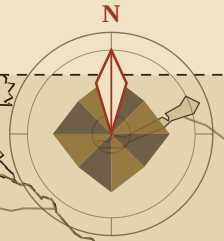


MADE TO EXPLORE

THE HARVEST ROAD

Eight harvests from Alba to Puglia, in the order they ripen

8 stops · 1,300 km · by campervan



LEGEND

- main route
- stage stop
- △ highland

SCALE — KILOMETRES

0 100 200 300

1

ALBA*Langhe, Piedmont — the grapes and the white truffle*

THE HARVEST In the Langhe, the hills of Barolo and Barbaresco are picked in September and October, and Nebbiolo is the last grape in, when the fog has already come — that is where its name comes from. From October to December, Alba holds its white truffle fair, the one truffle that cannot be farmed: it is hunted at night, with a dog, and sold in the morning by the gram. It is the most expensive harvest on the route and the only invisible one.

THE CAMPER Agriturismo with camper pitches on every hill, many in the network that takes campers free for a night if you buy something. You sleep in the vineyard, at the producer's, and in the morning the picking is outside the door.

FREE The picking is seen from any road in the Langhe in October. The Alba truffle fair charges entry, but the Saturday market and the smell across the whole town are free. At Barolo the castle has a wine museum with a ticket; the village does not.

Alba → Asti → Piacenza → Modena, about 260 km, on the A21 and A1 across the Po plain · ~3½ h by camper.

2

MODENA*Emilia — the must that boils*

THE HARVEST Traditional balsamic vinegar is not made from wine but from grape must boiled straight after the harvest, in cauldrons, for hours, until it halves. It happens in October, in the lofts under the roofs where the barrels stand in sets of five, six, seven, each of a different wood, and where the oldest vinegar is over twenty-five years old. It is the one harvest on the route you smell before you see.

THE CAMPER In Modena the camper area belongs to the local camper club: Area Camper Club Mutina, on Strada Collegarola, 6 km from the centre, with a bus to the centre 1.5 km away; stays are limited to 48 hours. There are agriturismo around too. Vinegar producers take visits by appointment, many of them campers too.

FREE A visit to an acetaia is usually free, with a tasting, in the hope you leave with a bottle. The covered Albinelli market is open and is the best place in town. Parmesan is made a few kilometres away, and the dairies take visitors early in the morning.

WHERE TO SLEEP Camper area · Area Camper Club Mutina, Strada Collegarola 76/A · GPS 44.61361, 10.94433

Modena → Bologna → Faenza → Marradi, about 130 km · ~2 h by camper. The last 40 climb into the Apennines on the Faentina road.

3

MARRADI*Mugello, Tuscany — the chestnuts*

THE HARVEST Marradi is the capital of the Tuscan chestnut, the marrone del Mugello, and every October weekend it holds its sagra: the whole village smells of chestnuts roasting on coals, and the castagneti — chestnut woods planted centuries ago — are gathered with rake and basket. Chestnuts were the bread of the Apennines until a century ago; today they are a festival. It is the cheapest harvest on the route and the most cheerful.

THE CAMPER Camper places at the sagra on weekends, and agriturismo in the chestnut woods. October nights in the Mugello are cold — heating on.

FREE The sagra has free entry; you pay for what you eat. The chestnut woods are walked on foot, and chestnuts fallen on the path can be gathered — not those in fenced castagneti, which belong to someone.

Marradi → Borgo San Lorenzo → Florence → Greve in Chianti, about 90 km · ~2½ h by camper. You pass through Florence without stopping — the city is not for a camper.

4

CHIANTI

Tuscany — the new wine

THE HARVEST When you arrive, the Chianti harvest has been in for two weeks and the must is fermenting in the vats. That is the right moment: you do not see grapes, you see what comes next. The cellars open for the new wine, the vines turn red, and in November the olive harvest begins, with new oil, green and bitter, pressed the same day. Chianti in October is the most photographed landscape in Italy, and rightly.

THE CAMPER Agriturismi with camper pitches all along the Chiantigiana road, between Greve and Castellina. Many ask you to buy wine or oil; it is the best exchange on the route.

