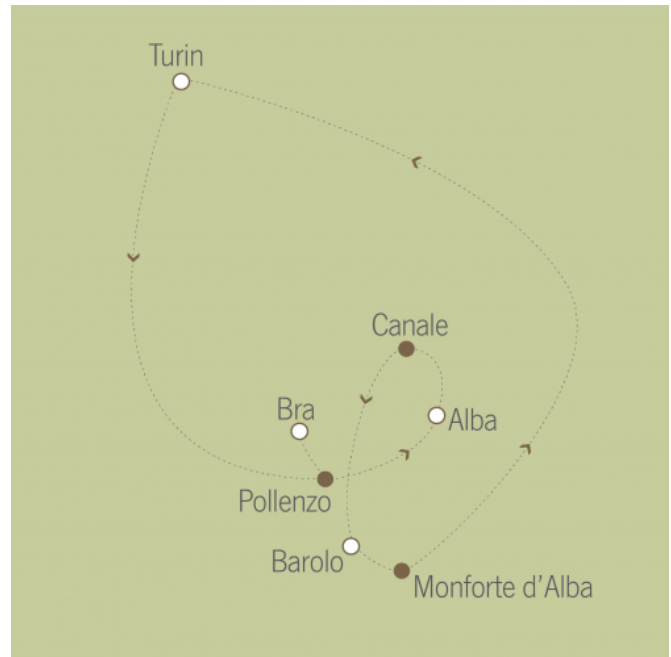


## Italy: Piedmont

### Tour-Only Itinerary

Italian culture is fueled by food, so prepare to indulge your palate on this walking tour of Piedmont, Italy. Your path leads through hilltop towns, following ancient trails along the medieval “Salt Route.” You’ll gain a savory perspective of local life as you rub shoulders with beekeepers, vintners, and cheesemakers, sampling their tasty wares. Stroll Piedmont’s vineyard landscape (recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage site), taking in pastoral views of fertile valleys and fruit orchards. In charming Barolo, try the world-class wine described as “the wine of kings, the king of wines” made from local Nebbiolo grapes. In Turin, walk the town’s elegant boulevards and riverside parks. Every step of your Piedmont walking tour is rich in Italian culture and cuisine.



### Highlights

- Get hands-on at a farmhouse in Roero, as you sip a glass of Arneis wine and learn the secrets of cooking pasta Piedmont-style
- In the forested hills of Alta Langa, learn the art of truffle hunting with an expert forager and her canine companion
- Dine with a master cheesemaker in his own home, sampling his acclaimed sheep cheese – made with milk from the local, long-eared, Langhe ewes
- Delight your palate while sampling the pale – yet intensely flavorful – “king of wines” at a historic winery in the heart of splendid Barolo

## On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Fully-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 6 miles per day, with options on most days. There are daily ascents and descents, with climbing time on the ascents ranging from about 15 to 45 minutes. The average elevation gain and/or loss is 500 feet. The terrain varies widely, from paved roads and cobblestone streets to uneven, single-track trails with loose stones or gravel, to dirt roads. The pace on this tour is leisurely with stops en route to explore villages, and cultural and historical sites.

## DAY 1

### Join your *Italy: Piedmont tour*

2-3 miles, easy

Your guide(s) will meet you at the Grand Hotel Sitea at 9:00 a.m. in the lobby. Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

After a brief welcome meeting in Turin you set off on a walking tour of the city known as the “Capital of the Alps.” Departing the hotel on foot, you walk east towards the city’s largest park, the Parco del Valentino located on the Po River, where riverside trails lead to the Ponte Umberto, a bridge across the Po near the base of the Monte dei Cappuccini, a small “mountain” in the city. An approximate 500-foot ascent winds to the summit, crowned with a lovely church that features panoramic views of the city and the majestic Alps in the distance. Descending back to the riverside, you continue walking to the Ponte Vittorio Emanuele; crossing this bridge you soon arrive at the grand Piazza Vittorio Veneto, one of Turin’s largest piazzas. From the square you follow the Via Po to the Piazza Castello, with the cathedral, the Palazzo Madama (where ancient Roman ruins can be viewed under glass floors), several museums, and many shops and restaurants.

