

Words and photos
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RIDING THE BOOT

There's more to
Italy than Venice



LOOK AT A MAP and you'll see that Italy is shaped like a boot. 'The Boot' stretches about 1000km (air distance) in total. From an Australians' point of view that might not be a particularly impressive number, but keep in mind that this boot-shaped Appenine peninsula stretches from the heart of the Alps all the way down to the center of the Mediterranean - almost halfway to Africa! And that is what makes Italy such an incredible (riding) destination. If you've spent a week or two in Italy and think you've seen it all... well, you're wrong.

There's many ways to ride Italy, but how about starting up high in the Alps, surrounded with more than 3000m high peaks, and then riding south towards the sea, just like rivers flow?

Adriatic Moto Tours has vast experience riding many destinations around the world, and this is just one of the amazing tours you can ride with us.

Roller Coaster in a natural paradise

If you left your hotel room window open to get some fresh air after you've

washed down the tasty dinner with a couple of bottles of white and red, and some "grappas" or "limoncellos" or whatever the 'greetings from the house' was, your room might be surprisingly cold in the morning. Even in July or August, the temperatures in Arraba or Corvara, where we usually stay, can drop down to around zero during the night. That answers why the guide suggested putting ski underwear underneath your riding gear for the next day. Once we had to postpone the morning ride to wait for a fresh three centimetres of snow to melt! In August! The road had dried, but the mountains around passes Giau, Falzarego, Pordoi, and Gardena were still covered with snow - what a fantastic day was that! Ah, that sharp, fresh air in the Dolomites, especially in the morning - that's something I'd put in bottles and inhale on a hot, summer day in Ljubljana...

You'll hear most people speak German in the area that they prefer to describe as Sued-Tirol instead of the North of Italy. And, we have to admit there are good sides of German or Austrian influence in the area: the roads are good, so are the infrastructure and

the hotels, and you won't see a single piece of rubbish on the side of the road. The Dolomites are tidy.

And now a few words about the riding. Here are two things that make for a thrilling riding experience, not comparable to anything else: great roads that don't allow you to rest much, and a fantastic environment that is simply stunning. Make sure you stop here and there to breathe in all the beauty. Also, make sure you keep rain gear in your top case at all times and plan your daily rides so you're back in the hotel around 2 or 3pm. Afternoon showers are on the daily menu - even when a forecast doesn't say so.

South of the Dolomites there are beautiful valleys and lakes (Como, Maggiore, Garda ...), and then south of these there's the most boring (riding wise) part of the Boot - the Po Valley or Padan Plain. Flat and full of industrial cities (well, they have to make Ducatis and Ferraris somewhere!), with highways, filled with trucks that drive from Genoa to Trieste and from Venice to Milan and, well, let's skip that, and ride the one and only, Tuscany!





it's an island. And, from a riders' point of view, it's a fu..., sorry, freaking great island. One of our guests from Australia described the SS 125 road, the old national highway that's connecting the cities on the eastern side of Sardinia, as 'the road of 1000 orgasms'. The chamfered edges of my boots were proof that the shape, angle, and surface of that road is a tyre and boot killer. It's like a racetrack on an island and I admit I always have to hold myself back so I

don't forget I'm still on a public road. I haven't seen it all, but if you ask me for the world's best riding location, my answer would be - Sardinia. Go there in April-May or September-October to avoid the summer heat and convoys of motorhomes, and make sure to have enough rubber on your tyres. There is other fun stuff to do in Sardinia when you get tired of it, too; sunbathing on the beach in Cala Gonone, with your feet being refreshed by waves from

the crystal-clear Tyrrhenian Sea, for example. Exploring mystical 'nuraghes', build by the Nuragic civilization between 1900 and 730 B.C. We're talking about pretty old stones!

Godfather sure wasn't hungry...

Southeast, 'just' across the Tyrrhenian Sea, there's another island, geographically and politically also



La vita e Bella

The name says it all as 'Tuscany' became a synonym for the romantic hilly landscape. For the first-class cuisine. For, of course, wines. Prosciutto. Caffè. For enjoying life with all senses. And that is what you should do there: take some extra time not just for riding, but for exploring romantic cities that are filled with history and art. That's why we take rest days in two cities next to each other: in Florence (you must have heard of it?) and Siena (you will hear of it!). On both 'rest days', we offer riding options, but opposite to the Dolomites, where we strongly suggest taking a rest-day ride, here I'd say: leave your bike parked and take the day as easy as it gets. First, a light

breakfast. Then take a walk in the old town, visit a museum or a gallery. Enjoy the second coffee downtown, with something sweet, a cake or a croissant, on the side. Buy yourself something nice - a silk shirt or a leather wallet/purse, something that will let you remember this day for a long time. Ask the seller for a lunch recommendation - ask where they go to have lunch (not where most tourists go). And as your bike is safely parked in a hotels' garage, don't order a glass - order a bottle. Hey, you're on holiday!

