

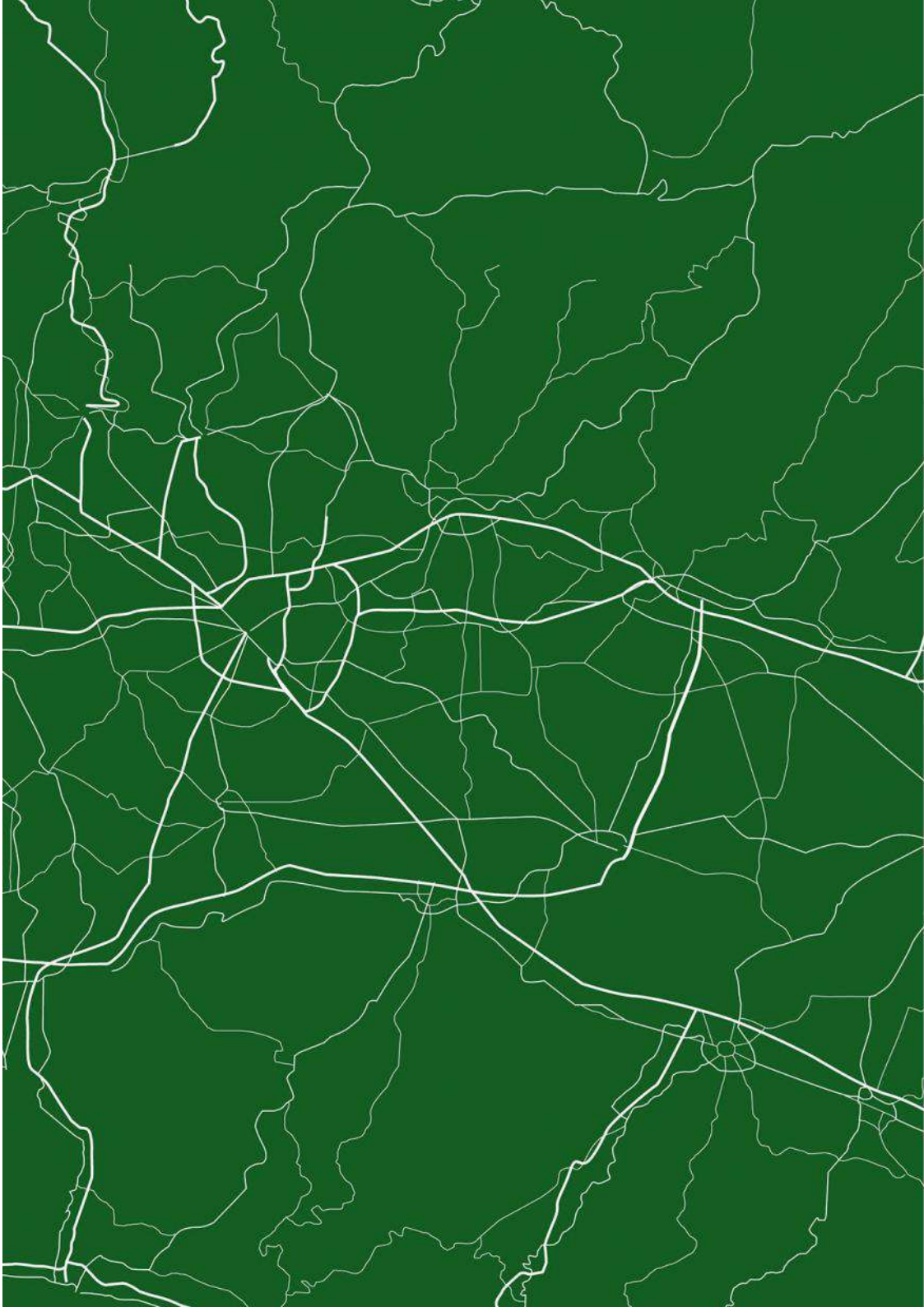


inLOMBARDIA

IN — BICI

/ Magazine





inBici #inLombardia — Magazine

Two hundred years after the invention of the draisine – the first bicycle, Lombardy is rediscovering its cycling routes, from the Alps to the Apennines. Its cycleways invite visitors to enjoy an authentic experience, rather than simply to count kilometres. On these ten routes, you encounter people, rice fields, river banks and vineyards. You can smell excellent food and roses. You can explore dirt roads in the woods. You can observe, as Leonardo did with the Navigli canals, charming villages and champions' hairpin bends. Lombardy's routes have been immortalized by cycling, making it the perfect place to take your bike.

Photo

Cover_ The Ponte delle Barche di Bereguardo on the River Ticino.

The most classic of cycle paths

— Route 1

*Featuring mills, lotus flowers
and strips of riverine forest, the Mincio
cycleway is the birthplace of cycling
tourism in Lombardy*

Two centuries ago, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe embarked on his 'Italian journey' in a horse-drawn carriage. Nowadays, many people do the Grand Tour on a bike. Following in the footsteps of the great writer-traveller, many choose the road that leads from Lake Garda to the banks of the Po as their first sweet taste of the "country where lemon trees bloom".

The Mincio cycleway is one of the first routes to be successfully established. The route is marked as Ciclovía 1, part of the Ciclopista del Sole. Once completed, it will form the great backbone of Italy, from the Alps to the main islands. The route has a gentle fellow traveller: the water of the Mincio River, which flows out of Lake Garda and lazily meanders through the first moraine hills, through woods, springs, bogs and wetlands, heading along the plain towards the river Po.

Photo. The Mincio cycle route near Marmirolo.

From Desenzano del Garda to Mantua

One day route

Difficulty for everyone

Length 43.5 km

Elevation profile slightly downhill

Roads segregated bike lane, paved

Type of bike touring bikes with gears
and road bikes

When from April to October

Mood slow

Photo

Alongside_ The lighthouse
in Desenzano del Garda.
Below_ A stretch of cycle path
in Parco del Mincio.
Below right_ Mantua's Middle Lake.



You start at Desenzano, perhaps after a coffee in Piazza Malvezzi, surrounded by the lake and porticoes, with a view of the Alps, and proceed southeast towards Pozzolengo and Monzambano, where you join the right river bank, the true cycleway. After a few kilometres, at Valeggio sul Mincio and Borghetto, the river makes a wide bend in the Mincio Regional Park. Beyond the town, there is a slight, almost imperceptible descent, allowing you to slightly ease off the pedals.

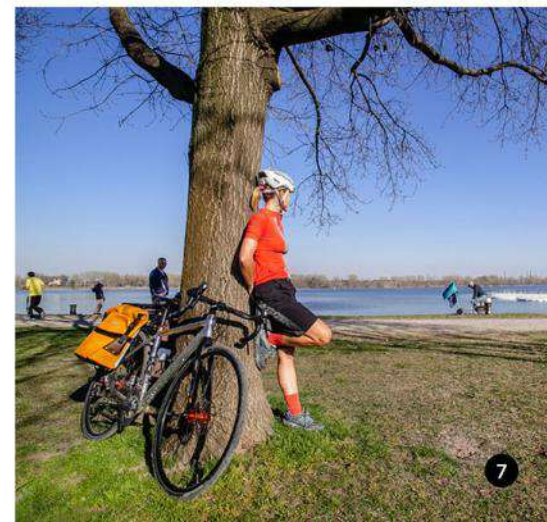
After the Centrale del Corno green area, just before Pozzolo, there is a wooded island in the centre that divides the river. Various plants grow wild here including broom, gentians, mint and aquatic orchids. On closer inspection, these plants can also be seen growing elsewhere on the river bank. In Pozzolo, the route diverts from the

Mincio River and follows the bank of the Pozzolo-Maglio drainage canal. A brief digression, crossing the canal for Massimbona, leads you to a small Romanesque church and a medieval mill that is still in operation.

Once back on the cycleway, after about ten kilometres you continue along the bank of another artificial canal, the Mincio diversion canal. From here, traveling down a few dirt roads, you can ride through fields and valleys or head towards the Parco Giardino Bertone, which contains a nineteenth-century villa and is full of paths, ponds and flying storks. There is a magnificent ginkgo tree in the villa's garden, which is cloaked in spectacular golden-yellow foliage in autumn. There is another lovely alternative just outside Soave Marmirolo, namely the Bosco della Fontana,

a former hunting ground of the Gonzagas, which is now a State Nature Reserve, one of the rare examples of riverine forest that has remained untouched for centuries. Now you are near the finish line, in the part of the route where lotus flowers grow on the river in the summer. Leaving the embankment road, you bear right towards rural roads that wind through the countryside: finally, Mantua appears.

You can observe it from the Cittadella del Porto, which was built in the sixteenth-century to defend the city. The fairytale silhouette of the towers of Castello di San Giorgio and the great white dome of Sant'Andrea make you feel as though you are riding a noble steed, like in the frescoes in the Bridal Chamber. It is time to dismount and to pay homage to the city of the Gonzagas.



From Garda to the Po

— In three days

Frescoes depicting lobsters and pomegranates. Freshwater fish and spicy ravioli. The route between Lake Garda and the Po offers many delights

HISTORIC MEMORIES San Martino della Battaglia

The memory of a historic battle is conserved through documents, relics and reconstructions in the ossuary-tower that stands on San Martino hill.

HISTORY OF THE RIVER Revere

History, archaeology, ethnography: The Po Museum is a journey into the ancient civilizations of the River Po. Nearby, a ship mill moored to the riverbank.

TASTINGS Sermide

The Mantuan melon capital is home to the Consortium that promotes it. In summer, the fruit is celebrated with numerous festivals, where you can enjoy it as an appetizer and dessert.

BEAUTIFUL MOSAICS Brescia

The town's stratigraphy is explored in the museum, housed in the Santa Giulia monastery. Roman houses with remarkable mosaics.

SILENT ABBEY San Benedetto Po

For centuries, the agricultural landscape around San Benedetto abbey in Polirone has seen continuous land reclamation and the establishment of settlements.

SWEET AND SPICY Mantua area

Rustic tradition and court tradition: Mantuan cuisine embraces both popular and aristocratic dishes. Be sure to try the "risotto alla pilota", a traditional rice picker's dish.



Photo. Piazza Sordello in Mantua.

AMONG THE VINEYARS Valtènesi and Basso Garda

Trebbiano di Lugana is produced in the moraine hills. Chiaretto, which has a floral bouquet, is made from Groppello grapes, grown on the slopes of the Valtènesi, amidst castles and lake breezes.

CASTLE WITH A VIEW Padenghe

Ascend to the austere Padenghe castle, with its polygonal walls and corner towers, and let your gaze wander over the wide expanse of Lake Garda and the hills.

LAKESIDE Sirmione

A small peninsula that extends into Basso Garda and is separated from the mainland by a crossable moat is home to a charming medieval centre with a spa.



Info

Over a weekend, you can cycle further to the Valtènesi Brescia hills, which feature vineyards, castles and views of Lake Garda. You can even head towards the city of Brescia, with its welcoming historic squares, where you can relax seated outside

a café. Finally, along the Po, you can explore the Bassa Mantovana and the Oltrepò, the land torn from the waters of the Great River, which abounds with testimonies of material culture and fine dining opportunities.