After lunch, an hour transfer brings you to the town of Pollenzo—not far from the town of Bra, the Italian base of the international Slow Food movement—and your home for the first two nights. The restored neo-Gothic country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy is a sprawling four-star hotel with extensive grounds, outdoor swimming pool, and indoor spa. The complex also includes the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Wine Bank, and Ristorante Guido, all of which have been conceived and developed by the Slow Food organization. The Slow Food movement is dedicated to preserving and promoting agricultural and culinary traditions particular to a region. Initiated in Italy, with its centuries-old practices, the movement has spread throughout Europe and North America. The university at Pollenzo is an international training and data center for preserving and disseminating the organic agricultural practices encouraged by the Slow Food movement. The Wine Bank is a depository of all Italian wines, conceived as an archive of the wines of all regions to create a “historical memory” of Italy’s finest wines, housed in the historic 19th-century cellars of the royal estate.

Following a welcome aperitivo and tour of the Wine Bank, continue to your hotel’s restaurant for a traditional Piedmontese dinner.

Accommodation: Albergo dell’Agenzia, Pollenzo

## DAY 2

### Treiso: The Rocche dei Sette Fratelli

4 miles, easy to moderate; Borgomale to Montemarino; 2 miles, easy

After a copious buffet breakfast complete with organic juices, a short transfer brings you to the hilltop town of Treiso, located in the heart of the Barbaresco wine-making region. From the town’s main piazza and Baroque parish church, you set off on a two-hour morning walk winding through pear, peach, and apple orchards, as well as vineyards producing the Nebbiolo grapes from which the renowned Barbaresco wine is made. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the entire Barbaresco region, including the towns of Neive, Neviglie, Barbaresco, and Alba. You arrive at the Rocche dei Sette Fratelli, a series of canyons resulting in a huge natural amphitheater, and learn about the local legend of seven blasphemous brothers who, struck by divine fury, fell to their death here.

A short drive takes you to the Cascina Pistone, a renovated farmhouse above the village of Borgomale, where a boundless panorama provides inspiration to a celebrated and passionate local cheesemaker. He gives a demonstration, explanation, and a tasting of some of the savory cheeses made from the milk of the long-eared Langhe sheep, a breed that is on the verge of extinction. After a light lunch, you are introduced to the Tonda Gentile delle Langhe, considered the best variety of hazelnuts in the world (and the prevalent crop of the Alta Langa) because of their intense aroma and flavor. A woman from the neighboring village of Bosia, who makes delicious tarts and desserts, brings over some of her *dolce* for a tasting.

After lunch, you continue on foot along a path on the ridge above the farmhouse, spotting wildflowers native to the area, as well as fragrant thyme and rosemary. Reaching a high meadow you enjoy views of Borgomale, and the privately owned Borgomale Castle, on one side, and the Belbo valley on the other. The trail gradually descends through a forest of oak, chestnuts, and the pino silvestre, the Langhe’s only native pine. Continue along a quiet dirt road used by farmers to reach their hillside vineyards and plots until you reach the small hamlet of Montemarino, one of the 21 villages that make up the Alta Langa (Upper Langhe), an area of high, rugged hills with vineyards planted mainly with Dolcetto grapes.

Late afternoon, you return (45-minute transfer) to your hotel, where there is time to relax, swim, or indulge in a massage (at your expense). Prior to dinner at a nearby charming osteria, join your guide(s) for a walking tour of the property and village (and visit to the church and fascinating Roman ruins in Pollenzo). The menu tonight features, of course, the region's wines and dishes that incorporate the freshest seasonal ingredients.

Accommodation: Albergo dell'Agenzia, Pollenzo.

## DAY 3

### Guarene circuit: Sentiero dell'Acino e della Pera Madernassa

5 miles, easy to moderate; 1.5 miles, easy; Agriturismo Le Querce estate; optional 1 mile, easy to moderate

You bid ciao to Pollenzo this morning and set off for a day of fun-filled activities. A short transfer brings you to the beautiful town of Guarene, with its 18th-century castle. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the Tanaro Valley—medieval castles and elegant villas serve as the backdrop. A highlight of the walk is Castagnito, a gem of a village whose origin dates to the 12th century.

To reward your morning efforts, a short drive delivers you to the Agriturismo Casa Scaparone, located just outside the town of Alba. The rambling stone farmhouse, dating back 500 years, has been lovingly restored by Alessandra Cornaglia. Today, the self-sufficient farm is home to fruit orchards, vineyards, terraced organic vegetable gardens, and a barn full of animals. A relaxing lunch here may feature homemade soup and frittatas made from the farm's fresh vegetables.

