

The loop itinerary starts from Domodossola and includes discovering the rural hamlets of the lower Bognanco Valley. The history of human settlements on the Piedmont strip tells the collective adventure of small rural communities constantly engaged in an arduous struggle against the roughness and harshness of the mountains. It is a fascinating story because it is so far removed from us, and it skilfully shapes the land by creating possibilities for life in an environment dominated by vertical coordinates.

The route starts from **Domodossola International Station**. We recommend the large parking lot "della Vigezzina" in Via Piave, behind the train station, for those coming by car.

Leaving the station, go straight along **Corso Paolo Ferraris**; at the second crossroads, take a left along **Corso Fratelli Di Dio** to reach the small town hall square, and continue straight along **Via Garibaldi** to the next small square from which several roads depart and take the second left, **Via Rosmini**, which then becomes **Via Matterella** coming to the intersection with **Tangenziale Dalla Chiesa**. **You go** up to the right along the Tangenziale, pass two traffic circles, and continue until the intersection with **Via Giuseppe Di Vittorio**. Take a left and climb until you reach the road bridge over the Bogna River. Cross the bridge and, soon after, leave the main road to enter the small paved road through the center of **Mocogna**, reaching the small oratory. A little further on, you reach a small square with a stone fountain. The mule track begins at Cisore and Monteossolano (trail D00- Via Stockalper Val Bognanco). Start to climb along the cart road; at the little chapel, turn left and continue past a couple of hairpin bends until you reach the village of **Cisore**, crossing the carriage road. Now, continue the carriage road that climbs with steep switchbacks until you reach **Pregliasca** and, finally, **Monteossolano**. Past the parking lot, a last steep section leads to the center of the village, which you cross until you reach the beautiful Church of San Gottardo with a viewpoint over the valley. Take the D00 trail from the church again, which continues halfway up the hillside and leads to the characteristic **Dagliano Oratory** dedicated to San Rocco.

Leave the mule track to take a steeply descending cattle track behind the oratory that becomes a coarsely paved track that reaches the village of **Pianezza**, which is also worth a brief visit to see a characteristic old grape press. From Pianezza, with a final steep paved section, descend to cross the Bognanco Valley provincial road. Take a right and climb about 150 m to the prominent

**stone bridge** that crosses the river. Take the bridge, follow the mule track with some steep sections, and climb to the hamlet of **San Marco**. From here, take the small asphalt road that, halfway up the hillside, returns to cross the valley provincial road in the hamlet of **Campeglio**, which you follow uphill for about 300 m to the junction for Bosco and Pioi. A challenging winding climb begins with some very steep sections. The two villages of **Bosco** and **Pioi** are worth visiting for the beautiful stone architecture and peaceful atmosphere. 200 m before Pioi, a forest track climbs toward Alpe Barca and Alpe Manzano. Follow it for about 400 m, and at the second hairpin bend, a path comes off that descends to cross the one coming from Pioi (which, however, cannot be pedalled uphill). Take a right, and with a mid-slope path, you pass a first valley that leads to a handful of rural houses, **Crestapiana**, perched on a moraine ridge. The trail continues downhill to a small wooden bridge over the **Rio Molezzano** and continues a midslope, with some challenging sections where you must carry your bike for short stretches. After passing another vallecola, you reach the small group of houses of **Alpe Pontasca**, where a dirt consortium track starts and descends to the small village of **Bei**. After crossing the village, take the carriage road that descends to cross the Domodossola-Alpe Lusentino Road. Follow it downhill to the hamlets of **Tagliaroli** and **Sala**, where on the left you take the mule track that descends into the center of **Vagna** with the beautiful parish church of San Brizio. From the town center, a wide mule track descends to the hamlet of **Castanedo**, where it crosses Via Giuseppe di Vittorio, and continues uphill. Follow the town route on the outward journey back to the **Domodossola station**.

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The route alternates between steep paved sections and trail and mule track sections.

Always remember that trails and mule tracks are not exclusively for bicycles, so speed should always be moderated, especially when approaching curves or blind spots. The same behaviour should be observed when crossing small hamlets and mountain pastures.

## POINTS OF ATTENTION

The section from Crestapiana to Alpe Pontasca has some narrow and somewhat exposed trail sections and short sections with rocks or steps uphill that force you to get out of the saddle and lead the bike by hand for a few meters.

## TECHNICAL DATA

Relevant geographical area: Verbano Cusio Ossola / Ossola / Bognanco Valley

Place of departure: Domodossola (Railway Station 270 m)

Place of arrival: Domodossola (Railway Station 270 m)

Number of legs: 1

Length: 25 km

Total ascent: 1100 m indicative

Total descent: 1100 m indicative

Difficulty: BC (MEDIUM)

Average duration: 2 hours 30 minutes

Minimum altitude: 270 m asl (Domodossola Railway Station)

Highest altitude reached: 907 m asl (track hairpin bend above Pioi)

