



Ciclovie del Toce Cycling through the woods

○ TC (VERY EASY)

The route starts from **Vogogna** and reaches **Ornavasso**, crossing the central stretch of the **Toce valley** between cultivated fields and lowland forests. It also crosses **Bosco Tenso**, a **natural oasis** established in 1990 by the municipality of Premosello and the **WWF** section of Verbania to protect the last remnant of lowland forest in the Toce valley, once extensive throughout the Ossola and now drastically reduced and fractionated. The area is vital for the presence of a rich avifauna, both permanent and migratory. The oasis is equipped with a series of bulletin boards describing the animal species in the area.

From the **historic center of Vogogna** (Palazzo Pretorio), go down Via Lossetti Mandelli until it crosses Via Nazionale. Follow the bicycle path that crosses the road after a few dozen meters to take Via Porto di Megolo. Immediately after the railroad underpass, continue on a dirt country road that continues until you cross a second railroad underpass and reach a small group of stone houses. Turn left here and continue along small country roads (muddy in places) until the road turns into a bicycle path. The track continues to be beautiful and relaxing among flower meadows, crops, and majestic trees until it reaches and crosses the **WWF Oasis of Bosco Tenso**. The track ends just before a railroad underpass. From here, you have **two options**:

1. from the underpass, turn right, skirting the railroad for a short distance, and then turn right along the bicycle path for about a kilometer, taking you to the confluence area between the Toce River and a side stream (Rio Crotta). Here, the bicycle path ends, and it is necessary to descend to ford the stream, which is almost always dry, and then climb back up the other side where the natural-bottomed bicycle path begins again and continues through the fields toward Cuzzago. This solution is **to be avoided in case the ford is impassable**;
2. in case of rain in the previous days or in case the ford is impassable, **it is advisable to take the railway underpass and lead to the provincial road**. Travel along it for about 900 m in the direction of Cuzzago, and immediately after the bridge over Rio Crotta, take the first underpass on the right, immediately finding the natural bottom bicycle path that continues toward Cuzzago. With this solution, the ford is avoided.

The bicycle path continues between corn fields. It is often **very sandy**, and wheels that make a good grip are needed (**mountain bike recommended**). When you reach the underpass leading to the **Cuzzago train station**, turn right, and after less than 200 m, turn right again, always following the signs for a promiscuous bicycle/pedestrian path until you cross the provincial road leading to the nearby **Ponte di Migiandone**. There are no alternative roads from here, so one must necessarily follow, paying close attention, the provincial road. Actually, traffic is always light because the nearby freeway absorbs it. You then cross the Migiandone bridge and continue along the road until you pass the built-up area of **Teglia**, where a new stretch of paved bicycle path begins on the right that reaches the **Punta di Migiandone**, with the large square marked by two imposing cannons that mark the beginning of the "**Linea Cadorna**" footpaths. From the square, equipped with a picnic area, toilets, and drinking fountain, continue along the bicycle path that skirts the tree-lined avenue.



Continue along the provincial road until you reach the outskirts of the village of **Ornavasso**, where the bicycle path ends. You will then cross the Bridge over the Rio San Carlo, reaching the center of Ornavasso village.

Alternatively, from the Punta di Migliandone, you can follow the broad path that skirts the mountain's base and arrives at **Lago delle Rose**. From here, take the road back to the provincial road that leads to the village.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The route is overall easy and flat, with a few muddy sections. It is not recommended after periods of heavy rainfall.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. ford on the Crotta stream between Premosello and Cuzzago
2. a section on ordinary roads (provincial road) from Ponte di Migliandone to Teglia (also in the hamlet of Migliandone di Ornavasso)
3. a section on the ordinary road (provincial road) before Ornavasso

TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Ossola / Bassa Ossola
Place of departure:	Vogogna
Place of arrival:	Ornavasso
Number of legs:	1
Length:	14.0 km
Height difference:	24
Total ascent:	10 m indicative
Total descent:	25 m indicative
Difficulty:	TC very easy
Average duration:	1 hour 30 minutes
Minimum altitude:	204 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	228 m.a.s.l. (Vogogna)
Degree of cyclability:	total
Recommended period:	March-October. Doable year-round, however
Presence of dedicated signage:	yes
Target Audience:	for families/bicycle tourists / cyclo-hikers



EATERIES

Vogogna, Premosello, Cuzzago, Migiandone, Lago delle Rose, Ornavasso.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

