

# A GUIDEBOOK TO THE LANGHE BY BICYCLE



**WRITTEN BY A BIKE GUIDE**



Paolo Casalis

# A guidebook to the Langhe by bicycle

written (and scrawled) by a bike guide



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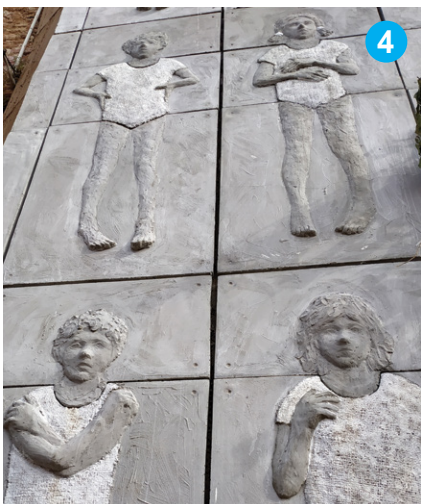
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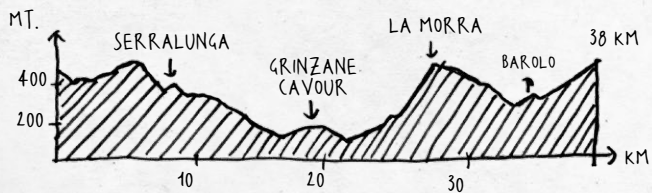
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# DAY 1

## THE CASTLES OF BAROLO





## Day 1 // Distance: 40 km // Elevation gain: 740 m

### Description:

The most classic ride of the lower Langa region, this loop allows you to visit five of the eleven towns in the Barolo area (note the area drawn on the map) without covering too many kilometers; Monforte, Serralunga, Grinzane Cavour, La Morra, and Barolo. After departing from Monforte, there is a false flat uphill that takes you to the junction before the town of Roddino, where you will turn left and start the descent to Serralunga, although there are a few short climbs before arriving to the center of town. Once you have arrived at the base of the valley, stay to the right at the roundabout, following the fairly flat road towards Gallo d'Alba. From here you can turn right up a short hill to the Castle of Grinzane Cavour (you can arrive all the way up to the courtyard by bicycle). Return into town and follow the directions for La Morra. After a potential stop for lunch there, you will descend into Barolo and finally climb back up to Monforte, finishing the loop.

#### DAY 1

ROUTE: MONFORTE - SERRALUNGA  
GALLO D'ALBA - GRINZANE CAVOUR  
LA MORRA - BAROLO - MONFORTE

#### POINTS OF INTEREST ALONG THE ROUTE:

- SERRALUNGA CASTLE (PAG 27)
- FONTANAFREDDA (PAGG 23, 26, 49)
- GRINZANE CASTLE (PAGG 17, 24, 75)
- LA MORRA (PAG 52)
- BAROLO (PAG 26-32-34)
- WIMU (PAG 26)

#### VISITS TO WINE CELLARS:

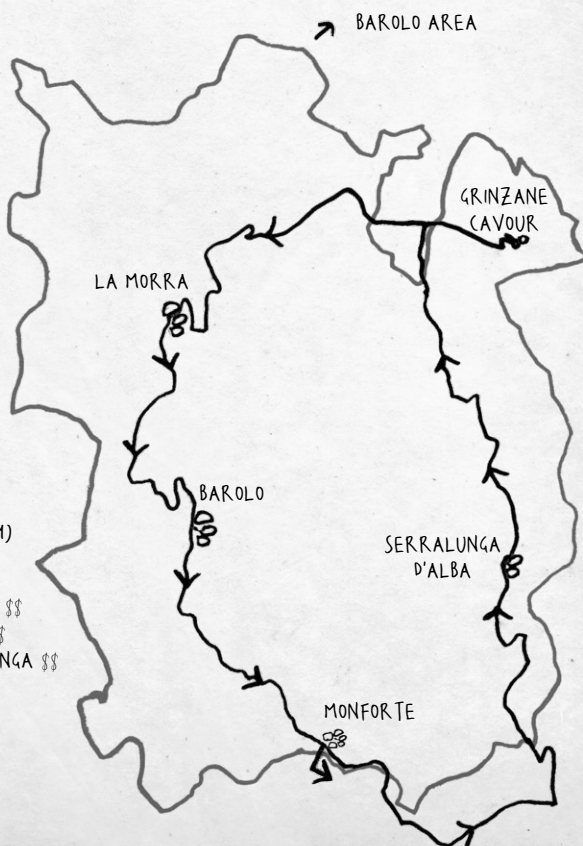
- FONTANAFREDDA (PAG 23)
- MASSOLINO, SERRALUNGA (PAG 23)
- RATTI, LA MORRA (PAG 23)
- CASTELLO DI VERDUNO (PAG 49)
- CHIARA BOSCHIS, BAROLO (PAGG 23, 161)