From Rovato to Cazzago

San Martino

One day route

Difficulty *medium*

Length 63 km

Elevation profile 650 m

Roads 80% paved, 20% dirt

Type of bike *touring bikes with gears and mountain bikes*

When *from March to November*

Mood *gourmet*

Water bottles and wine

— Route 2

The undulating roads of Franciacorta pass through vineyards that are famous throughout the world. Concealed among rows of vines, castles and abbeys

For once, you can toast the winner at the start in Franciacorta, in the Brescia area, the district that overlooks Lake Iseo, where the most popular sparkling wine in Italy is produced. In this moraine valley, which resembles a vegetable garden, a certain Dr. Conforti noted, in the 16th century, the presence of "biting" wines. Set on gently sloping terraces between a parish church and a bell tower, these vineyards are the birthplace of extraordinary DOCG wines. Chardonnay grapes represent the feminine side: they lend the wine softer notes. Meanwhile, the Pinot Nero grape variety gives the sparkling wines a rigorous, masculine character. So, raise your glasses: a circuit of wineries awaits you, whose variety will amaze you. It is a puzzle of food and wine, nature and mystical stops. Behind every bend.

When you leave from Rovato, you immediately realize that the day will be enjoyably challenging. The climb to the Convento dell'Annunciata is less than a kilometre, but it is intense and involves riding on cobblestones, which requires attention. From the terrace in front of the monastery, on the slopes of Montorfano, the view extends to the heart of Franciacorta. Beautiful and cyclable, even though you cannot see much lowland.

—
Photo. View of Lake Iseo from Sulzano.

Photo

Alongside_ The Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Erbusco.
Below_ Landing stage on Lake Iseo in Sulzano.
Below right_ View of the vineyards of Franciacorta.

From up here it is easy to understand why Brescia is the land of cycling. The area is a continuous “eat and drink”, as we Italian cyclists like to call the close succession of fairly short climbs and descents. Next, you follow signs to Erbusco. Resist the temptation to visit the area’s legendary wineries and take a quick break beside the Pieve di Santa Maria Maggiore, a Romanesque jewel of a church that has been returned to its former glory by a recent restoration. Continue westbound towards Adro and Capriolo, which is dominated by a fortress with a small, picturesque medieval village. To get there, you have to ascend a little more. From here on, the ride becomes less challenging.

You soon reach Paratico, which overlooks the southern shores of Lake Iseo. You have not yet reached the halfway mark, but you have definitely earned a relaxing break on the benches of the Parco delle Chiatte, the artificial lakefront built where merchant ships once docked. The cycleway, which is partially protected, starts at Paratico and leads to Brescia. You continue to Clusane and on to the Torbiere del Sebino, the group of ponds just south of Lake Iseo, which are now protected nature areas. You could circumnavigate it by bicycle, but it is worth choosing the so-called Percorso Centrale, which crosses the water on wooden walkways.

At the end of the walk, you begin to see the outline of the Cluny monastery of San Pietro in Lamosa, which has dominated the marsh area since 1083. Enlarged and reshaped in subsequent periods, it preserves an important series of early-medieval and Renaissance frescoes and a baroque oratory. Continue along the cycleway, which first ascends a hill with vineyards, and then gradually heads in the direction of Paderno Franciacorta and Rodengo Saiano, where you can see the most important religious monument of Franciacorta, the Olivetan Abbey of San Nicola. Founded by Cluny monks in the 11th century, it was located on an important crossroads and provided accommodation and food to pilgrims traveling to Rome. However, the majesty of the complex is due



to the Benedictines who took it over 400 years later, extending the Abbey and decorating it with remarkable frescoes.

It is time to return towards the starting point. You go back along the cycleway to Paderno Franciacorta. From here, you follow signs to Bornato. A symbolic choice, designed to celebrate the marriage between history and vineyards, which has been celebrated every day here, in Franciacorta, for centuries. Indeed, the Castello di Bornato contains the oldest winery in the area. You are now on the home stretch and you can indulge yourself by savouring some wine besides the crenellated walls. Once back on the saddle, you continue along side roads that are open to cars, and soon reach Cazzago San Martino, which requires one final push. Which will undoubtedly be rewarded with more glasses of sparkling wine.



Between Ticino and Oglio

— *In three days*

Artificial canals built for irrigation, aristocratic villas and historic towns with spectacular examples of industrial archaeology

1. The Panperduto dam, a 19th-century hydraulic architectural jewel, built near Somma Lombardo, where the Villoresi canal separates from the Ticino river.
2. The 16th-century Villa Borromeo Visconti Litta in Lainate, around ten kilometres from Milan, with its notable water features.
3. The trails, are perfect for mountain bikes, through the oak woods and moors of the Parco Regionale delle Groane, the largest protected area on the plain.
4. The Museo del Presepio di Dalmine, near Bergamo, which contains over 900 representations of the Nativity from all over the world.
5. The Monastero di Astino, at the entrance to Bergamo, and the adjacent "Biodiversity valley", where 1500 plant species grow, many of which are edible.
6. The "torta polenta e osei", made with marzipan and decorated with little chocolate birds, Bergamo's traditional dessert. In Bergamo Alta, you can find the best straciatella ice cream.
7. The ascent to Monte Maddalena, from Brescia. Challenging, but panoramic, with many alternative routes for mountain bikes.
8. Polenta and Gorgonzola DOP: two of Lombardy's outstanding products, which are best-enjoyed in the Bergamo area and Brescia valleys, after, rather than during, a cycle trip.
9. Once a sixteenth-century forge at the start of the Val Trompia, the Museo I Magli di Sarezzo explores the tradition of iron-working in the Brescia area.
10. The Ciclovía Sud del Mella, from Brescia to Ponteviso. A flat route, best-suited to mountain bikes, passing through the Parco dello Strone.

Info

From the Canale Villoresi pedestrianized cycleway, which connects the Ticino to the Adda and is completely flat for 85 kilometres, you enter the Bergamo area. The route becomes more hilly, with elevation changes, including the "spurt" that leads into the centre of Bergamo Alta and to the hilly belt east of the city. There are more undulations up to Brescia, until you reach the grand finale of the plain along the Ciclabile del Mella, which ends on the banks of the Oglio.



Photo. The Monastery of San Pietro in Lamosa in the Torbiere del Sebino nature reserve at Provaglio d'Iseo.



Some like it on bikes

— *Notable fans of the area*

The Vigorelli Velodrome which resembles a millefeuille pastry. The museum that houses the bike with silk tubes. The trails in the Parco del Ticino. And a certain fig tree in Olgiate Molgora. Special places for special cyclists



Davide Oldani
Chef

"I really enjoy road cycling. I do it to keep fit: as a cook, you need to stay in shape. Directing a kitchen is like conducting an orchestra. You need a thousand eyes. When I ride my bike, I have time to myself: I am alone with my thoughts. And this reenergizes me. Cycling is a way of putting things in order, in your head and soul. I find that there are some similarities between cycling and the kitchen. Milan-Sanremo reminds me of the spring, of a dish like the Pasqualina tart with artichokes and herbs. At the end of a Tour of Lombardy, I would make saffron and rice: its spiral of gold-saffron on the white of the beans recalls the turn of a wheel. When I think of the Velodromo Vigorelli, it reminds me of a millefeuille pastry: the turns of the track resemble the process of making pastry. An action that is repeated in an infinite circle."



Linus
Dj

Two or three rides a week. Cycling trips play an important role in the schedule of Linus, the hugely popular voice of Radio DeeJay. "It is more fun and less arduous than other sports, and it is also enjoyable as a group activity." When he has limited time, Linus makes a "desperate escape" in the direction of the Parco del Ticino: "a flat loop in the countryside between Cusago, Cassinetta di Lugagnano and Robecco sul Naviglio". Otherwise, he rides to Reggia di Monza and then towards Sirtori and Colle Brianza. When he wants to go for a serious ride, "the Larian triangle is perfect for demanding trips: from Canzo, I ascend the Colma or Muro di Sormano, and then descend to Lake Como and reach Bellagio. From here, I return to the starting point, climbing the Ghisallo hill or the easier ascent from Onno to Valbrona". Always with fun in mind.



Carola Gentilini
Director of the Museo del Ghisallo

"Cycling and Lombardy are two stories that have always gone hand in hand. The Museo del Ciclismo is the best witness of this connection. This is the best suited climb for the home of cycling. I was in charge of its set-up, as an architect and urban cyclist. And I was infected. Opened in 2006, the museum, with its contemporary design, was partially carved into the rock. Inside, a curved ramp, which evokes the Ghisallo ascent, leads to three floors that tell the history of cycling: bicycles that won world records, historic documents and a Pink Jersey collection that also contains offerings given to the nearby Madonna del Ghisallo church. My favourite bicycle is Coppi's hour-record bicycle, with its silk tubulars and wooden rims. It is a sight to behold."



Felice Gimondi
Champion cyclist

"If I were to accompany a friend on a ride through Lombardy, I would go to Val Taleggio, which is unspoiled and contains little traffic. You ride up the valley from San Giovanni Bianco to Oolda, and then you ascend to the Bura pass. Of course, you need to be fit, but the climb is not difficult. Then you go down the Val Brembilla until you return to the bridges of Sedrina, which is my own town. As a boy, I helped my postwoman-mother to make deliveries by bicycle. Val Brembana was my gym. When I had to train, I went to Valsassina, descended to the lake and continued to Ghisallo. The first time I went there I was a boy. I borrowed a racing bike. I left one Sunday morning with a friend without eating and without any training. On the way back, after 150 kilometres, we were exhausted. We plundered a fig tree at Olgiate Molgora. We left nothing but leaves".

From Varese to Campo dei Fiori

One day route

Difficulty medium-easy

Length 62 km

Elevation profile 400 m

Roads 100% asphalt

Type of bike touring bikes with gears
and racing bikes

When from March to November

Mood relaxing



A small ancient world — Route 3

Segregated bike lanes, fishing villages and historic parks. On the roads of a memorable edition of the Road World Cycling Championships

The parks surrounding the villas of Varese, the garden-city, are the best introduction to a highly rewarding day's cycling. These same green areas welcome cyclists at the end of the route, which is around sixty kilometres long and can easily be covered in a day. Since 2008, when it hosted the Road World Championships, Varese has held a place in the hearts of cycling enthusiasts from every continent. The routes designed for the cycling challenge passed through spectacular locations that still have a strong appeal. The route starts downhill from the Villa Recalcati park, in the centre, and glides down to Schiranna, on the banks of Lake Varese. It immediately leaves the motorized road behind, following a segregated bike lane that allows you to circumnavigate the lake in a clockwise direction, passing right beside the reeds.

You occasionally venture into coastal woods, up to the ancient fishing village of Cazzago Brabbia, where you can find the Ghiacciaie, stone buildings with conical roofs used, from the eighteenth century onwards, to store slabs of ice taken from the lake and to preserve fish. In Biandronno, you can sail towards the Isolino Virginia, a small green island in the centre of the lake, which was home to the oldest lake-dwelling settlement in the Alpine area, now an Archaeological Park with a Prehistoric Museum, which was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011.

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Photo. The Basilica di San Vittore in Varese.

