

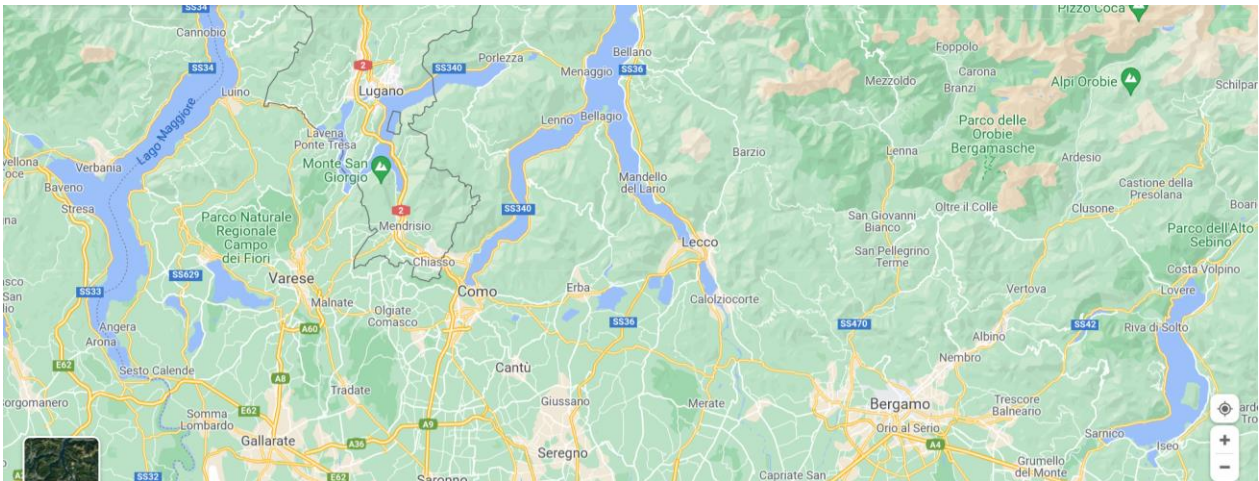
Bikexplore

Italian Lakes and High Passes

(GW222)

£1680

03 to 18 September 2022



Tour Prospectus

A stunning mountain and lake route. We climb the two of the highest passes in Italy, spend time at the stunning Lake Como and cycle by most of the great lakes of North Italy and several of the minor ones too.

Itinerary

Key to meals: B = Breakfast, D = Dinner

Saturday 3rd September. Bergamo Città Altà, arrival day

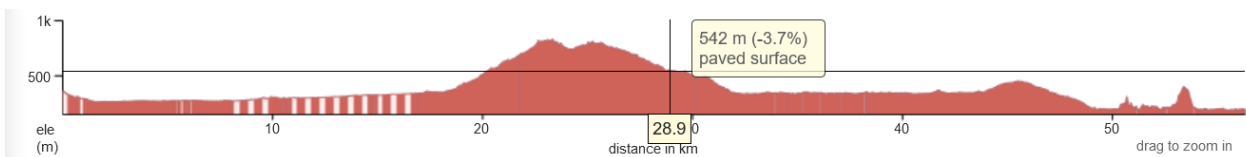
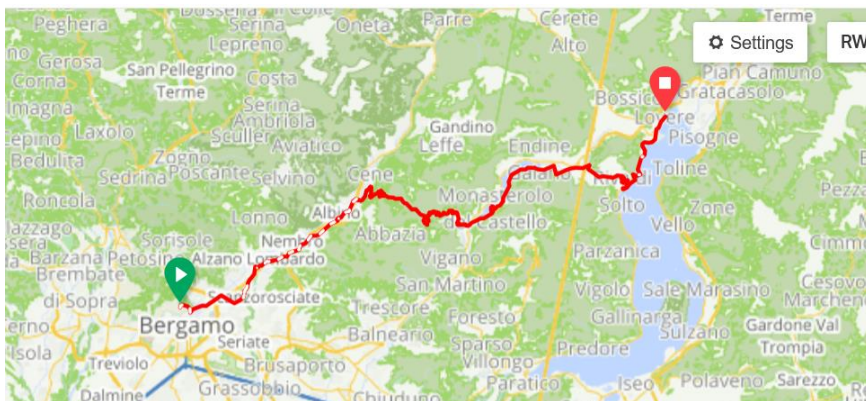
Transfer to Hotel, bike build. Bergamo Città Altà is the old part of Bergamo and very picturesque.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 4th September. Città Altà to Lovere

We ride out of Città Altà, following the cycle path along the river Serio. Then we head up into the mountains climbing to over 800m in height. We pass a sanctuary dedicated to cyclists. Then a long descent past Lago Engine and to Lago Iseo. We follow a road hewn out of the rock into Lovere.