FREE The Chiantigiana itself, the SR222, is the finest road in Tuscany and costs nothing. The villages — Greve, Panzano, Castellina — are walked freely. Tastings usually charge, but little.

WHERE TO SLEEP Camper area · Area Sosta Camper Greve in Chianti, Via Montebeni · GPS 43.59068, 11.31355

Chianti → Siena → Perugia → Trevi, about 180 km · ~3½ h by camper. From Tuscany into Umbria, beneath Assisi.

5

TREVI

Umbria — the oil

THE HARVEST Between Spoleto and Assisi the hills are covered in olives, and Trevi is their centre. The olives are picked from November, with nets spread under the trees and rakes, and go to the press the same day — oil that waits a night is not the same oil. In November the hill villages open their presses for Frantoi Aperti: you watch it being made and taste oil that was olives an hour ago.

THE CAMPER Agriturismi among the olives, with camper pitches, and a sosta area at Trevi. It is the stop where you really sleep in the middle of the harvest.

FREE The picking is seen from the road. The open presses in November take visitors free; the tasting on bread is included. Trevi has an oil museum with a small ticket, and the hill village is open.

Trevi → Spoleto → Norcia, about 60 km · ~1½ h by camper. You climb into the Sibillini mountains up the Nera valley.

6

NORCIA

Umbria — the black truffle and the lentils

THE HARVEST Norcia is the capital of the black winter truffle, hunted from November to March, and of the Castelluccio lentil, harvested in summer on the plateau above, which flowers in June in every colour. The town is also the capital of charcuterie: norcino in Italian means a pork butcher, after the town's name. The 2016 earthquake brought down the basilica and much of the centre; the town stands and works.

THE CAMPER In Norcia the stop is a mixed car park on Via Circonvallazione, 150 m from Porta Ascolana: eight camper places, on a slope, with no services; for water and power there are agriturismi around, such as Agricamping Brandimarte at Misciano. The road to Castelluccio is closed in winter and narrow in summer; it is done in a day.

FREE The truffle market is a market, not a museum: you enter freely, you taste if you buy. The Castelluccio plateau is open and is the emptiest place in central Italy. The charcuterie shops of Norcia offer samples in plain view.

WHERE TO SLEEP Camper parking · Parcheggio auto e camper, Via Circonvallazione 50, Norcia · GPS 42.79049, 13.09383

Norcia → L'Aquila → Navelli, about 130 km · ~3 h by camper. From Umbria into Abruzzo, beneath the Gran Sasso.

7

NAVELLI*Abruzzo — the saffron*

THE HARVEST On the Navelli plateau, at 700 metres, the best saffron in Italy is grown, and it is picked in three weeks from late October: the crocus flowers open at night and are gathered at dawn, before the sun touches them, and from each flower three red threads are pulled by hand. A kilo of dried saffron takes around two hundred thousand flowers. It is the shortest harvest on the route and, after truffle, the dearest by the gram.

THE CAMPER Camper place at Navelli and agriturismi on the plateau. The farms take visitors at dawn, for the picking, if you ask the day before. The nights are cold and the sky is the blackest on the route.

FREE The purple fields are seen from the road, at dawn, for three weeks. The picking can be watched from the edge. The stone village, empty the rest of the year, is open.

| Navelli → Pescara → Bari → Ostuni, about 480 km, on the A14 along the Adriatic · ~6½ h by camper. The longest stage, southward.

8

OSTUNI*Puglia — the thousand-year-old olives*

THE HARVEST The plain between Ostuni and Fasano is the largest olive grove in Europe, and the trees here have twisted trunks a thousand years old and still bear. The harvest is in November and December, with nets and shakers, and Puglia's oil is half of Italy's. Many trees are sick with Xylella, the bacterium that has been drying out the olives of the south for a decade; what you see is a harvest defending itself. It is the end of the route, and the oldest.

THE CAMPER Agricampeggi in the groves at Ostuni and around, and sosta areas on the coast. In November the coast is empty, the beach campsites closed, the farms open.

FREE The ancient groves are seen from the road between Ostuni and Fasano, and a few masserie leave the old trees open to visit. Ostuni, the white town, is open and at its finest in November light.

| End of the route. Germany is 1,500 km away; there is no ferry north from Bari, so back by motorway, two days.