Photo

Alongside_ Embarkation in Biadronno for the Isolino Virginia.
Below_ Bridge over the river Bardello, on the cycle path of Lake Varese.
Below right_ Historic buildings alongside Lake Varese in Schiranna.

Back on dry land, you come to Gavirate, home to the "brutti e buoni" (the good and bad ones), traditional sweets made from almonds and toasted hazelnuts that will give you a good dose of energy. Not far from the centre, the 13th-century Chostro di Voltorre calls for a moment of meditation. It is a good opportunity to take a break before leaving the cycleway and journeying on to Cittiglio, the birthplace of cycling legend Alfredo Binda. The town has a museum dedicated to the three-time world champion, which is a recommended stop for cycling enthusiasts.

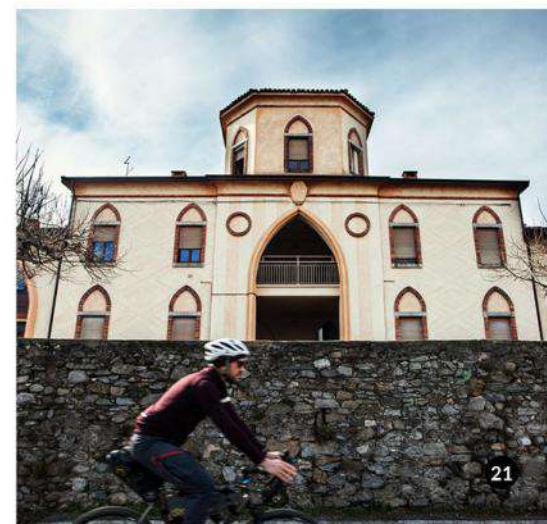
Once back on the saddle, you ride towards Valcuvia, a valley overlooking Lake Maggiore, which surrounds the northern part of the Monte Campo dei Fiori. You continue along the valley floor, with no elevation changes, admiring the glory of the surrounding mountains: Campo dei Fiori to the southeast, the slopes of Monte Nudo to the northwest, which conceal the trenches, mule tracks and observation posts of the Linea Cadorna, the series of fortifications built along the Swiss-Italian border at the end of the 19th century. The shadows of war fade away, along the Valcuvia, at the entrance to the Villa Della Porta Bozzolo, in Casalzuigno, an 18th-century jewel surrounded by a large park and terraces. Protected by the FAI, the delightful villa is worth visiting due to the grandeur of its court of honour and ballroom. The newly-designed rose garden, intended as a historical museum to celebrate the rose, contains rose varieties that are no longer cultivated elsewhere.

Next, you pedal slightly uphill towards Monte Campo dei Fiori, a regional park with nature reserves, an astronomical observatory and the Sacro Monte complex, 2 kilometres of medieval cobblestones and chapels built on a sacred mountain. When you reach Orino, with its beautiful 12th-century fortress, you come to a long hilly, wooded section. Many cyclists come here, attracted by the variety of the route and the low traffic. You reach Brinzio, which overlooks a small lake and is the start of the easy Rasa ascent. You reach the top of the hill almost without realizing it and if you want, you can charge headlong down to



Varese without even touching the pedals (though brakes are a must).

The first historic home with a garden that you encounter is Villa Toeplitz, which boasts spectacular water features, monumental trees from all over the world and is equipped with picnic areas. A little further on, you come to the 19th-century Villa Panza, which is owned by FAI. It contains a collection of contemporary art and its park is also the setting of an Art in Nature project: Land Art installations made from stones and logs, in dialog with nature, its co-author and spectator. Some of the works are, coincidentally, wheel-shaped, yet another reference to bicycles. The day's toil ends here. However, the fittest cyclists will not turn down the opportunity to brave the climb up to the Campo dei Fiori. Almost like world champions.





Between Lake Maggiore and the Po

— *In three days*

Art Nouveau friezes, museum bread and cycleways along river banks. Journeying on to the Po, the scenery switches from Belle Époque to a rural world that is still thriving

1. The Art Nouveau villas in Luino, overlooking Lake Maggiore, which has a Belle Époque atmosphere. The best view is from Via Dante.
2. Arcumeggia, the most famous of the painted villages in the Varese area, featuring over 50 frescoes by contemporary artists.
3. The wooden walkway along the Lago di Comabbio, which is best-suited to mountain bikes.
4. The Monsorino archaeological area in Golasecca, which contains remains dating back to the Iron Age.
5. The Naviglio Grande cycleway between Turbigo and Robecco sul Naviglio. The canal, which is still in use, was created in order to transport grain, timber and marble from Lake Maggiore to Darsena in Milan, for the construction of the Fabbrica del Duomo.
6. The Lombard Romanesque style Basilica di San Bassiano, which stands alone in the countryside just outside Lodi Vecchio.
7. The Museo del Pane at the Castello Morando Bolognini di Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, which, with its real artefacts and bread from all over Italy, explores the work of bakers.
8. The San Colombano vineyards in Lambro which are home to the DOC wines nearest Milan, surrounded by hills that are very popular with cyclists.
9. The six hundred pairs of magnificent birds (gray herons and little egrets) that nest in the heronry in the Monticchie natural reserve, in the municipality of Somaglia.
10. The Colatore Venere "Greenway" between Livraga and the main bank of the Po, where you can ride a mountain bike.

Info

The first part, in the Varese area, presents the only elevation differences, although they are not particularly strenuous. The next day, you enter the Milan area, along the picturesque Naviglio Grande cycleway towards the farms in the Parco Agricolo in the south of Milan. On the third day, you reach the province of Lodi with its Romanesque churches, vineyards and protected areas.



Photo. The "Barchett" canal boats of Boffalora in Robecco sul Naviglio.



Along the silver railway

— Route 4

A stretch of railway line converted to a cycle path, amongst secluded hills and industrial archaeology. The Val Seriana is a journey through the history of places

For more than a century, the Val Seriana has been a place of work with little time for leisure. From 1884, a railway line just over 34 kilometres long, with gradual gradients and wide bends, travelled up the valley and formed the main means of transport for manufactured goods and minerals, above all zinc, lead and silver-bearing galena. The train also carried passengers travelling to Clusone, the gateway to the Presolana Mountains. In the 1960s, after the old railway line was closed, little by little the route was made into a cycle path, like many disused railway lines all over Europe. The path runs along the banks of the River Serio, connected by tensile structure crossings for bicycles, with short branches leading to the centre of the towns and villages along the route.

Photo. The bridge of Albino, dating from the Middle Ages.

From Ranica to Clusone

One day route

Difficulty for all cyclists

Length 31 km

Elevation profile 340 m

Roads dirt road as far as Ponte Nossa, then paved

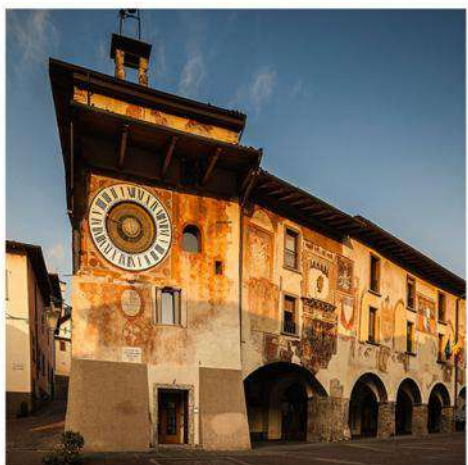
Type of bike touring with gear change, road and mountain bikes

When from April to October

Mood curious

Photo

Alongside_ Industrial archaeology buildings in Ponte Selva.
Below_ The Astronomical Clock of Palazzo Fanzago in Clusone.
Below right_ View of Val Seriana amidst the mountains.



The path starts from Ranica, 7 kilometres north-east of Bergamo, easy to reach in around 15 minutes from the train station in Bergamo if you load your bike onto the electric tramway. The cycle path initially travels along the left bank of the River Serio. At Ranica, there is a historical cotton mill with adjacent housing for the workers, characterised by balconies running continuously along each floor. At Alzano, however, it is not possible to ignore the first major heritage of the valley's industrial past. Soaring out of all proportion, in fact, are the six gigantic smoke stacks of the former cement factory built in 1833 and shut down in 1966.

At Albino, a medieval stone bridge crosses the river: here the smoke stacks that can be seen belong to another historical textile factory. The



path continues along the right-hand side of the River Serio as far as Cene, where a fine public park overlooks the bend in the river. If you wish to take a detour you can cycle up to the Palaeontological Park in the upper part of the town where, amongst other exhibits, you can see a perfectly preserved skeleton of the oldest pterosaur in the world.

At Colzate, the cycle path returns to the right bank of the river and stays there. The valley narrows, towns and villages become rarer, the vegetation becomes denser and you begin to smell mountain air. After the narrow stretch, the massive profile of the Presolana appears. You leave behind the dirt path and from here onwards you pedal on paved surfaces. At Ponte Nossa, where the Nossana torrent flows into the River Serio, a bridge once again crosses the river. The cycle path continues

along the opposite side and begins to gradually climb. In front of the former railway station at Ponte della Selva a rest area has been set up for cyclists, with benches, tables and a welcome drinking fountain. After going through a short tunnel, there are only 4.5 kilometres to cycle until the point of arrival. The cycle path continues through spacious meadows. An incline, while not too challenging, makes you stand on your pedals, off your saddle.

Another kind of dance awaits you at Clusone, on the wall of the Oratorio dei Disciplini, next to the Chiesa Madre. It is the famous Dance of Death, frescoed by an unknown artist in AD 1485. However, it is not really so very scary: at the end of a bike ride, you will certainly be more fit than the skeletal courtly dancers.

From the Orobie to the Crema area

— *In three days*

Art treasures, turreted castles, historical bridges and, for the gourmet cyclist, tortelli with savoury fillings and alpine cheeses



Photo. The former Municipal Casino of San Pellegrino Terme.

A CITY WITH A VIEW Bergamo

In Upper Bergamo, amongst winding and climbing streets, medieval stones and renaissance marble, the Pinacoteca picture gallery, the Carrara Academy, and the Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art.

ART NOUVEAU WATERS San Pellegrino Terme

In the very middle of the Val Brembana, a leap back to the Belle Époque. Exuberant floral patterns in the former Municipal Casino.

CRAFT TOWN Gromo

A charming medieval town in the Upper Val Seriana known as "little Toledo". A museum celebrates the presence of forges for the processing of blades.

ECOMUSEO Gorno

Soil and subsoil: human history and material history of a community told by weaving together work in the mines, woods and mountain pastures.

COURT LIFE Malpaga

The palace of the great condottiero Bartolomeo Colleoni, fortification and courtly residence. With frescoes celebrating his very terrifying fame.

BEFORE TAXIS Cornello dei Tasso

Porticos, cobbled streets and the residences of the de Tassis family, who were instrumental in setting up the public postal service in Europe as well as giving their name to taxis.

BETWEEN THE RIVERS Parco Regionale del Serio

At the confluence with the River Adda, the protected fluvial area is scattered with farmhouses, villages and castles. There are numerous cycle paths amongst alder and poplar trees.