- Route distance: 54 km
- Route altitude gain: 1150 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

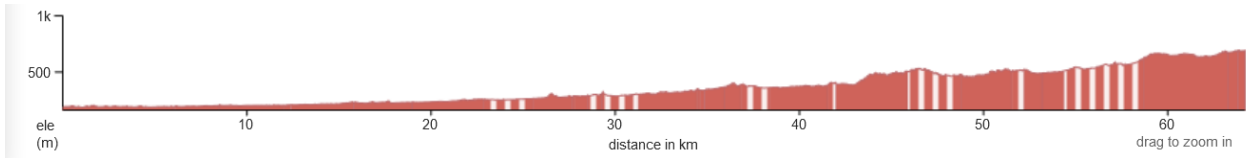


Monday 5th September. Lovere to Edolo

Follow the river Oglio cycle path to Edolo. The route is partly a traffic free cycle path and follows the river. We climb steadily to 700 metres. Stay 2 nights.

- Route distance: 66 km
- Route altitude gain: 980 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



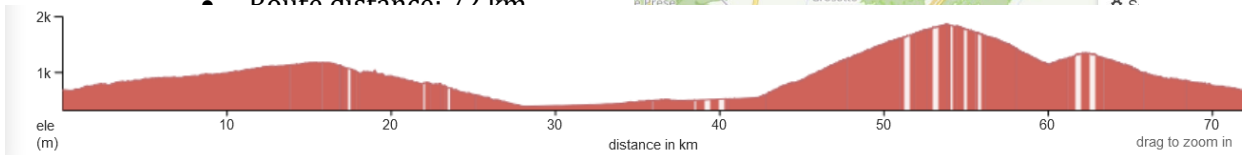


Tuesday 6th September. Passo Mortirolo

Choice of routes:

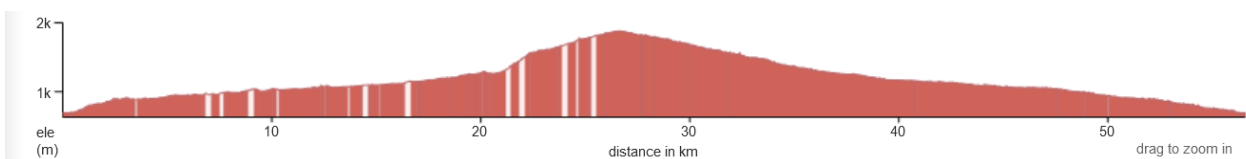
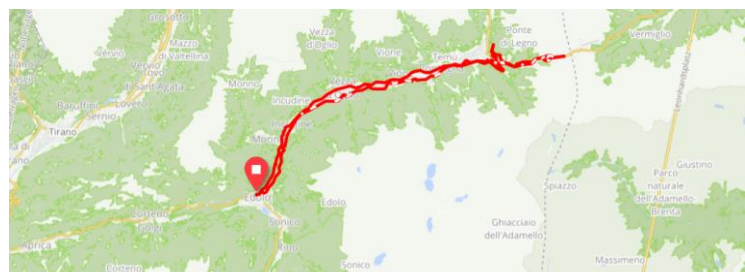
1. Guided. Circular route from Edolo to Passo Mortirolo. The pass is notorious as one of the toughest climbs in Italy. The climb is hard but spectacular.

• Route distance: 72 km



2. Non guided. Follow the cycle path from Edolo to Ponte di Legno then proceeds on the road. The altitude gain is 1880m.

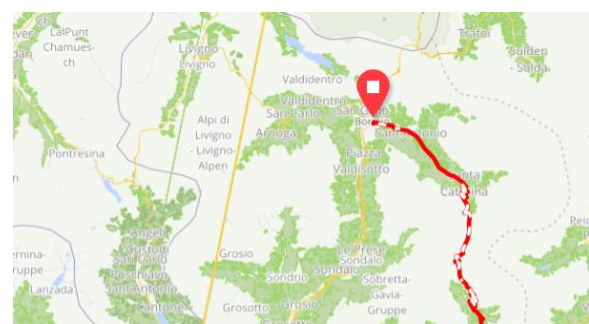
- Route distance: 60km
- Route altitude gain: 1350m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



