



## Cicogna



From the Toce River estuary to the main Verbania gateway to **Val Grande National Park**, this is one of the largest wilderness areas in Europe.

**WARNING:** before the Casletto bridge, the **tunnel**, about 70 m long, **is not illuminated**; it is better to bring a flashlight, along the **Casletto-Cicogna bridge section**, the road is narrow, and there are many blind hairpin bends: be very careful, especially downhill.

In Fondotoce, environment, and history are intertwined in a unicum worthy of the utmost attention with the Fondo Toce Nature Park and the **Casa della Resistenza**, a building erected near the memorial dedicated to the **42 martyrs of Fondotoce**.

You start from the parking lot near the **Parco della Memoria e della Pace**, which can be accessed along the road leading to the **Camping Continental** (one of the best-equipped and most famous in Europe) in Fondotoce or from the bicycle path connecting with the nearby train station.

You ride along the first section of the bicycle/pedestrian path until you reach the junction for **Bieno**: here, turn left, ready to face a climb of about 2.3 km with no excessive gradients.

After the Bieno drop-off, with traffic lights on the right and a small church on the left, you quickly descend to Verbania Trobaso. After about 2 km, along a couple of straights and curves, you reach the **San Bernardino Verbano, Rovegro, and Cicogna junction**.

Comprehensive, easy switchbacks lead to the village of **Santino**; when you reach the church, turn right toward Rovegro.

The two hamlets are 3 km apart, almost entirely in the woods, in the municipality of San Bernardino Verbano.

In **Rovegro**, you can fill your water bottle at the **fontana degli alpini** or at the nearby **Circolo** if you prefer something more substantial.

From the small square of Rovegro, continue slightly downhill for about 500 m, and then start climbing again, always in progression, with an average gradient ranging from 5 to 8%, until near the **tunnel** that you face downhill. Warning: it is just over seventy meters long but not lit!

From the tunnel, exit onto the **Casletto bridge**, from which you see the **San Bernardino Stream** below. This stream, along with the San Giovanni, flows into Lake Maggiore and bounds the town of Intra.

From here on, the climb becomes challenging. No need to hesitate...maximum available speed, a deep breath, and off you go!

The first 500 m are the toughest, but you should be confident because the climb is less hostile than it looks; the maximum gradient is at most **12%**.

After the recent renovations, **hairpin bends and curves** help you gain altitude. However, much of it remains "**blind**," meaning you can't see who is coming in the other direction, so care should always be taken uphill and downhill.

Once past the initial cliff, just over 2 km remain, between 9% and 10%, with the last 300 m definitely more affordable.

Before the sign for the village of **Cicogna**, you pass by the **old washhouse** where you can cool off, especially on certain scorching summer days.

By now, it is only a short distance to the finish line; after a few turns, we arrive near the "gateway" to the **Val Pogallo**, one of the most beautiful and evocative destinations within the extensive **wilderness area** of the **Val Grande National Park**.

Just above, the **Park** effigy welcomes everyone, inviting those who wish to visit its **registered office**, which is located right here in **Cicogna**, hamlet of Cossogno.

In the square below the church dedicated to the Madonna of Caravaggio, there is the **ARCI "Felice Cavallotti" bar**, a historic **validation point** for Le Salite del VCO.

Suitably refreshed, it is time to descend back to the valley.

Caution: the section leading back to **Casletto Bridge** not only has "blind" curves and hairpin bends but, often, some debris (stones, branches, dirt).

Except for the tunnel ascent and the last stretch at the entrance to **Rovegno**, everything else is downhill.

Back on SP 61, instead of going back up to Bieno, continue toward **Verbania-Trobasso, Renco**, right and then left banks of the **San Bernardino Creek**, exit onto SS 34 near the **Il Maggiore Theater**, turn right toward **Sant'Anna, Pallanza, Suna** and then **Fondotoce**.

In this way, those wishing so, can try the new **bicycle and pedestrian pathway** that connects Suna to Fondotoce, complete with a cantilevered walkway over the lake (the latter has already been in operation for a few years).

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

It is not a particularly challenging climb, which, beyond the first section, Fondotoce-Bieno-Santino, runs on secondary roads with little traffic.

The only caveat is that you should keep scrupulously to your right in sections where the road becomes narrower (from Rovegno to Cicogna).

Recommended speed: 36/28.

## CRITICAL POINTS

1. Unlit tunnel near the Casletto Bridge.
2. First km uphill from Casletto Bridge toward Cicogna.
3. Hairpin bends from Casletto Bridge toward Cicogna, often "blind": always use caution.
3. Bottom sometimes with debris (stones, branches, soil).

