



Mottarone from Colazza



A loop **more than 50 km** long on the **eastern slope of Mottarone**, the one that overlooks the Borromeo Gulf and sweeps over Lake Maggiore, Switzerland, Lombardy, and a large section of the Alps, with his majesty Monte Rosa in the foreground.

The start is from the large parking area of the **Palaghiaccio di Colazza** equipped area, where muscle, or assisted mtb can be rented for the nice ride proposed.

The first section (between dirt roads and short asphalt stretches, between small valleys and brief glimpses of Lake Maggiore) is a succession of "eat and drink" that allows you to warm up legs and lungs to prepare for the most challenging part, which is past Gignese.

In this first part, you understand how these cart and mule tracks were once very popular with people, with stretches still showing a paved surface of ancient splendor.

A nice, fun **descent** (warning: **very degraded in some sections**) ends the first segment shortly after the bridge over the **rio Erno** west of **Gignese**. You ride a short asphalt section, cross the bridge over the Agogna, and take the **first dirt road on the right**: you can't go wrong, if only because of the apparent slope that appears to your eyes as soon as you turn the bridge. Hand on the gears (or the most power available) and be ready to give it your all: this is one of the most challenging sections of the entire route.

So much effort is, in any case, rewarded by the rural environment - made up of pastures, huts, cows, and what they leave on the ground after so much rumination - that you will find from here up to the summit of Mottarone.

The first mountain pasture is that of **Torona**, from which you get a first glimpse of the splendid panorama that awaits you. Depending on the season, there is a fountain from which one can draw without qualms. In any case, if not, a quarter of an hour's ride away, leaving the trail for a hundred meters, is the fountain of Alpe Fej, the alpine pasture of the hunters of Armeno and surrounding areas.

After another uphill stretch, you return to the track and reach the junction for **Monte Falò** or **Tre Montagnette** from which there is a breathtaking view of the entire basin of Lake Maggiore and a large part of the Alpine chain, including the **Monte Rosa** massif, an ancient watershed between the African and European continents.

From here, we can also see the peak of Mottarone and the still-long road ahead.

From the Tre Montagnette you descend to the junction that will be touched upon three times during the trip. From here you take to the right passing through stretches of pastures, birch forests, beech woods, and a still "loaded" mountain pasture (i.e., frequented in fine weather by the mountain people and their beasts, primarily cows, a few pigs, goats, and sheep), **Alpe Volpe**, where you have a chance to quench your thirst and tuck in your water bottle.

From the Alpe della Volpe, pass to the **Alpe Calandro** (in complete abandonment), to exit shortly after on the **strada Borromea**, the road that will take you up to the intersection with **Via Mottarone** (coming from Armeno), near the **monument** dedicated to two cycling champions of the past (**Pasqualino Fornara** and **Domenico Piemontesi**) and then up to the square near the "burned" hotel (the one that in the golden times hosted a queen of the House of Savoy). Along this stretch, you will find another **fountain, the Federica**, part of Borromean memory.

To get to the summit, you have two options: service road on concrete or direct along the compact bottom ski slope.

When you reach the **summit of Mottarone**, you have a 360-degree view: from the Po Valley to the Alpine chain, from the Strona Valley to the Ossola, with many lakes as icing on the cake (Maggiore, Orta, Mergozzo, Varese, Comabbio, and so on listing). The only view to be obscured is the one right in front of you, which comprises antennas, towers, and all sorts of other horror essential to life today.

The summit is also a turning point, meaning that it will be almost all downhill from now on.

Via asphalt, you reach the second parking lot, cross it, and continue between a single track and pieces of dirt road to be taken with due caution. Only a couple of asphalt crossings interrupt a pleasant descent without overcoming difficulties to the **Chapel/ Cortano Refuge**, complete with a fountain.

A hundred meters or so of asphalt in the Luciago/Armeno direction brings you back onto the dirt road again, right next to a pine forest, toward **Alpe Farfossa**.

A comfortable dirt road leads to the Alpe. Continue along the trail that leads to a ford with the only unavoidable "**portage**" of the day: easy for the biker with the muscular, a little more difficult for the one with the assisted, but nothing transcendental (in any case, always better to be in two).

Past this critical point, you reach the stretch of dirt road already travelled uphill; from here, you ascend and descend to the **junction for the Tre Montagnette** and then take the new stretch to Coiromonte. Be careful not to get too caught up in the thrill of speed because this stretch is very popular with both hikers on foot and hunters on off-road vehicles.

The asphalt exit occurs near one of the area's historic cottages. The route, however, includes a left turn with a descent right in front of the **Circolo Combattenti e Reduci di Coiromonte**, where a coffee, sandwich, or tart is a must.

Leaving the Circolo, take a right on asphalt until the entrance to a new dirt road (**not the first, but the second detour**). The trail runs almost entirely through the woods, with a few exits onto clearings and alpine pastures until it descends into the Agogna Valley near the **Cascinone** locality.