MOUNTAIN DELICACIES Bergamasca

Stracchino and taleggio cheese, mature Branzi and Agri cheese, made in the alpine meadows and mountain pastures. A temptation for every cycle tourist.

TORTELLI DOC Crema

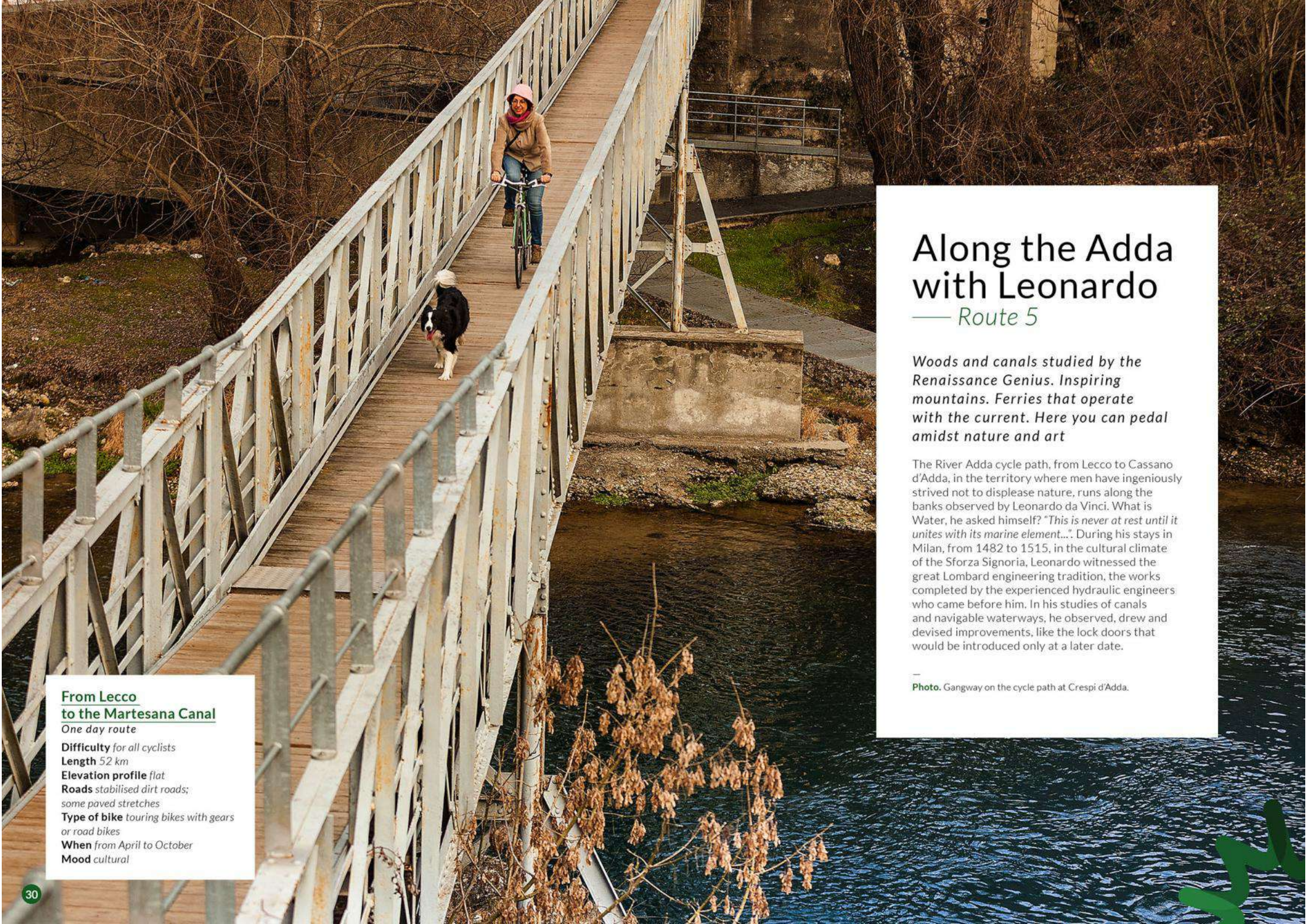
Thinly rolled-out egg-based pasta embraces a spicy-sweet filling made with breadcrumbs, grana cheese, eggs, candied peel and nutmeg, raisins and lemon rind.



Info

With a weekend available or better still one day more, you can follow the routes of the cycle paths between the Orobie Alps and the area around Crema towards the plain, along the River Adda or the River Serio, as far as Crema.

Or you can continue along the Val Brembana, following the path converted from an old railway line, going on towards the heart of the Orobie Alps, with very varied mountain bike itineraries for those who are more used to cycling up and down hills



From Lecco to the Martesana Canal

One day route

Difficulty for all cyclists

Length 52 km

Elevation profile flat

Roads stabilised dirt roads;
some paved stretches

Type of bike touring bikes with gears
or road bikes

When from April to October

Mood cultural

Along the Adda with Leonardo

— Route 5

Woods and canals studied by the Renaissance Genius. Inspiring mountains. Ferries that operate with the current. Here you can pedal amidst nature and art

The River Adda cycle path, from Lecco to Cassano d'Adda, in the territory where men have ingeniously strived not to displease nature, runs along the banks observed by Leonardo da Vinci. What is Water, he asked himself? *"This is never at rest until it unites with its marine element..."*. During his stays in Milan, from 1482 to 1515, in the cultural climate of the Sforza Signoria, Leonardo witnessed the great Lombard engineering tradition, the works completed by the experienced hydraulic engineers who came before him. In his studies of canals and navigable waterways, he observed, drew and devised improvements, like the lock doors that would be introduced only at a later date.

—
Photo. Gangway on the cycle path at Crespi d'Adda.

Photo

Alongside_ View of the Alessandro Taccani hydroelectric station.
Below_ Relaxing along the river Adda.
Below right_ The gangway leading to the Taccani station.



Hints of Leonardo's presence accompany this ride along the banks of the River Adda. In Lecco, where it begins, you can also find traces of another great Italian, Alessandro Manzoni, who from "that branch of the Lake of Como, which turns toward the south" began his novel, *The Betrothed*. After passing the Azzone Visconti bridge where the Adda once again becomes a river, ride along the right bank. Turning into Via Alzaia, you will find yourself on the Mid-Adda Valley cycle path.

The river once again becomes a lake at Garlate, where the former cotton mill now houses the Municipal Silk Museum. At Brivio, the valley begins to narrow and the course of the river starts to meander. At about 20 kilometres from the start of the path, you will encounter the first signs of Leonardo: at Imbersago there is a wooden ferry, attached to a cable suspended between the two banks. Its movement is driven by the current. Leonardo was the first to observe and draw these currents. After 3 kilometres, you will arrive at the bridge at Paderno d'Adda, soaring 80 metres above the river. With its dense structure of iron beams, it looks a little like a horizontal Eiffel Tower.



Just beyond it, the Paderno Canal branches off from the river. Here once again, the Renaissance Genius left his mark. The parallel canal that was intended to avoid the most turbulent stretch of the River Adda was devised by Leonardo, but was only constructed in 18th century, thus opening up transport of goods from Lake Como to Milan, along the Martesana Canal.

The stretch of the cycle path running between the Adda and the Paderno Canal is one of the most spectacular parts of the route. It is in the heart of the Leonardo Eco-museum, an open-air exhibition system illustrating Da Vinci's presence in this area. It seems that, as a painter, he took inspiration from the landscape of the River Adda, in particular from the Tre Corni narrows at Brivio, for the background of *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Natural landscape and

human engineering are once more harmoniously combined in the three hydroelectric power stations standing at water level. Overlooking the Taccani power station at Trezzo sull'Adda, the powerful remains of the Visconti Castle are silhouetted seemingly in architectural continuity. A little further downstream from Trezzo, the Martesana Canal leading to Milan branches off from the Adda. A footbridge crosses the river taking you to the opposite bank, the left one, where you can ride as far as Crespi d'Adda, a historical 'company village', providing housing alongside a large textile factory, the result of enlightened entrepreneurship, and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Continuing along the towpath of the Martesana Canal, you will reach Vaprio where you can see the terraced gardens of Villa Melzi d'Eril, where Leonardo stayed for a long period.



From Valtellina to Cremona

—In three days

Terraced vineyards, mountain bike trails and characteristic eateries. And a lake with literary memories, that you can cross by steamer, taking your bike with you



Photo. The village of Pescarenico along the River Adda.

FOR ALL TASTES Valtellina

From the uphill stretches that have made cycle racing history, Stelvio, Mortirolo, Aprica, to the routes around Livigno, the birthplace of off-road cycling.

HEROIC WINES Valtellina

Vineyards producing full-bodied red wines: Inferno, Grumello, Sassella and Sfursat. For cyclists, to be sampled strictly in the evening, after the day's ride.

BRIEF STOP Chiavenna

Where the Val Bregaglia meets the Valle San Giacomo, an elegant old town centre with fountains made from soapstone and the fine Collegiate Church of San Lorenzo.

COOL WATERS Val Bregaglia

At the mouth of the valley is the double waterfall along the Acquafraggia torrent that enchanted Leonardo when he passed through the Valchiavenna.

IN THE MEADOWS Pian dei Resinelli

Above Lecco, the plateau that in summer becomes a green, grassy balcony overlooking the lake, the gateway to the Southern Mount Grigna.

VISITS TO CROTTI Chiavennasco e Valtellina

Mountain taverns: pizzoccheri made from buckwheat flour, cheese fritters, bresaola salted beef and goat violin cured meat. To replace the calories that you have consumed.

IN THE CITY Lodi

Piazza del Duomo and the treasure chest of the Tempio Civico dell'Incoronata, a pictorial score by Bergognone and the Piazza brothers.

AROUND THE LAKE Lake Como

From Lecco you can sail up the eastern branch by steamer, stopping in Varenna, Bellagio and Menaggio, on the western shore.

CHEESE MAKING Lodi area

Try Granone lodigiano cheese, the aphrodisiac qualities of which were praised by Casanova; pannerone cheese and the curly scrapings of raspadùra, as well as mascarpone.



Info

The River Adda, the great waterway connecting the plain with the mountains, can inspire a weekend break uniting worlds that are very different from each other. From the peaks in the Valtellina and Valchiavenna, where you can seek

the thrill of daring downhill rides and climbs back uphill, you can descend to Lake Como, taking advantage of charming steamer transport and then, along the course of the River Adda, reach the lowlands around Lodi, in the heart of the Po Valley, to discover Lodi, a minor art city.



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From Monza to Monte Bisbino

One day route

Difficulty exacting, for experts

Length 81 km

Elevation profile 1400 m

Roads 100% paved, 5 hairpin bends
with cobbled stones

Type of bike touring bike with gears
and road bike

When from March to November

Mood for abnegationists

Climbs for champions

— Route 6

Amongst the hills and the Pre-Alps, villas and small sanctuaries, Brianza offers the routes preferred by Lombardy road cyclists

This itinerary begins at Villa Reale in Monza, one of the largest parks in Europe. Destination: the first slopes of the Pre-Alps of the Lombardy region, the exacting climbs in the Como area and on Monte Bisbino at an altitude of 1,325 metres, on the border with Switzerland. First take a quick look at the neoclassical style Villa, initially the residence of the Austrian Royal Family, then the Royal Palace during the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy and later during the reign of the House of Savoy. Then you will be ready to mingle with a gaily coloured crowd of racing cyclists, riding north. You only need to follow the flow of the River Lambro, whose waters, still gentle here, will accompany you for quite a few kilometres. Along the gently sloping road, you will be met by the small towns of Brianza, ideal for stopping for a steaming hot coffee: Biassono, Macherio, Carate, Arosio, Inverigo. As you ride northward, the Pre-Alps around Como will become increasingly more visible, until they dominate the landscape.

