

## the bicycle thief ON TOUR

When planning a holiday, what is it you're looking for? Time to simply relax at your favourite beach resort, combing the museums and art galleries of the world, or are you seeking something different, an adventure.

More and more, holidaymakers are craving some variety in their holiday. This can take many forms, ranging from trekking in the Himalayas, walking the Kokoda Trail, to bungy-jumping in New Zealand. Or perhaps cycling through some of Italy's sensational scenery takes your fancy.

Well, this is exactly what Punto Tours organised for a group of cycling enthusiasts during the Italian autumn of 2006. A 15-day itinerary was arranged that appealed to lovers of Italian history and culture, food and wine, but above all, dished up some challenging rides for its participating cyclists.

The group consisted of eight guys and five girls, all with differing cycling abilities, ages and backgrounds. Some were regular race competitors, whilst others were more of a weekend warrior. However they all shared something in common, a real passion for the bike and a commitment to training hard in the lead up to the tour.

Where better to start an Italian holiday than Tuscany. All group members made their own way to Rome, arriving with bicycles in tow. There was a leisurely bus trip to Montalcino, another of those idyllic Tuscan mountain top villages. It is the subject of *Brodo and Vanilla Beans*, the bestseller by Australian author, Isabella Dusi. Montalcino is also famous for its Brunello wine, arguably Italy's finest and most expensive red.

Residing in the charming, family run, Hotel Il Giglio, located in the centre of the 'centro storico' (the old historical part of town), the hotel had the most beautiful views over the surrounding Tuscan valley – even from the bathrooms!

Words Vincenzo Ulgiati  
Photography Courtesy of Punto Tours