## TECHNICAL DATA

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Relevant geographical area:     | Verbano / Access for Val Grande             |
| Place of departure and arrival: | Fondotoce, Parco della Pace e della Memoria |
| Number of legs:                 | 1   |
| Length:                         | 39.2 km                                     |
| Height difference               | 538 m                                       |
| Total ascent:                   | 789 m indicative                            |
| Total descent:                  | 757 m indicative                            |
| Difficulty:                     | MEDIUM                                      |
| Average duration:               | 3 hours 00 minutes                          |
| Minimum altitude:               | 194 m.a.s.l.                                |
| Highest altitude reached:       | 732 m.a.s.l.                                |
| Degree of cyclability:          | total                                       |
| Recommended period:             | April-October                               |
| Presence of dedicated signage:  | no  |
| Target audience:                | amateur cyclist/cyclo-hiker                 |

## VANTAGE POINTS

Casletto Bridge.

## EATERIES

Fondotoce, Santino, Rovegno, Cicogna (Circolo ARCI "Felice Cavallotti").

## INFO POINTS

VERBANIA INTRA - Piazza Ranzoni, 40 - 28921 Verbania Intra (VB), Tel. +39 0323 503249/+39 0323 556669 - [turismo@comune.verbania.it](mailto:turismo@comune.verbania.it)

VERBANIA PALLANZA - Viale delle Magnolie, 1 - 28922 Verbania Pallanza (VB), Tel. +39 0323 557676 - [proloco@comune.verbania.it](mailto:proloco@comune.verbania.it)

## BIKE SERVICE

Ciclomania Barale, **Sale-Shop-Hire**, Corso Benedetto Cairoli, 63 - 28921 VERBANIA (VB), Tel. +39 0323519516, [Info@ciclomania.com](mailto:Info@ciclomania.com), [www.ciclomania.com/home.html](http://www.ciclomania.com/home.html)

Ver-Bike, **Sale-Shop**, Corso Europa, 64/F - 28922 VERBANIA PALLANZA (VB), Tel. +39 0323 501475, [info@verbike.it](mailto:info@verbike.it), [www.verbike.it](http://www.verbike.it)

Autocaravan Vagamondo, **Rental**, Corso Europa, 64 - 28922 VERBANIA PALLANZA (VB), Tel. +39 0323 504419, [info@vagamondo.com](mailto:info@vagamondo.com), [www.vagamondo.com/](http://www.vagamondo.com/)

Ciprian Enrico, **Sales-Shop**, Via Giuseppe Castelli, 7 - 28922 VERBANIA PALLANZA (VB), Tel. +39 0323 502401, [cicli@ciprian.it](mailto:cicli@ciprian.it), [www.ciprian.it/newsite/homepage1.php](http://www.ciprian.it/newsite/homepage1.php)

Ebike Lago Maggiore (Inside Space), **Rental**, Via 42 Martiri, 165 (FS Station production area) - 28924 VERBANIA FONDOTOCE (VB), Tel. +39 351 9115572 / +39 339 6741662, [info@ebikelagomaggiore.com](mailto:info@ebikelagomaggiore.com), [www.ebikelagomaggiore.it/](http://www.ebikelagomaggiore.it/)

## CHARGING STATIONS

Corso Mameli, Old Embarcadero - 28921 VERBANIA INTRA (VB)

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### Along the route

Casa della Resistenza di Fondotoce, Fondo Toce Natural Park, Ponte Casletto, old washhouse in Cicogna, Val Grande National Park visitor center in Cicogna, Madonna del Caravaggio Church in Cicogna 17th century.

### Nearby

#### VERBANIA

Museo del Paesaggio at the Viani-Dugnani palace in Pallanza, Casa del Lago, Il Maggiore Theater, Villa Taranto Botanical Gardens, Villa Giulia, Villa San Remigio, Romanesque Oratory of San Remigio 11th century, Madonna di Campagna church 16th century, Collegiate Church of San Leonardo in Pallanza 16th century, the secular yew tree and the Church of the Buon Rimedio in Cavandone.

#### BIENO

Cobianchi canal and power plant, fed by the waters of the S. Giovanni stream, San Rocco Church.

#### SAN BERNARDINO VERBANO

Romanesque bell tower of Bieno Parish Church 11th century, Val Grande National Park, Oratory of St. Anthony of Padua 17th-18th centuries.