



Independent cycling tour (BVS6)

The 'Via Cilento'

'Il Cilento Antico'

*Cycling along the coast and through the mountains of the Cilento,
one of Italy's largest and most diverse National Parks,
(including the best parts of the 'Via Silente')*



TRIP NOTES 2024

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****GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy****



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.

The 'Via Silente' is a journey of 600 km. through this magical, authentic, sometimes harsh, sometimes stunningly beautiful area. The route describes a circle, touching both the shores and mountains of the Cilento National Park. It is subdivided in 13 stages. The route is named after the typical 'sound' of the places you will discover: silence. Silence is everywhere. It completely neutralizes the day-to-day noise you are used to.

This tour roughly follows the first part, the western ring of the 'Silent Way', uniting the initial and the beautiful final part, for a total of 190 Km subdivided in 5 stages, taking in only the best parts of it and adding some extra 'must-see's.

Your tour starts from Casalvelino. The first part of the route is very picturesque. It passes through the quaint fishing villages of Pioppi and Acciaroli. From there, it continues for 40 Km following the beautiful coastal line. From Castellabate you start cycling inland and will discover some of the most authentic village of the area. You'll stay overnight in Vatolla and Stio, both little gems, authentic representations of rural southern Italy. From Stio along a magnificent route, full of pleasant surprises you then return to the plain again, after having experienced a great week in the Cilento.

Your route is stunning, magical, but not without difficulties. In fact, the Silent Way goes sometimes through a very harsh land, wild, and for that reason authentic. 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 welcomed 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 (vehicle support possible). Two of the steepest climbs can be booked as an optional extra. Average cycling times: approx. 3-5 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Casalvelino (Castelnuovo)

After your arrival at Vallo della Lucania you will be picked up and brought to your first accommodation. Your bike will be waiting for you here. In case you want to try it out already you could go for a short ride to the Greek city of Velia or ride down to the beach for a quick dip before turning in and getting settled in at the hotel. In the late afternoon you will be welcomed by your local host and receive your 'Silentina' as well as the full information package. You will have a first great meal based on local specialties at the premises of your hotel or agriturismo.

Day 2 – From Castelnuovo Cilento to Pollica 1st Stage of The Silent Way

Your journey begins in Castelnuovo Cilento, a wonderful village whose name originates from the ancient castle that dominates it. From the square just in front of the castle the view is extraordinary, it offers a unique view on the 'Silent Way' that you are about to begin. This stage is not very difficult. After 11 km from the start, you will find yourself climbing on a hilly road with 5% slope in average. Once in Acquavella you can stop and rest before continuing in the direction of Stella Cilento (386 MASL), in the foothills of the homonym mountain. From Stella Cilento, continuing on SP77 for 3 km, you will arrive in Omignano. There, in the main square of the village you can visit the "laboratory" of the artisan basket maker Giuseppe Giuliano.

The Silent Way continues in the direction of Galdo. Take a rest at the Caffè Letterario (the literary cafe). This place was founded by the former mayor of the village, murdered by the mafia. In the literate coffee "thoughts shape themselves", do not miss it. You then pass through the charming hamlets of Celso and Pollica, with great views over the sea. This first stage finishes in beautiful Canicchio, on the slopes of the Monte Stella. Its view on the Mediterranean Sea, just on above Acciaroli is priceless.

Distance: 37 km.

Day 3 – From Pollica to Vatolla 2nd Stage of The Silent Way

Today you will reach the sea very soon. You will be able to reach it at dawn, when fishermen will be coming back from the catch of the night. The road is downhill, full of turns for 8 km, and passes through typical Olive plants. Once you are on RS267 you will have in the village of Pioppi behind you. If you want, it only takes 2 minutes to reach it so that you can stop and drink a coffee on the square before beginning your journey again towards Acciaroli, a quaint little fishing village, loved by Hemingway. More recently, it has becoming a beloved summer resort. From here, without leaving the coastline for a second, you will reach Agnone and Ogliastro Marina. You are now very close to Punta Licosa and its little island that carries the same name. Between Ogliastro Marina and the following village Pozzillo, in a piece of 8 km, you will cycle in the middle of a pine tree forest, a *Pinus halepensis* reserve, among the oldest and better preserved of the entire area of the Cilento National Park.

Immediately after the village of San Marco, you leave the coast once again to begin the exploration of Cilento's heart. Here, you will face the first significant slope of The Silent Way. This slope, will allow you to reach the village of Castellabate. Visiting Castellabate is truly worth it, especially its ancient castle whose building begun on October 10th, 1123. After Castellabate, you will climb to Perdifumo, then Mercato Cilento and finally Vatolla. Make sure that you visit Palazzo De Vargas here. The place hosts the museum dedicated to Gianbattista Vico (an Italian political philosopher, rhetorician, historian, and jurist). Still today it is possible to sit in the shadow of the Vico's olive tree, in the square of the Convento della Pietà. It is exactly in this place, in the absolute surrounding peace, that Vico set in place his theory of the Science of History.

Distance: 47,5 km.

Day 4 – From Vatolla along Cicerale to Stio 3rd & 4th Stage of The Silent Way

From Vatolla, the third stage proceeds to Mercato Cilento; from here, by a long dirt road that starts from the Convento del Carmine, you get to Rocca Cilento, dominated by the Angevin-Aragon fortress. Then you go down to Torchiara, beautiful center located on a scenic ridge. Continue on SS18 until, before reaching Ogliastro Cilento, a small road on the right will lead you to the village of Finocchito, then in Monte Cicerale, and finally Cicerale. Mercato Cilento in the Middle Ages was the point of convergence of the main roads have the territory of Monte Stella and became a place of trade following the construction of a church in the fifteenth century, probably built in 1472 by the Carmelites along with their convent, leaning against the side church.