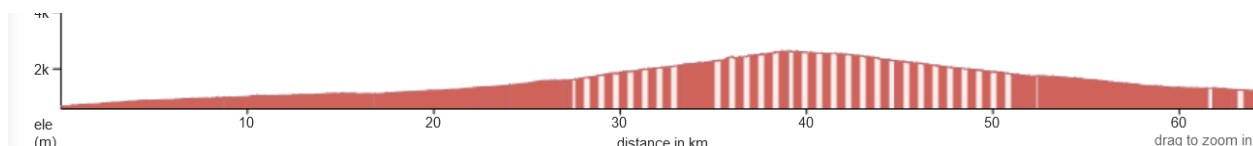
Wednesday 7th September. Edolo to Bormio

Follow the road to Ponte di Legno, then ride up the Gavia pass at 2620m above sea level. Passo Gavia is the second highest pass in Italy and one of the highest in Europe. It is an absolutely stunning ride. It is usually quiet as it is 'only' the second highest. Descend to Santa Caterina Valfurva then along the road to Bormio. We start climbing at Edolo, about 600m ASL, but the actual pass begins at Ponte di Legno.

- Route distance: 68 km
- Route altitude gain: 2300 m



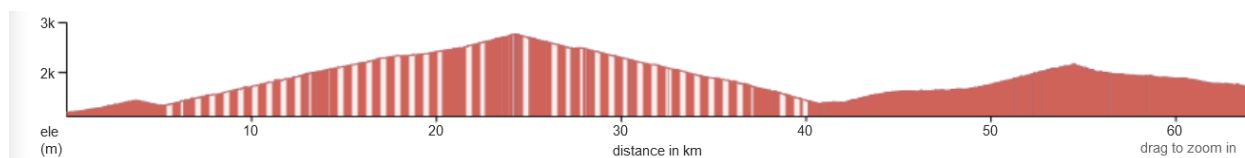
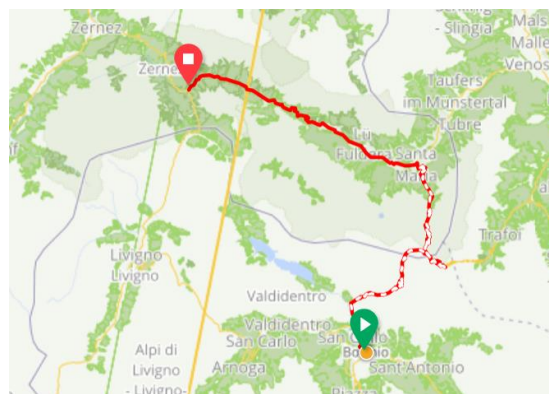
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Thursday 8th September. Bormio, Stelvio, Livigno

Leave Bormio, climb up Passo Stelvio, 2750m at the top. Turn back and descend down the quiet road into Switzerland. The photo on Streetview was taken in September and the whole area is covered in snow. In Switzerland we climb the Offenpass at 2140metres. then take the old tunnel through the mountains to the hidden valley of Livigno high in the Alps. We will need to take the shuttle though the tunnel, it opens out onto the magical Livigno valley. We then ride the last few kilometres along the lake to Livigno village.

- Route distance: 75 km
- Route altitude gain: 2700 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Friday 9th September. Rest day at Livigno

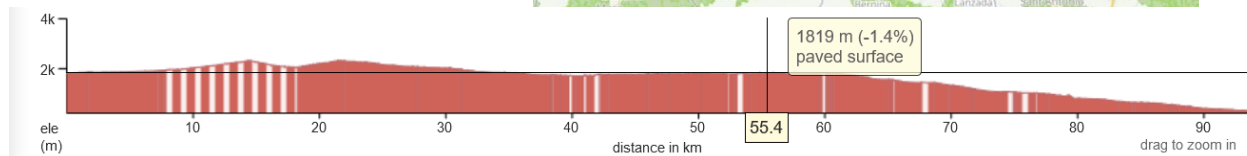
Livigno is at 1800m. Walks or gentle rides available, ride round the lake or walk up into the Livigno valley. Mountain walks also possible.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 10th September. Livigno to Villa di Chiavenna

The route leaves the Livigno valley and re-enters Switzerland, we ride through San Moritz, high up in the Engadine valley, past two small lakes Silvaplannersee and Silvasee then back into Italy. The route continues downhill through small villages to the hotel.

