

Monsterrando

GRAVEL IN MONFERRATO



TRAVEL CHARTER

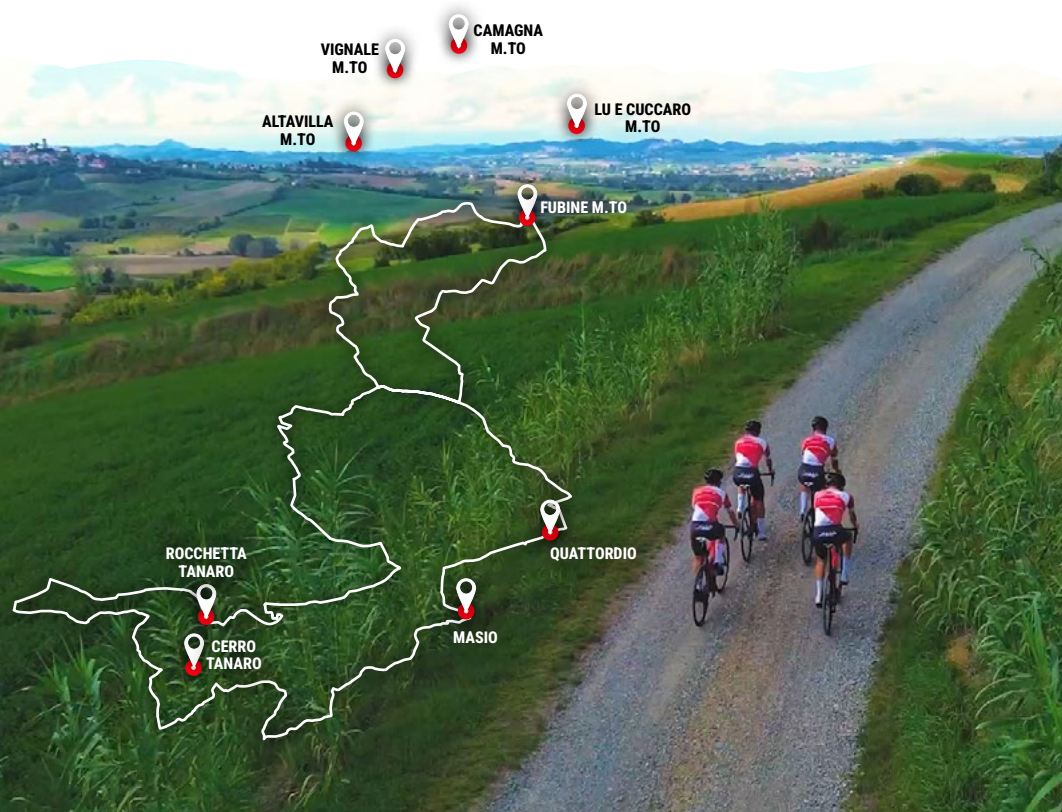
History, traditions and
food & wine specialties of Monferrato

THE VILLAGES OF MONSTERRANDO

A mosaic of history, landscapes, and flavors

There is a common thread running through the Monferrato hills, yet every bend in the road, every skyline, and every town square reveals a truly unique soul. The nine municipalities hosting the Monsterrando route are not merely points along a track, but pieces of an extraordinary cultural, scenic, and food-and-wine mosaic. A true constellation of villages sharing a deep identity—built on hospitality, farming traditions, and UNESCO World Heritage nature—while each offers its own unique and unexpected treasures.

Fubine Monferrato, Quattordio, Cerro Tanaro, Rocchetta Tanaro, Masio, Altavilla Monferrato, Vignale Monferrato, Camagna Monferrato, and Lu e Cuccaro Monferrato have joined forces to offer you far more than just a sporting backdrop. This Travel Charter is your invitation to slow down, wander through the narrow alleyways, chat with the locals, and fall in love with the extraordinary variety of our land. Every single one of these villages deserves to be discovered, listened to, and, above all, lived to the fullest.



MONSTERRANDO TOURIST RIDE

The thrill of Gravel at a slow pace

A non-competitive experience open to everyone, this is the perfect opportunity to get in the saddle and experience the iconic atmosphere of the Monsterrando champions with a whole new spirit: more relaxed, slow, and contemplative. Thus, the very first edition of the Monsterrando Randonnée Tourist Ride was born—an unmissable opportunity for anyone who wants to savor the true essence of Gravel without the pressure of the clock, immersed in the timeless beauty of the Monferrato region.

