



Giro d'Italia Domodossola - Cascata del Toce



Along this path, thanks to a grand champion like **Marco Pantani**, unforgettable pages of contemporary cycling have been written.

Indeed, who does not remember the last great uphill sprint made by the "Pirate" on Friday, May 30, 2003, during the 19th Canelli-Cascata del Toce stage!!!? How it turned out, then everyone knows, but those moments remain indelible in the memory of the many fans.

Just as they remain in the annals of cycling the **granfondo** organized by UC Valdossola, first "**ex Diabolo**" and then "**De Zan**," with departure from Formazza and arrival at the Cascata, after a 160-kilometer route, which brought the less trained to exhaustion. Other times!

Back to the present day, we start from **Domodossola Railway Station** to climb to the top of Europe's highest waterfall.

There is little time to warm up the legs, a couple of km on the flat, from the center of Domo to Crevoladossola to get to face the first rough patch of the day: the Napoleonic bridge over the **Diveria stream**, up to the junction for the Divedro Valley and the Antigorio and Formazza Valleys. At the fork, we continue straight along **Via Valle Antigorio** to **Oira**. The road is all flat and climbs only at the exit of the village, then descends again to the main artery, the **SS 659**, near the **Toce River**, passing through a short tunnel in the rock, just before the **junction** for **Pontemaglio** with its unmistakable **Roman bridge** connecting the two banks of the river. It continues straight on, always skirting the Toce, until arriving near the establishment of the world-famous aperitif "**Crodino**."

The climb up to here was more of a long falsopiano. The music changes immediately after the plant, right next to what were once the renowned **Crodo Baths** (which saw among their first managers the **Del Boca** family, as told by Angelo, the family historian and author of famous books such as "Italiani, brava gente?" about national war exploits on African soil).

Shortly after the thermal baths, the road picks up along a straight stretch of almost a kilometer, ending soon after the **Crodo Dairy** and **Forno Ossolano**, obligatory stops on the way back.

Once over the top, you have time to catch your breath and climb more gently to **Baceno**, a crossroads between the Devero and Formazza Valleys, where the landscape takes on alpine characteristics among dark rock walls, coniferous forests, and green pastures.

In Baceno, it is worth a few minutes' distraction to pay a visit to the **Church of San Gaudenzio**, a national monument dating back to the 11th century and in which there are numerous frescoes from various periods

and some traces of what was once ancient stained glass depicting the twelve Apostles, as well as wooden sculptures of considerable interest.

Between Crodo and Baceno is the famous "**Marmitte dei Giganti**" on the Toce, the "**Orridi di Uriezzo**," all the way to the "**Caldaie del Diavolo**," which are located just after the village of Croveo, at the beginning of the Devero Valley: spectacular phenomena of nature that attract thousands of visitors every year, reachable on foot or by mtb.

Another exciting feature is the presence of the "**0**" element, the most profound tectonic element in the entire Alpine range, a true rarity in the geological field.

Returning to our unique, we take to the **Formazza Valley**, pedaling toward **Premia**, village characterized by consistently uphill access, whether climbing or descending along the Toce.

From Premia, one descends to **Piedilago** to face a long flat stretch and arrive at the **Terme di Premia spa**. Thanks to the water from Premia's **Longia spring**, which gushes out at **42°** and is considered ideal for the treatment of skin diseases (burns, scars, eczema, etc.), this establishment was opened in 2008, benefiting from a unique surrounding environment as well as being in a strategic spot, halfway between Domodossola, the capital of the Ossola, and Alta Val Formazza, with its cross-country skiing trails in winter and many hiking trails in summer.

With thoughts of a refreshing bath, we resume pedaling along the SS 659, passing through **San Rocco, Passo**, and entrance to **Salecchio** on the left (one of the first Walser villages colonized in Ossola). This flat area was primarily devastated by the **flood of August 1987** and whose signs can still be seen by the keen eye.

As we reach **Rivasco**, the hamlet of Premia, the roadway narrows (watch out for trucks coming downloaded from nearby quarries!), and the slopes become harder; it is better to stop and fill our water bottles at the nearby fountain.

