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## **AUTUMN RIDES TO INSPIRE Puglia, the Veneto, Provence, and Burgundy**

TORONTO, Canada — For the trip designers at Gray & Co., it's important to always be a step—or two—ahead. That's why as you're marveling at the cherry blossoms and slipping into summer mode, they're plotting fall's must-do escapes. Because we all know that when the leaves start to fall and school's back in—no matter how many decades ago that mattered—you're going to feel that irresistible pull to experience Europe in autumn. Specifically, you're going to want to spin through vines just as they're turning golden, and pedal to medieval villages as they summer tourists dwindle. After all, who wouldn't? This fall, Gray & Co. recommends four sublime autumn destinations: Burgundy and Provence in France, and Puglia and the Veneto in idyllic Italia.

Burgundy and Provence offer tastes of quintessential France: cobblestone villages, elegant châteaux, bucolic landscapes, and charming cafés. In Burgundy, the vine reins supreme, and pedaling through renowned vineyards and into the hills of the Haute Côtes during the day make evening tastings all the more rewarding. The great villages of Volnay, Meursault, Pommard, and Puligny-Montrachet are easily reached on two wheels from Beaune, home to the intimate L'Hôtel de Beaune—along with countless bistros, Michelin-starred restaurants, historic sites, and charming shops.

In Provence, the village names are just as recognizable—if for different reasons. Think Mènèrbes and Gordes, Lacoste and Les Baux. Here, the legacy of the Romans is as vivid as Van Gogh's inspirations: landscapes characterized by sunflowers and lavender, cypress and olive trees. Fortunately, fabulous hotels are as ubiquitous as starry nights, with gems like the Château des Alpilles, La Bastide de Marie, and Couvent de Minimes offering perfectly authentic yet luxurious accommodations.

In Italy, the Veneto and Puglia offer somewhat off-the-beaten-path experiences. In the former, Amarone and risotto fight for top billing with 16th century architecture and the charms of Lake Garda and scenic little Bassano del Grappa. In Asolo, the Villa Cipriani is a fabulous country hotel that was once the home of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (not to mention the Guinness family).

Regardless of where you find yourself, culinary revelations are everywhere—but perhaps nowhere so authentically as in Puglia, the understated heel of Italy's mostly glamorous boot. Here, agricultural riches combined with a lack of affluence make for such rustic pleasures as simply cooked seafood and tomato-based pasta dishes. Just as impressive as its olive oil are the region's whitewashed villages, Adriatic views, Baroque treasures, charming *trulli*, and the five-star Masseria Torre Maizza.

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