THE ROUTE IN BRIEF

Distance	~1,300 km
Driving time	~22 h in all, without stops
Recommended time	21–28 days
Stage stops	8
Countries	IT
Harvests	8
Direction	north → south, with the autumn
Best months	Oct–Nov

GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE YOU LEAVE

The road to Castelluccio is closed in winter and narrow in summer: do it as a day trip.

In November, at Ostuni, the beach campsites are closed; the farms stay open.

There is no ferry from Bari northwards: the way back to Germany is by motorway, about 1,500 km, in two days.

WHEN TO GO

The window: mid-October to late November. Earlier, the south has not started; later, the north has finished and the white truffle has gone up in price.

Ideal: leaving around 20 October. You catch the truffle at Alba, the must at Modena, the chestnuts at Marradi, the new oil in Tuscany and Umbria, the saffron at Navelli, and reach Puglia as the olive harvest begins.

Avoid: leaving in September to see grapes. You see the picking, but you miss everything else — oil, truffle, saffron, chestnuts all need October.

Weather: real autumn: rain in Piedmont, fog in Emilia, cold in the Apennines, sun in Puglia. A route for every kind of clothing.

THE HARVEST CALENDAR

Grapes: Piedmont and Tuscany, September–October. Nebbiolo is the last, in the fog.

Boiled must and vinegar: Modena, October, straight after the harvest.

Chestnuts: the Apennines, October, sagre on weekends.

White truffle: Alba, October–December, the fair on weekends.

Black truffle: Norcia, November–March.

Saffron: Navelli, the last three weeks of October and early November, at dawn.

Olives: Umbria from November, Puglia November–December. The new oil is tasted the same day.

WHERE YOU SLEEP

Italy has a network of farms that take campers free for a night in exchange for a purchase from the producer. It is made for exactly this route: you sleep where the harvest is.

Municipal sosta areas exist in almost every small town, cheap or free, sometimes without power. Agriturismi with camper pitches are everywhere on the hills.

Free overnighting is permitted in Italy, but communes may ban it by zone, and in tourist places they do. On this route there is no point: the farms beat any car park.

Book at Alba on truffle weekends and in Chianti in October. Otherwise, in November, you are nearly alone.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

ZTL Almost every Italian historic centre is a limited-traffic zone with cameras. The camper does not go in; the fine arrives at home months later. Park at the sosta area and walk.

The sagre Village harvest festivals are the best thing on the route and appear in no guidebook. They are announced on posters, on weekends, and you pay only for what you eat. Ask at the farm where you sleep.

The truffle White truffle is sold by the gram and the price changes week to week. A small lunch with shaved truffle costs a day's camping; a whole truffle, a week's. Buy little or none.

The new oil Freshly pressed oil is green, cloudy and bitter, and catches in the throat. That is how it should be. Buy it at the press, in a can, and keep it in the dark.

The motorway The A1 and A14 are paid at the barrier. The route uses them on the long stretches between harvests; in between, the hill roads are free and better.

When should you set off on the Italian harvest route?

Around 20 October. That catches the truffle at Alba, the boiled must at Modena, the chestnuts at Marradi, the new oil in Tuscany and Umbria, the saffron at Navelli, and gets you to Puglia as the olive harvest begins.

Can you sleep at a farm in a camper in Italy?

Yes. There is a network of farms that take campers free for a night in exchange for a purchase from the producer. It is made for exactly this kind of route.

What is a sagra, and do you pay to get in?

It is the village harvest festival, at weekends, announced on posters. Entry is free; you pay only for what you eat. They are the best thing on the route and appear in no guidebook.

Can a camper enter Italian historic centres?

No. Almost all are limited-traffic zones with cameras, and the fine arrives at home months later. Park at the sosta area and walk.

THE RULE OF THE ROAD

*“On this route you do not visit places. You reach them when they ripen.
The harvest does not wait for you, but it lets you watch, and usually taste.
What you pay for is what you take home, and it is the only luggage worth having.”*

Documentary check: September 2026. Places, hours and conditions change — check them before you leave.