This is Brianza, an area of hard-working folk, where history is linked to the industrial development of the 20th century, while still offering unexpected vistas of woodland and hills. After riding past the small Lake Alserio, with the hills that in the meantime have become mountains, you will arrive in Erba.

—
Photo. Paved hairpin bend on the way to Monte Bisbino.

Photo

Alongside_ The Monument to the Cyclist at the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Ghisallo.
Below_ One of the climbs around Lake Segrino.
Below right_ On the summit of Monte Bisbino.

Here, making a small detour from the route to your final destination, and continuing towards Asso, you can reach some of the most symbolic routes for cycle racing in Lombardy. We recommend doing this. The road begins to gently climb. Pass by Lake Segrino where there is a pleasant cycle trail around its shores. The woods become thicker after Canzo, located amid rocky peaks with altitudes close to 1400 metres. From Sormano you arrive at the notorious Muro (Wall), the historical climb in the Giro di Lombardia (Tour of Lombardy), where the altitude and the names of great champions are written on the asphalt.

There are now only 6 kilometres to go before reaching the Ghisallo Pass, at 754 metres. Three busts in the church square, portraying Coppi, Bartali and Binda, welcome you with eyes showing their exhaustion. They herald the little sanctuary of the Madonna del Ghisallo proclaimed the patron saint of cyclists in 1949 and the Museum that tells the story of Cycle Racing (see interview on page 15). Ride back towards the original destination, and after Lake Alserio ride west, towards Como. Skirting around the even smaller Lake Montorfano, with its shores surrounded by thick beds of reeds, you will arrive at the capital of the province, Como. If you have time, you can interrupt your ride to take a steamer trip. The cycle itinerary continues, on the contrary, along the western shore towards Cernobbio. This little town is a peaceful holiday resort. Before the long climb that awaits you, it is a good idea to take a break, taking the opportunity to visit the very fine 16th century Villa Pizzo with its uncommonly beautiful Italian-style garden.

The itinerary then enters the most exacting, and perhaps also the most spectacular stretch: the climb up to Monte Bisbino. No less than 15.7 kilometres of exertion await you with an average gradient of 6.9% for a total of difference in altitude of over 1000 metres. Tackle it without hurrying, stopping frequently to enjoy the view. The view of the lake, the Larian Pre-Alps and a superb view of the Po Valley make the journey worthwhile. The surface of the first stretch of road, up to the small village of Rovenna, is in good repair. The second part of the climb, on the other hand, from km 6 onwards, requires more care. You will be riding



along the route of a military road built during World War I, part of the Northern Frontier or Cadorna Line. Just below the summit of Monte Bisbino, in fact, you can see the old trenches. Of the 33 hairpin bends leading to the top, no less than 5 are cobbled. Take care when riding around them. Villa Argentina, the village at km 9, with its fountain, is a good place to fill your water bottles. The last few kilometres through alpine woodland have a slightly steeper incline. Take deep breaths of the fragrant air. The summit of Monte Bisbino welcomes you with all its magic at an altitude of 1,290 metres. From there, on clear days, the view sweeps even further than the Po Valley, as far as the Apennines beyond it. On the summit there is a Sanctuary to the Blessed Virgin, a weather station and a small refreshment bar. The climb is complete, ending with an immense vista and deep silence.





From Como to Cremona

— *In three days*

Canals, tricycles and a funicular that made history. And, to drive away hunger, high-calorie soft cheeses (with or without bread)

1. The Museum of Science and Technology in Milan, which preserves 40 vintage bicycles in storage, displayed during exhibitions, of which the oldest is an 1818 Draisine.
2. The cycle path of the Naviglio della Martesana canal, commissioned by Francesco Sforza in 1457, the lock gates of which were drawn by Leonardo on a few sheets of the Codice Atlantico.
3. The WWF Il Caloggio Nature Reserve, a short detour from Bollate to encounter awaits with goldfinches, swallows, pheasants, newts and emerald toads. With a beautiful butterfly garden.
4. The funicular from Como to Brunate. Inaugurated in 1894, it climbs up the mountain to 500 metres, giving a unique view of the lake and the Alpine foothills.
5. The awn, the sweet, symbol of Como, impaled by a typical wooden stick of olive or cherry in memory of a branch that fell in the dough in a lakeside tavern.
6. The Cycle Path of the Parks: 41 kilometres, dirt roads in some stretches, more than half in protected sites. From Rovellasca Manera to Lura Park, north of Saronno, and Milan's North Park.
7. Gorgonzola, to be tasted in the place that gave the cheese its name and that celebrates it with an autumnal festival.
8. The Prehistorical Park of Rivolta d'Adda. See tyrannosauruses and brontosauruses up close.
9. The courtyard with portico of Pandino Castle: a classic square layout with corner towers.
10. The canal bridge between Vacchelli and the river Serio in Crema, a showpiece of hydraulic engineering.

Info

Once at Monte Bisbino, it is possible to retrace the route taken, descending as far as Como. From here, the route heads for Milan along the charming Cycle Path of the Parks that connects Lura Park with North Park. On the third day, leave Milan heading east along the cycle path of the Naviglio della Martesana. From Cassano d'Adda, along the Vacchelli canal, Crema and Cremona can be reached.



Photo. The façade of the Villa Reale of Monza.



Lemon groves and hay barns

— Route 7

In the Upper Garda, among Alpine peaks and silvery olive trees, cyclists pedal along in the company of the sunniest of citrus fruits. And, at low altitude, some verses by an eccentric poet

From the lake to the mountains in less than 50 kilometres. Our starting point is Salò, enclosed by ancient gates, overlooking a small bay on the western shore of Lake Garda, around thirty kilometres from Brescia. Leaving the lakeside path behind, the route continues on the Gardesana Occidentale road in the direction of Riva. There is a succession of gravel and pebble beaches and, on the terraces, the lemon groves, architectural composition of horizontal and vertical poles exposed to the south-east between the mountain and the lake. This stretch is perfect for warming the legs up: barely 15 kilometres on the flat to enjoy the view of the lemons, humble fruit from faraway Persia, or perhaps from the Himalayas, able to lift melancholy by becoming the architect of pergolas and gardens.

Photo. Hay barns at Magasa on the road to Cima Rest.

From Salò to Cima Rest

One day route

Difficulty *challenging, for experts*

Length *45 km*

Elevation profile *1200 m*

Roads *100% paved*

Type of bike *touring bikes with gears and road bikes*

When *from April to October*

Mood *determined*

Photo

Alongside_ At Salò, on Lake Garda.
Below_ Terraces with lemon trees in Bargnano.
Below right_ Lake Valvestino in Val di Vesto.



In Gardone, a visit must be made to the Vittoriale, the fanciful residence of the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio who spent the last years of his life there. The decorated twin arch at the entrance displays one of his many sayings: "I have what I have given".

After a few kilometres, Maderno is reached. An ancient bakery awaits us with a well-earned slice of Maderno cake, perfect for loading up on sugar. From here on, Garda gets smaller and the landscape changes. The first protruding rocks appear amidst the cypress and olive trees. An audacious cycle path yet to be built along the Lombard side, designed as a hanging pathway attached to the rocks, overhanging the carriageway, will join paths, still existing in part, that will enable the exploration of the whole lake.



The route reaches Gargnano, a fishing village dear to the English writer D.H. Lawrence who stayed here around 1912, with a fountain for filling water bottles. Before us, a tangle of nets: whitefish, trout and valuable charr are caught. The time has come to take our leave of Garda and its sub-Mediterranean climate. The mountains await.

The next destination marked is Valvestino. To get there means a 7.5 kilometre climb with an average gradient of 5.5%. The climate immediately changes. The air becomes fresher, the noises of Garda give way to the silence of the high mountains, at an altitude of just 500 metres. The road, now descending slightly, winds alongside the artificial basin of Lake Valvestino. To the west is the wilderness area of the Vesta valley, a thinly populated place where deer, chamois and roe deer live. Beyond a suspension bridge lies

Molino di Bollone. A plaque hidden among the pine trees reminds us that we have just crossed the ancient border between Italy and Austro-Hungarian empire. At the signs for Magasa, the landscape changes again. Limestone peaks on a substrate of dolomite rock rise from the road. With its numerous paths, the area is also perfect for mountain bikes. A second, more challenging climb of 8 kilometres awaits with gradients of more than 10% in some points. It must be tackled with rhythm and patience. Once reached Magasa, the next goal is Cima Rest. The final hairpin bend arrives with a view of the valley that fully rewards the effort. The altitude is 1,100 metres, amidst meadows and pastures. The road ends here. Hay barns with sloping thatched roofs appear scattered over the landscape like crumbs. Protected only by the dome of the sky.

Garda and the course of the Chiese

— *In three days*

A velodrome fit for champions and for testing track bicycles. And more: churches, lakes, archaeological museums and an excellent virgin olive oil

TRACK EXCITEMENT Montichiari

The Montichiari velodrome is where the professionals train. The true greats of cycling have pedalled here. To experience the thrill of speed on the track, a bicycle can be hired.

LIQUID GOLD Polpenazze del Garda

The tasting of the extra virgin olive oil of Garda can be enjoyed in one of the olive mills of Valtenese in the lower lake area. It is perfect with freshwater fish from the lake.

TIMELESS The territory of Montichiari

San Pancrazio, a jewel of the 12th century in the Romanesque style, lies on a hill. During equinoxes, the sun strikes precisely the central window of the apse.

CURIOUS TRAVELLER Calvisano

The Museum of Rural Life preserves tools and ethnographic remains of shoemaking, animal rearing, tailoring, milking, spinning and woodworking.

AMONG CHURCHES Roè Volciano

The paved cycle path of the Naviglio Grande Bresciano, from Salò to Brescia: 28 kilometres of quiet roads amidst ancient churches, bridges and old mills.

THE OTHER LAKE Idro

Lake Idro is hidden behind Garda amidst wooded slopes and mountain villages. The panorama from the Rocca d'Anfo, a 15th century bastion at 700 metres, is beautiful.

