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FEATURES

**MOTOGP: A
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RED BULL RING**

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AT MOTO GIRO
D'ITALIA**

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Italian classics parked outside the hotel in Pesaro

ITALIAN PASSION

From medieval towns to snowcapped peaks, the Moto Giro d'Italia delivers a week of Italian roads, vintage bikes, fine food and global camaraderie

WORDS AND PHOTOS ULI CLOESSEN

A New Zealander on a Benelli, a Brit riding an MV Agusta, a Polish rider aboard his wife's Ducati — at the Moto Giro d'Italia, motorcycle enthusiasts from around the globe come together for a week of Italian roads, shared history, local cuisine and endless curves.

A PASSION FOR MOTORCYCLES

That simple phrase not only captures the spirit of the Moto Giro d'Italia, but also explains why so many riders from all over the world return year after year. When you combine that passion with Italian food, stunning scenery, and the timeless charm of centuries-old towns, you've got the recipe for an unforgettable week.

I had dreamed of riding in the Moto Giro for years. The idea goes back to my days in

southern Germany, when I stumbled across a group of vintage motorcycles parked in a piazza while on holiday in Italy with a friend. That unforgettable scene stayed with me. This year, I finally made it happen. I left my home in New Zealand and embarked on a 26-hour journey to Bologna to fulfil that long-held dream.

The train ride from Bologna to Imola was packed with Ferrari fans headed to the Emilia-Romagna Formula One Grand Prix. My destination lay further east: Pesaro, birthplace of composer Gioachino Rossini and home to motorcycle brand Benelli — this year's start and finish for the Moto Giro.

LOGISTICAL HURDLES

As a non-EU citizen, buying or renting a motorcycle in Italy is no easy feat. Some

rental agencies are hesitant to rent their precious Bellas to non-Europeans. Luckily, Benelli — the event's main sponsor — stepped up and provided me with a Leoncino Trail 500, a modern classic with vintage flair. I was the only participant from Oceania and I'm especially grateful to Michael Cassel, the German Moto Giro liaison who offered guidance and welcomed me into the German rider contingent.

The Moto Giro d'Italia has a storied history. From 1914 to 1957 it was a prestigious road race for motorcycles with 75cc to 175cc engines. During this golden age of Italian motorcycle design, brands like Benelli, Moto Guzzi, Ducati and MV Agusta competed fiercely for glory.

But in 1957, a tragic crash at the Mille Miglia — when a Ferrari left the road and killed 11 people —



ABOVE: Stopping by Valentino Rossi's home town of Tavullia BELOW: A pair of Vespas take a breather in Fermo



The impressive Piazza del Popolo in the hill top town of Fermo



Competitors line up in the Piazza della Repubblica Terni



Theo Däeschlein (Vespa GT60) and Peter Frohnmeyer (Honda CB250RS)

led the Italian government to ban all road racing. The Moto Giro was only revived in 1989, this time by the Moto Club Terni. No longer a speed race, it was reborn as a regularity rally, focused on style, precision and endurance. Today, the event is open to motorcycles of all eras, whether you're riding competitively or cruising in the "tourist" category with no time pressure.

Each rider receives a daily start time and a time card to be stamped at official

"Crono Stops". These checkpoints aren't just for timekeeping — they're also rest and refreshment points offering everything from homemade cake to savoury snacks and drinks, often hosted by local clubs. Some stages even feature skill tests, and the day's results are announced at dinner each evening.

The event is escorted by motorcycle-riding Carabinieri who guide us out of cities — or in true Italian fashion, blast past traffic jams on

the wrong side of the road with lights flashing. Following them feels like riding in your own Giro d'Italia — just with engines instead of pedals.

The route changes every year. In 2025 we rode through five regions: Marche, Emilia-Romagna, Umbria, Lazio and Abruzzo — a varied mix of coastline, rolling hills, mountain passes and medieval towns. Around 1000 miles (1600km) of mostly rural backroads and side streets delivered pure riding pleasure,



The small village of Cerreto di Spoleto is usually home to just 200 inhabitants



A museum visit near Rimini



An immaculate Motobi Catria Sport



1939 Benelli 250 on display in the Hotel Charlie reception area in Pesaro



The entrance to the Benelli Museum in Pesaro



Spectacular views and an espresso in Sellano, in the Province of Perugia

though potholes, cracks and earthquake damage kept us alert. The scenery more than made up for it: fortresses, monasteries, old city walls, sea views, fountains — Italy in full colour.