After a series of bends, you reach **Chioso**, skirting some Walser-style buildings that deserve attention, then **Foppiano**, and then the crossing of the Toce to move on to the "most hostile" part of the climb: the **Casse gorge**.

Mind you, it is not because of the harshness but because of the **constraint of going through the winding tunnel** after the old Casse road has been effectively abandoned and is in a prominent and dangerous state of disrepair. While waiting for ANAS, which is responsible for both arteries, to do its duty and reestablish the old connection, we must pass through the belly of the mountain: it is **3 kilometers** with a gradient of around **6%**, doable, with a quiet pedaling, in about **fifteen minutes**.

The leap of the "Casse" is a watershed between the Latin and German cultures of the Walser, the mountain people, of whom Formazza is one of the oldest colonies.

Leaving the tunnel, we reach **Fondovalle**, then **Church** and **San Michele** among green mowing meadows, giant pylons carrying electricity, and steep walls furrowed by striking waterfalls.

After San Michele, it's the turn of **Valdo**, with its family-friendly ski lifts, and **Ponte**, the main town of **Formazza**, where there are stores, restaurants, and hotels to spend pleasant vacation moments.

Leaving Formazza, the last real effort of the day begins there, where "**the Pirate**" attempted his previous feat.

Leaving the village, one comes to the vicinity of the 1933 Ponte **hydroelectric power plant**, named after **Giacinto Motta**, a pioneer of electrical engineering in Italy. The power plant collects water from three branches: **Toggia**, **Vannino**, and **Morasco**.

There is time to catch your breath until the **Brendo** sign, then it's just uphill, except for the two short flat sections of **Canza** and **Sotto Frua**.

From **Grovella** to **Canza**, there are a series of quite challenging switchbacks, but passing through these two villages is like stepping into **Walser's** history and traditions; the cleverly renovated dwellings have lost none of their ancient connotations, amalgamated in a unique mix of wood and stone.

After Canza, we come to Pantani's stretch and his final show of pride, immediately dampened by Gilberto Simoni, another grand champion who was the winner of that year's Giro d'Italia and two years earlier in 2001, one of the most talented Italian climbers of all time.

The photo we publish is by **Piermaulini**, a photographer from Omegna, who has been following the Giro for many years and is also a lover of the specialissima.

Indelible memories, as was the arrival above the natural spectacle offered by the Toce Waterfall, which from Sotto Frua upwards is only partly obscured by the avalanche barriers (strengthened back in 1987 and still needed some extension).

For lovers of landscape **photos**, **Sotto Frua** represents a focal point for truly unique shots: cross the river (just near the beginning of the avalanche guard on the left), even while remaining on the bike (the bottom is stabilized earth), to arrive after a hundred meters at the foot of the waterfall.

At the end of the three artifacts that shelter from landslides and snow, with maximum gradients around 10 percent, we reach the top of the waterfall with the last section abutting the rock and the overhang of the Toce River, the real star of the unparalleled natural spectacle.

Having arrived at the **Toce Waterfall** (the locality's proper name, at an elevation of 1675 m.a.s.l.), you cannot miss the souvenir photo on the small wooden balcony located right on the edge of the drop, where the water, with all its disruptive force, soars through the air in the form of tiny droplets that sometimes reflect the colors of the rainbow.

Unique sensations to be cherished in the treasure chest of good memories.

But we have not yet reached the end of our climb; in fact, there is less than a kilometer to go before we arrive in **Riale**, an ancient Walser settlement and renowned center for winter cross-country skiing (for years, a popular destination for national teams from all over Europe to train). After a slight falsopiano and a short uphill section, you arrive near the Hotel Restaurant **Aalts Dorf** ("Old Village") and **the** nearby **Cross-Country Center**.

Refreshed as appropriate, we recommend extending the ride for a little more than a mile and a half to the **Morasco Lake** dam; it's really worth it, as is taking a little stroll through the tiny Walser village and its **Oratory of St. Anne** that dominates the entire plateau.

At this point, it's time to head back... knowing that it's not quite all downhill: Premia is there waiting to squeeze out the last remaining resources. Happy re-entry!