With a “French-style” staggered start (free departure between 10:30 AM and 12:00 PM from Fubine Monferrato), you can decide when to hop on your bike and start the journey. The loop course stretches over 65 km with an elevation gain of around 590 meters (D+). It is an accessible route with a predominantly flat profile, punctuated by just two short scenic climbs (2 km each at 5-6%), making it ideal for anyone with the desire to ride and a basic level of fitness.



640 m
Uphill

610 m
Downhill

220 m
Highest point

100 m
Lowest point

Along the famous strade bianche (white dirt roads) and the pathways through the UNESCO World Heritage vineyards, you will have all the time you need to breathe in nature, snap photos, and enjoy our beautiful Monferrato.



ALTAVILLA MONFERRATO

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Municipality of Altavilla M.to

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History

Altavilla Monferrato's roots trace back to the Roman era. A strategic village perched on the hills of Monferrato Casalese, it became a fiefdom in 1026. Its name reflects its commanding position ("high town"). The lands were donated to Novalesa Abbey. In 1320, Marquis Theodore I of Monferrato enclosed the town with walls and built a castle. The village followed the fortunes of the Marquisate until passing permanently to the House of Savoy in 1708. Between the late 19th century and 1935, Altavilla was an important hub for steam and electric tramways connecting Monferrato with Alessandria and Asti.



Culture

The village is dominated by the Castle and the Parish Church of San Michele, nestled in the alleys of the historic center. Altavilla houses the facilities of one of Italy's oldest distilleries: **Antica Distilleria Mazzetti** in Cittadella, and **Mazzetti d'Altavilla**, located atop the hill in an ancient monastery surrounded by a historic park housing "La Rotonda" votive chapel. In 1846 Filippo Mazzetti began distilling, and for over 170 years the family has carried on the tradition using copper stills powered by steam boilers.

The Museums of Altavilla M.to

Besides the **Grappa Museum**, visitors can explore the **Steam and Electric Tramway Museum** (both located in Cittadella). Here you can admire vintage carriages, steam locomotives, historical documents, photos, and items related to Monferrato tramways, complete with telegraph and telephone transmission equipment, schedules, and authentic period artifacts.

Food & Wine Specialties

Besides being known as the "**Town of Grappa**," for 20 years Altavilla has organized "**Cioccolato nel Monferrato**," a day dedicated to chocolate featuring master pastry chefs. Local cuisine offers traditional Monferrato dishes and wines ranging from classic Barbera d'Asti DOC to wines from neighboring hills like Malvasia di Casorzo DOC and Ruchè di Castagnole Monferrato.



CAMAGNA MONFERRATO

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History

Camagna Monferrato boasts ancient origins spanning Roman times and the Early Middle Ages. Historically a fiefdom belonging to the Aleramici, Palaeologus, and Gonzaga families, it is famous as the “Town of the Great Dome” and for its fine wines. Following the 1943 armistice, the partisan group led by Agostino Lenti formed and operated in Camagna. On September 12, 1944, in Valenza, Fascist and Nazi forces executed 27 young men led by Capt. Agostino Lenti. Memories of this tragedy can be visited at the Resistance Museum (birthplace of Resistance martyr Eusebio Giambone) as well as the Shrine dedicated to them in the center of the cemetery.



Culture

Beyond the monumental church and its great dome, the village features several accessible private Infernot, including the one owned by “**La Rocca di Camagna**” discovered in November 2017 (now a small museum open to the public). Inside the Infernot **Nello Scagliotti**, visitors can sense the passion and effort of farmers who carved it during winter breaks. Rich in niches, alcoves, and tunnels, it evokes times past and traditional rural values.

The Great Dome

The monumental church, which makes Camagna Monferrato the “**Town of the Great Dome**,” was erected in its current state in 1885 designed by architect Crescentino Caselli (a pupil of Antonelli, designer of Turin’s Mole Antonelliana). Early records date to the 13th century, with its first reconstruction in the early 1600s and expansion in 1819. Another local curiosity is the legend of a mysterious “magic stone” called “**la Culièta**”, believed to predict weather conditions by measuring humidity.

Food & Wine Specialties

Piedmontese cuisine reigns in Camagna Monferrato: Monferrato agnolotti, Piedmontese breed beef, and fine truffles. Local wines include Barbera, Grignolino, and Freisa. PGI hazelnuts, local honey, cured meats, and traditional sweets round out the offerings.



