



## EAST Cusio - Mottarone from Omegna

 OC (CHALLENGING)

It is a long and challenging **route** only for some. Still, one that can become so by opting, when the body or batteries can't take it anymore, for the **escape routes** is **SP 42** Omegna- Armeno and **SP 41** Armeno-Mottarone, which run through the center of this fantastic loop.

We start from the **Omegna train station**, and along **Via Repubblica**, we reach **Borca**. From here, a beautiful path, recently adapted for bikers, leads to **Crabbia**, Pettenasco hamlet. A short stretch of paved road leads to the main town, skirting the railway and crossing a level crossing. Here, we enjoy a splendid view of **Lake Orta** and its **Sacro Monte**, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi and recognized by **UNESCO** in 2003 as a "**world heritage site**."

When we reach the imposing railway bridge, we leave the asphalt to proceed, first on a dirt road and then on a mule track, toward **Carcegna**, Miasino hamlet.

Walking through the small village, we can admire old dwellings and picturesque corners, such as the **old washhouse** and its **pink flamingo** overlooking from above.

In an alternation of dirt road and short asphalt stretches, passing a modern riding school and several small farms that market their products (from milk to cheese, from yogurt to butter), we reach **Lavignino** hamlet of Armeno.

From Armeno, we continue to Coiromonte along a paved road that winds its way from the **Ondella Valley**, an area of wide-mowed meadows, to the second of the three bell towers (the third is that of Sovazza, an emblem of the autonomy these small villages enjoyed in the past) along a series of broad, defatiguing switchbacks amid lush beech forest.

Upon reaching **Coiro** (as the locals call it), we get the first impressive panoramic view of a large slice of the western Alpine arc, with **Monte Rosa** in the foreground.

A stop at the **Circolo Combattenti** refreshment stand, which has long been the bastion of survival in this tiny hamlet, is a must here.

After a well-deserved snack of fresh milk and homemade pies, we continue on a dirt road to the **Tre Montagnette** or **Monte Falò** as you like. The ascent has a few sections that are a bit challenging, with double-digit gradients. However, given the state of the road bend, it can be overcome without any unique difficulty.

The second vantage point par excellence of the day provides a 360-degree view from Lake Maggiore in its entirety, to the Lombard lakes, from Lake Orta to Monte Rosa, from the western Alps

to the summit of Mottarone, we need only turn our head to be captivated by so much splendor. By MTB, going up and down the **three peaks of Monte Falò** is a lot of fun! A little less so when, after the hilarious descent, we have to regain altitude to approach the day's finish: the Mottarone summit.

The dirt road ends near **SP 41** to resume a hundred meters further toward **Alpe della Volpe**. This alpine pasture is still "loaded" during the summer with a hundred or so cows.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Mottarone offered fertile soil for thousands of livestock, thanks to the efforts of the mountain people. Unfortunately, only the ruins of the mountain pastures that populated it remain from those times.

One example is **Alpe Calandro**, which we pass through before coming out on the **Borromeo family private road**.

From here to the summit, there are only a few kilometers to go: 3.5 on paved road or just a couple along the impassable firebreak that leads to the foot of the cable car that fatefully rose to the headlines in the summer of 2021.

In either case, we reach the junction with SP 41, near the **monument** dedicated to two great cycling champions: **Piemontesi** and **Fornara**. From here to the summit, there is little more than a kilometer and a half to go, with a first stretch on asphalt and the last on concrete or dirt, as desired. The **Summit of Mottarone** is an achievement, and... so much is enough! If it were not for the splendid view from there, one would be advised to tackle the descent immediately and get away quickly from that thicket of towers and antennas that have been defacing it for years. In any case, this natural balcony, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was a sought-after destination for the first tourist visitors to the mountains: from the House of Savoy to legendary international literary names--so well known that the Italian Touring Club cited it among its eight recommended Alpine hiking destinations.

Back to current events, after much pedaling uphill, it is time to enjoy the downhill.

Following the appropriate trail from the summit is advisable to avoid spoiling the sparse turf that covers it. Down on the lay-by, we are spoiled for choice of where to go for a drink or a sandwich before descending to the valley.