Exit onto the **SP delle Due Riviere** with a left turn towards Gignese, ahead one kilometre, and then right onto a small bridge crossing the Agogna at **Pian del Gatto**. The road, on asphalt, climbs for about seven hundred meters to a fork on the right that leads onto a forest road. It is still uphill for almost three kilometres, until an altitude of 890 m, after which it is downhill with some slight up and down. We are back in Alto Vergante along an intricate crossroads of forest roads that will take you back to Colazza.

Here, there are no directions to follow; you must follow the track on the GPS and pay attention to the main intersections, especially the one at **Cappella del Vago**, to be left **heading southeast** following the methane pipeline signs. Along this stretch, on the left, a fountain with ever-fresh water is right next to one of these signs.

It is to be taken with due caution that the downhill section was recently "gullied" for logging work.

Having overcome this last "difficulty," you are now nearing the end of the cycloexcursion, with a kind of wash house a few meters from the starting parking lot, where you can remove some of the mud from both the vehicle and the biker, before departing satisfied for home.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The Colazza-Mottarone-Colazza is a route **more than 50 km** long and involves a **not inconsiderable physical-athletic effort**, both because of its length and because of some sections that are really challenging in terms of slope and type of terrain. It is a **route suitable for people trained and experienced** with their bicycles, be it muscle pedaling or assisted pedaling.

Another essential aspect to consider is the intertwining of paved, dirt, forest, and trails. Although there is special signage (the red one from Le Salite del VCO, complete with the V40 initials), a **GPS** or **cell phone** complete with an **offline map** and the appropriate **trail marker** is strongly recommended. Better yet, equip yourself with a **map** (we recommend CAI's 25,000 on Mottarone) or, for more safety, rely on someone who already knows the area and the route.

Clothing: for a good part of the year (beyond certain scorching summer days), on the ascent, you don't feel cold, but on the descent, you do... since you'll be touching 1500 m above sea level anyway. A good windbreaker and arm, knee, and shin protectors for the descent should never be lacking.

CRITICAL POINTS.

1. At the start: section of the **descent** into the woods, from Alpe Scincina to the exit on the SP Due Riviere near Rio Erno in Gignese, with **uneven ground**.
2. **Very steep climb** from Gignese to Alpe Torona in the first section just after leaving the SP Due Riviere.
3. **Portage** past Alpe Farfossa: there is a short section (about ten meters), crossing a small stream (with little water) and subsequent ascent on rock, where it is better to be in company and, in case of an e-mtb from 22 kg up, get help.

TECHNICAL DATA.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Relevant geographical area: | Verbano Cusio / Alto Vergante / Mottarone east side |
| Place of departure: | Colazza ice rink parking lot |
| Number of legs: | 1 |
| Length: | 51.4 km |
| Height difference: | 940 |
| Total ascent: | 1622 m indicative |
| Total descent: | 1609 m indicative |
| Difficulty: | OC (CHALLENGING) |
| Average duration: | 6 hours |
| Minimum altitude: | 544 m.a.s.l. |
| Highest altitude reached: | 1484 m.a.s.l. |
| Degree of cyclability: | good |
| Recommended period: | April-November |
| Presence of dedicated signage: | yes |
| Target Audience: | mtb lover |

VANTAGE POINTS

Monte Falò, Tornante Alpe della Volpe, Vetta del Mottarone.

EATERIES

Refreshment points and fountains are plentiful; however, be careful to carry food and beverages that can last several stretches completely immersed in the woods and far from population centres.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

GIGNESE - Via Golf Panorama 2 - 28836 Gignese (VB) - +39 0233 20787 -
info@prolocogignese.it

BIKE SERVICE

eWheels - cell. 342 642 0253 - Via per Pisano, 2, 28010 COLAZZA (NO)

CHARGING STATIONS

eWheels - cell. 342 642 0253 - Via per Pisano, 2, 28010 COLAZZA (NO)

P.za Guglielmo Marconi (in front of City Hall) - 28836 GIGNESE (VB)

Bar Alp, Mottarone - 28838 STRESA (VB)

Casa della Neve – Regione Mottarone Vetta, 1 - 28838 STRESA (VB)

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

Birch, chestnut, beech, and picturesque pine forests. Several largely abandoned mountain pastures.

From Monte Falò to the summit of Mottarone, there are expansive and striking views of the Po Valley, Lombard lakes, Lake Orta, San Giulio Island, and the Alpine chain with Monte Rosa in the foreground.

The monument is dedicated to two past champions, Domenico Piemontesi and Pasqualino Fornara.

Nearby

COLAZZA

Church of San Bernardo 13th century, Green Village Sporty.

GIGNESE

Umbrella and Sunshade Museum, Alpinia Botanical Garden, Church of San Rocco 16th century, Monte Falò (Tre Montagnette): 360-degree vantage point.

STRESA

Canonica Museum, Antonio Rosmini Historical Museum, Isola Madre Palazzo Borromeo Puppet Museum, Vetta del Mottarone: 360° vantage point, Alpinia Garden

ARMENO

Romanesque Church of Maria Assunta 12th century, Museo degli Alberghieri, Madonna di Luciago 16th century, Centro Mirapuri (hamlet of Coiromonte).

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 give 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, 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 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 bicycle 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.