#### RESTAURANTS

- MORE E MACINE, LA MORRA (PAG 47) \$\$
- LOCANDA FONTANAZZA, LA MORRA \$\$
- VINOteca CENTRO STORICO, SERRALUNGA \$\$
- LA ROSA DEI VINI, SERRALUNGA \$\$
- CASA CIABOTTO, VERDUNO \$\$
- CASE DELLA SARACCA, MONFORTE \$\$

#### HOTEL:

- CORTE GONDINA, LA MORRA \$\$
- VILLA BECCARIS, MONFORTE \$\$\$



**Level of Difficulty:** \*\* / \*\*\*\*\*

This is a fairly easy and accessible loop for all, especially when you add in a few rest stops. The two main climbs, up to La Morra from the side of Santa Maria and up to Monforte, both have an average grade of slightly over 5%, although there are some sections which are more difficult, closer to 10 %. Starting at 9am, you have 8 hours (including breaks) to pedal 40km, which averages out to about 5 kilometers an hour. This means that you don't need an ebike, believe me, even if you are seventy years old or weigh 100kg. You may sweat a bit, and you might walk 200meters, but don't you want the satisfaction?

**Traffic:** \*\* / \*\*\*\*\*

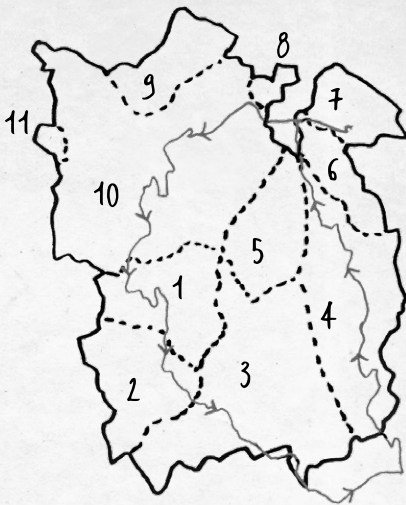
These are normally not very busy roads, except you may encounter some traffic entering Gallo and leaving Barolo.

**Danger:** \*\* / \*\*\*\*\*

Make sure to pay attention to the S turns in the downhill to Serralunga and Barolo. Fairly good asphalt road surfaces.

**Beauty:** \*\*\*\*\* / \*\*\*\*\*

It is not the most original loop of the Langhe, on the contrary, it is one of the most well-traveled by tourists and local cyclists. Nonetheless it maintains a beauty and attractiveness that is hard to beat. Panoramic viewpoints: All or almost all of the 38km are spectacular, but especially remarkable are the plateau after Monforte d'Alba (former golf course), the downhill towards Serralunga (around Hotel Boscareto), the viewpoint in La Morra, the downhill to Barolo.



**THE ELEVEN VILLAGES OF BAROLO**

- 1) BAROLO 2) NOVELLO 3) MONFORTE D'ALBA
- 4) SERRALUNGA D'ALBA 5) CASTIGLIONE FALLETTO
- 6) DIANO D'ALBA 7) GRINZANE CAVOUR 8) RODDI
- 9) VERDUNO 10) LA MORRA 11) CHERASCO

GRINZANE CAVOUR  
CASTLE



CASTIGLIONE FALLETTO  
CASTLE



## The castles of Barolo

*«Hey, can you hear me?»*

*«Hello, Gianni, can you hear me?»*

*«I can hear you.. Hello, Luke, can you hear me?»*

*«No, I can hear you. Listen, I can't find the last two, are they with you?»*

*«I can't hear you, Shit!»*

The cell phone lands violently on the windshield, launched like a discus thrower and then abruptly slowed a few centimeters from the final impact. Gianni is irate and that controlled throw today represents his only possible moment of releasing his anger, but he needs the cell to remain intact at least for a little while.