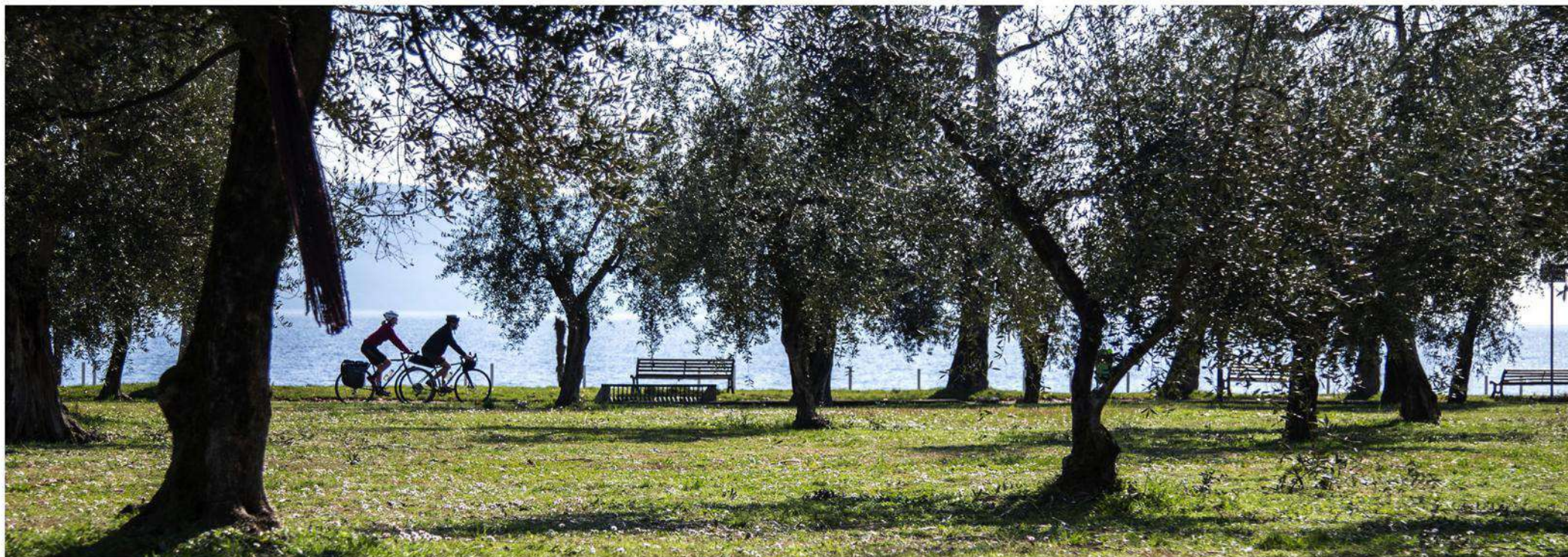


Photo. Pedalling amidst the olive trees at Lake Garda.

AT TABLE Bagolino

In dialect, Bagoss means "dweller of Bagolino". But it is also the name of a highly-prized cheese. Perfect for replacing lost calories.

ACROBATICS Casto

Balancing tests on logs, climbing aids and a "zip-line" in order to fly suspended in the void attached to a steel cable in the Parco delle Fucine.

A LITTLE HISTORY Gavardo

The Archaeological Museum of Val Sabbia is housed in a church building, with the prehistoric remains of the settlements in the western Garda area.



Info

After the first stage to Cima Rest, a descent follows to Molino di Bollone before climbing towards Capovalle. From here, a long descent leads to Idro, on the shores of the lake of the same name, from where the path continues along the river Chiese and

the Val Sabbia to Tormini. The third stage is the cycle path of the Naviglio Grande Bresciano to Montichiari, once again meeting the Chiese. Then, passing through fields and farmhouses, you eventually reach the river Oglio, near Canneto.



From Cremona to Casalmaggiore

One day route

Difficulty *easy*

Length *56 km*

Elevation profile *50 m*

Roads *80% paved; 20% dirt roads*

Type of bike *touring and mountain bikes*

When *from March to July
and from September to October*

Mood *fluvial*

Hide and seek with the river

— *Route 8*

Dancing on the bends of the Po. Amidst rows of willows, poplars and farmhouses. Along the route of an extraordinary cycle path that in future will lead to the sea

In Cremona, the city of good living from where our route departs, it is a pleasure to be awakened by the sound of bells. After a hearty breakfast in the city's delicious pastry shops, with the aroma of spruce, maple, poplar and mahogany wafting from the lute makers' workshops, we say farewell to Piazza del Comune, the Duomo, the Baptistery and the bell tower of Torrazzo and pedal to the south-east at a relaxed pace along the cycle route of Golena del Po.

The excitement is high. This is a fragment of a much wider territory involved in the VenTo project, the cycling and pedestrian path, with asphalt road bed or smooth surface, that will connect Venice to Turin, along the Po through Lombardy: a route of 679 kilometres amidst quarries, small orchards, rows of poplars and wooded scrubland along the line of latitude 45° North, still in the planning stage. To date, the stretch that goes from Cremona to the east along the main left bank of the Po is mixed, but can already be cycled on. The river acts as guide, appearing and disappearing, hiding behind a curtain of poplars and the marsh flora: it plays hide and seek among the ditches that conceal its ancient bed with the accumulation of glacial detritus.

—
Photo. On the bank of the Po, near Cremona.

Photo

Alongside_ The Luna beach
in Parco del Po e del Morbasco.
Below_ Cycle route along the river Po.
Below right_ Stretches of cycle path
on the banks of the Casalasco.

The first farmhouse encountered, with the typical rural courtyard architecture, proclaims entry into the Parco del Po and Morbasco, with wooded scrubland and the picturesque river beaches of Luna, where the route is slightly livelier, also suitable for mountain bikes. In this part of the cycle route, it is the names of the place that suggest the characteristics of the territory: the village of Gerre de' Capriolio, "gravel" in dialect, recalls the presence of small dirt roads.

The river continues to snake along: it comes close and moves further away, a definitive course taken only in the 16th century when it shifted repeatedly to the north. Sometimes, taverns are found where once there was a "passage", a ferry or a bridge to cross to the other shore.

In other places, we can let ourselves be transported by the sound of the bells of the little country churches. This happens at Solarolo Monasterolo and Motta Baluffi, where all the fish species of the Po are gathered in the sixty or so tanks of an aquarium in the middle of the countryside, a few hundred metres from the banks.

The ride runs along. The raised bank gives a good view of the plain, a sort of timid wall where sometimes the purplish-blue head of an orchidea purpurea can be seen. At Gussola, on the bend of a meander among islands and whitish shores, is the Oasi Lipu of Lancone, a protected reed-bed habitat with marsh and migratory birds. The willows, poplars and alders standing in strict geometry are frequented by pigeons and the greater spotted woodpecker.

Near Casalmaggiore, at a broad bend, the river Po comes close to the residential area. We could stop here, on the "listone", the paved area of Piazza Garibaldi and the town hall in neo-Gothic style.



From the Suzzara bank, the cycle route continues on the right bank of the Po, along riverside streets with poplars and expanses of land for cultivation. In the Mantua stretch, close to the estuary, the great river flows at 5 metres above the level of the fields, held back only by the grassy sloped banks. The witty old country folk remark that the fish fly higher than the marsh birds in these fields. And we are ideally placed on our bikes astride the two worlds. In this land without shade. Not a single kilometre ahead is along a protected cycle track. So our safety as well as the river's will be guaranteed by the banks. In this meandering fluvial geography, it will be the rural courtyards, farms and the beloved places that once belonged to the lords of Mantua, the Gonzaga, and the agricultural settlements that will provide reliable points of orientation.





The cycle routes of the Po — In three days

An old pontoon bridge, an unexpected jewel of craftsmanship, the architecture of an ideal city. And tasty boiled meat dishes to eat.

1. The Antonio Stradivarius Violin Museum of Cremona, with the most valuable violins in the world and a recently built auditorium, a jewel of acoustic engineering.
2. Boiled meats accompanied by the sweet and sour flavour of mustard, a recipe that dates back to 1604, can be sampled in the taverns of Cremona. Indispensable protein for a cyclist.
3. Brooches, cuff-links, bracelets: more than 20,000 items of jewellery preserved at the Museo del Bijou in Casalmaggiore, evidence of a historical artisan tradition.
4. Sabbioneta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was commissioned by the Gonzaga and built on the basis of the humanistic principles of the ideal city.
5. The Grana Padano cheese, a great energy boost for cyclists, can be bought from the stores in the dairies.
6. Piazza XXIII Aprile in the village of Pomponesco, in Mantua: a long rectangular portico with cobblestones that reaches the bank of the Po, the location for "The Spider's Stratagem".
7. The Castello dell'Alluvione of the village of Cizzolo offers a view that is worth stopping for and admiring.
8. Ponte di Barche di Torre, a pontoon bridge dated 1926, is a few strokes of the pedal from the confluence of the rivers Oglio and Po.
9. The drainage pump of San Matteo delle Chiaviche, typical of the countryside between the rivers Oglio and Po, now forms part of an ecomuseum.
10. The Paludi di Ostiglia marshes, with reeds and water lilies, are a nature reserve of 120 hectares in an extensive wetland.

Info

After Casalmaggiore, the Golena del Po cycle path becomes more panoramic and very green along the river. After the confluence with the river Oglio, the path continues to the Borgoforte bridge, passing along the right bank of the Po. The cycle path continues along this bank until San Benedetto Po, only to return after another 15 kilometres to the left bank in the municipality of Ostiglia.



Photo. The Galleria degli Antichi in Sabbioneta.



**From Calvatone
to Isola Dovarese**

One day route

Difficulty average

Length 62 km

Elevation profile 50 m

Roads 80% dirt roads, 20% paved

Type of bike touring and mountain bikes

When from April to July
and from September to October

Mood terraqueous

Tortelli and peat bogs

— *Itinerario 9*

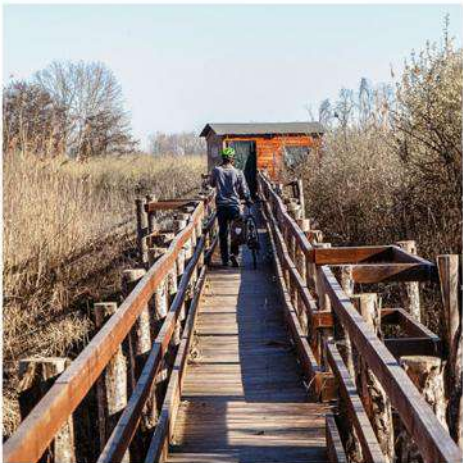
*Reed beds, wetlands and corn.
Along the Oglio, the pace is slow in
a landscape shaped by centuries of
coexistence of land and sea*

Memories of night time rides often come up in the tales of the country folk around these parts. With or without the Moon. With sturdy bikes, and good brakes. Nothing romantic, however. At night, the ride is through white willows that control the irrigation channels that receive the waters of the Oglio. The river, boosted by the tributaries in Val Camonica, forming Lake Iseo, continues its course to the south and, before joining the Po, creates a little galaxy of nature reserves, the Parco dell'Oglio, North and South. Our journey begins here, in the greenway inside the Parco dell'Oglio South, on the banks, amidst remnants of the primordial plain, riverside woods, poplars and ash trees. With ducks darting between the banks.

—
Photo. In the Torbiere di Marcaria Nature Reserve.

Photo

Alongside_ Corte Castiglioni in Casatico.
Below_ Gangway between
the reed beds of Torbiere di Marcaria.
Below right_ In the area south of Mantua.