VOGOGNA - At Castello Visconteo - 28887 Omegna (VB), Tel. +39 0324 87200,
turismo@comune.vogogna.vb.it

MERGOZZO - Corso Roma, 20 28802 Mergozzo (VB), Tel. +39 0323 800935,
e-mail: turismo@comune.mergozzo.vb.it

BIKE SERVICE

Dadebike, **Sales-Shop**, Via Vittorio Veneto, 75 - 28877 ORNAVASSO (VB), Tel. +39 342
7271804, dadebike@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/dadebike

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

Vogogna is a historic center with numerous 17th—to 18th-century buildings, including Castello Visconteo (mid-14th century), Palazzo Pretorio, and Villa Biraghi Lossetti, built in 1650. It now houses the headquarters of the Parco Nazionale della Val Grande.

Educational Oasis of Bosco Tenso: it was established in 1990 on municipally owned land. The area, managed by the municipality, covers about 22 hectares. Numerous varieties of plants, such as Lime trees, Ash trees, Oak trees, Dogwoods, White Alders, Black Poplars, Willows, Mountain Elms, Maples, and Cherry trees, can be seen inside. Foxes and deer can be encountered there, as well as about 40 species of birds, including Green Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, Cuckoos, Cormorants, Montagu's Harrier, and Jays. An area equipped for organizing country parties with a kitchen and large roofed areas has recently been set up near Bosco Tenso. A private riding school nearby allows visitors to also engage in relaxing horseback riding in the Premosello countryside.

Linea Cadorna: this system of military fortifications was meant to defend Italy's northern border close to Switzerland. It was named after the then Chief of Staff of the Army, General Luigi Cadorna of Pallanza, who promoted it. In the Ossola valley and Verbano, it covers an elevation difference of 2,000 m between the Toce plain and Monte Massone and between Lake Maggiore and Monte Zeda.

The system of fortifications was built along the Italo-Swiss border between the summer of 1915 and the spring of 1918, during the First World War, at a time when there were fears that, penetrating from the Alpine passes of the Swiss Central Alps, Austro-German troops could quickly reach and occupy the industrial and economic nerve centers of our country.



The "Linea Cadorna" was never used and was abandoned. Today, these military mule tracks make it possible to walk the mountains and the fortifications, from which not a single cannon was ever fired, providing an opportunity to learn about a tragic moment in the 20th-century's history.

Punta di Migliandone and Forte di Bara: Between the defensive line at the bottom of the valley and the Bara fort, the mountain ridge sees lines of overlapping trenches to the north and the service mule track protected by the mountain to the south; numerous tunnels in the rock allow the connection between the works. The Linea Cadorna works could be for infantry or artillery; the latter had to be equipped with different pieces, such as cannons, howitzers, and mortars. The route of the mule tracks had to adapt to the conditions of the terrain, and the maximum slope for long stretches had to be at most 12% to allow mules laden with weapons and ammunition to travel along them. Since these were tactical roads (of minor importance), mule tracks were built without prior design: while one team defined the route, others began work.

Valley Bottom Bunker: between the Punta di Migliandone, where the mountainous ridge that descends from the Cima Tre Croci peak melts into the Toce plain, and the steep rampart of the Nibbio horns, there is 700 m of the plain. It is the narrowest point in the Ossola Valley, which has always been a compulsory passage to access the border crossings with Switzerland. Between the Bara spur and the course of the Toce, a continuous line of walkways below ground level led to concrete artillery bunkers (still visible) suitable to withstand the impact of a frontal attack. In front of them, in a northerly direction, minefields would have been made and Frisian horse lines placed.

Oratory of San Bernardo: The country oratory of San Bernardo (17th cent.) was reached by the Rogazioni, the processions that took place seasonally in the Ornavasso countryside to propitiate good harvests and which took place until 1963. Here, in 1890, historian Enrico Bianchetti discovered a necropolis of the Leponti (the inhabitants of the Ossola Valley in the 1st millennium BC) whose finds are now on display at the **"Bianchetti" archaeological museum** in the Town Hall. The main inhumation tombs revealed rich grave goods characterized by large iron swords, fibulae (spring clips) made of silver and bronze, terracotta "whirligig" vases, precious jewelry sets (rings, bracelets, and pendants), and wine services from Etruria. The Leponti spoke ancient Celtic language and wrote using the "Lugano alphabet" (unique Etruscan letters used north of the Po River).