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

It is a long and challenging route but a harbinger of great satisfaction both athletically and environmentally, historically and culturally.

A 50/28 should prevent excessive muscle fatigue.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Premia represents a uniqueness: you always face it uphill on the outward and return journey.
2. The Crate Gallery requires a total immersion of about fifteen minutes.
3. The descent has several critical issues: the high-speed tunnel passage and several blind bends encountered further downstream.
4. It is not recommended on holidays due to heavy traffic.

TECHNICAL DATA

Relevant geographical area:	Ossola/ Formazza Valley
Place of departure and arrival:	Domodossola Railway Station
Number of legs:	1
Length:	46.6 km
Height difference:	1456 m
Total ascent:	1630 m indicative
Difficulty:	MEDIUM
Average duration:	hours4
Minimum altitude:	273 m.a.s.l.
Maximum altitude reached:	1729 m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	total
Recommended period:	May-September
Presence of dedicated signage:	no
Target audience:	amateur cyclist/cyclo-hiker

REFRESHMENT POINTS

In the various locations traversed.

SCENIC POINTS

Toce Waterfall

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

DOMODOSSOLA - Piazza Matteotti c/o Bus Terminal - 28845 Domodossola (VB) - +39 0324 248265 - infopoint@visitossola.it

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BIKE SERVICE

BikeMotion, **Sale-Repair shop-Rental**, Corso Colonnello Attilio Montea, 57 - 28845

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AndreRent, **Sale- Rental**, Via Maglioggio, 4/A - 28862 CRODO (VB), Tel. +39 347 570 1297 ebike@andrerent.it, www.andrerent.it/

Lepontia Cicli by Cheula, **Sale** - Via Circonvallazione ,15 - 28862 CRODO (VB) Tel: 0039 3475106045 Fax: 0039 032461162 - info@ciclilepontia.it

CHARGING STATIONS

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Centro Fondo Riale, località Riale - 28863 FORMAZZA (VB), Tel. +39 329 125 7417, barpgianluca@gmail.com

La Baita Restaurant, Ponte hamlet - 28863 FORMAZZA (VB), Tel. +39 0324 63048, bruna.papa65@gmail.com

Hotel Rotenthal, Ponte hamlet, 81 - 28863 FORMAZZA (VB), Tel. +39 0324 63048 Mob. +39 338 9851736, rotenthal@rotenthal.it, www.rotenthal.it

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

Napoleonic bridge in Pontemaglio, Antigoriana Dairy in Crodo, Orridi di Uriezzo, Church of San Gaudenzio in Baceno, Spa in Premia, "G. Motta" hydroelectric power plant in Ponte, Toce Waterfall, Oratory of Sant'Anna and Walser houses in Riale.

In the vicinity

DOMODOSSOLA

Civic Museum of Natural Sciences "G.G. Galletti," Mattarella Hill Archaeological Museum, "Mellerio Rosmini" Museum of Natural Sciences, Civic Museum of Palazzo San Francesco, Civic Museum Sempioniano, Civic Museum Palazzo Silva, Sacro Monte Calvario Special Reserve.

CREVOLADOSSOLA

Historical Artistic Museum, Museum of Sacred Architecture, Parish Church of Saints Peter and Paul 16th century.

CRODO

Viceno Mountain House Museum, "Ubaldo Baroli" Earth Science Museum, "Devil's Wall" megalithic structure from the protohistoric period.

BACENO

Goglio Cable Car Museum, "Don Amedeo Ruschetta" Chaplain's House, Church of San Gaudenzio, Old Torchio, Alpine Pasture Museum, Uriezzo Gorge and Marmitte dei Giganti.

PREMIA

"Don Giovanni Bonomo" Mineralogical Museum, Spa, Walser settlement 13th century of Salecchio, ancient icehouse, medieval tower remains (loc. Christ).

FORMAZZA

16th-century Casa Forte or Steinhaus (loc. Ponte), Formazza Ski Club Historical Hall, 17th-century Madonna della Neve Oratory (loc. Sopra Frua), 1606 Scilligo House, Toce Waterfall.