



Paestum and Cilento Bike Challenge

Riding through the amazing scenery of the Cilento National Park, one of the biggest and most diverse in Italy



TRIP NOTES 2021

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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 the 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 offering endless possibilities to the road cyclist, amateur and experienced semi-professional alike. A few flat areas, mainly concentrated along the coast, immediately make way for rolling hill country punctuated by several low mountains. This makes for an interesting ride, where challenging climbs and exhilarating descents follow at breathtaking pace.

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. 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 cultural treasures, like Greek Paestum and Velia, and the ruins of Roscigno Vecchia. All connected by great well-paved and quiet roads, ideal for road cycling.

The first day you will move inland from the plain of Paestum, cycling through the Cilento's foothills offering wide views of its marvellous coastline. You'll pass through Trentinara, spectacularly located on top of a sheer rock cliff, and stop at Felitto near the spectacular canyon of the Calore River, where you can admire several medieval bridges. The next couple of days you will explore the mountainous inland of the region, passing through the wild nature of the Cervati Massif on your way to the village of Morigerati situated high above the Gulf of Policastro in the far south of the Cilento Region. From here you then make your way to the fishing village of Pioppi beneath Monte Stella, enjoying wonderful views of the limestone cliffs of Monte Bulgeria and the marvellous coastline between Marina di Camerota and Pisciotta. On your final day you tackle Monte Stella, passing through several of the villages dotting its slopes, before turning back along the coastal road to Agropoli and Paestum.



Please note: this is a moderate to hard tour for which experience of road cycling and a good general physical condition are necessary to make your travel experience enjoyable. Average cycling times: approx. 5-7 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Paestum

After arrival at Paestum you head for the hotel and get settled in. In case you didn't bring your own bike, you will find your rental bike at the hotel. A short trip from your hotel can take you to the temples and city walls of Greek Paestum. Alternatively you can go for a short ride or head down to the beach for a quick dip. In the evening you can have an 'aperitivo' in one of the bars with a view of the temples, before eating dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation: Hotel in Paestum - HB

Day 2 – Paestum to Bellosguardo

Before setting off for your first day's cycling trip you can take your time to visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Paestum and its famous Greek temples. After your visit you can hop on your bikes and start your cycling adventure. From the archaeological site of Paestum you head in the direction of the foothills of the Cilento area, passing first through Ogliastro Cilento and then towards Cicerale. From Cicerale you cycle through lush countryside to the village of Trentinara, spectacularly located on top of a sheer rock face where you enjoy a magnificent view over the Paestum plain. You then continue on to the villages of Monteforte Cilento and Magliano Vetere. Along your way you'll have plenty of time for a refreshing stop in one of the villages to fill up your water bottles, or why not have a cup of coffee or a cappuccino? You can stop for lunch along the road, either at Magliano Vetere or shortly after. After lunch you enter the valley of the Calore River, passing through Felitto and Castel San Lorenzo. Along this stretch of your trip you can admire several medieval bridges crossing the river, all the while cycling through beautiful countryside on quiet, well-paved roads. The last part of your day's trip takes you to your lovely family-run agriturismo near the panoramic village of Bellosguardo. Here you have the opportunity to relax on your terrace while sipping a glass of wine, taking in the wonderful view over the agriturismo's vineyards before having a well-deserved dinner.

Accommodation: Agriturismo in Bellosguardo - HB

Distance : 83 km - Altitude gain : 1670m - Cycling time (no breaks included): 5 hours

