

RALLIES & CLUBS

Rolling Vintage

Motogiro d'Italia 2025



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

I had dreamed of riding in the Motogiro 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. 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 fulfill 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 farther east: Pesaro, birthplace of composer

Gioachino Rossini, home to motorcycle brand Benelli, and this year's start and finish for the Motogiro.

As a non-EU citizen, renting a motorcycle in Italy is no easy feat. Rental agencies are hesitant to rent their precious Italian machines to non-Europeans. Luckily, Benelli – the event's main sponsor – stepped up and provided me with a Leoncino 500 Trail, a

Above: One of the checkpoints during the 2025 Motogiro d'Italia was in Valentino Rossi's hometown of Tavullia. **Left:** This is the start of the rally in Pesaro. Each of the more than 150 riders had a designated start time at the beginning of each day.



modern classic with vintage flair. I was the only participant from Oceania, and I'm grateful to Michael Cassel, the German Motogiro liaison, who offered guidance and welcomed me into the German rider contingent.

The Motogiro d'Italia has a storied history. From 1914 to 1957, it was a prestigious roadrace for motorcycles with 75cc to 175cc engines, with brands like Benelli, Moto Guzzi, Ducati, and MV Agusta competing fiercely for glory. But in 1957, a tragic crash at the Mille Miglia – when a Ferrari left the road and killed 11 people – prompted the Italian government to ban all road racing.

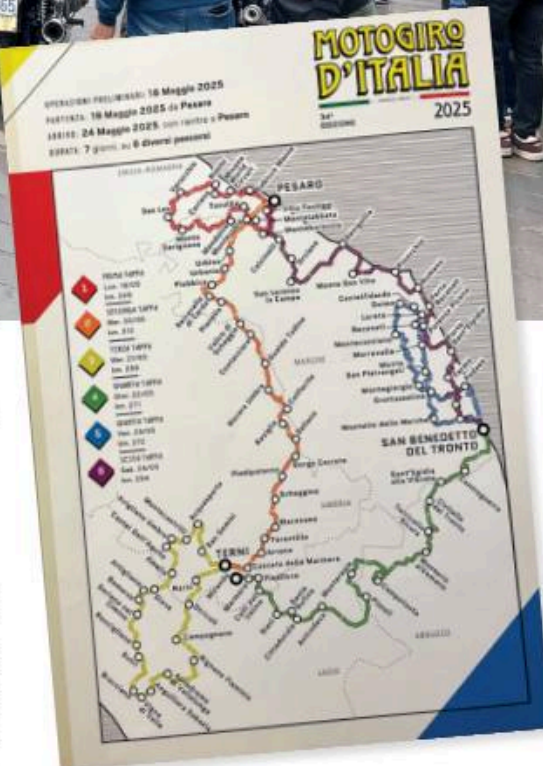
The Motogiro was revived in 1989 by Moto Club Terni. No longer a speed race, it was reborn as a rally, focused on style, precision, and endurance. Today, the event is open to motorcycles of all eras, whether you're riding competitively or cruising in the tourist category with no time pressure.

Above: Motogiro riders arrive at Piazza della Repubblica in Terni. **Right:** The route map for the 2025 Motogiro d'Italia, which covered about 1,000 miles. The route changes each year, and in 2026 it will be in Sardinia.

Each rider receives a daily start time and a timecard to be stamped at official checkpoints, which are used not only for timekeeping but as rest and refreshment stops offering everything from homemade cake to savory 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 guided us out of cities – or in true Italian fashion, blasted past traffic jams on the wrong side of the road with lights flashing.

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 1,000 miles of mostly rural backroads and side streets delivered pure riding pleasure, though potholes, cracks, and earthquake damage kept us alert. The scenery more than made up for the obstacles: fortresses, monasteries, old city walls, sea views, fountains – Italy in full color.



Above: A group of *sbandieratori* (Italian flag wavers) welcomes riders to Narni.
Right: The author with his borrowed Benelli Leoncino 500 Trail in Terni.



Unforgettable moments? Plenty. The scent of wild broom along a high ridge road with ocean views. A stop at the Benelli Museum in Pesaro. A massive Valentino Rossi mural in Tavullia. The dramatic climb to Campotosto Lake, framed by snowcapped Abruzzo peaks.

We averaged 155 to 185 miles per day. My scheduled start time was 9:33 a.m., and I usually finished the day's ride between 5:30 and 6 p.m. 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.

Evening dinners began, in classic Italian style, around 8:30 p.m. But the wait was worth it: multicourse meals with pasta, wine, and local flair, served at the host hotels.

My Benelli Leoncino 500 Trail – No. 86 – fit right in with its spoked wheels and vintage design. The longer suspension made rough roads tolerable. The bike ran strong, sounded great, and had plenty of power – until about 30 miles from the finish, when the engine started sputtering. I called for a tow and made it just in time for the final gala dinner back in Pesaro.

Bike verdict? The fuel injection was a little jerky at low speeds, and the fuel gauge wasn't very accurate. But overall, the Leoncino was a playful companion, and I could easily see adding one to my own garage.

The Motogiro d'Italia is more than a motorcycle event. It's a rolling

museum, an international class reunion, and a time-traveling ride that blends past and present. For those who embrace the spirit of the Motogiro, it 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. **①**

The 2026 Motogiro d'Italia will take place May 24–30 in Sardinia. For more information, visit MotogiroItalia.it.



Uli Cloesen was born in Stuttgart, Germany. Cloesen currently lives in Christchurch, New Zealand, where he writes about motorcycles. He is the author of seven books on custom bikes and cafe racers, published by Veloce in the U.K.



Julien stands proudly with his MV Agusta 350. The mix of riders and vintage bikes made for a memorable event.

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MOTOGIRO D'ITALIA

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