Ornavasso, "Enrico Bianchetti" archaeological museum: this archaeological collection owned by the Museo del Paesaggio-known internationally since the late 19th century, located in the Ornavasso branch and can be visited by appointment. The visit to the "Enrico Bianchetti" Archaeological Section includes an audio guide, which can be activated on-site via QRcode. Visitors will have the opportunity to be accompanied on a tour of the museum by the narrating voices of the ancient owners of the exhibits, who will tell their own stories and those of the preserved objects.

Ornavasso, Parish Museum of Sacred Art: The collection houses valuable works of sacred art (sculptures and paintings) once scattered in the village churches and dating from the 14th to the 18th century.



Ornavasso, House Museum of the Partisan "Alfredo Di Dio": The Museum houses documents, manuscripts, photographs, and artifacts that testify to the life of the "Valtoce," a partisan division that made a strong contribution to the liberation and defense of the territory. Alfredo Di Dio, with Dionigi Superti, commander of the "Valdossola," signed the surrender of Domodossola, from which the splendid experience of the forty days of freedom of the Ossola Republic was born.

Nearby

PREMOSELLO CHIOVENDA

Parish Church of Maria Vergine Assunta: dates from the late 16th century or the first decades of the following century. Inside, it preserves valuable Baroque-style wooden furnishings: the confessionals, pulpit, and a sacristy cupboard. A fragment of a fresco, datable to the early 16th century and found under the plaster of the left aisle, remains the only relic of the oldest construction.

CUZZAGO hamlet of PREMOSELLO CHIOVENDA

The hamlet was an autonomous municipality until 1928, when, by government provision, it was annexed to the municipality of Premosello. Today, it has 447 inhabitants. It is embellished by old patrician houses from the 17th to 19th centuries, witnesses of ancient wealth; the 17th-century parish church is dedicated to St. Martin. In the village square, the recently restored old turnery dairy (Museo Ca' Vegia) houses a small collection of objects related to the ancient dairy chain. It is also a venue for temporary exhibitions and cultural events.

Cuzzago Railway Station Gardens: A peculiarity of Cuzzago station is its Italian-style gardens, commissioned in the 1980s by stationmaster Gabriele Carboni. In addition to the plants in the flowerbeds, which are usually found in other stations, Carboni also wanted to add other characteristic architecture, such as a model of the Tower of Pisa, statues recalling the fairy tale Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, a miniature castle, and others. In 1989, the station won the title of "Italy's most beautiful station" as part of a competition held among station managers who tended their respective gardens. Carboni oversaw its preservation until the station became crewless. The latter event affected their maintenance, which today lies in neglect.

Church of Madonna dello Scopello: once used as a lazaret during the terrible plague of 1600, then by vow transformed into a church; stands on a natural rise above the Domodossola-Milan railroad and the Ossola Valley provincial road no.166 at the end of the village of Cuzzago in the direction of Premosello. The plague epidemic that struck the area was the one Manzoni mentioned in "The Betrothed" at the same time in Milan. By that time, the Badger (*Taxus Baccata*) specimen, whose age is estimated to be around 500 years old, would have been present. The veracity of the age is proved by the unusual size of the Badger (about 3m in circumference and 16 meters in height); such plants grow slowly over time, and comparing such specimens with others on the Italian territory, other interesting information about the long-life span emerges.



MIGIANDONE hamlet of ORNAVASSO

Shrine of Madonna di Oropa: The Black Madonna is venerated throughout Europe, particularly at Oropa in the Biella mountains, Einsiedeln in the Swiss Alps, and Czestochowa in Poland. The "Black Lady" of Einsiedeln (Notre Dame des Hermites) is venerated by the Walser people in Migliandone and Ayas in the Lys Valley, who consider her the bringer of rain during prolonged drought. The Shrine of Madonna di Oropa on the mountain of Migliandone was built in 1820 at the behest of Gaspare Bessero, a gold prospector who made his fortune in the Anzasca Valley. He had lost his rich gold seam in the mine, and, passing under the mountains of Oropa in the Biella region, he vowed to that Madonna to erect a shrine if he found it again. And so, it happened...