Following lunch, you are joined by an expert, local truffle hunter, Martina, who shares her secrets of hunting for the delectable mushroom, looking for clues such as certain types of trees, leaf litter, amount of sunlight and moisture, etc. Your trail lies in the woodlands, outside the town of Montà, and it winds up to the chapel of Santo Sepolcro, passing columns decorated with plaster statues. Legend has it that a monk, after returning from the Holy Land, chose these woods as the place where he would dwell as a hermit. Later it became a pilgrimage destination due to the presence of a wooden statue of Christ, said to be brought there by a knight on his return from the Crusades.

Late afternoon, you transfer to your home for the next two nights—a 17th-century, family-owned farmhouse, nestled in cultivated fields and vineyards, in the heart of the Roero, and within the Natural Park of the Rocche. The park comprises a unique ecosystem and microclimate in which, because of its location and elevation, Mediterranean and alpine vegetation grow in proximity to one another. The area was also known for, and enriched by, the discovery of a vein of white salt with pharmaceutical properties called “Sal Canal.” Upon your arrival, there may be time for a dip in the outdoor swimming pool or an optional walk. Departing directly from the hilltop *agriturismo*, a path traverses the inn’s vineyards and overflowing peach, apricot, pear, and plum orchards.

This evening you gather in the hotel’s dining room for an aperitivo of local wines and cured ham and cheeses, before sitting down to dinner, perhaps an insalata del Roero (walnuts, celery, and goat cheese), followed by homemade lasagna or risotto with porcini mushrooms.

Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Querce del Vareglio, Canale

## DAY 4

### Natural Park of the Rocche: Il Sentiero del Lupo

2.5-mile loop walk, easy to moderate; optional Il Sentiero del Castagno; 3.5 miles, easy to moderate, 600-ft. elevation gain and loss

After breakfast, you transfer to the nearby village of Montà to set out on one of several trails that make up the “ecomuseum” of the Cliffs of Roero. A range of hills stretching out along the left bank of the Tanaro River beneath the plateaus of Turin and Fossano, the Roero is a landscape of steep hills and notably the “Rocche,” a distinctive line of rocks traversing the entire territory, from Pocataglia to Montà.

The Rocche’s unique ecosystem, comprised of more than 950 plant species, is perfect for beekeeping and results in high-quality honey. Setting off from the outskirts of Montà, your walk along the sandy and semi-shaded “Wolf’s Trail” brings you to the home of local beekeepers. Here you learn about the evolution of beekeeping over the centuries, how bees communicate and dance, and of course sample some honey and honey products. The natural methods used include cold extraction of the honey, which leaves the purest taste, allowing you to distinguish honey made from chestnut and cherry among other flowers.

Looping back towards Montà, the trail is framed by cherry trees and distant views of the Alps on a clear day. Afterwards you transfer back down to Montà for lunch at a local café and a stroll through town (and maybe a stop for a refreshing gelato). You may then choose to return to your hotel by bus to relax, or to continue directly from Montà along the “Chestnut Trail,” which leads you to a perfect panoramic viewpoint over the striking Rocche hills. One of the most noticeable natural features along the trail (and from which it takes its name) are the Roero chestnut trees, “chestnuts of the Madonna,” some of which are hundreds of years old. This particular species is prized both for the early ripening of its nuts in early autumn and for its ability to adapt to an altitude of 1,000 feet (a bit lower than other species). Historically crucial to the region’s rural economy, the chestnut was called the “plant of bread”—its fruit was once one of the main sources of food (prior to the arrival of potatoes from the “New World”) and its wood was an essential raw material. The path continues to Saint Nicolao, on an important bird migration route, and eventually leads you directly to your a *agriturismo* hotel.

After some time to relax and refresh, you depart for an optional hands-on cooking lesson in a relaxed setting at our friends’, Luca’s, traditional Roero farmhouse. For those who choose this option, you prepare several traditional Piedmontese dishes, with expert assistance from the chef. Dinner (for everyone) is a festive affair featuring the fruits of your (or your traveling companions’) labor.