From the **second lay-by**, we return to nature along a **fun track** but only partially free of the occasional small obstacles (rock or rain-excavated soil), ending near the **Alpe Cortano alpine shelter**, complete with a fountain.

From here on, we need to assess our physical condition (too tired?!? Just better leave it at that!) and technical ability (the following descent is challenging). If in doubt, it is best to continue along SP 41 to Armeno and then along SP 42 to Omegna.

Otherwise, one continues toward the **Pescone Valley**. After an initial stretch among boulders and various obstacles, we enter a beautiful beech forest, from which we exit by fording the small stream called in the local dialect "**al Rial da Verminasca**" and then continue slightly downhill to the Alpe of the same name.

The signs of the times can be noticed not only by the state of abandonment of the alpine pastures but also by the climate change taking place; in fact, the vast weather-rooted plants seen just before the Alpe confirm this.

Passage through the middle of the huts is obligatory; in any case, it is recommended to proceed at a walking pace since, for much of the year, there is still the Alpine man who resides there in the company of a large group of dogs, "all females!" as he is fond of reiterating.

Leaving **Alpe Verminasca**, we continue up and down along a constantly changing environment and terrain: from dirt to the "lunar" rock (which tends to crumble and create a sandy mantle) that characterizes the Valley.

We go from rock to birch forest (a pioneer plant that grows where there used to be pasture for cows) until it descends to the **Pescone Stream** near a water intake, which usually presents some difficulty in crossing.

We then return to an extensive dirt road (this is the remaining part of the old road that led to the quarries), which we tackle by letting go of the brakes, but always with some caution.

Arriving near a hairpin bend, attention should be paid to the branch off to the right that leads to Tre Alberi, an important crossroads of the day.

Again, we need to keep an eye on the batteries (both physical and electrical) to check their condition well, as there is still quite a bit of road and uphill to tackle. It is better to continue along the all-downhill route to Agrano when in doubt.

If, on the other hand, we intend to continue, we follow the signs. Within half an hour, we reach the last turning point: the crossroads called **Tre Alberi**, a clearing under the crowns of imposing centuries-old beech trees.

A bulletin board and a series of signs help us understand where we are and where we are going. We must be careful not to be influenced by the pleasure of tackling the descent immediately because this is untrue. It is necessary **to climb a little more to the left**, to the top of the ridge; only at this point does the challenging climb of the day end; the remainder is now of little consequence.

From the ridge, we descend along a single track that is part of the "**East Cusio**," a section recently set up with public funding.

Charming and smooth, the first part of the descent ends near **Alpe Meazza**, abandoned in the middle of a pine forest.

The following portion is quite beautiful in the initial section. Still, it has very technical passages, marked by unique signs inviting walking. One of these, a somewhat exposed **rock passage** (featuring a splendid view of Lake Orta and its western shore), once secured, was dedicated to one of the creators of this trail.

Having passed the most critical stretch (about two hundred meters), we continue inside the forest until the village of **Agrano**, a hamlet of Omegna.

Once we reach a parking lot, we must decide: do we continue to a very technical descent or opt for asphalt and descend directly to Omegna?

For those who choose the **complex version**, we resume on the dirt road to the north, following the power towers.

The first part is flat with a couple of short uphill sections; on the other hand, the second part is more adrenaline-pumping, where riding skills are put to the test. In any case, in doubt or hesitation, it is recommended to get off the bike as indicated by the appropriate signs.

The descent also includes a small ford, which the best ones do by biking. Tackling the rest of the descent by riding or walking depends only on the biker's courage and skill.

The **challenging single track** ends close to **Via Repubblica**: be careful to stop in time and check whether or not vehicles are coming along the thoroughfare.

Continuing along Via Repubblica, we reach the starting point at the Railway Station. If there is still some energy left, we recommend a little sightseeing tour of the city that was the birthplace of **Gianni Rodari**, and that is 'trying over time to honor the illustrious children's writer in the best possible way: from the house where he was born to the museum dedicated to him, from the **Parco della Fantasia** to the illustrated nursery rhymes above the streets (to be admired especially at night).

In what was once considered the capital of homeware (thanks to famous names such as Bialetti, Lagostina, Girmi, and Alessi), we can rejuvenate body and mind and take away an unforgettable memory.

