

 **01** Tour of Lake Orta BC (MEDIUM)

Along the lake that inspired Gianni Rodari and Piero Chiara
Besides the famous hiking "blue ring," Lake Orta boasts a "**green ring**" for mountain bikers, muscle, and assisted. It is a year-round trail without snow (an increasingly rare natural element!). In every season, it presents a unique and striking appearance.

The direction is anti-clockwise, from north to southwest, which is less challenging.

The **start** is from the **Sports Center in Bagnella**, a hamlet of **Omegna**, equipped with ample parking, RV area, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a rowing venue, a finish line of a brand-new zip-line, and several refreshment stations.

The beginning, in the recommended option of **Monte Zuoli**, is the one that presents the most significant physical and technical difficulties of the entire route; in any case, nothing prohibitive, take it slowly enough and, considering that it leads to one of the most scenic and literary-inspired places on Lake Orta (in fact, the **Giardini della Torta in Cielo** (the Gardens of the Cake in the Sky) inspired by **Gianni Rodari**, who was born in Omegna in 1920, are located here), it is worth a try. From the Giardini della Torta in Cielo (from which a beautiful film starring Paolo Villaggio was also made), we climb to the **Laghetti di Nonio**, passing through the "**cats' village**" (**Brolo**) and through a stretch that is a bit exposed, but wide enough to transit safely.

From Laghetti, we descend to **Nonio** and, along the "**path of the Elves**," we reach **Cesara**, the village of peace and friendship, where Christmas shines, with the goodness of spirit of its inhabitants rather than with artificial lights.

We then climb to the highest part of the lake's western shore, **Grassona**, **Egro**, and **Monte San Giulio**, alternating asphalt, paths, old mule tracks still well preserved, and viewpoints, one more beautiful than the other.

From the small mountain village, dedicated to the saint who spread the new Catholic religion in these areas in the fourth century, we descend back to the lake at **Pella**, where the **Isle of San Giulio** seems to be just a stone's throw away ... with or without a miraculous cloak.

Along low-traffic paved roads, trails, and unpaved bicycle and pedestrian roads, we skirt the lake as we pass villas, parks, marinas, and extensive reed beds where fish and their winged predators find a home.

The municipalities involved are Pella, **San Maurizio d'Opaglio** (considered the tap capital"), and **Gozzano**, located at the southern end of Lake Orta.

The turnaround is in **Bolzano Novarese**, where we cross a wooded area (complete with a rest stop and a fountain) and exit near the **Corconio Quarries**, close to the dirt road that leads to the nearby **Buccione Tower**.

Before the railway bridge, we take the path along the railway embankment that leads to the small village of **Corconio** in the municipality of Orta San Giulio.

We then continue on a wide cartroad to "**the painted village**" of **Legro**, another charming hamlet of Orta, famous for its "domestic murals": paintings on the facades of private homes inspired by favorite films that had Lake Orta and Piedmont in general as their backdrop.

From Legro, we recommend the variant on **Orta San Giulio** and its UNESCO World Heritage **Sacro Monte**. Otherwise, we continue toward **Carcegna**, another beautiful village overlooking the lake.

Pedaling along a wide dirt road and then a beautiful mule track, we reach downhill the village of **Pettenasco**, just under the massive arches of the historic railroad bridge over the **Pescone Stream**.

Continuing on a paved road, we reach the hamlet of **Crabbia**; from here, a dirt road and a beautiful path through the woods with a view of the lake, recently arranged for mountain bikes, leads us to **Borca**, a hamlet of Omegna.

The connection to **Bagnella**, the starting and finishing point, is all on a paved road.