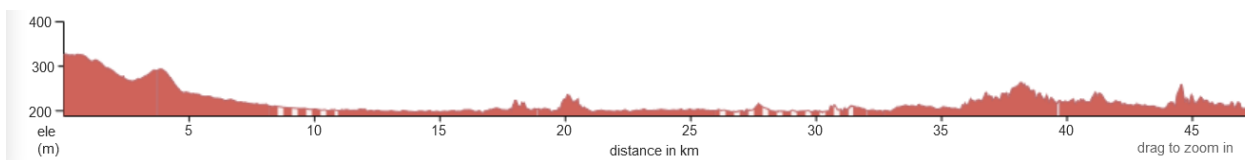
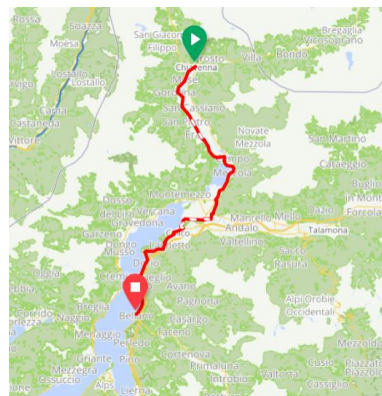
- Route distance: 94 km
- Route altitude gain: 1150 m (descent 2650m)
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Sunday 11th September. Villa di Chiavenna to Lake Como

Route follows mainly quiet roads and cycle paths. to Lake Como. Then it follows the lakeside using the cycle routes where possible, including some gravel tracks. We ride to Bellano then take the ferry to Bellagio. Stay 2 nights.

- Route distance: 65 km
- Route altitude gain: 280 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Monday 12th September. Free day

Lake Como is shaped like a giant upside down Y, Bellagio is on the tip of the middle section of the lake. It has amazing views to all the northern parts of the lake. Free day to explore Lake Como and its famous villas. Ferries from Bellagio to many parts of Lake Como.

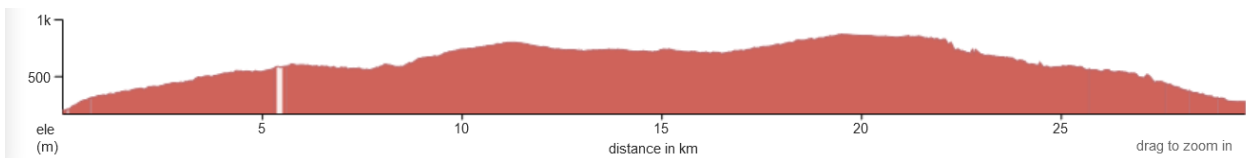
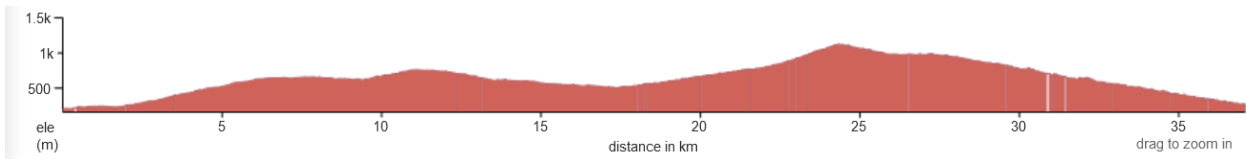
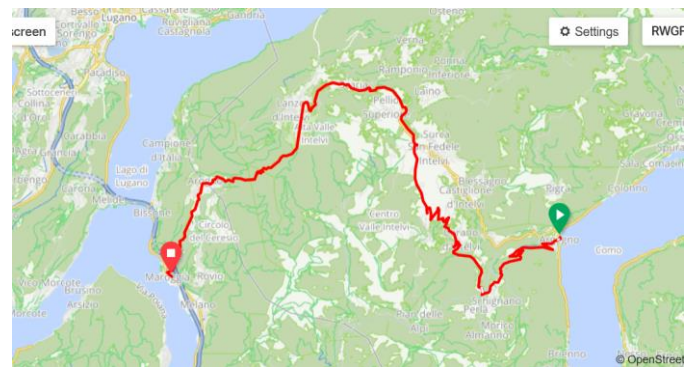
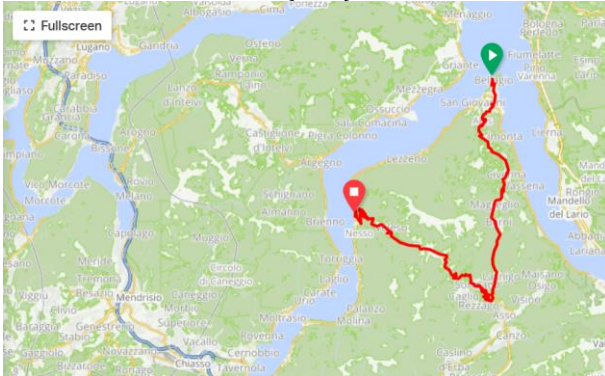
- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel

- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 13th September. Bellagio to Lake Lugano

Climb through the mountainous central spine of Lake Como. Visit the famous cycling sanctuary of the Madonna del Ghisallo, then drop down to the west side of the central spine. We cross the lake by ferry, then ride through the mountains into Switzerland and Lake Lugano.

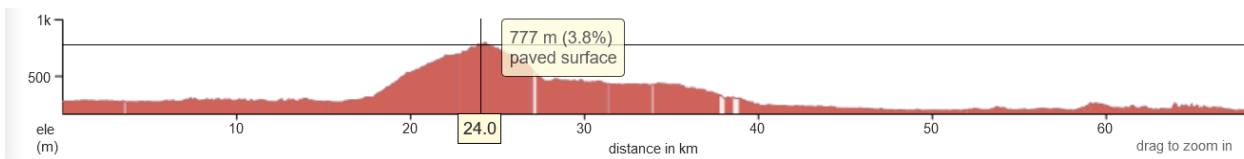
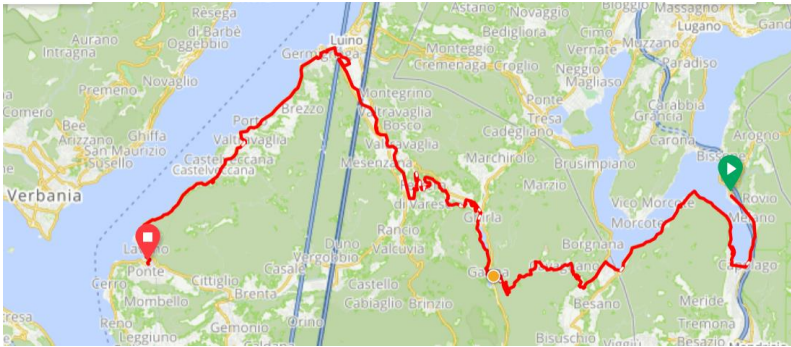
- Route distance: 67 km
- Route altitude gain: 2100 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Wednesday 14th September 2022. Lake Lugano to Lake Maggiore

The route follows the lakesides where possible. We re-enter Italy at Porto Ceresio, then route through the pre-alpine valleys by the exquisite Lago di Ghirla and on to Laveno on the shores of Lake Maggiore. Some cycle paths, most are tarmacked. We meet Lake Maggiore at the pretty town of Luino and follow the lake to Laveno.

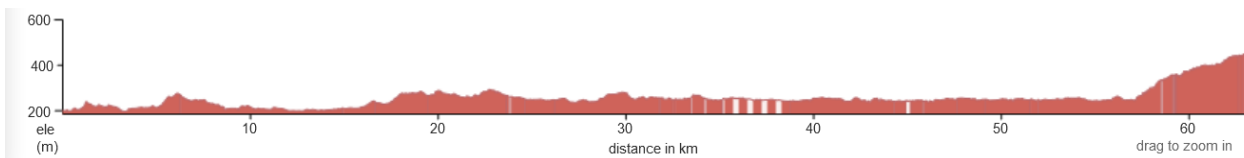
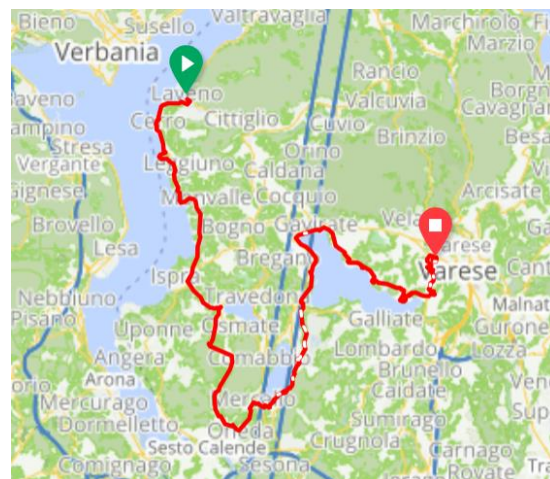
- Route distance: 68 km
- Route altitude gain: 1050 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Thursday 15th September. Laveno to Varese

We follow the side of Lake Maggiore to the pretty monastery of Santa Caterina, then continue by three small lakes, Monate (needs a side trip), Comabbio and Varese. We follow cycle paths round Lake Comabbio and Lake Varese (some not tarmacked). and up into Varese. We stay at the Palace Grand Hotel, designed in 1923 and overlooking the town.