A few weeks and he will finally have the time to order another as well as be at home to receive the package.

As a first day it could have gone better, much better..

After not even 10 kilometers from the departure, Rick and Helena, a couple from Ohio, thought it was a good idea to take a secondary road and got lost.

Where the hell did they go, Gianni asks himself. After the old golf course, now covered in weeds, there aren't any forks in the road, there aren't any secondary roads, it goes straight to the turn for Serralunga d'Alba. Luke was supposed to regroup them at the top of the hill, he couldn't control what happened in the middle of the group from the van... We can't start like this!

Luke and Gianni are two cycling tour guides, a strange linguistic and legislative hybrid between guide tout court and sport companion, born out of the growing phenomenon of bike tourism. Luke has been guiding for a number of years, he moved from California to Italy for this job back in 2012.

Gianni has a bit less experience guiding, but he is from the area and this week he will be the one that the guests enthusiastically call a local. Often the tour guides work in pairs, as it is almost always necessary when there are more than 2 guests.

One must be self-sufficient for days on end, bring luggage, bicycles, technical gear, water, food, and many other things. Driving a huge van at the speed of a cruise ship 20km/hour is not exactly an amazing experience, and usually the guides will alternate. One day one pedals and the other drives the van and then they switch.

For their friends, Luke and Gianni are the lucky winners of the slot machine of life. They have a job that seems made for those on Instagram.. “work” is a big word: paid to pass the days cycling through fantastic scenery, paid to stop in the best restaurants and feast on caviar and champagne, travel the world, party and have fun.

Unfortunately, it’s not exactly like that..

The first year, they tried, like all their colleagues had in the past, to explain to friends and family that theirs was a job like any other, maybe even harder and more exhausting than others.

Wake up at seven in the morning and then sixteen hours (yes, because when it goes well you finish the day at eleven in the evening) always on and with the guests, working to anticipate their every request, explaining history and telling stories, making sure to foresee every need, risk, danger.

We also work a month in a row with no breaks, no Saturdays and Sundays, holidays, birthdays and holidays.

Since no one really understood the work behind it, they accepted the idea, in fact they even began to brag about it publicly.

It’s true, they are lucky.

It’s true, they live “a life on vacation”.

Just three kilometers from the start, Rick and Helena still haven’t realized it, but they are lost. They are riding along a dirt road that crosses the heart of the Barolo area, on their right the cru Boscareto, on the left the cru Ginestra.

It is a service road, the one frequented only by tractors and the Panda 4X4 of the winemakers, but they did not see the signs, nor did they notice the abrupt transition from asphalt to dirt roads.

Coming down from the Monforte hill they were busy trying out the quick release pedals, the disc brakes, the new electronic gearbox. Too many new things all at once for a couple of 50-year-olds from Ohio who cycled for the last time last August, joining Rick's boss in that Pan-Mass Challenge. That day the route was completely flat, just like how there hadn't been much climbing in their sporadic rides around Cleveland, Ohio: thirty, forty kilometers from the city center to Cuyahoga National Park, for a total of about 150 meters of climbing overall.

The descent of Monforte: a curve to the right in counter-slope, two hairpin bends in a row and then the one on the cobblestones in the middle of the houses.

After fifty meters of jolting around, Rick's bike swayed dangerously in front of Luke who was standing there waving to indicate the fatal danger represented by the grate of a drain, to his right the colored houses of the village of the Langhe, ever closer. Rick, forty-five years old and weighing eighty-seven kilos, computer engineer from Cleveland with a family, a wife and a perfect American dream house, saw the blue wall and windows in sugar blue of the I Catari tavern closed for weekly rest, the pink wrought iron gate that met him.

Somehow, by applying all of his eighty-seven kilos to the disc brakes of his racing bike, the 25mm tire of the front wheel gripped the pebbles, while the rear wheel skidded sideways and rose dangerously off the ground.

A moment before potentially flipping over the handlebars in the first hundred meters of his holiday in Piedmont, Rick miraculously managed to stop, got off the bike and walked what remained of that dangerous descent, a legacy of a crazy medieval era in which the Italian populations sought to create the steepest and most inaccessible hills on which to build their villages. In the case of Monforte, that population had made an even more extreme choice: they were of Cathar religion, heretics.

*«Let's go, guys! No more turns for the next 10K!»*