Along **Via Repubblica**, we pass next to the train station, then take **Via Mazzini**, with its evocative literary revival dedicated to **Gianni Rodari** (poems proposed in the form of illuminated signs above the street: a sight to be enjoyed as soon as daylight leaves); then we pass in front of the municipal headquarters made famous by the "La banca di Monate" (a movie made in 1976, by Francesco Massaro with Walter Chiari, based on the short story of the same name by Piero Chiara), to finally reach the Omegna lido via the **Lungolago Antonio Gramsci**.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The most significant difficulties are found at the beginning with the **ascent to Monte Zuoli** along the pine forest and woodland (there is, however, a paved **variant** along **Via Tre Cascine** and **Via Varallo**, complete with road signs) and then in the subsequent ascent to the **Lagheti di Nonio** (with an exposed part and some steep as well as short climbs).

Another climb made more difficult by the cobblestone surface, and water breaks is the one leading to **Egro da Grassona**.

The variant of **Buccione Tower** is purely challenging in terms of the type of bottom (mixed sand) and the slope.

There are also two short sections (no more than twenty meters) **before Cesara** and at the **exit of Pella**, where if we fail the first time, we can pass them the second time by staying on the bike. As for the **descent**, the most significant difficulties are encountered in some sections **between Egro and Monte San Giulio** (the first hairpin bends are very narrow and have a very ruined bottom) and on the **mule track** leading to **Pella**. In these cases, a short and safer "**portage**" is recommended.

Otherwise, it is a succession of ups and downs that eventually lead to nearly a thousand meters of ascent along just over forty kilometers: great for those who use pedal-assisted bikes but challenging for muscle users.

Also of note is the **bottleneck just after the Lagna pier**, with its blind curve that leads onto a very narrow dirt road between a lake retaining wall and the mountain, where we can barely pass; in these cases, remember that pedestrians always have the right of way and that one's presence on a bike should be signaled with a whistle or bell.

Along the route are plenty of fountains and towns with essential services (pharmacies, stores, charging stations, etc.). Although we pass through forests, banks, and mule tracks, we are always a few hundred meters away from settlements and, above all, from SP 46 to the west from SP 229 to the east, to which we can always fall back in case of need.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Rocky passage from Brolo to Laghetti di Nonio with exposed and barrier-free section.
2. Crossing SS 229 shortly after the intersection of Via Leopoldo Marangoni (from Lido di Gozzano) and Via Fratelli Rosselli at the junction of SP 43 (Via Mario Motta) towards Bolzano Novarese.

TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Cusio / Lower Cusio / Lake Orta
Place of departure:	Bagnella di Omegna
Number of legs:	1
Length:	41.3 km
Height difference:	313 m
Total ascent:	950 m indicative
Difficulty:	MC (MEDIUM)
Average duration:	4 hours 30 minutes
Minimum altitude:	289 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	602 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	good
Recommended period:	all year-round
Presence of dedicated signage:	no
Target audience:	mtb enthusiast/ cyclo-hiker

SCENIC POINTS

Monte Zuoli (Omegna), Panoramic terrace of Monte San Giulio (Pella), Buccione Tower (Orta San Giulio).

REFRESHMENT POINTS

Bars, clubs, restaurants, and stores can be found along the entire route in the towns crossed.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

OMEGNA - Piazza XXV Aprile 17 - 28887 Omegna (VB) - +39 0323 61930 / +39 338 8870913
- info@proloco.omegna.vb.it

ORTA SAN GIULIO - Via Panoramica - 28016 Orta San Giulio (NO) - +39 0322 905163 -
infoturismo@comune.ortasangiulio.no.it

PETTENASCO - Via Vittorio Veneto c/o Museo dell'Arte della Tornitura del Legno - 28028
Pettenasco (NO) - +39 345 9956357 - proloco.pettenasco@tiscali.it

BIKE SERVICE

Sport è bike - Knutti Massimo, **Sale-Repair shop-Rental**, Via Fratelli di Dio 61, 28887
OMEGNA (VB), (+39) 339 5924089, maximoknutti@gmail.com,
www.knuttibike.com/index.php/en/