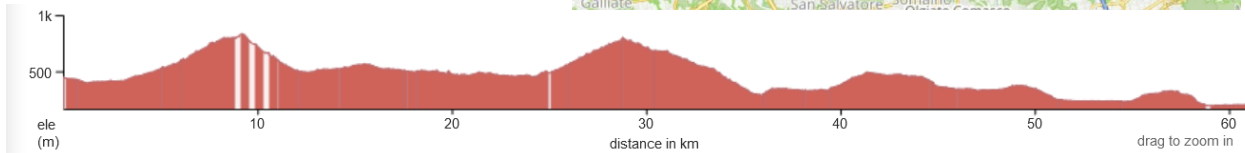
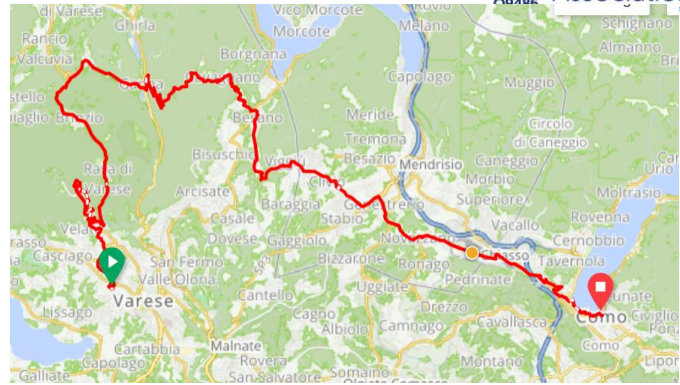
- Route distance: 63 km
- Route altitude gain: 850 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Friday 16th September. Varese to Como

We cycle from Varese Palace Hotel up the local mountain, Campo Dei Fiori. We ride to a medieval village on a shoulder of the mountain, with a side trip to the summit with incredible views over the lakes also available. We spend a little time here as it is stunning. Walk down the Sacro Monte trail with its 14 chapels. Ride through the Pre-alps, into and out of Switzerland then on to Como.

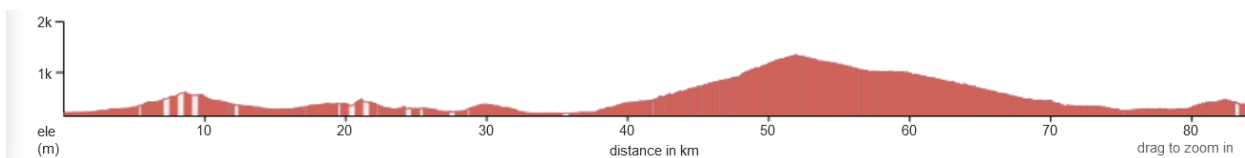
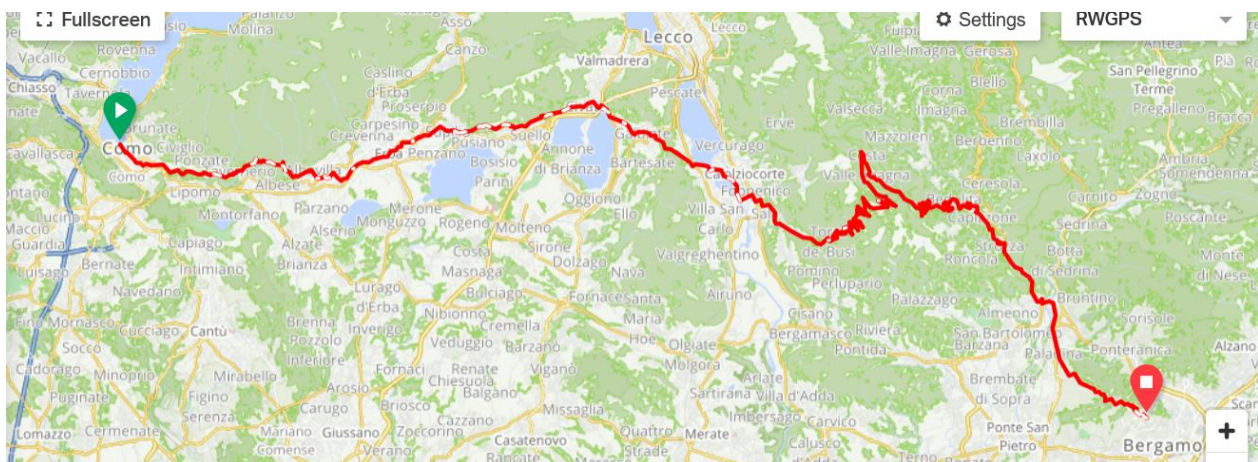
- Route distance: 63 km
- Route altitude gain: 850 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Saturday 17th September. Como to Bergamo