Degree of cyclability: Good

Recommended period: April - November

Presence of dedicated signage: No

Target Audience: Mtb lover

## VANTAGE POINTS

Monteossolano, Pioi, Alpe Pontasca, Bei

## EATERIES

Domodossola, Mocogna, Vagna

## TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

DOMODOSSOLA - Piazza Matteotti c/o Railway Station - 28845 Domodossola (VB), Tel. +39 0324 248265, [infopoint@visitossola.it](mailto:infopoint@visitossola.it)

BOGNANCO TERME - Via Cavallini - 28842 Bognanco (VB), Tel. +39 0324 234127, [info.prolocobognanco@gmail.com](mailto:info.prolocobognanco@gmail.com)

## BIKE SERVICE

Ciclomania Barale, **Sale-Shop-Hire**, Via Papa Giovanni XXIII, 64 - 28845 DOMODOSSOLA (VB), Tel. +39 0324 241203, [info@ciclomania.com](mailto:info@ciclomania.com) , [www.ciclomania.com](http://www.ciclomania.com)

Il Ciclista di Calvetti Fabio & Brusco Stefano, **Sale-Shop-Rental**, Corso, Via Ferdinando Disegna, 10 - 28845 DOMODOSSOLA (VB), Tel. +39 0324 227400, [ilciclista.snc@tiscali.it](mailto:ilciclista.snc@tiscali.it), <http://www.ilciclista.com>

BikeMotion, **Sale-Shop-Hire**, Corso Colonnello Attilio Moneta, 57 - 28845 DOMODOSSOLA (VB) Tel. +39 349 2562899 [info@bikemotionshop.com](mailto:info@bikemotionshop.com), [www.bikemotionshop.com](http://www.bikemotionshop.com)

Cicli Niccioli, **Sale-Shop-Hire**, Via Luigi Cadorna, 42 - 28845 Domodossola VB Tel. 0324 45533 / 366 304 9272 [cicli.niccioli@libero.it](mailto:cicli.niccioli@libero.it)

## CHARGING STATIONS

There are no charging points, but the elevation gains and the number of kilometres of the route do not require additional recharges

## PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

**Domodossola:** historic center with the beautiful Piazza Mercato, the Civic Museums of Palazzo Silva and Palazzo San Francesco, the Medieval Tower, and the Collegiate Church of SS. Gervasio and Protasio

### Rural mountain civilization

The mountain range in the lower portion of the Bognanco Valley has seen the development of a rural civilization in the last thousand years, with terraced cultivation being the most vital link in its production systems. The settlement pattern of villages such as Vagna, Monteossolano, Cisore, Bosco, and Pioi sees buildings clustered in closed agglomerations arranged linearly on the slopes of steep mountain slopes. Stone buildings cling to the mountain and are surrounded by terraced fields that tell the story of "rural mountain civilization." These villages preserve the infrastructures of the peasant economy: presses to press grapes and obtain a sour wine (prunent), mills to grind rye, barley, and chestnuts, ovens to bake "pansègla" (dark bread made with rye and wheat flours), imposing terraces that testify to centuries of labors to wrest small fields from the slope, "toppie" (pergolas made with stone slabs to support chestnut crossbars for the development of the shoots).

### The Monteossolano Wine Press

In the center of the village of Monteossolano, you can visit a large wine press to produce pomace. These large presses are true masterpieces of "peasant engineering": the Piedmont's lever presses. They were in huts or unique rooms, and consisted of a large beam (arvul) of chestnut or oak, sometimes measuring up to 7 or 10 meters in length, and a large stone connected to the beam by a screw made of walnut, pear or in some cases ash wood. The beam constituted a lever that could be set in motion by operating on the screw, causing it to lower onto the wooden or stone bed on which the grapes to be squeezed were stored. The weight of the large chestnut trunk and the large stone chained to the vine could develop a pressure of several tons.

The community stopped using the Monteossolano press in the early 1980s. However, it can always be visited since it has a special coin-operated opening. Other well-preserved grape presses can be found in Cisore and Pontasca. Local residents should be asked to see.

## 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. Drive 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 properly

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. Bicyclists must give way to all non-motorized trail users. Cyclists proceeding downhill should give the right of way to those going uphill. Make any overtaking as safe and polite as possible.



**REMINDER:**

**CYCLISTS MUST ALWAYS GIVE WAY TO OTHER USERS**

## RULES OF CONDUCT FOR BIKERS

Since the appearance of the first mountain bikes, the NORBA (National Off-Road Bicycle Association) has drafted 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.

### NORBA Code.

1. Always give the right of way to hikers on foot.
2. Slow down and use caution when approaching and overtaking hikers on foot or other cycle walkers. Always signal your arrival well in advance; avoid cackling or shouting; rather, apologize and greet politely.
3. Keep mountain bike speed under control at all times 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 route, 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 collect your own and, when possible, also those abandoned by other "distracted" hikers.
7. Always respect private and public property, leaving gates, movable 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 ability of the driver, the equipment, the environment, the terrain, and, above all, the weather conditions.

**9.** Never undertake a cycle excursion alone, except in cases of force majeure. Stay away from isolated areas far from major roads, and always leave clear directions regarding the route and estimated return time.

**10.** Minimize impact with nature: steal only images and memories, and leave, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of your vehicle.