Accommodation: Agriturismo Le Querce del Vareglio, Canale

## DAY 5

### Diano d’Alba to Monforte d’Alba

Diano d’Alba to Grinzane Cavour; 2 miles, easy. Castiglione Falletto to Monforte d’Alba; 5 miles, easy to moderate

This morning you leave the Roero and enjoy a scenic transfer into the heart of the Langhe region, the home of Barolo wine, which is a landscape of rolling vineyard-covered hills, topped by medieval villages and ancient fortresses, connected by a series of country roads and walking paths. The name “Langhe” has uncertain and ancient origins, some theories are “land of the Ligurians,” “the uncultivated land,” or “the tongues of land.”

Arriving at the pretty village of Diano d’Alba, you set off on a trail that connects to Grinzane Cavour and

offers stunning views of the Alps. Descending steadily, you wind through vineyards (planted with the Dolcetto vines for which Diano is famous) and hazelnut cultivations. Sweeping views of the surrounding countryside and the impressive Grinzane castle, your morning's final destination, reward your efforts. Following a visit to the 13th-century castle where the famous truffle auction is held each fall, a short bus ride brings you to the village of Castiglione Falletto. Another hilltop wine-producing village, Castiglione Falletto is endowed with a castle with stark undecorated towers, striking in their austere beauty. Lunch, which may include platters of local cured meats, frittata of the day, and a salad, awaits at a small family-run restaurant with a spectacular view over the surrounding countryside.

Fortified by lunch, you continue on foot to your final destination and home for two nights—Monforte d'Alba (for those who prefer to go directly to the hotel, a minibus transfer is provided). An easy descent along the paved road turns into a path that crosses vineyards and woods and emerges at a stream near a spring. The trail continues flat through more forest and then climbs steeply, eventually reaching the 12th-century chapel of Santo Stefano and later, the pretty village of Perno. A final climb brings you to the entrance of your historical hotel, an 18th-century villa converted into a charming hotel just outside the ancient town walls. Upon settling into your inviting room, an independent evening of strolling and dining in Monforte—a charming village in which archaeological studies have uncovered traces of Neolithic as well as Roman settlements—awaits. Monforte owes its name to the walled castle that stood at the summit in the Middle Ages.

Accommodation: Villa Beccaris, Monforte d'Alba

## DAY 6

### Monforte to Barolo

4 miles, easy to moderate; La Morra to Barolo; 2.5 miles, easy

After an espresso or cappuccino and enticing buffet breakfast you set off on foot from your hotel and venture through the heart of Barolo country. From the historic center of Monforte, the panoramic path leads down the valley towards Novello, one of the 11 Barolo wine-producing villages, through vineyards, and on to Barolo itself—the town that gave its name to the world-renowned wine. Unlike most of the wine-producing villages, Barolo is not perched on a hilltop but rather lies relatively low in the valley. The name is thought to derive from the Celtic *bas reul*, meaning “low place.”



Arriving at a renowned Barolo winery, we are welcomed for a tour and tasting. The “king of wines and wine of kings” according to the Piedmontese, Barolo is made from the Nebbiolo grape, and its production is centered in the towns you have been walking to and from: Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Monforte d’Alba, and Serralunga d’Alba. During your tour you learn about the unique terroir—the soil and climate—the wine’s production, refined and intense taste, and its relatively long aging process. The tasting whets your appetite for lunch on your own at one of the town’s many cafés.

A short transfer brings you to the town of La Morra, “the terrace of the Langhe,” affording magnificent views over the surrounding patchwork of vineyards. Explore the narrow cobbled alleyways, pausing at a café to savor an espresso or gelato or to admire the stunning architecture of the church of San Martino or the 18th-century bell tower.

This afternoon’s walk leads from La Morra back to Barolo and offers a different perspective of the heart of this area. Passing through the “main cru” vineyards, you see Castello della Volta, a privately-owned 13th-century manor house, before arriving in Barolo. A short transfer returns you to your hotel, where you have time to relax before a festive farewell dinner to toast the week’s adventures.

Accommodation: Villa Beccaris, Monforte d’Alba

## **DAY 7**

### ***Your Italy: Piedmont* tour concludes**

Your last morning in this special region includes a visit to Alba, the truffle “capital,” where the outdoor market and shops are brimming with local specialties. There is free time to browse or visit its 13th-century town hall or cathedral built over the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, before continuing on to the Grand Hotel Sitea in Turin (by approximately 1:15 p.m.), where you bid farewell to your guides before continuing your onward travels.

## What's Included

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
All on-tour meals except 1 lunch and 1 dinner	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7	✓