock cliffs of the Cervati Mountains, and descend into the spectacular Sammaro Canyon. You might stop at the Calore River and, with a bit of luck, see rare otters swimming about in the water. Here you cycle over quiet peaceful roads in the middle of fragrant 'maquis' and tall chestnut and beech woods, through olive groves and vineyards. In the evening you turn back to your agriturismo and enjoy a glass of robust red wine and *la mamma's* traditional, honest cuisine.

Accommodation: Agriturismo - Felitto

Distance: 56 km. – Cycling time: 4 h. – Ascent & descent: +/- 600 m.

Day 4 – Felitto to Ceraso

Today you will cycle from the Calore Valley to a cosy agriturismo in the rolling hills above the Alento plain in the central part of the Cilento. From Felitto you first head south. If you wish you can make a short detour for Laurino, where, during a stroll through the historical centre, you can admire several small churches, old 'palazze'



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and the village's castle. From here a quiet country road running through thick woods takes you to the tiny hamlet of Stio. You then continue through the woods to Gioi, beautifully located on a hilltop. You then continue with great views to Moio della Civitella, where you can visit the remains of a pre-Greek fortified town. You could climb up to the little church on the very top of the hill where you admire a beautiful panorama of this part of the Cilento. This is an ideal spot for a picnic lunch. From Moio you continue to Vallo della Lucania, the largest town in the central Cilento. From here you then head for Massascusa and Ceraso. This nicely preserved medieval village certainly merits a short visit – and a drink in the town square - before you continue mostly downhill to your agriturismo where you will settle for the night. You'll enjoy a nice dinner made from local produce here.

N.B. It is possible to include an extra night here. Descriptions for an extra ride will be provided!!!

Accommodation: Agriturismo - Ceraso

Distance: 65/70 km. – Cycling time: 4-5,5 h. – Ascent & descent: + 600 m./- 750 m. / + 800 m./- 950 m.

Day 5 – Ceraso to San Marco di Castellabate

Today you cycle down to the coast, to the fishing village of San Marco di Castellabate, enjoying splendid views of the pristine Cilento coast at the feet of Monte Stella. Down at the coast, you can visit the remains of the Greek town of Velia, birthplace of the philosophers Zeno and Parmenides, and birthplace of one of Europe's most ancient medical schools. You can admire the old port, the Greek and Roman baths, different temples and the famous 'Porta Rosa', one of the earliest examples of the use of the arch in Greek architecture. After your visit you cycle through the plain of the Alento River to Marina di Casalvelino. From here you follow the coastal road through the charming seaside fishing villages of Pioppi, once home to Ansel Keys, father of the so-called 'Mediterranean Diet', and Acciaroli, linked to the writer Ernest Hemingway. You could stop for a refreshing swim and have your lunch on the beach here. Then continue to Agnone, the 'Ripe Rosse' and Ogliastra Marina, from where you can visit the peninsula of Punta Licosa with its grotesquely curved pine trees, before turning in at your hotel at San Marco di Castellabate.

N.B. It is possible to include an extra night here. Descriptions for an extra ride will be provided!!!

Accommodation: Hotel * - San Marco di Castellabate**

Distance: 57 km. – Cycling time: 4 h. – Ascent & descent: + 350 m./- 400 m.

Day 6 – San Marco di Castellabate to Paestum

Today a short ride takes you back to Paestum. If you didn't visit the peninsula of Punta Licosa the day before, you can cycle over the small paved path from San Marco to the small lighthouse at its very tip. After your visit to the peninsula you climb up to the medieval village of Castellabate, situated on a hill slightly inland. From here you enjoy a wonderful view of the coast. Take your time to visit the nicely preserved historical centre of the little town. You then continue to the hamlet of San Pietro where a quiet country road takes you to the magnificent Bay of Trentova near Agropoli. Here you can take a short walk on the paths leading through the fragrant 'maquis', high above the crystal-clear sea of Punta Tresino. Your next stop is the town of Agropoli, where the acropolis with its ancient town gates and imposing remains of the castle are well worth a visit. After a cup of coffee you cycle back to Paestum, where, after a nice hot shower at the hotel, you can enjoy an 'aperitivo' with views of the Greek temples. For dinner tonight you are free to choose one of the restaurants near the temples.

Accommodation: Hotel * - Paestum**

Distance: 50 km – Cycling time: 4,5 h. – Ascent & descent: + 500 m./- 550 m.

Day 7 – End of the tour

Your tour ends after breakfast at Paestum.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in characteristic hotels and agriturismo's (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Dinners are included, except on the last two nights when you are free to make your own dinner arrangements at one of the restaurants in San Marco di Castellabate and Paestum. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or purchased locally.

Night 1: The first night is spent in a beautifully located 3-star hotel, just outside the archaeological site of Paestum, set in a stunning Mediterranean garden. On the premises of the hotel there is also a swimming pool.

Nights 2 & 3: These nights are spent in a very nice agriturismo near the village of Felitto, in the heart of the Cilento. Breakfast and dinner are based on local specialties.

Night 4: The next night you stay in an agriturismo in the heart of the Cilento, near the village of Ceraso, offering a taste of peaceful country life. After your day's cycling you can relax at the agriturismo's private swimming pool.

Night 5: Tonight you stay at a very nice hotel in the fishing village of San Marco di Castellabate. The little port and some nice beaches are only a short walk away.

Night 6: The final night you will stay in Paestum again. Upon request we can book a hotel on the beach.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.



INCLUDED

- Accommodation: 2 nights in Paestum, 2 nights in Felitto, 1 night in Ceraso, 1 night in San Marco di Castellabate; all nights in good *** hotels or agriturismos
- Meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 dinners
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 50.000 scale (or better) ; GPS waypoints and tracks (optional)
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- Private transfers as specified



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NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature
- Bicycle rental (available on request*)

** fee for 6 days (from day 1 afternoon to day 7 morning) : € 125 (hybrid bikes); € 250 (E-bikes); € 15 (helmet rental). If preferred, you can bring your own saddle and pedals.*

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy to Moderate (2-3): Mostly moderate rides but with some longer climbs. All roads are well paved and mainly quiet, with limited traffic except for some periods during summer and holidays near the coast. Extensions are possible on some days.

Fitness: Some experience of bicycle touring and a good general physical condition will certainly make your travel experience more enjoyable. You should be able to cycle for several hours a day, also in hot dry conditions.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PAESTUM, which can easily be reached by direct train from either Naples or Salerno. Naples has an international airport. From Rome (and many other cities) Naples and Salerno, and thus Paestum, can easily be reached. A short walk (optional transfer) brings you to the hotel.

Departure: The tour ends in PAESTUM. A short transfer can bring you to the local train station where Salerno and Naples are easily reachable.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Extra cycling and/or sightseeing options will be provided! Prices for the 10-day tour are on line, as well as the prices for the shorter 6—day version, with only one night in Felitto. Details & prices for other tour variations are on request.

It is also possible to extend your tour with a few days in Salerno, or with a few days cycling along the beautiful Amalfi Coast. Details and prices on request.

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