Day 3 – From Bellosguardo to Morigerati

Today's trip takes you from the Alburni Mountains to the little village of Morigerati high above the Gulf of Policastro in the south of the Cilento area. You leave Bellosguardo in the morning and after a few km reach the village of Roscigno, where the old centre – *Roscigno Vecchia*, the 'Pompeii of the 19th century' – was abandoned at the beginning of the 20th century and has since been preserved unchanged. After visiting the abandoned village and its tiny crafts museum you pass on the bridge high above the Sammaro Gorge and arrive at Sacco, located directly beneath several high limestone cliffs. From Sacco you start climbing up into the Monte Cervati mountain range, the very heart of the Cilento. You follow quiet roads through cultivated fields and wild forests, often without meeting any traffic for long stretches. From Piaggine you climb up to the Croce di Pruno plateau situated at 1200 m. You then launch yourself into the exhilarating descent that takes you in the direction of the isolated village of Rofrano. However, just before arriving here, you will turn east and, after a short climb, head for the little town of Sanza, situated on a hilltop in the Bussento River Valley. From Sanza a winding road flanking the river takes you first to the hamlet of Caselle in Pittari and then to delightful Casaletto Spartano. Up here in the mountains you will cycle through deep gorges and wild nature, enjoying unexpected views of the Gulf of Policastro! From Casaletto you then continue to Torraca before arriving at your evening's base in the medieval village of Morigerati. Alternatively you could head straight from Caselle in Pittari to Morigerati, shortening your route by several km. Tonight you'll have a great dinner based on local specialties.

Accommodation: Country inn at Morigerati - HB

Distance : 78/109 km – Altitude gain : 1610 / 1950 m - Cycling time (no breaks included) : 5/6 hours



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Day 4 – From Morigerati to Pioppi

Today's stage takes you along a large part of the southern coast of the Cilento to the little fishing village of Pioppi, situated below Monte Stella. You will cycle through the hilly country close to the coast, passing by olive groves and chestnut forests. You start by descending from Morigerati to Policastro Bussentino, and then climb steeply up to San Giovanni a Piro. Once you arrive in the village, lying directly underneath the steep cliffs of Monte Bulgheria, the hardest part of the day is already behind you. Indeed, from here on you will enjoy an exhilarating descent towards the coast at Marina di Camerota – an ideal spot for a cup of coffee or a cappuccino in the delightful little village square – and then continue along the beautiful coastal road to laidback Palinuro and the medieval hilltop village of Pisciotta, dominated by enormous trees in the olive groves. Alternatively you could climb up from Marina to Camerota and then head to Licusati where you then have the opportunity to enjoy an exhilarating descent full of hairpin curves into the Mingardo River valley, before cycling to Palinuro. This option will only add a few km to your day's trip, but up to 400 m of altitude gain! After passing through Pisciotta you will head inland again, climbing up to the hamlets of Rodio and Terradura, beautifully located in lush mountain scenery, and then descend to the coast again. After passing through Ascea you will arrive at Castellammare di Stabia. Here you have the opportunity to visit the archaeological site of Velia, home to the Greek philosophers Zeno and Parmenides, and cradle of one of Europe's most ancient schools of medicine. Amongst its remains one finds the celebrated 'Porta Rosa' (Pink Gate), one of the first examples of the use of the vault in Greek architecture. Alternatively you could continue from Pisciotta directly to Ascea, leaving you more time to visit Velia and relax in the afternoon. In any case, after your visit to the site you continue through the Alento River plain on flat roads to your hotel at Casalvelino Marina or Pioppi for a hot shower and some relaxation. You can take a relaxed stroll along the shore in the evening before having a nice dinner.

Accommodation: Hotel in Casalvelino Marina / Pioppi - HB

Distance : 88/98 km – Altitude gain : 1325/1620 m - Cycling time (no breaks included) : 5/6 hours