At Calvatone, where it possible to receive information at the Park office, we reach the river in a few minutes to find clear signs for the Oasi Le Bine with the WWF visitors' centre, a meander that ran dry in the 18th century and can be covered on bicycles along a dirt road in the shape of a ring. The Oasis is a marshy environment rich in natural vegetation.

Leaving Le Bine behind, we head to the south, on the right side of the narrow flood plain that runs along the river. The embankment roads are almost all dirt tracks but can be covered with a good touring bike and are perfect for a mountain bike. We pedal along following the river, accompanied by the flight of herons. After a dozen kilometres, by which time the river has become a friend, it is time to cross the bridge that leads to the town centre of

Marcaria and pedal along the left bank of the Oglio. In the main square, a road can be seen between the farmhouses where access to Torbiere di Marcaria is indicated, a reserve that offers an unusual visit. A marsh is entered: an extensive wetland of reed beds and vegetation punctuated by oxbow lakes, abandoned meanders where once peat was extracted. Under the tyres of the bicycle, you feel the soft ground and enjoy the silence, interrupted only by the sudden movements of migratory birds, frogs and amphibians.

A brief stop at one of the little towers or at the stilts for birdwatching and we return to the main path, leaving the river behind for a detour on an asphalt road in open country until Corte Castiglioni is sighted in the village of Casatico. This vast monumental complex was commissioned

by Baldassarre Castiglioni, the ancestor of the very famous author of *The Courtier*, a treatise that portrayed the ideal man of the humanistic era. In the last spurt to Canneto, still some kilometres away, hunger brings to mind that, in this countryside, on the border between Mantua, Brescia and Cremona, there is an excellent culinary tradition. The menu states: pumpkin tortelli, herb omelettes, roast game and, among the freshwater fish, marinated eels from the river Oglio. Perfect for the touring cyclist in need of filling up on both carbohydrates and protein. Mouth watering for a well-deserved meal, Ponte Vecchio in Isola Dovarese is reached and this leads along the opposite bank to the picturesque Renaissance square of the town of the same name. At the end of the day, the shadows of the colonnades gradually lengthen under the porticos of the square.



The greenway of the Oglio

— *In three days*

Castles and fabulous petroglyphs. Passes made famous by the Giro d'Italia and Liberty spas. And Lake delicacies to be sampled

DELICATE FLAVOURS

Lake Iseo

Among the fishermen's catch, trout, tench, pike and sardines. Baked tench with polenta brings earth and water together and restores exhausted cyclists.

AMONG THE FISHERMEN

Monte Isola

Load the bikes on the boat to visit Monte Isola on Lake Iseo. With fishermen's villages on a hillside.

ANCIENT WALLS

Paratico

The late medieval castle lies amidst the hills and vineyards where the Oglio joins Lake Iseo, a short detour before tackling the roads of the plain.

DRAWBRIDGE

Soncino

A strategic estate since its foundation in the 10th century. Scenes from the film "Ladyhawke" were shot at Castello Sforzesco.

WATER LABRYNTH

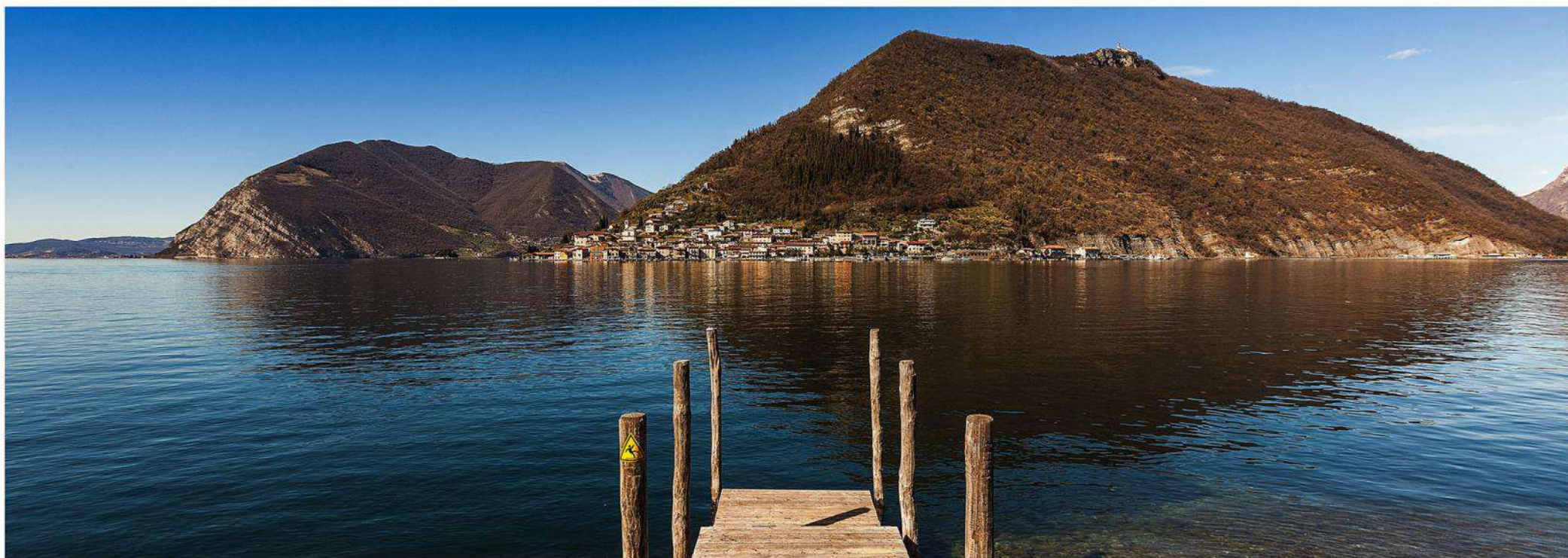
Genivolta

The Tombe Morte of Genivolta is where the three great canals that feed the dense network of irrigation ditches in the Parco dell'Oglio North intersect.

MOUNTAIN AIR

Passo del Tonale

In the Parco dell'Adamello, a mouthful of Alpine air at 1,883 metres. Passo del Tonale is one of the decisive ascents/descents of the Giro d'Italia.



HEALTHY CLIMBS

Darfo Boario Terme

Under the Liberty loggia of the Ancient Spring, bottles can be filled with water rich in minerals salts from natural springs.

ALPINE MIDDLE AGES

Breno

On the summit of a hill, between Alpine peaks. The walls, the tower and the church of Castello di Breno are a journey into the Lombardy of the Middle Ages.

A LITTLE BIT OF PREHISTORY

Val Camonica

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the petroglyphs of Val Camonica, can be visited in 8 equipped parks scattered around the towns of the valley.



Info

Leaving from the Passo del Tonale in the Parco dell'Adamello, the gradients increase but nearly all are descents until Darfo Boario Terme and Lake Iseo. Here, it is advisable to stop and undertake, on the following day, a fine tour along the shores of

Photo_ View of Monte Isola on Lake Iseo.

the lake. An attractive alternative is to take the ferry from Sulzano or Sale Marasino goes to Monte Isola. The next stage leaves the lake behind to follow the banks of the river Oglio as it crosses the plain to the Po.

Riding with Einstein

— Route 10

The waters of the Ticino, the irrigation ditches, the canals and the rice fields shape a landscape with a fluid geometry that once captivated a certain gifted student.

Pavia, a little capital of art and culture, can boast of a long history with regard to the bicycle. In May 1869, the first national cycling race was held here, organised by cycle racers from Milan forbidden by a decree from organising competitions in their own city. It is nice to think that here, some decades later, along the banks of the river Ticino, a very young Albert Einstein once pedalled.

He was sixteen when, in the spring of 1895, his family moved for a short time to Pavia, where his father opened an electromechanical engineering factory. We know that the future Nobel prize winner at this time enjoyed leaving the Casa Cornazzani, where Ugo Foscolo had also lived, to go swimming in the river and walking in the hills of Oltrepò. We cannot be certain he went on bike trips but, years later, immortalised in the saddle in the famous photograph going around the Californian campus of Pasadena, he is said to have confessed that his best insights came to him while pedalling.

—
Photo. The Ponte Coperto over the Ticino at Pavia.



From Pavia to Abbiategrasso

One day route

Difficulty for all

Length 41 km

Elevation profile 50 m

Roads 100% paved

Type of bike touring bikes with gears
and road bikes

When from March to October

Mood fluid

Photo

Alongside_ Across the Ponte Coperto toward the historic city center of Pavia.
Below_ The Visconti Castle of Abbiategrasso.
Below right_ In the countryside on the way to the Naviglio di Bereguardo.



The route starts from the Ponte Coperto di Pavia connecting the historic centre to Borgo Ticino, in the direction of Abbiategrasso. We ride along the crest of the bank, almost suspended between the river and the flood plain, fields and farmhouses. After the wide meanders of the Ticino, amidst irrigation ditches that seem to be miniature rivers and nests from which white and ash-grey herons rise, the road abandons the view of the river and, after the junction at Mulino Limido, reaches Zerbolò.

We stop here and look up: on leaving the town, there is a street lamp that for years has been the home of a large nest, inhabited from March to September by a pair of storks. After Zerbolò, we reach the village of Parasacco before heading once again towards the Ticino. Awaiting us, amidst large,



gravel beaches, is the picturesque bridge, the Barche di Bereguardo. Creaking under the wheels of the bicycle, this is one of the last examples of pontoon bridges in cement, originally in wood, which floated and gave an indication of the water level. Lovers of mountain bikes can cover the stretch up to the bridge along a path of around 20 kilometres, well marked. Beyond the bridge, the only short, limited difference in level of the route is tackled and, after a long straight stretch on a slope, flanked by monumental poplars, Bereguardo is reached.

The Visconti castle is left behind and the ride continues on the towpath of the Naviglio di Bereguardo, 20 mostly straight kilometres alongside a canal built in the 16th century to connect the Naviglio Grande of Milan to the

Ticino and the latter to the Po and the sea. A vital commercial waterway for the transport of goods for four centuries, the Naviglio di Bereguardo was reduced to operating as an irrigation channel after the Naviglio Pavese was built. Along the well-maintained cycle track, there are basins with waterfalls, an arched stone bridge and small piers. Passing the sign for Cascina Perdon, a detour to the left leads to the village of Morimondo, where an Abbey was founded in 1136 by the Cistercians. Back on the towpath, after a little more than 4 kilometres, we come to Castelletto di Abbiategrasso where the Naviglio di Bereguardo draws its waters from the Naviglio Grande. Abbiategrasso leads us to visit the Basilica of Santa Maria Nuova, the entrance of which on the incomplete façade is attributed to Bramante. But it's also the chance to stock up on sugar: fine pastry shops await in the historic centre.

The Pavia area

— *In three days*

Bridges, embankments and vineyards in a land that alternates between hills and the plain. Stimulating and not impossible on a bike. At the confluence of two magical rivers

BETWEEN TWO RIVERS Ponte della Becca

Made of iron in 1910, at the confluence between the Po and the Ticino, this is an engineering work that changed the skyline of this stretch of river.

EAT AND DRINK Oltrepò

From Stradella to Val Versa, from Broni to Casteggio, the limestone clay ridges are dried by the Apennine breezes. For cyclists, there's a picturesque ascent/descent and good wines.