We leave Como heading towards the Lecco, then on to Bergamo. We use cycle paths quiet roads round small lakes and climb over a 1300m pass, trying to avoid the busier routes where possible.

- Route distance: 93 km
- Route altitude gain: 2350 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)



Sunday 18th September. Bergamo

Pack bikes, tour the old town of Città Altà, which is well worth a visit if you missed it at the start of the tour. Then transfer to the airport or station.

- No cycling
- Meals: (B)

Prices and Key Dates

Price: £1680

The price is based on a minimum number of 8 participants taking part in the tour. If there are insufficient bookings by 1st July 2022, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Price includes:

- Return minibus transfer from Bergamo Orio al Serio airport or Bergamo station to the hotel in Città Altà.
- 15 nights hotel on half board basis, sharing room.
- Vehicle support on cycling days.
- Ferry to Bellagio and to Nesso to Arogno.
- Shuttle through Munt la Schera tunnel.
- Bikexplore costs.

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from Bergamo from your home.
- Drinks with evening meals.
- Lunches or refreshments during the day.
- Ferry tickets on the rest day at Lake Como.
- Entry fees at any attractions visited.
- Other internal travel.
- Any other personal expenses.
- Travel Insurance.
- Single occupancy supplement (£250, subject to availability).
- Bike transport to and from the UK, £80 extra (maximum of 8 bikes can be carried).

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £160 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Manager has processed your Booking Form (see below), with the final balance of £1520 per person to be paid no later than ten weeks prior to departure, by 1st July 2022.

Cancellations

Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Written notice received:	Cancellation charge:	
Up to 1st July 2021	Deposit	(£160)
From 2nd July to departure	100%	(£1680)

To make a booking

Read the section on 'Booking a Holiday' on the Bikexplore website, then contact the Tour Leader to check that there are still places available. If there are, download and complete the

booking form and email it to the Tour Manager. Once it's been processed instructions on how to pay the deposit (and balance) will be sent to you.

Holiday Information



This holiday is classed as Grade 8 – Athletic Carrying a light load cycling up to 114km per day and climbing up to 1520m. Please note that some days are harder than this, but the vast majority of days are a lot easier.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation is generally quite good, but sometimes we may have to adapt as some of the villages we are travelling to are quite small. It will usually be in 3-star hotels sharing rooms, with single occupancy limited and subject to availability. Most of the hotels have local specialities on offer. Vegetarians can be catered for, please put this down as a 'special request' on your booking form. Lunches are generally down to you; café stops or picnics.

The nature of the holiday

We will be cycling most days, and there are some quite hard climbs and some long days.

Rest Days

There are two rest days mid tour. The first one is at Livigno and the second one is on Lake Como. There is an extra non-moving-on day before Gavia Pass, but I have set up a choice of two rides for that day.

Roads used

Mainly quiet roads and some traffic free cycle paths. There are a small number of non-tarmacked cycle paths.

The area covered by the holiday

The north of Italy is sadly neglected by holiday companies. Between the wars the Italian Lake District was hugely popular amongst travellers doing the Grand Tour, we even stay at one of the hotels designed to cater for that group of people, The Palace Grand Hotel at Varese. We spend time at three of the great Italian lakes as well as visiting 3 to 4 of the less well-known lakes, riding on the lakeside cycle paths, as well as passing a number of small ones.

