

The **Strona Valley** morphologically begins just after the "Fabbricone" bridge at the end of **De Angeli** Street in **Omegna**.

A series of blind bends between a rock and the Strona stream lead to **Canova del Vescovo**, near the junction for Germagno.

Those who do not feel up to tackling the dirt road between Chesio and Luzzogno can continue straight ahead. In contrast, those who do feel up to it must turn right facing three wide and gentle switchbacks that lead to the center of **Germagno**, a municipality of just over 180 inhabitants and the crossroads of one of the most challenging climbs in the area, the **Alpe Quaggione**.

Our road continues on the left through the tiny hamlet, then enters a forested area with moderate and steady slopes.

This leads to **Loreglia** directly to the churchyard of the Madonna del Rondone church, with a beautiful view of the Strona stream and the peaks surrounding the valley.

Not far from the churchyard, there are some public services on the left side, which is very rare in such pleasant locations.

Leaving the main town, we descend to the **Mulino**, the junction for Prelo and Chesio. Here, we have the last chance to avoid the dirt road by descending to **Prelo**; otherwise, we cross the bridge and continue straight for Chesio, ready to use the most agile gear ratio available. In fact, the resounding (at least in the name) **Via Roma** leading to **Chesio** (Loreglia hamlet) is quite steep, with peaks around 12%.

Once in the village, we can tuck in our water bottles, eat a candy bar, and then set off again on a gentle descent. Shortly after leaving the village, we pass near the junction for one of the most challenging "extremes" in the history of Le Salite of VCO: **Alpe Loccia**, which we recommend trying at least once in your life, knowing that we may also suffer the indignity of putting our feet on the ground. Soon after, the asphalt ends and the **dirt road** begins: this is our "valley white road," often used when the valley floor provincial road is impassable due to some landslide or wandering boulder.

This unpaved road is all in all well put, and, barring a few probable punctures, in the blink of an eye, we reach **Luzzogno**, a hamlet in the municipality of Valstrona. Here a stop at the local Circolo is recommended, before descending again to the provincial road on the valley floor, which is just over 2 km away. The descent ends beside the **Strona** town hall, once the seat of the Montana of the Strona and Basso Toce Valleys Community and, in fact, the capital of the entire valley.

Several turners (and more, nicknamed "gràtagamul" in the local dialect) of wood still operate. Turning right, after about 500 m, we pass near the bridge to **Fornero** on the left; straight on, the road climbs gently again until **Piana di Fornero** and the subsequent **forks** for **Massiola** and **Sambughetto**, which are on the right and left of our direction of travel, respectively.

At this point, there are no more lateral "distractions," we go straight ahead (in a manner of speaking, given the curves there are) in the direction of Forno, paying attention to oncoming cars and motorcycles and goats in both directions!

Numerous curves, at first narrow and then increasingly wider, lead to **Forno**, or about 1000 m above sea level: there are still 300 m to go before we reach the end of our ascent.

Having come this far, one might think that it is not such a challenging climb...poor deluded people, the fun starts right here!

With an elevation gain of 215 m in just three kilometers, we reach the **Piana di Forno**. There are just under 2 kilometers to go from here to the finish line, but these are the toughest ever.

The real surge awaits us near the **cemetery**: some tough 300 m... but we must hold on because it's almost done now.

Campello Monti is a village that deserves to be visited and experienced for its ancient Walser roots, history, stately homes, and the many hiking opportunities it offers.

Once a hamlet of Rimella, even today, one can visit under the church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. In this place, in winter, the bodies were stored while waiting for the pass to nearby Valsesia to become passable again because it was now free of ice and snow.

The inn is "at **the summit of Capezzone**," which serves as an alpine hut for those transiting along the GTA (Great Crossing of the Alps), run by the Volponi family. Local cured meats, cheeses, and an excellent mountain pizza (and here the taste gains!) are worth experiencing. While you recover your strength, you will be pleased to know that the Bulgari family, world-renowned jewelers, draw part of their roots here. Here, in the church, as mentioned earlier, found hospitality a painting of St. Francis receiving the stigmata, a work by **Guercino** (1633, one of the greatest exponents of Italian Baroque), which was stolen, then found, and finally found its permanent home at the Diocesan Museum in Novara, a decidedly safer place than the pleasant church in Campello, but one that speaks volumes about how specific stories go in the mountains.

Having hoarded history, art, and gastronomic delicacies, all that remains is to return to the lakeshore, enjoying a long and pleasant descent, being careful not to spoil it with a few too many gambles or too little concentration.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

It is an affordable climb for most up to Forno. From there on, you need legs, breath, and nimble ratios.

It would be best if you always kept to your right because the road has several bottlenecks, particularly from Marmo on up.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Dirt road between Chesio and Luzzogno: to be cautiously approached looking for the best passage.
2. For the last 3 km, in addition to the slope, you have to consider the road surface, which is not always in good condition (depending on the number of avalanches that came down in the winter period and how the Province managed to cope with them). This last aspect should be considered, especially in the descent.

TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Cusio/Strona Valley
Place of departure and arrival:	Omegna Railway Station
Number of legs:	1
Length:	47.8 km
Height difference:	1007 m
Total ascent:	1355 m indicative
Difficulty:	MEDIUM
Average duration:	3 hours 30 minutes
Minimum altitude:	293 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	1300 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	good
Recommended period:	April-September
Presence of dedicated signage:	no
Target audience:	amateur cyclist/cyclo-hiker

REFRESHMENT POINTS

Clubs and food stores are present in the main towns crossed; the same goes for fountains.

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

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

Canottieri, Lungolago Buoizzi, 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)

"Alla vetta del Capezzone" Inn, Via Zamponi, 5 - 28897 VALSTRONA (VB)

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

San Bartolomeo Parish Church 13th century in Germagno, San Gottardo Church in Loreglia, Casa Gianoli and Ville dei Cane", San Rocco Church 16th century in Chesio, Collection of Sacred Art in Forno, St. John the Baptist Church and Villa del Bordo in Campello Monti.

In the vicinity

OMEGNA

Birthplace of Gianni Rodari, Fantasy Park, Nursery Rhymes on the Streets, Forum Arts and Industry Museum Foundation, Collegiate Church of Sant'Ambrogio, De Angeli-Frua Area, Vatican District, Porta Romana, Ponte Antico, Giardini della Torta in Cielo and Rock Carvings (Monte Zuoli),

La Morta di Agrano, Crusinallo Castle, Agrano Agricultural Nature Center Alpe Selviana

GERMAGNO

Walnut oil press, The arched houses (Caiasce), San Bartolomeo Parish Church 13th century, Monumento della Resistenza (Alpe Quaggione)

LOREGLIA

San Gottardo Church (bishop of Ildesheim in Saxony), Casa Gianoli and Ville dei Cane" (Chesio hamlet), San Rocco Church 16th century (Chesio hamlet)

VALSTRONA

Strona Valley Ethnographic and Handicraft Museum (Forno hamlet), Collection of Sacred Art (Forno hamlet), Preia Bridge (Forno hamlet), St. John the Baptist Church (Campello Monti hamlet), Villa del Bordo (Campello Monti hamlet), Campello Monti Eco museum, Strona Valley Nature Museum Center "Mario Bertolani" (Sambughetto hamlet)