Day 5 – From Pioppi to Paestum by way of Monte Stella

Today you will explore the small back roads connecting the many hamlets on the slopes of Monte Stella. From your hotel in Pioppi you head inland and, shortly after, start climbing up to Acquavella. From there on you continuously climb and descend through the wooded hill country, first to Stella Cilento and then to Omignano. Here you can stop for a short break to fill up your water bottles and you can take your time to drink a cup of coffee at a local bar. You then have the opportunity of climbing up to the very top of Monte Stella, looking out over most of the Cilento region, which will add another 13 km and 650 metres of altitude gain to your day's trip! You can continue straight to the villages of Sessa Cilento and Mercato Cilento, where you start descending towards the town of Agropoli. A short detour now takes you uphill again in the direction of Perdifumo, and then on to the little town of Castellabate, beautifully located on a hill high above the coast. Here you can visit the delightful medieval centre of the town, dominated by its castle, and have lunch admiring the marvellous view of the coast in front of you. From Castellabate you can then enjoy a swift descent towards San Pietro, after which you gently climb up again for a few km before whizzing down to the port of Agropoli. Alternatively you could skip the climb uphill to Perdifumo and Castellabate and head directly to Agropoli. The town's historical centre, located on steep limestone crags above the port, is well worth a visit. From Agropoli a few flat km take you to Paestum again. You could also stop at a buffalo farm along the way tasting genuine buffalo mozzarella. After arriving at your hotel you spend the afternoon relaxing in the hotel's garden, or head for the beach. Those who feel like it can visit the museum of the archaeological site, exploring its collections of prehistoric utensils, Greek vases and Roman sculptures. Not to be missed is the so-called 'Tomba del Tuffatore' (Diver's Tomb), a rare example of Greek funeral painting. You are free to make your own dinner arrangements tonight, taking your pick from the good choice of restaurants for your last great dinner, overlooking the Greek temples.

Accommodation: Hotel in Paestum – BB

Distance : 61 / 88 km – Altitude gain : 950 / 1260 m - Cycling time (no breaks included) : 4 / 5 hours



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Day 6 – End of the tour

The tour ends in Paestum after breakfast today. A short private transfer takes you to the local train station where you can easily travel on to Salerno and Naples. A taxi transfer to other destinations can be arranged on request.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic hotels or agriturismos (generally 3-star). All rooms have en-suite facilities. **Dinners** are included on all nights except for the last one at Paestum.

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 will be passing through.

Night 1: The first night is spent in a beautifully located 3-star hotel, just outside the archaeological site of Paestum. The hotel has its own car park and is within walking distances of the Greek temples.

N.B. Those bringing their own bikes by car can leave the car on the premises of the first hotel in Paestum for the duration of the whole tour.

Night 2: This night is spent in a wonderfully located agriturismo, situated near the village of Bellosguardo in the Alburni foothills. Breakfast and dinner are based on local specialties.

Night 3: The next night you stay in a country inn in the village centre of the charming Morigerati.

Night 4: Tonight you stay in a very nice hotel in the fishing village of Pioppi (or in Casalvelino Marina). The little port and some nice beaches are only a short walk away.

Night 5: The final night is spent at the hotel in Paestum again.

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 Paestum, 1 night Bellosguardo, 1 night Morigerati, 1 night Pioppi (or Casalvelino Marina); all nights in good 3-star hotels, agriturismos and country inns.
- Meals: 5 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

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 (high quality road racing bikes. You may want to bring your own saddle and pedals)

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate to hard (3/4): Moderate to hard rides (to road cycling standards) inevitably with several climbs, some of which can be quite long and strenuous. All roads are well paved and mainly quiet with little traffic except for some stretches near Paestum. Extensions or shortcuts are possible on most days.

Fitness: Experience of road cycling and a good general physical condition are necessary to make your travel experience enjoyable. You should be able to cycle for several hours a day and long distances even in hot dry weather conditions.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in PAESTUM, 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 thus Paestum, can easily be reached.

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



TOUR VARIATIONS

PERSONALISED ROUTES

This tour is only an example of a possible 'Cilento Bike Challenge'. This tour can be adapted to your wishes and special interests. You can book extra nights in beautiful places, such as Positano, or at the end of the tour to spend a few days at the beach. This tour can be used as a framework to create a personalised tour, longer or shorter, or with fewer different accommodations. Details and prices on request.

GROUP TOURS

This tour is offered as a self-guided tour. It is however possible to organise this – or a similar, personalised tour, as a group tour, including a guide and a support vehicle. Also partly supported (only for the most challenging stretches) tours are available on request. Please contact us.

For small groups discounts are available.

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to extend your tour with a few days at Salerno, along the beautiful Costiera Amalfitana or at Naples. Details and prices on request. Extra cycling and/or sightseeing options can be provided!

UPGRADE

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

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