Bike Store Omegna, **Sale-Repair shop**, Via Tito Speri 3, 28887 OMEGNA (VB), (+39) 0323
350295, bikestoreomegna@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/BikeStoreOmegna

E-Traction, **Rental**, Via Borca 6, 28887 OMEGNA (VB), (+39) 392 4899480, info@etraction.it,
www.etraction.it/

E-Bike Garage, **Sale-Rental**, Via Sant'Anna 31, 28881 CASALE CORTE CERRO (VB),
(+39) 0323 348044, info@e-bikesgarage.com, www.e-bikesgarage.com/

Ebike Lago d'Orta, **Rental**, Via Domodossola 9, 28016 ORTA SAN GIULIO (NO), (+39) 348
2618416, ebikelagodorta@gmail.com, www.ebikelagodorta.com/

CHARGING STATIONS

Bar Ristorante Salera, Piazza Salera, 16 - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Canottieri, Lungolago Buozzi, 37 - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Sport è Knutti, Via Fratelli Di Dio, 61 - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Public baths, gardens Lungolago A. Gramsci - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Oasi della vita, Via Fucine, 7 - Bagnella - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Laghetti di Nonio, Rifugio dei Pescatori - 28891 NONIO (VB)

Piazza del Municipio - 28891 NONIO (VB)

Circolo Operaio, Piazza Guglielmo Marconi - 28891 CESARA (VB)

Via Lungo Lago - 28010 PELLA (NO)

Camping Cusio, Via San Giovanni Bosco, 5 - 28016 ORTA SAN GIULIO (NO)

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

The Giardini della Torta in Cielo (Monte Zuoli), Brolo the cats' village, Bridge over the Pellino in Pella, villas and docks from San Maurizio to Lido di Gozzano, Buccione Tower, Legro the painted village, railway bridge in Pettenasco.

In the vicinity

OMEGNA

Birthplace of Gianni Rodari, Fantasy Park, Nursery Rhymes on the Streets, Forum Arts and Industry Museum Foundation, Sant'Ambrogio Collegiate Church, De Angeli-Frua Area, Vatican District, Porta Romana, Old Bridge, Giardini della Torta in Cielo and Rock Engravings (Monte Zuoli), The Morta di Agrano, Crusinallo Castle, Agrano Agricultural Nature Center of Alpe Selviana.

NONIO

Brolo "the cats' village" (paintings, sculptures, bas-reliefs inspired by the four-legged pet, Laghetti di Nonio), Portal of Vicolo Tavola, Oratory of San Rocco.

PELLA

Lavatory, Bridge over the Pellino, Old Hospital, San Filiberto Complex, Scalpellini Monument, former Sonzogn Paper Mill.

SAN MAURIZIO D'OPAGLIO

The Tap Museum, Bettoja Palace, Brioschi House, Santa Maria Church in Luzzara.

GOZZANO

San Giuliano Basilica, Bishop Palace, Colle della Guardia.

ORTA SAN GIULIO

Painted village (Legro hamlet), Sacro Monte, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi and UNESCO heritage site, Isle with a Roman basilica and Benedictine abbey, Motta Square and "Broletto", Buccione Tower.

MIASINO

Villa Nigra, Sperati Palace, churches of San Gottardo (Pisogno hamlet) 16th century, San Pietro (Carcegna hamlet) 17th century, San Rocco 16th century.

PETTENASCO

Museum of the Art of Woodturning, Medieval House, Parish Church of Saints Audenzio and Caterina 17th century.

SERVICES FOR THE BIKE TOURIST

Train station, buses, RV area, parking lots near the start/finish line, hotels and B&Bs, bike stores, rentals, charging stations as marked on the map.

Standards of behavior

1. Stay on the trail

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 tracks, 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, a sudden movement, or a 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 N.O.R.B.A. (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 N.O.R.B.A. 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 making sure to 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. During cycle hiking, it is always advisable to be self-sufficient. 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.