The Gavia pass is one of the spectacles of the Alps as it is little visited. It is 100m lower than the Stelvio but in my opinion it is vastly superior. We climb up the long side, approximately 2300m of climbing that day. The road up was only tarmacked 10 years ago. Stelvio is just high. There is only one pass in France higher, the Col de l'Iseran. We descend the Stelvio on a lovely alternative route through Switzerland where we will need to take a shuttle though a tiny road tunnel back into Italy at Livigno which is a gorgeous hidden alpine valley. We spend a day at Livigno with lovely walks or cycle rides round Lake Livigno. The day before

the Gavia we have the option of cycling the Mortirolo Pass, a notoriously tough pass, but well worth it for the views at the top.

From Livigno we ride to Lake Como, where we can visit some of the stunning lakeside villas on our free day. From Lake Como we ride back into Switzerland staying at Lake Lugano before moving on to Lake Maggiore, the second largest lake in Italy. On the return route we visit some smaller lakes, Lago di Varese, Lago di Comabbio and others. From Varese we ride up the mountain that overlooks the city, where there is a medieval village perched on a shoulder with a famous 14 chapel walk, with each chapel designed by a different architect.

Route Information

Route sheets and GPX files will be provided.

Group information

The maximum group size will be 18, plus the Tour Manager and driver.

Weather and Clothing

The weather is usually good in Italy in September, but we will be travelling to the high mountains, some of which exceed 2000m, so you will need to bring appropriate clothing for adverse conditions. If you intend to do some walking around Livigno then bring appropriate clothing and footwear. It may snow in the high mountains and it has been known that the highest passes can close as a result, even in September.

Cycles / Equipment

We recommend a good audax type bike, though as no luggage needs to be carried you can bring your lightweight road bike. However, some of the cycle paths have stretches of gravel and this may cause problems to lightweight racing tyres. I recommend larger tyres than usual to avoid such problems. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. Some climbs are long so a low bottom gear (i.e., small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. New tyres and inner tubes are recommended. Participants will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools each day to deal with punctures and minor repairs.

The support vehicle will not be far away in case of dramatic changes in the weather. You will not need to carry luggage, but a saddlebag, rack pack or bar bag will be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, snacks and your map. Each participant is expected to bring and carry their personal items and spares. Helmets are your personal choice as there is no legal requirement for these to be worn in Italy.

Maps

Although you will be provided with route notes and GPX files and there will be a support vehicle as well as the Tour Manager, please bring a map with you in case you get separated from the group. Touring Club Italy maps are a good choice; the TCI map of Lombardia covers all of the route.

Travel

Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. Thus, it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Manager nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definitely going ahead. This is especially important this year due to the pandemic. Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions are imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead. In the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us.

Three airlines fly to destinations convenient for the start and end point of the tour:

- Ryanair flies to Bergamo Orio al Serio
- British Airways to Milano Linate.
- EasyJet to Milano Malpensa and Linate

There are regular train shuttles from both Malpensa and Linate airports to Milano Centrale station, and from there an onward service to Bergamo. Note that the larger Malpensa is about 50km north of Milan whereas Linate is closer to the city. There is also a shuttle from Malpensa to Orio al Serio. Bergamo. Orio al Serio is quite close to Bergamo town and we are happy to pick you up if you let us know your arrival time.

Another option is the overnight train from Paris to Milan. However, bikes will need to be boxed. This is quite a good option as although it might seem more expensive, you get a couchette to sleep in and the train arrives at Bergamo early in the morning leaving you the whole day to visit the town.

It will be possible to take some bikes from the UK to Bergamo in the van, but you will have to deliver your bike to the Tour Manager, and the charge is £80.

Travel insurance advice

Italy is in Europe, but Britain is no longer in the EU. Your EHIC card is valid until its expiry date, but it cannot be renewed. Instead a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) has due to be introduced (see <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/>). However, at present Britain no longer has a reciprocal health agreement with Italy, though this might change before the start of the tour. Appropriate travel insurance is therefore essential; please check with your provider to ensure that they cover the revised conditions in Europe. Although most travel insurance policies do not cover cancellation due to pandemic restrictions, the money you pay to us for the holiday is fully protected until we depart.

About the leader

I am a keen cyclist, trained cycle instructor, ride leader and mechanic, able to support members of the group who require it. I have led a number of tours for Cycle Tours and Holidays and toured myself extensively in Europe and further afield. As I speak Italian and have lived in Italy for a number of years, I know the area very well. I actually lived in Varese, one of the towns we stay at.



Greg Woodford

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