CERRO TANARO

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History

The history of Cerro Tanaro is tied to its medieval origins and its strategic position in the Monferrato region along the Tanaro River. First mentioned as Cerretum in 1041 in a diploma by Emperor Henry III, it was a possession of the Bishops of Asti and a fiefdom of various noble families. In later centuries, different noble families succeeded one another at the castle and village, which hosted princes such as Carlo Gonzaga, ruler of Monferrato. During World War II, in the spring of 1944, Cerro Tanaro and neighboring hilltop villages became a major hub of Partisan Resistance.



Culture

The village hosts prominent events such as **ScaloFestival**, featuring talks, music, sports, and high-profile guests organized by the local administration during summer. Another highlight is **Cuntè Munfrà**, dedicated to theater, music, talks, and memory workshops aimed at promoting and preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of Piedmont (recognized in recent years as the best regional project).

“Sarachet” Bicycle Museum

The “Sarachet” Bicycle Museum in Cerro Tanaro celebrates the life and inventions of Guido Saracco, known as “Sarachet.” Housed on the first floor of the historic railway station, it displays over a century of vintage bicycles, frames, machinery, and handcrafted accessories. A versatile and eccentric figure, Saracco (born in 1916) was a bicycle racer, a frame builder by trade and passion, a musician, a dialect poet, and a community entertainer.

Food & Wine Specialties

Typical dishes of Cerro Tanaro faithfully follow Monferrato and Asti cuisine, centered around the skillful use of truffles, choice meats, and local cheeses such as Asti High Langa “Robiola di Roccaverano”. First courses include **donkey agnolotti**, Bagna Cauda, and Bollito Misto (a hearty winter dish). Fine local wines include Barbera d’Asti DOCG and Grignolino d’Asti DOC.



FUBINE MONFERRATO

TOURIST OFFICE
of the Municipality of Fubine M.to

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History

The origins of Fubine Monferrato date back to the late Roman era, with its first official record dating to January 26, 1041. The village developed on a panoramic hill, strategically positioned along a route connecting the Tanaro Valley to the Po River. In subsequent centuries, the village was contested between the Marquises of Monferrato and various European powers, also enduring the famous sack by the Landsknechts. The municipality added "Monferrato" to its original historical name in 2017.



Culture

In Fubine Monferrato you can explore a rich historical and artistic heritage. The main landmarks are the **Bricherasio Castle** with its park and hanging rose garden, and the **Bricherasio Chapel**, a Neo-Gothic building dating from 1864. In its underground crypt lies the cenotaph of **Count Emanuele Bricherasio** (co-founder of FIAT), created by the sculptor **Leonardo Bistolfi**. Other highlights of great interest include the **Church of Santa Maria Assunta**, featuring a 56-meter-high Neo-Gothic bell tower, the remains of the ancient city walls, and the Spalto (rampart).

Infernot

Carved in the local sandstone beneath the traditional ancient houses of the Monferrato region, the Infernot are underground extensions of the wine cellars. Since 2014, the vineyard landscapes along with their Infernot have been inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage** list. The Infernot of Fubine Monferrato are among the most spectacular in the entire region, with over 50 officially cataloged, including two of remarkable architectural importance restored beneath the Town Hall.

Food & Wine Specialties

Among traditional Monferrato dishes, Fubine stands out for its agnolotti (stuffed with braised beef), fritto misto piemontese (Piedmontese mixed fry), and bagna cauda. Symbolic local products also include **friciulin** (green fritters) and local asparagus. Everything is enhanced by fine red wines such as Barbera and Grignolino, produced by local wineries. Artisanal gelato and chocolate, honey, hazelnuts, and the delicious "**Baci della Contessa**" biscuits also shine.



LU E CUCCARO MONFERRATO

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Municipality of Lu e Cuccaro M.to

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History

The municipality of Lu e Cuccaro Monferrato was born in 2019 from the merger of two historic villages whose histories have been intertwined for centuries with Piedmontese nobility and great explorations. Cuccaro is tied to the thousand-year-old Colombo family, who ruled here starting in 960 after investiture by Emperor Otto. Lu has Roman origins and was a fortified medieval center under the Marquises of Monferrato, shaped by plagues and changing rulers.



