



## Giro d'Italia Mottarone from Orta San Giulio



One of the most renowned and popular cycling destinations for fans of the "*specialissima*" is **Mottarone**, either because the **Giro d'Italia** has passed through it several times or because it is the ideal climb with its rugged, but never prohibitive, gradients and increasingly rewarding surroundings as we climb.

Two roads lead to the summit of Mottarone: the private Borromean road up from Lake Maggiore and the Due Riviere SP 39 up from Lake Orta, and it is this one that we are going to propose.

The starting place is the **Orta** Railway Station in the hamlet of **Legro** (the famous painted village), which offers both the possibility of getting there by train and ample parking.

Leaving Via Giuseppe Lunati, we take SP 39 of the Due Riviere (which will take us as far as Armeno), turn upstream, and at the next junction, take a right onto Via per Miasino. We exit the village facing a wide hairpin bend followed by a long shady stretch, always uphill, with a series of semi-curves and a gradient that does not exceed 9%.

This first stretch of ascent ends at the **Miasino roundabout**; here, we proceed straight ahead, still on SP 39, and after a long falsopiano among meadows, farms, and imposing electricity pylons, with a slight change in gradient and a series of wide bends, you arrive at the **junction for Armeno** on the left. Turning onto **Viale Luigi Cadorna**, we pass the cemetery and the imposing **Romanesque church** dedicated to Santa Maria Assunta. We arrive in **Piazza della Vittoria**, in front of the Town Hall.

The fountain on the right or bar on the left offers a chance to refill your water bottle before starting the real climb to Mottarone along the **SP 41**: 12 km, starting from the stop next to the Town Hall to the Mottarone square.

A series of curves with significant gradients lead to the exit from the village and the first tough-as-nails section that ends in **Cheggino** locality: 500 m of real torment where the GPS records between 14% and 16% maximum peak.

A sharp bend in front of the houses allows us to momentarily catch our breath, but we need to hold on a little longer before we can breathe less laboriously and manage to get our hands on the water bottle.

It's time to drink and stow the container. We are already near the pine forest where the **most challenging stretch** of the day's climb begins: a couple of difficult kilometers, first close to the pine forest, then between huts and fences, with gradients approaching **18%**. The climb is so challenging that it often doesn't allow us to be clear-headed enough to look around and admire his majesty, Monte Rosa, slyly watching us on our left.

Once we get to the coveted **Madonna di Luciago** Sanctuary, the most is done, and we can even treat ourselves to a nice drink at the fountain (assuming the water is back to being drinkable, as it always was until a couple of years ago...otherwise there is the nearby restaurant).

A first series of uphill curves (maximum gradient 12%) followed by others in a slight falsopiano lead to the chapel-reservoir **Cortano** (on the left), where the panorama begins to change, sweeping over the surrounding valleys and plains... is just a preview of the natural spectacle that awaits us a little further on.

Arriving at the bend of the **Alpe della Volpe** (on the right), we are captivated by the breathtaking panorama we witness, with the green valleys and hills overlooking Lake Maggiore, neighboring Switzerland, Lombardy, and a wide arc of the Alpine range.

Environmental ecstasy aside, it should not be forgotten that the final destination is still almost 3 km away, with an average gradient between 8 and 10% -which is no small feat!

Coming out of the birch forest (the pioneer plant there, where once was pasture), we return to enjoy a beautiful panoramic view back toward the Rosa massif.

A pair of curious wrought-iron pillars on the right mark the entrance to **Alpe Frimm**, one of the many alpine pastures that, until shortly after the last World War, enlivened the "round mountain" with thousands of grazing cattle and that today are mostly abandoned and, only in sporadic cases, reloaded in the warm season.

Past that, after a few hundred meters on the right, is the **alpini fountain**, complete with a steel "mouth" and almost always very calm water.

We are now only a short distance from crossing the Borromeo Road and the **monument** in memory of two past champions, **Domenico Piemontesi** and **Pasqualino Fornara**.

A couple of hairpin bends (the second of which is a sort of causeway) lead to the junction and the last effort of the day: 1 km at 10% separates the first pad and another 300 m (much softer) from the second at the foot of the Mottarone Summit.