The dirt road uphill to the side of the convent of Mount Carmel is the first part of an interesting path that follows the ridge, with views of both inward land and toward the sea. The road skirts the thick woods of the Forest of San



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Francesco and finally reaches in view of the spectacular castle of Rocca Cilento. The first information on this site can be found in a manuscript of the year 1110. There, the decision of William Sanseverino to move the seat of the Barony of Cilento from the fortress on the top of Mount Stella to Rocca Cilento, is described. The castle is one of the most characteristic monuments in the landscape of Cilento, set atop a hill at 635 m above sea level. Leaving Rocca Cilento on the road you will pass by the old Convent of San Francesco, founded in 1417 by St. Bernard of Siena with the help of some noble families of the place. Past Torchiara, the Silent Way continue for 3.5 km on SS18, until a panoramic road on the right takes you to the tiny village of Finocchito. Stop and rest on the square outside the church, where silence reigns. After Finocchito, continue in the direction of Cicerale, named after the Latin expression *Terra quae cicera alit*, meaning "land that feeds the chickpeas." Now you cycle above one of the largest reservoir of the entire territory of Cilento and Vallo di Diano: the Alento Lake. Around the dam, the 'Oasis' now is a ideal place for birdwatchers. After Cicerale, you will continue towards the village of Trentinara (606m.), clinged to a rocky mountain that looks down on the valley of the Sele river. From the panoramic square at the top of the village, you can clearly see the Costiera Amalfitana (Amalfi coast) and Punta Licosa. From Trentinara to the village of Monteforte and then to Magliano, the road goes gently uphill. Your next stop will be the village of Stio, where you will be staying in a beautiful, welcoming B&B.

Distance: 57,5 km.

Day 5 – From Stio along Felitto to Sicignano degli Alburni 4th & 5th Stage of The Silent Way

Take your time to visit Stio. Here you can find the Museo Trotta, luthiers' craftsman, the photography museum. Leaving Stio, you will go down on a dirt road that will lead you on the embankment of the Calore's river. From here, you will reach the medieval bridge of Magliano. Felitto is very close now. Felitto is famous for the Calore 'Canyon', a hiker's paradise, and its special "fusilli felittesi", a typical pasta. From now on you will continue along the Calore river. After a few km from the *Gole di Felitto* you go past *Castel San Lorenzo* and *Roccadaspide* (where you will find the Filomarino Castle). Ahead of you, you will see the massive of the *Alburni* mountains. At its slopes there is *Castelcivita* with its very famous caves. The caves are on the right side of the Calore river, half way between *Castelcivita* and *Controne*. The Silent Way does not touch *Castelcivita*, however if you have legs and lungs just go, it is worth the ride. From *Controne*, well known for its special beans, following the road signs for the cemetery, a secondary road goes up on the *Alburni* mountains until *Postiglione* presenting you its well-maintained medieval castle. The road is very steep for 1 km, then it becomes more shallow.

On your right, the imposing presence of the Alburni Mountains will guide you. After Postiglione, a secondary road goes just past the cemetery and leads after a few kilometers back to the main road. At the intersection of Scorzo continue in the direction of Sicignano degli Alburni. From here and all the way up to Petina the view on the right is dominated by the mighty and magnificent buttresses of Alburni. Entering Sicignano, you will notice its ancient castle recently restored and spectacularly situated on a relief to guard the valley below. You will stay again in a great agriturismo.

Distance: 65 km.

Day 6 – End of the tour

The tour ends after breakfast today. A private transfer can take you back to the train station, Naples or Salerno. A taxi transfer to other destinations can be arranged on request.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

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

Dinners are included on some days. On other nights you are free to make your own dinner arrangements. On request all dinners can be included - at fine restaurants.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you stay.

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: 5 nights in good *** hotels, B&B's or agriturismo's – like below or similar:
 - 2 nights Hotel*** or agriturismo Castelnuovo Cilento/Casalvelino
 - 1 night Villa Cannicchio - BB - Cannicchio (Pollica)
 - 1 night B&B La Carosella - BB - Vatolla
 - 1 night B&B Il Portigo - BB – Stio
- 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

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: www.genius-loci.it/tour/rental-bikes)



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, even in hot weather.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in CASALVELINO, which can easily be reached by train from either Naples or Salerno. Naples has an international airport. From Rome (and many other cities) Naples and Salerno, and from here Vallo della Lucania, the nearby train station, can easily be reached.

Departure: The tour ends in CASALVELINO on day 6. A short transfer can bring you to the train station where Salerno and Naples are easily reachable.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

This tour is a short, modified version of the original 'Via Silente'. The full 14-day version can be booked as well. For the really fit cyclist – preferably with a road bike – it is possible to add two extra loops to the highest Cilento mountains: Mt. Cervati and Mt. Gelbison, staying one extra night in Sanza and Ceraso respectively.

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Descriptions for extra rides and sightseeing options will be provided. Details & prices on request.

It is also possible to extend your tour with a few days in Paestum or Salerno, cycling along the beautiful Amalfi Coast or in Naples. Extra cycling and/or sightseeing options can be provided!

ROAD BIKE CHALLENGE

For fit cyclists – preferably with road bikes – it is possible to do this tour in 2-3 days. Please contact us for detailed proposals. Luggage transport will be provided, and for small groups also vehicle support can be organised. Details & prices on request. . It is also possible to do the full 'Via Silente', including the two extra loops to Mt. Cervati and Mt. Gelbison, in less than 14 days. You can choose your own challenge, according to your fitness & time, and complete the full loop in 5, 6, 8 or 10 days.

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