Culture

In Cuccaro, visitors can explore a small yet fascinating Museum dedicated to the Colombo Family of Cuccaro, a noble feudal family with numerous castles. The museum illustrates the theory of Christopher Columbus's kinship with the Marquises of Cuccaro Monferrato.

In Lu, the Civic Tower stands inside a panoramic park offering breathtaking 360-degree views. Another museum of sacred art in Lu is housed in the historic San Giacomo complex, a church founded in the 13th century and rebuilt between 1568 and 1610.

Two Big Benches

The views from both villages are exceptional, but a visit to the two Big Benches is a must to enjoy the wonderful rural landscape. **Big Bench 98 in Lu Monferrato**, blue and yellow, offers a fantastic view over the rolling hills of Monferrato Casalese. **Big Bench 99 in Cuccaro Monferrato**, purple-colored and inspired by local lavender fields of the past, sits atop the “*ciùdu*” hill.

Food & Wine Specialties

The hills of Cuccaro and Lu Monferrato are largely covered in vineyards, but wine is not the only typical product: hazelnuts are also a major crop with a centuries-old connection to the area. The local cuisine is deeply rooted in Monferrato tradition. Fine local wines include Barbera d'Asti and Monferrato Nebbiolo, both aged in oak barriques.



MASIO

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Municipality of Masio

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History

The history of Masio, located on the right bank of the Tanaro River between Alessandria and Asti, dates back to the Middle Ages. The village was long a strategic crossroads for river trade and came under the influence of the Bishop of Asti, the Visconti family, and later the Alessandria county. The nearby Redabue Castle, medieval in origin, suffered severe destruction at the hands of the condottiero Facino Cane. On the road to Alessandria stands the small Church of San Sebastiano, built near an ancient lazaretto used during the major 17th-century plagues. During World War II, Masio witnessed strong Resistance activity.



Culture

The symbol of the 12th century, the 27-meter **medieval Tower**, is all that remains of the town's impressive fortification system. Of tourist interest is the **Church of Santa Maria and San Dalmazzo**, a Romanesque-Gothic building that evolved over centuries, featuring a Romanesque layout and Gothic vaulting. Architecturally significant is Redabue Castle, an imposing historic residence owned by the Doria Lamba family since 1830.

The Tower and the River Museum

Inside the medieval Tower (a national monument) is **"The Tower and the River"** museum, a fascinating vertical route telling the story of Masio's tower and regional towers, structures born as symbols of municipal power in the Middle Ages that became defining landscape features in modern times.

Food & Wine Specialties

Masio's flagship De.Co. (Municipal Designation) dish is **"Subrich"**—flattened fritters made with spring herbs. The name derives from the French *sur brich* ("on the brick"), as they were originally cooked on hot stones. Another De.Co. product is **Masio Asparagus**. The undisputed king of wines is **Barbera del Monferrato DOC**, though Dolcetto and Grignolino are also successfully cultivated in the surrounding hills.



QUATTORDIO

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Municipality of Quattordio

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History

The history of Quattordio is a fascinating blend of Roman origins, medieval struggles between Asti and the Marquises of Monferrato, and strong 20th-century industrialization. Its name derives from the Latin Quattuordecimum, indicating its distance of 14 miles from Asti along the ancient Roman road. Originating along the route to Alba and Acqui Terme, it served as an important staging post. First mentioned in an official document in 1159 by Frederick Barbarossa, it entered the orbit of the Municipality of Asti, which made it a strategic outpost.



Culture

Worth visiting is the **Castle of Lajone** (1624), a splendid historic residence featuring cellars, an Infernot, and a centuries-old park. Thanks to its position, the village was chosen by several noble families as a holiday retreat. Today, visitors can admire **Casa Sanfront** (seat of the Town Hall), **Palazzo Olivazzi**, **Palazzo Tapparone-Canefri**, and the **Church of San Pietro** from 1781.

Capital of Color

Since 1984, Quattordio has transformed its historic center into an open-air urban art gallery, a true **Street Art Mural Museum**, thanks to top American artists of the era, who later became authentic legends.

Food & Wine Specialties

Quattordio's culinary tradition is a triumph of Monferrato flavors. The flagship local product is the "**Sicòt**" (local zucchini), featured in festivals and events alongside top-quality Piedmontese beef. Here you can sample battered zucchini flowers as well as pickled zucchini and chicken (in carpione). The traditional Sicòt with eggs is served alongside bollito misto piemontese (Piedmontese mixed boiled meat), accompanied by classic bagnet (green and red sauces) and fine Monferrato wines.