One last effort, repaid by the pleasure of another beautiful view of Lake Orta, and we have now reached the top of **Mottarone**, where, few will know, a world champion like **Vittorio Adorni** met his wife.

The **Borromean road** is proposed for the descent, passing through **Gignese** and its **Umbrella Museum**; from here, we resume the **SP 39** Due Riviere road toward **Sovazza** and **Armeno**, with two or three minor uphill rips.

Just after the **bridge over the Ondella River** and the **motocross course** in **Armeno**, instead of entering the village, we turn left onto **Via Circonvallazione**, at the end of which, on a sharp curve, we go straight down **SP 119** towards **Carceгна**.

It is an all-downhill road through meadows and woods that leads you through the small village right in front of its main **church** dedicated to **St. Peter the Apostle**.

A broad curve and a long, flat straight lead to crossing SP 39 again, a few hundred meters from the starting place.

If strength and time permit, we should stroll among the **painted houses of Legro** (paintings dedicated to famous films and stories) and then visit **Sacro Monte**, the town of **Orta**, and the **Isle**. You will see they will make this outing of ours even more unforgettable.

#### TECHNICAL ASPECTS

It is about 20 kilometers of climbing, with vast stretches to catch our breath and enjoy the magnificent surroundings.

Recommended 50/28--but a few more teeth certainly won't hurt either.

#### POINTS OF ATTENTION

The two stretches Armeno-Cheggino and Pineta-Luciago are the toughest by far.

#### TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Cusio/eastern side of Lake Orta
Place of departure and arrival:	Railway Station at Legro hamlet of Orta San Giulio
Number of legs:	1
Length:	43.0 km
Height difference:	1077 m
Total ascent:	1228 m indicative
Difficulty:	MEDIUM
Average duration:	3 hours 30 minutes
Minimum altitude:	359 m.a.s.l.
Highest altitude reached:	1436 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	total
Recommended period:	April-October

Presence of dedicated signage: no  
Target audience: amateur cyclist/cyclo-hiker

## SCENIC POINTS

Alpe della Volpe hairpin bend, Mottarone summit.

## REFRESHMENT POINTS

Armeno uphill and Gignese downhill, Luciago, various restaurants at Mottarone.

## TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

OMEGNA - Piazza XXV Aprile 17 - 28887 Omegna (VB) - +39 0323 61930/+39 338 8870913  
- info@proloco.omegna.vb.it

ORTA SAN GIULIO - Via Panoramica - 28016 Orta San Giulio (NO) - +39 0322 905163 -  
infoturismo@comune.ortasangiulio.no.it

## BIKE SERVICE

MTB E-Motion **Rent & Ride, Rental**, Via Parrocchiale, 24/26 - 28010 MIASINO (NO), Tel.  
+39 389 7863941, rent@mtbemotion.it, www.mtbemotion.it

Ebike Lago d'Orta, **Rental**, Via Domodossola 9, 28016 ORTA SAN GIULIO (NO), (+39) 348  
2618416, ebikelagodorta@gmail.com, <https://www.ebikelagodorta.com/>

## CHARGING STATIONS

Camping Cusio, Via San Giovanni Bosco, 5 - 28016 ORTA SAN GIULIO (NO)

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

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

P.za Guglielmo Marconi (in front of City Hall - 288836 GIGNESE (VB)

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### Along the route

Painted village of Legro, the Romanesque church of Santa Maria Assunta in Armeno, the small church in Luciago, a monument dedicated to Piemontesi and Fornara, and the Umbrella Museum in Gignese.

## In the vicinity

### ORTA SAN GIULIO

Painted village (Legro hamlet), Sacro Monte, dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi and UNESCO heritage site, Isle with the Roman basilica and Benedictine abbey, Motta Square, and "Broletto."

### MIASINO

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

### ARMENO

Romanesque Church of Maria Assunta 12th century, Museo degli Alberghieri, Madonna of Luciago 16th century.

### GIGNESE

Umbrella and Sunshade Museum, Alpinia Botanical Garden.