

GEOGRAVEL. TUSCANY LE STRADE GRIGIE

23/24 September 2023

GeoGravel Tuscany, good first shot

Gravellers from all over Italy took part in the first edition of the event conceived by Paolo Bettini, a weekend of festivities attended by personalities such as Paolo Kesisoglu, Giovanni Vernia, Luca Paolini and Nicholas Roche.

Paolo Bettini has been dreaming of this event since 2020, a gravel festival that would show the world the wonders of the Strade Grigie and the geothermal area of Tuscany.

This weekend the dream finally came true.

In the splendid setting of Pomarance (PI), a real gravel festival was held, where sport and party merged to offer something unique to everyone, from the nearly 200 gravellers who came to the event to the local population.

Everything started on Friday afternoon with the inauguration of the GeoVillage set up in 'Il Piazzone', which housed the various sponsors' stands, the marquee stage, the kitchens and all the organisation coordinated by the guys from Velo Etruria di Pomarance.

The first to set off to discover the Strade Grigie were the daredevils who took on the Ultra route (240km with 5000m of climbing), which started on Saturday afternoon.

Among them was former pro Nicholas Roche, who after a career on the road has discovered the thrill of cycling on gravel.

Saturday night was the big party.

About a thousand people from all over Tuscany (and beyond) attended the concert by DJ Federico Scavo, who gave the right charge to tackle the next day's three routes with two hours of great music.

Sunday morning was indeed the highlight of the event: almost 200 people set off to admire the beauty of the geothermal area, some on the short (46 km), some on the medium (90 km) and some on the long (110 km) route.

Among them were some familiar faces: Paolo Kesisoglu, Giovanni Vernia, Marco Bandiera and Luca Paolini.

At the finish, there was a pasta party prepared by the volunteers of Pomarance.

There, in the beautiful square near the town centre, with the dust still on their legs and the wonder of the landscapes they had just ridden across still in their eyes, they toasted with old and new friends to these three days of celebration on the Strade Grigie, the first edition of GeoGravel Tuscany.

At the end of the event, Paolo Bettini summed up his impressions as follows:

"I am delighted with the way things have gone, I have seen with my own eyes a dream come true.

Let me thank all those who made it possible, the sponsors, the volunteers, all the participants who chose to come to Pomarance for this weekend of celebration.

This event has convinced me even more that the focus on slow cycling - which really allows you to discover all the excellence of an area - is the winning formula.

Of course, as with all firsts, there is still room for improvement and thanks to the comments and suggestions we have received from participants over the past few days, we will be able to organise a second edition that I am sure will be even better."