



Alpe Cortino

 BC (MEDIUM)

In the **valley of painters**, on the wilderness side, at the gateway to the **Loana Valley** and the Val Grande National Park. A "belvedere" of excellence in the Vigizzo Valley.

Choice: "easy" or "more difficult" route, depending on the riding ability of the biker's vehicle.

After leaving the car in the large parking lot next to the church of Lorenzo the Magnificent in **Malesco**, at the junction with Finero and Valle Cannobina, take a right onto **Via Laurasca**, which leads into the Loana Valley.

A few hundred meters, you leave the village, immediately immersed in the shade of the forest.

After a mile, you leave the paved road for an upstream path from the main road. More than a path, it is a middle ground between a mule track and a dirt road: wide, rideable, with two charming passages over **concrete bridges** that cross as many tributaries of the **Loana Stream** that flows down the valley.

The trail mule track ends near a hairpin bend on the Via Laurasca, below a cable car system that is much used in these parts for transporting construction and other materials.

There are still 500 meters left for regular signal reception of the best-known Italian telephone network, then stop! It's back to **pristine nature** in every sense of the word.

350 meters on asphalt separate from the consortium road (on the **left**, complete with **bar**), which leads to Alpe Cortino.

It is 3 kilometres of well-maintained dirt road, gaining about 370 meters in elevation with an average gradient of 12 percent.

After **eight** lovely wide **hairpin bends**, we reach the vicinity of the Alp, where modernity and tradition coexist in perfect balance.

Alpe Cortino is a veritable balcony over the entire Vigizzo Valley and beyond; in fact, just above the arrival square is a panoramic knoll over the **Loana Valley**, called "**Sass di Cùrùn**" from the typical bushes so called in the local dialect, and over the peaks of the Val Grande... not to be missed!

In the center of the Alp is the **Nigritella Refuge**, where polenta, tapelucco, or a plate of pasta can always be found. Be patient while waiting for your turn, especially in July and August.

For those who lack optimal vehicle driving technique or feel **insecure**, we recommend a nice nap and **returning from the same road**, enjoying the sweat-tearing dirt road of the outward journey downhill.

However, for those who feel **secure** in their vehicles and are willing to take a somewhat torturous mile approach (especially between July and August, when the cows come out to graze and are the real masters of the trail), the **descent to Alpe Colpreto** is suggested.

The descent begins one kilometre from Alpe Cortino, about 100 meters up, after walking a **very varied and rugged trail** that requires some **"portage"** (particularly near the small valleys furrowed by the streams that descend to the valley).

This quarter of an hour of fatigue is amply repaid by the **descent into the beech forest**, which turns out to be technical, but at the same time well designed and flowing; a genuinely unique environment, where close encounters with local fauna (deer and roe deer in primis) and not only can happen. The only caveat is paying due attention to the stones in the shoreline for water drainage.

The entire trail is well marked and maintained thanks to **local volunteers**, to whom thanks are due for their excellent work.

The exit from the beech forest coincides with the entrance to what was once a thriving grazing area, that of **Alpe Colpreto**, of which a few huts, ruins, and a cool fountain remain, much appreciated on certain summer days.

The rest of the descent is still in the forest but with a more uneven bottom and a less impressive environment than the first.

After about a kilometre and 200 meters, the path ends, and the bike path begins, leading onto **Via dei Monti**, a 600 m dirt road followed by asphalt.

This re-entry allows you to sightsee around the small village of Vigezzo and stop at the Town Hall Square to eat good ice cream and sip a rejuvenating mug of beer.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Only those who decide to tackle the decidedly more technical part of the approach and descent from Alpe Colpretto encounter the real difficulties.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Some "portages" along the kilometre separating the two alpine pastures.
2. The descent inside the beech forest has some very narrow hairpin bends, making it easy to make a wrong trajectory.

TECHNICAL DATA.

Geographical area of belonging:	Ossola / Val Vigezzo / Valle Loana
Place of departure and arrival:	Malesco
Number of legs:	1
Length:	11.0 km
Height difference:	789 m
Total ascent:	749 m indicative
Total descent:	745 m indicative
Difficulty:	BC (MEDIUM)
Average duration:	2 hours 00 minutes
Minimum elevation:	765 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	1554 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	good
Recommended period:	June-September
Presence of dedicated signage:	yes
Target Audience:	mtb lover

VANTAGE POINTS

Sass di Cürün and Alpe Cortino.

EATERIES

In Malesco and at Rifugio Negrinella at Alpe Cortino.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

MALESCO - Via Ospedale, 1 - 28854 Malesco (VB), Tel. +39 0324 929901,
promalesco@libero.it

BIKE SERVICE

Laura Sport, **Rental**, via per Re, 20 - 28854 MALESCO (VB), Tel. +39 0324 94493, Cell. +39 350
5280309

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

The two "lookouts" over the Loana Valley and the Vigezzo Valley.

Nearby

Points of interest not to be missed include the Eco museum of soapstone and stonemasons; the late **19th-century washhouse** in which as many as 24 washerwomen were housed at the same time; the **17th-century "del Tacc" mill** in the hamlet of Zornasco, which was the largest of the 54 mills existing in the Vigezzo Valley in the early 20th century; the **architectural complex of St. Peter and Paul**, which includes the church, oratory, cemetery, the friars' house, the **chapel of San Carlo Borromeo**, and the **fountain of the Basilisk**, the mythical reptile-shaped figure, complete with scales, crest, bat wings and nimble little legs, resting on a quadrangular stone base inspired by the ancient rose depicted in the municipal coat of arms.

For those who feel like taking a few more kilometres of (paved) road, they can always take SP 75 to Valle Cannobina and go to the **WWF oasis at Pian dei Sali**, a typical humid mountain environment, home to the orange-brown-coated "temporaria frog," an amphibian that finds its ideal habitat up to more than 2,500 meters above sea level.

Two events of considerable appeal in Malesco are the International Short Film Festival "**Malescorto**," which is held at the end of July and has already had more than 20 editions, and the arrival of the **Ossola Valleys Rally**, which has found its most coveted stage here.

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. Bicyclists 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 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. 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, moving 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 goal 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. Do not pass through 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.