No, you prefer riding? Good idea, too: join many locals on their joy ride from one to another romantic little town around the Chianti region - but don't you even try to race with them!

Riders' Paradise

After visiting the leaning tower of Pisa on the western coast (you can skip that in my opinion) it's time for an overnight ferry to Sardinia. It's still Italy (unlike its northern neighbor Corsica, which is French), but ... it is different. Of course,

ride roads less travelled

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Tuscany Sardinia Corsica

HIGHLIGHTS
Riding on Sardinia, Venice, Cinque Terre, Florence, Siena, Leaning Tower in Pisa, riding on mountainous Corsica, Chianti region.

TOUR DATES
APR 24 - MAY 9, 2022
SEP 22 - OCT 7, 2022

COUNTRIES
Italy, France

DURATION
16 days / 14 riding days

ROUTE LENGTH
2,700 km (1,700 miles)

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Adriatic Moto Tours' options for riding "The Boot"

The tour that captures most of the mentioned places in the article, is AMT's classic 16-day Tuscany Sardinia Corsica guided motorcycle tour. The name says it all: starting from Venice you'll ride to Tuscany and the two islands, Sardinia and Corsica, visiting the famous Cinque Terre on the way back. If you want to skip Tuscany and do just a quick tour of the two islands, take a 9-day Sardinia & Corsica Riders' Heaven tour. For all those interested in riding the passes, there's a couple of options: Alps Adriatic Adventure (15 days), Top of the Alps (9 days), Western Alps Adventure (9 days), or Best of Eastern Alps (9 days). For extending the ride further south there are the South of Rome & Sicily Tour (15 days) or the Sicily Tour (9 days).

For individuals (or with pillion) who want to do it all, there's an option of doing a self-guided tour where you tell us which places you want to visit and for how many days you're going to live on the bike. So! You want to see it all and you're asking how many days that would take? Honestly? A month will be just fine!

For dates, day-by-day info, photo and video galleries, and pricing visit adriaticmototours.com

Italian, but (again) very, very different from what we've ridden till now. 'Sicilia' is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, and because of its location it was influenced from all sides: Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs... There are seven UNESCO world heritage sites on the island: the Valley of the Temples, the Roman villa, Mt. Etna - to mention just a few. The point is: there's a lot to see and do in Sicily, while the riding itself can sometimes feel like an adventure ride. Why? Some roads are, well, not really perfect. Some are under construction (for years), some are closed (but then you can still sneak through on a motorcycle), and also the surroundings are not as tidy as, for example, the Dolomites. There

are riding highlights of course, like the road where the Targa Florio Road Race was held from 1906 (!) or the road to Sapienza Refuge ski area on the southern slopes of glorious Mt. Etna, and more.

For me, the highlight of the Sicily Tour is the food (and everything that happens around it). We always visit Sicily in spring or autumn, off the main tourist season, and that's why a restaurant, where we've had lunch last time, might be closed. And when you're a tour of 10-15 riders, this can be a little issue. No one likes to ride with an empty stomach, no one wants to spend time searching for a good restaurant, browsing Tripadvisor, making u-turns in narrow, steep streets on a hot, sunny day.

But let me tell you something: when in Sicily, don't spend too much time searching for a 'good' restaurant with an English-speaking waiter. Just stop, tell or show (a gesture with a virtual spoon in front of your mouth is understandable even with your helmet on), then sit down and let them serve you. Take your helmet off, though. If nothing else is boiling in the kitchen, always say yes to 'Pasta Alla Norma', which is pasta with an eggplant-tomato-basil sauce, and when you're lucky and there's some swordfish in the fridge, go for "Rigatoni con Pesce Spada e melanzane". Wait - forget all about it! Just let them feed you and tell me later how it was. I guess there's a chance of getting something ordinary on your plate, but after having

done the Sicily Tour numerous times, the cuisine didn't disappoint one single time.

Well, yes, most of Italy is like that, but here you can feel and smell that you're close to the origin of what you're putting in your mouth - that's why it all smells so great. And there's the atmosphere; sometimes you're enjoying lunch with local workers, then in the

same evening they come to play violin next to your table in, ah, one of the most romantic towns you can imagine - Taormina - on the east Sicilian coast, just above the Isola Bella beach - please, Google it, as there are not enough pages in the magazine to tell you just how good this place is. Otherwise, get ready to join our tour and live an experience of a lifetime! 🍷

