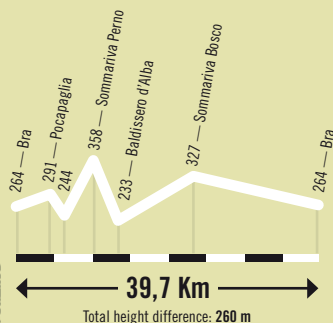


# On the Trail of the 'Masche'

cicloturismo  
nelle Langhe e nel Roero



The first part of this route does not present a challenge as far as gain in altitude is concerned and the second part includes a long flat stretch. For this reason it is ideal for less expert cyclists. The route begins and ends in Bra, a town of considerable interest for its Baroque architecture. This is where the Slow Food movement was founded and is probably the most important urban area of the Roero region. From Bra, you continue towards the heart of the Roero and the town of Pocalpaglia, with breath-taking views of the 'Rocche', dramatically barren hills of sand and clay which possess very little vegetation and are totally in contrast to the lush and verdant colours of the nearby Langa Wine Hills. Along the way,





the visitor will also have the opportunity to admire tumbling inland cliffs close to the 'Rocche' with thick woodland growing right to their edges. Forested land alternates with local cultivations and there are some wonderful views to be had as you cycle among these starkly contrasting elements of landscape. It isn't surprising that local legends about the mysterious creatures known as 'masche'

are abundant. The 'masche', a term in Piedmontese dialect, are a kind of wicked witch although the word can also be used to indicate evil wood sprites. One of the most famous local witches, or 'masche', was from Pocapaglia and it is easy to imagine her gaze penetrating through the fronds of the trees as you bowl through the lovely woodlands towards Sommariva Perno. As you near this town, the amount of cultivated land increases, with the appearance of vineyards and commercial fruit orchards. Along the way, visitors can choose to deviate slightly from the indicated route to take a break for a tasty snack in one of the nearby villages – Baldissero d'Alba, Monteu Roero or Ceresole d'Alba, for example, or continue undisturbed until they come to the Roero town of Sommariva del Bosco, known for its yearly honey festival, called 'Amè l'Amel' ('loving honey' in dialect). From here, the country road will take you back to Bra, where we advise a glass of good local wine to accompany the excellent local veal sausage, of which locals are justifiably proud.