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

For e-bike users, it is recommended to do the maximum powers sparingly; it is better to proceed with the basic one (Eco): with **500 watts**, you get to the limit; **another 100/200 watts** more are **recommended**. For bikers with muscular bikes, **excellent physical and technical preparation is required** because the route is long and challenging, where there is no shortage (far from it!) of steep and uneven sections. There are plenty of fountains and refreshment points along the route.

## POINTS OF ATTENTION

The most technically challenging sections are all downhill:

1. Cortano-Rial section of Verminasca;
2. "Rocchette di Mauri" (shortly after Alpe Meazza) and subsequent section;
3. Agrano-Borca (middle and final section).

## TECHNICAL DATA

Relevant geographical area:	Cusio / Lake Orta
Place of departure and arrival:	Omegna Railway Station
Number of legs:	1
Length:	44.2 km
Height difference	1188 m
Total ascent:	1690 m indicative
Total descent:	1640 m indicative
Difficulty:	OC (CHALLENGING)
Average duration:	5 hours 30 minutes
Minimum elevation:	300 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	1488 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	good
Recommended period:	April-October
Presence of dedicated signage:	yes
Target audience:	mtb enthusiast

## SCENIC POINTS

End of Coiromonte ascent, Monte Falò, Mottarone Summit, Roccette “Mauri” above Agrano.

## REFRESHMENT POINTS

The main towns crossed: Omeña, Crabbia, Pettenasco, Armeno, Coiromonte, Mottarone, Agrano.

## TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

OMEGNA - Piazza XXV Aprile 17 - 28887 Omeña (VB) - +39 0323 61930/+39 338 8870913 - [info@proloco.omeña.vb.it](mailto:info@proloco.omeña.vb.it)

PETTENASCO - Via Vittorio Veneto c/o Museo dell'Arte della Tornitura del Legno - 28028 Pettenasco (NO) - +39 345 9956357 - [proloco.pettenasco@tiscali.it](mailto: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, [massimoknutti@gmail.com](mailto:massimoknutti@gmail.com), <http://knuttibike.com/index.php/en/>

Bike Store OMEGNA, **Sale-Repair shop**, Via Tito Speri 3, 28887 OMEGNA (VB), (+39) 0323 350295, [bikestoreomeña@gmail.com](mailto:bikestoreomeña@gmail.com), <https://www.facebook.com/BikeStoreOmeña>

E-Traction, **Rental**, Via Borca 6, 28887 OMEGNA (VB), (+39) 392 4899480, [info@etraction.it](mailto:info@etraction.it), <https://www.etraction.it/>

## CHARGING STATIONS

Etraction, Via Borca, 6 - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

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)

Circolo di Agrano, Via per Armeno, 12 - 28887 OMEGNA (VB)

Ostello del Quadrifoglio, Vicolo Filiberti, 8 - 28011 ARMENO (NO)

Bar Alp, Mottarone - 28838 STRESA (VB)

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

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### **Along the route**

From Pettenasco, splendid views of Lake Orta, Sacro Monte, San Giulio Isle, and Monte Rosa.

From Monte Falò and the Mottarone Summit, unique views of Lake Maggiore, Lombard lakes, Canton of Ticino, Western Alps, Monte Rosa, and Lake Orta.

Several mostly abandoned mountain pastures. In summer, herds of cows graze.

Paragliding gymnasium near Monte Falò.

### **In the vicinity**

#### OMEGNA

Gianni Rodari's birthplace, Fantasy Park, 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 Alpe Selviana.

#### PETTENASCO

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

#### MIASINO

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

#### ARMENO

Romanesque Church of Maria Assunta 12th cent., Museum of the Alberghieri, Madonna di Luciago 16th cent., Mirapuri Center (hamlet of Coiromonte), Monument to Piemontesi, and Fornara (junction of Borromea Mottarone road).

## 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. 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, there may be someone 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 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 first mountain bikes appeared, the NORBA (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 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 priority to hikers on foot.
2. Slow down and use caution when approaching and overtaking hikers on foot or other cycle walkers, always making sure to signal your arrival well in advance; avoid cackling or shouting instead, 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 driver, 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. Minimize the impact with nature: stealing only images and memories and leaving, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of one's vehicle.