ROCCHETTA TANARO

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History

The origins of Rocchetta Tanaro date back to the Roman era, thanks to settlements along the ancient Via Fulvia. The original village core was established around the 10th century. Later, a medieval settlement arose as a strategic checkpoint for the river port and road; during this era, Benedictine monks played a fundamental role in land reclamation and cultivation. Subsequently, the town was historically tied to the noble house of the Marquises of Incisa. Rocchetta Tanaro was also a key hub of Resistance in the Asti region.



Culture

Rocchetta Tanaro created a River Museum inside the Fattoria Roceta, highlighting the historical bond between residents and the river. A visit to the historic center is highly recommended to see the **Castle of the Incisa di Rocchetta** with its cylindrical tower and ancient walls. Religious landmarks worth visiting include the Chapel of the Ciappellette (10th century) and the Church of Saints Nicolao and Stefano in the town center.

Rocchetta Tanaro Natural Park

The main attraction is the **Rocchetta Tanaro Natural Park**: a 123-hectare protected forest area perfect for hiking and cycling amidst ancient woods and vineyards. It houses the charming Romanesque chapel of Sant'Emiliano. The history of this location is tied to the noble Marquises of Incisa, who rose to prominence in the 12th century. The park was championed by Marquis Mario Incisa della Rocchetta, founder and long-time president of WWF Italy. Of botanical significance is a giant beech tree (around 200 years old and 40 meters tall).

Food & Wine Specialties

Among local products, the **"Tirà"** stands out—a leavened cake rich in raisins, traditionally prepared during Carnival. The area is renowned for cultivating the **Asti Square Pepper** (Peperone Quadrato d'Asti) and **Golden Celery** (Sedano Dorato), staples of autumn tables often served raw with classic bagna cauda. Leading local wines include Barbera del Monferrato DOC and Grignolino DOC.



VIGNALE MONFERRATO

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History

Vignale Monferrato has ancient Roman roots. Dominated by a strategic castle, the village was a fiefdom of the Aleramici and later the Palaeologus families, who developed it as a fortified town. It endured centuries of devastation due to Franco-Spanish wars and was repeatedly besieged and sacked, while also suffering severe plague epidemics. With the transition to the House of Savoy, the town found political stability. Architectural gems date to this period, such as the Church of San Bartolomeo designed by architect Magnocavalli. The Counts Callori were the town's chief patrons, with their namesake 17th-century palace.



Culture

The town is dominated by the imposing **Callori Castle** and dotted with fine religious buildings, such as the **Church of San Bartolomeo**, the 17th-century **Church of the Batù**, and the Romanesque **Church of the Addolorata** (also known as “**Church of the Convent**”). Another attraction is **Casa Serpentello**, an open-air artwork where a farmer-artist decorated the façade with terracotta tiles depicting ancient vineyard trades. Another rich museum of rural history is located in San Lorenzo hamlet. The town's Infernot are of great significance. Vignale Monferrato is part of the Vineyard Landscapes of **Piedmont UNESCO World Heritage** site (Core Zone No. 6: “Monferrato of the Infernot”).

The Town of Dance

Created in **1978**, it is one of the most prestigious international dance and performing arts events, transforming town squares and hills into an open-air stage. The festival runs from June through summer with masterclasses, workshops, and widespread performances focused in historic locations like the Upper Gardens of Palazzo Callori in Piazza del Popolo.

Food & Wine Specialties

In Vignale Monferrato, dishes awarded the De.Co. mark include **Bagna Cauda** and **Friculin ad Surcli** (fritters blending vegetables with eggs, breadcrumbs, and Parmesan). These tasty fritters are fried in oil until golden and served as an appetizer or main course. The perfect pairing includes renowned local red wines like **Barbera Superiore DCG** or **Grignolino DOC**.




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**REGIONE
PIEMONTE**



Fondazione
Cassa di Risparmio di
Alessandria



Fondazione
Cassa di Risparmio di Asti



Comune di
Altavilla Monferrato



Comune di
Canagna Monferrato



Comune di
Cerro Tanaro



Comune di
Fubine Monferrato



Comune di
Lu e Cuccaro Monferrato



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Quattordio



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Vignale Monferrato

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