ORNAVASSO

Shrine of Madonna del Boden (Boden = plain in the Walser language of Ornavasso): it is one of the major centers of Marian worship in Verbano Cusio Ossola and has been the destination of participatory pilgrimages for five centuries. The shrine commemorates the apparition of Our Lady to the shepherdess Maria Della Torre on September 7, 1528. It was built beginning in 1530, expanding a pre-existing chapel, and took on its present appearance in the 1930s. The iconography of the Virgin of the Boden is that of a Madonna "of the chair": the Mother, with crowned head, is seated on a throne, the Child is blessing with her left hand, while with her right hand, she holds the crusader globe, symbolizing Jesus' reign in heaven and on earth. The shrine preserves an essential collection of ex-voto tablets that allow us to read centuries of popular devotion. The location on which the shrine was built makes this place especially popular with bikers. Since 2009, the BV del Boden has been identified as the patron saint of those who practice the sport, and since 2011, she has twinned with the Ghisallo Shrine.

Ancient Marble Quarry: Ornavasso marble, already used in ancient times, gained importance in the late 14th century for erecting Milan Cathedral and other Lombard monuments. The "Casino" quarry was active in the first half of the twentieth century (52 workers in 1939); a 192-m-long tunnel provides access to a large 16-m-high final hall in which the pink marble lode that is a continuation of that of Candoglia, on the opposite side of the Toce valley, is put to live. The quarry can be visited and is intended for educational use and events.

Church and tower of the Guardia: the church is located above the village of Ornavasso, about 200 meters from the parish church of S. Nicolao, along the road leading to the Boden Shrine. The "Della Guardia" Shrine takes its name from the promontory of the same name on which it stands, so named still today because of the presence of an ancient signal tower dating back to the early 14th century, which was part of a defensive watchtower system composed of towers visually communicating with each other.



Standards of behavior

1. Stay on the trails

Respect the trail and any prohibitions on access. Respect private property.

2. Leave no trace

Respect the land. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable than dry trails. Stay on existing trails, and do not create new ones. Don't take shortcuts by cutting corners. Take any litter with you.

3. Ride carefully

A moment's distraction can endanger both yourself and others. Abide by speed limits and ride so that you can always control your bicycle. Always wear a helmet.

4. Don't scare the animals

Animals are easily startled by an abrupt approach, sudden movement, or loud noise. Allow them enough space and time to adjust to your presence.

5. Give right of way

These trails are not only for bicycle use but also shared by hikers on foot. So, especially downhill, speed should be moderated: around a bend, someone may be coming up. Let other trail users know you will overtake them through a friendly greeting or a bell. Bikers must give way to all non-motorized trail users. Bikers proceeding downhill should provide the right of way to those going uphill. Make any overtaking as safe and polite as possible.



**REMINDER:
BIKERS MUST ALWAYS GIVE WAY TO OTHER
USERS**



RULES OF CONDUCT FOR BIKERS

Since the first mountain bikes appeared, the NORBA (National Off-Road Bicycle Association) drew up a code of conduct intended to regulate off-road activity with full respect for nature and other frequenters of the mountains and trails.

Many clubs, organizations, associations, and schools throughout Italy have adopted the NORBA Code. It consists of a series of general tips that, if followed carefully, can help make this sporting and hiking practice so much in vogue today more enjoyable for everyone.

N.O.R.B.A Code

1. Always give priority to hikers on foot.
2. Slow down and use extreme caution when approaching and overtaking walkers or other cyclo-hikers. Always signal your arrival well in advance, avoid cackling or shouting, apologize, and greet politely.
3. Always keep the speed of the mountain bike under control and approach turns with extreme caution, anticipating sudden obstacles. The pace should be commensurate with the type of terrain, the type of trail, and each person's experience.
4. Always stay within the marked path, thus minimizing environmental impact (permanent damage to surrounding vegetation and subsequent soil erosion).
5. Do not disturb or frighten domestic or wild animals; give them time to move away and off the path.
6. Do not, for any reason, leave garbage as a result of your passage; you should pick up your own and, when possible, also those abandoned by other "distracted" hikers.
7. Always respect private and public property, leaving gates, mobile barriers, or bars as they are found. In any case, go directly to the landowners to ask for permission to pass. "No trespassing" often means "Please ask permission if you want to pass."
8. It is always advisable to be self-sufficient during cycle hiking. The destination to be reached and the speed at which one moves should be proportionate to the psychophysical fitness and skill of the biker, the equipment, the environment, the terrain, and, above all, the weather conditions.



9. Never undertake a cycle tour alone, except in cases of force majeure. Stay away from isolated areas distant from major roads, and always leave clear directions regarding the route to be taken and the estimated return time.
10. Minimizing the impact with nature: stealing only images and memories and leaving, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of one's bike.