



## WEST Cusio - Alpe Sacchi

BC(MEDIUM) 

**On the western shore of Lake Orta between Cusio and Valsesia.**

Since the advent of MTB, this tour **between Cusio and Valsesia** has always been one of the most popular, both for its accessibility (mostly along well-maintained forest roads) and its scenic, historical, cultural, and natural "offerings."

The departure is from the **Bagnella Sports Center**; skirting the **Rio Fiumetta**, we pass the **Oasi della Vita**, with vegetable gardens tended by local retirees and a bar-restaurant run by **Pro Senectute**. This association has volunteered for several decades to serve active senior citizens and "communication" between generations.

From the Oasis, we go up along **Via Erbera** to the "**Quattro strade**" roundabout and then on to **Cireggio**, the village of Captain **Filippo Maria Beltrami**, a partisan commander who died in an armed clash with the Nazi-Fascists on February 13, 1944, in Megolo di Pieve Vergonte, about whom we will find several testimonies along the way.

Still on asphalt, along **SP 51** and an unending series of hairpin bends (there are about twenty at last count), we climb to **Quarna Sotto**, the "village of music" complete with a square, museum, and artisan factory to testify to this peculiarity.

From the main church dedicated to San Nicolao, we descend near **the Oratory of the Madonna del Saliente**, where a notice board recalls that from here, the ancestors of the "campionissimo" **Fausto Coppi**, a surname still widely used in the village, emigrated to other shores.

Continuing always on asphalt, we descend into the valley of the **Rio Molinello** and then ride abruptly along the steepest section of the entire route: a hundred meters with a concrete bottom and gradients of more than 20%.

With this climb, the asphalt section practically ends (except for a few more short sections), and the dirt road leading to Alpe Camasca begins. Several hairpin bends facilitate the ascent and allow us to take our time to admire the various alpine pastures served by the road.

From the beech forest, we come out near the **Alpe Camasca**, complete with a serizzo memorial stone showing the altitude of 1230 m.a.s.l.; from here to the **Cappella degli Alpini**, where there is a fountain and bulletin board dedicated to the historic "**Sentiero Beltrami**," we pass again on paved road.

Having refilled our water bottles and satiated our stomachs, we leave the alpe continuing on a dirt road toward **Cò di Stobi**, where the Beltrami Trail descends to the Strona Valley, and our route continues **westward** toward the Ranghetto Pass in Valsesia.

Past a bar, which restricts its access to authorized vehicles, we follow the forest road in a continuous up and down for a couple of kilometers until we reach the green pastures of **Alpe Ranghetto** and the **Pass** of the same name at an altitude of 1272 m.a.s.l. Nearby, close to the small chapel, signs are still evident of the landslide that brought millions of cubic meters of soil down into the valley in October 2020.

Leaving the pass, we continue south in the direction of Alpe Sacchi.

After a short flat section, we descend decisively along a forest road to a crossroads, complete with signposts, from which we ascend for about fifty meters (gradient of more than 20%) until entering a path that descends for a few meters and then rises abruptly.

From here on, we get off the bike and into the "**portage**," the only way to get over the famous "**roccette**," the realm of goats and hostile terrain for bikers equipped with assists. It's only about ten minutes, but for those without a bit of muscle, it's exhausting... after all, it's a matter of towing (or carrying) a vehicle that usually varies from 20 to 25 kg in weight, not trifles!

The effort is rewarded by a beautiful panorama and the fact that there will be only flat and downhill from now on.

The flat section is the one leading from Alpe Sacchi and before it to the **chapel** in memory of five **partisans** killed between 1943 and 1944.

**Alpe Sacchi** is an agritourism where hospitality is sacred, and we can refresh and recover much of our spent energy, always with our gaze sweeping over Quarne, Lake Orta, and Mottarone.

We can enjoy a beautiful descent once spirit and body have been restored. However, to tell the truth, the beginning could be better, as the final stretch that leads from the pasture into the **beech forest** is somewhat bumpy.

Past the initial obstacle, we continue with a beautiful stretch of **single track** in the shadow of lush beech trees and its undisputed majesty, the "**Fò di'Umbréla**," a centuries-old beech tree that Mother Nature forged into a shape reminiscent of a large umbrella.

Unfortunately, there are obvious signs of human foolishness in this work of art of Nature. By reporting it, such havoc will be avoided in the future.

Immediately after the tourist-naturalist variant, we retrace our steps and continue downhill to the **fork** for **Alpe Cignerra**, from which we can connect back to Quarna Sotto. We, however, continue **straight on** to the Laghetti di Nonio.

The descent is all on forest roads, usually well-maintained and very smooth. We should not be caught up in speed because both authorized vehicles and people on foot and animals pass through it.

A section with a stone bottom ends the steepest descent, followed by a slight falsopiano, still on the dirt road, that leads to the **Lagheti di Nonio** and the **Rifugio dei Pescatori**, with **charging** facilities for both riders and e-bikes.