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS?

The scent of wild broom in bloom along a high ridge road with ocean views. A stop at the Benelli Museum in Pesaro. A massive Valentino Rossi mural in Tavullia. Or the dramatic climb to Campotosto Lake (complete with bear warnings), framed by snowcapped Abruzzo peaks.

We averaged 155 to 185 miles (250-300km) per day. My scheduled start time was 9.33am, and I usually arrived between 5.30 and 6pm. One tip I'm happy to pass on — courtesy of Michael Cassel: always carry cash! Not all gas stations accept credit cards, and some machines don't give change if you overpay. I learned that the hard way. Another adjustment: remembering to ride on the right side of the road — unlike New Zealand, where we drive on the left.

Evening dinners began, in classic Italian style, around 8.30pm. But the wait was worth it: multi-course meals with pasta, wine and local flair were a daily highlight, served at the host hotels.

BIKE VERDICT

My Benelli Leoncino Trail 500 — start number 86 — fitted right in with its spoked wheels and vintage design. The longer suspension made rough roads much more tolerable. The bike ran strong, sounded great, and had plenty of power — until about 30 miles (50km) from the finish, when the engine started sputtering. I called for the event's tow and made it just in time for the final gala dinner back in Pesaro.

The fuel injection was a little jerky at low speeds and the fuel gauge wasn't very accurate — especially in the first half of the tank. But overall, the Leoncino was a trusty companion. I could easily see myself adding a 500 — or even an 800 — to my own garage.

HEART, CRAFT AND CAMARADERIE

The Moto Giro d'Italia is more than a motorcycle event. It's a rolling museum, an international class reunion, and a time-



Guzzi at Montefiore dell'Aso

travelling ride that blends past and present. For those who embrace the spirit of it, the Giro delivers more than just curvy roads — it creates a sense of community. And maybe, just maybe, it helps you find a new home in the saddle of an old machine.

The 2026 Moto Giro d'Italia will take place in Sardinia from 24-30 May. Registrations have now started via the Moto Giro website at www.motogiroitalia.it, where the organiser also makes suggestions about motorcycle hire for the event. **ARR**

THE RIDERS: PEOPLE AND MACHINES

What makes the Moto Giro truly special isn't just the scenery or the machines — it's the people.

Here are a few stories from the paddock:

Daryl Harris (Ireland): Rode a rented 1972 Motobi 125. A first-time participant drawn by his love of Italy — and he clearly enjoyed every minute.

Roland Fröjd (Sweden): Chose a 1985 dual sport Moto Morini Kanguro 350 — perfect for rough roads.

Birger Börslin (Sweden): Former Moto Morini importer. Rode a 1983 3½ Sport he bought back from its first owner in 1990.

Rüdiger Kohlmetz (Germany): On a 1959 Parilla 175 Special. This was his second Giro; he appreciated the milder May temperatures compared to last year's scorching Milano-Taranto.

Julien Pearl (UK/USA): Rode a 350cc MV Agusta built by a father-son team near Genoa. For him, the Moto Giro is

"the Mille Miglia for the rest of us".

Vincent Speet (Netherlands): Brought his 1330cc Egli-Godet Vincent — a tech-lover's dream.

Peter Frohnmeier (Germany): Rode a 1980 Honda CB250RS. A classic race veteran, web pioneer, and founder of classic-motorrad.de

Zed Zawada (Poland/UK): Rode his wife's 250 Desmo Ducati. A co-founder of *Classic Bike* magazine, Zed is deeply connected to the vintage scene.

Carsten Feuss (Germany): Rode his 1973 Laverda 750. First-time Giro rider, though his collection includes bikes from the 1920s and '30s.

Uli Cloesen (New Zealand): That's me. A German-born moto-journalist now based in Christchurch — this was my first Giro, and certainly not my last.

Theo Däschlein (Germany): Piloted a Vespa GT60. A well-known name in the scooter and sidecar scene.