FROM THE EAST Lomellina

Rice arrived at the court of Ludovico il Moro was the centrepiece of the dining tables in the area. For a substantial risotto, better weight until the end of the ride.

AT THE CASTLE Belgioioso

Once a delightful villa, the castle houses trade fairs and cultural events ranging from the organic to the vintage, from holistic wellness to new technologies.

AMONG THE PORTICOS Varzi

The salami that takes its name from the ancient village of Varzi could only have originated on the Salt Road that connected the plain to the sea. To drive away hunger.

ANCIENT WAY Via Francigena

The centuries-old route of pilgrims from Canterbury to Rome ran along the Ticino and Po in the Pavia area. Most of it can also be covered on bikes.



OUTSIDE THE CITY Pavese

The Certosa of Pavia, the Visconti chapel-mausoleum, a treasure trove of masterpieces of the Lombard Renaissance with frescos by Bergognone. The cloisters are fantastic.

THE DUCAL COURT Vigevano

The priceless Renaissance style of Piazza Ducale, with porticos on three sides, with columns, capitals and frescoed vaults. And Bramante's soaring tower.

ANCIENT DISPUTE Mortara

In a tribute to the tradition of goose salami, the September Palio stages the Game of the Living Goose, with a board made of wooden boxes.



Info

Pavia is a perfect point of departure. As well as the Ticino and Naviglio di Bereguardo, Milan can be reached along the cycle path of the Naviglio Pavese. Or, following the course of the Po, the low plain can be crossed up to the hills of San Colombano al Lambro.

Photo. The monumental complex of Certosa di Pavia.

On the third day, a route can be taken between the castles and rice fields of the extraordinary "middle earth" that is Lomellina. Finally, there are the hills of Oltrepò, with Broni, Casteggio, Godiasco Salice Terme and Varzi.

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— Events

Bike testing, historic cycling and night rides

An exhibition is scheduled of 19th century bicycles in a courtyard of Old Milan

Lombardy Region Trophy

Where Milan

When the beginning of March

The stars of mountain biking on the Monte Stella or Montagnetta di San Siro route. A sporting event that is part of the Internazionali d'Italia Series sponsored by the Region, that brings the best of this specialist sport to the city.

Milano-Sanremo

Where Milan

When the middle of March

Since 1907, the year of the first edition, the great spring classic saw the greatest champions of cycling of all times line up at the starting line in Piazza Castello.

Spring Cycling Festival

Where Milan

When 2nd Sunday of April

For more than thirty years, this spring ride has been organised by the historic association Fiab Milano Ciclobby. It winds from the centre to the periphery and, every year, there's a different destination, usually a park.

Biciclette Ritrovate

Where Milan, Corso Garibaldi 65

When Salone del Mobile

For enthusiasts and lovers of design, an exhibition of historic and collectors' bicycle: nineteenth century bicycles, tandems, working bicycles (ice cream man, knife-grinder, postman), the racing frames of champions.

Cyclopride Day

Where Milan

When weekend of the middle of May

Two days dedicated to the bicycle in its urban form which ends on Sunday with a ride-procession through the streets of the centre. The village of Piazza del Cannone hosts a cycle market, themed workshops, children's workshops.

BikeUp

Where Milan

When weekend of the middle of May

The Electric Power Festival was the first major event dedicated to pedal-assisted bikes. Meetings, manufacturers' exhibitions, free tests and an e-bike test in the historic centre are all planned.

La Ducale Vigevano

Where Parco del Ticino

When end of May

Non-competitive historic cycling with vintage bicycles on the roads of the Sforza. From Piazza Ducale di Vigevano to the woods and rice fields of the Ticino, with routes of 60 and 90 km. With trade exhibitions and side shows.

Mangia Bevi Bici

Where Ispra

When middle of September

Slow riding and wine and food tasting that do not neglect cultural, nature and landscape breaks along the roads between the Lombard side of Lake Maggiore and Lake Comabbio.

Bike Night

Where Milan

When middle of September

Scheduled Bike Nights, night rides on the cycle paths that originated in London, are the events that unite the Lombard capital with Lake Maggiore, along the Naviglio Grande to Ancona.

Mantua Bike Festival

Where Mantua

When end of September

The city of the Gonzaga dynasty is the right place for a festival, with shows and conferences that focus on the bicycle and its many facets: cycling, cycling tourism, soft mobility, environmental sustainability.

Giro di Lombardia

Where The entire Region

When start of October

From the plain to the lakes and the mythical Lombardy climbs known internationally, among which is the very tough Muro di Sormano. Known as "the Classic of the dead leaves", the race ends the world cycling season.

La Lacustre

Where Marone

When mid October

On vintage bicycles, this ride completes the Historic Cycling circuit of Lombardy. It includes the beautiful route that snakes along the shores of Lake Iseo, as well as the panoramic stretch of the ancient Toline-Vello coastline.

Raggio

Where Alzano Lombardo

When middle of November

Inside the Spazio Fase, in the former Pigna paper factory, this is the most creative business in the bike world: artisan frame makers, manufacturers of accessories, start-ups in new technologies and reinterpretations of vintage bicycles.

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— Info

The 10 long distance macro-routes through the Region, from which our suggestions for day trips were taken

Macro-route 1

From Garda to the Po

Difficulty average; the Valtènesi stretch is challenging

Length 421 km

Roads 92.3% paved, 31.6% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears, road and mountain bikes
When from March to October

Macro-route 2

From the Ticino to the Oglio

Difficulty challenging, for expert cycling tourists

Length 273 km

Roads 64.4% paved, 50.9% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and mountain bikes
When from March to October

Macro-route 3

From Lake Maggiore to the Po

Difficulty easy

Length 481 km

Roads 69.8% paved, 40.2% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and mountain bikes
When from March to October

Colophon

— Magazine

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Promotional tourism brochure by Explora S.C.p.A.

Project by CICLICA.CC
and Mariateresa Montaruli,
translations by Trans Edit Group

Macro-route 4

From Orobie to Crema area

Difficulty average; challenging in the valleys

Length 234 km

Roads 45.5% paved, 69.6% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears, road and mountain bikes
When from April to October

Macro-route 5

From Valtellina to the Cremona area

Difficulty average; challenging in the valleys

Length 400 km

Roads 74.9% paved, 42.6% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears, road and mountain bikes
When from April to October

Macro-route 6

From Como to the Cremona area

Difficulty challenging, for expert cycling tourists

Length 366 km

Roads 57% paved, 45% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and road bikes
When from March to November

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Macro-route 7

Garda and the course of the Chiese

Difficulty challenging, for expert cycling tourists

Length 184 km

Roads 60% paved, 63% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and road bikes
When from March to October

Macro-route 8

The cycle routes of the Po

Difficulty simple

Length 227 km

Roads 81% paved, 33% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and mountain bikes
When from March to July and from September to October

Macro-route 9

The greenway of the Oglio

Difficulty average

Length 366 km

Roads 74% paved, 25% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and mountain bikes
When from March to July and from September to October

Macro-route 10

The Pavia area

Difficulty for all; the hills of Oltrepò are for those in training

Length 367 km

Roads 70.8% paved, 26.5% segregated bike lane
Type of bike touring bikes with gears and road bikes
When from March to October

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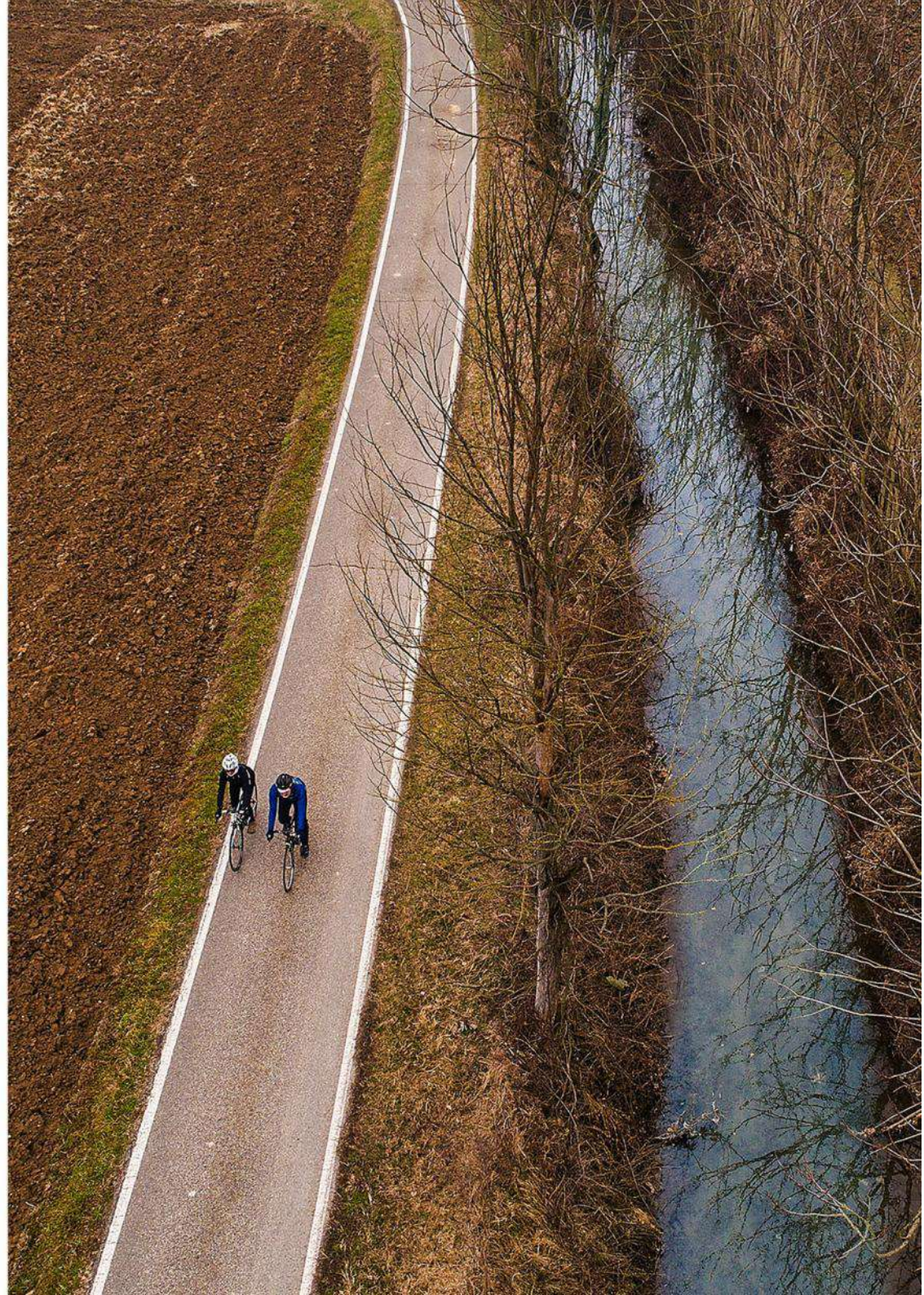
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— Magazine

10 one-day routes
10 macro-routes to cover
in several days
Discover the countless
facets of a cycling
holiday in Lombardy

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