The final part leading up to the arrival could be more predictable and exciting, far from it!

A lovely **single track**, recently arranged, especially for MTB, leads to the small town of **Brolo**, the "**cats' village**," which remembers the four-legged pet in various forms, from mosaic to statuette, from painting to sculpture, as thanks for helping, a few centuries ago, the population defeating the plague.

A short asphalt stretch among green meadows separates Brolo from **Monte Zuoli**, on which the **Giardini della Torta in Cielo** (Gardens of the Pie in the Sky) of Rodarian memory rises.

The busy place features playgrounds, walking and MTB trails, historical relics (**votive chapels**), and a splendid close-up view of Omegna, Lake Orta, and Mottarone.

From here, the **Bagnella Sports Center** is just a short distance away; after a fun initial single track between chestnut woods and pine forest, we are back to asphalt, then back to Piazzale Lodi as is appropriate for bikers, that is, on the dirt road between "**Boschina**" (the grove that is on the Lakeshore) and the Rio Fiumetta.

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

There are four areas into which this path can ideally be divided.

The first path approaches Quarna Sotto along SP 51, all on asphalt with several hairpin bends, some very scenic.

The second path, from the valley of the Rio Mulinello to the outlet of the "roccette," is almost all on the dirt road, with good rideability.

The third, the "roccette," is complete with a short (about ten minutes) but intense portage.

Fourth, the descent, always beautiful and free of technical difficulties, between forest roads and trails, from Alpe Sacchi down to Lake Orta.

## POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Passage between rocky cliffs in Valsesian territory, just before tackling the last stretch of the approach to Alpe Sacchi. Here, the trail climbs between the rocks, forcing us to carry the bike by hand or on our back. The most significant difficulty is for "assisted" owners forced to drag or carry over twenty kilos of weight.
2. End of pasture-beginning beech forest section below Alpe Sacchi, with a very uneven bottom.
3. A few tens of meters somewhat exposed between Nonio and Brolo Ponds.

## TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Cusio and Valsesia
Place of departure and arrival:	Piazzale Lodi a Bagnella di Omegna
Number of legs:	1
Length:	32.5 km
Height difference	990
Total ascent (indicative):	1350 m
Difficulty:	BC (MEDIUM)
Average duration:	3 hours 30 minutes
Minimum elevation:	294 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	1284 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	partial
Recommended period:	April-October
Presence of dedicated signage:	yes
Target Audience:	mtb lover / cyclo-hiker

#### SCENIC POINTS

Monte Zuoli (Omegna), Cappella degli Alpini (Alpe Camasca), Passo del Ranghetto (Valsesia), Alpe Sacchi (Valsesia)

#### REFRESHMENT POINTS

Alpe Sacchi farmhouse, cell. 368 3724943 (Alpe Sacchi, Varallo, summer months only)  
Alpe del Ranghetto (Ranghetto Pass, Varallo, summer months only)  
Rifugio dei Pescatori (Laghetti di Nonio)

#### TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

OMEGNA - Piazza XXV Aprile 17 - 28887 Omegna (VB) - +39 0323 61930/+39 338 8870913 -  
info@proloco.omegna.vb.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, <http://knuttibike.com/index.php/en/>

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

## CHARGING STATIONS

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

Locanda Posta, Piazza IV Novembre, 5 - 28896 QUARNA SOTTO (VB)

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

Town Hall Square - 28891 NONIO (VB)

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### Along the route

Oasi della Vita in Bagnella, Madonna del Saliente Oratory in Quarna Sotto, Chapel of the Alpini at Alpe Camasca, Beltrami Trail, Alpe and Votive Chapel at Ranghetto Pass, Memorial Fallen Partisans near Alpe Sacchi, Nonio Ponds, Brolo the cats' village, Giardini della Torta in Cielo and the Monte Zuoli chapels.

### In the vicinity

#### OMEGNA

Birthplace of Gianni Rodari, Fantasy Park, Nursery Rhymes on the Streets, Forum Arts and Industry Museum Foundation, San. 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.

#### QUARNA SOTTO

Ethnographic and Wind Musical Instrument Museum, Saliente Oratory, Batíne Mill Ecomuseum.

#### QUARNA SOPRA

Painted walls, Belvedere, Mandali Center.

#### VARALLO SESIA

Sacro Monte UNESCO Heritage Site 15th century, Palazzo dei Musei, home of the very rich Pinacoteca, Collegiate Church of S. Gaudenzio 12th century, Church of S. Maria delle Grazie national monument 15th century, Villa Durio, Villa Barbara, Villa Virginia, Civic Theater, Civic Library "Farinone Centa", Calderini Museum, Scarognini d'Adda Palace, Racchetti Palace 14th century, Ranghetto Pass.

## 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 for bicycle use and are 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 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 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 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. 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. Minimizing the impact with nature: stealing only images and memories and leaving, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of one's vehicle.