

Loop itinerary on beautiful mule tracks, trails, and stretches of low-traffic paved roads to discover the three villages of the Antigorio Valley: **Baceno**, **Crodo**, and **Premia**, with their hamlets. It also crosses the entire fascinating area of the "**Glacial Garden of the Orridi di Urieggio**," consisting of gorges and potholes carved out by the ancient system of streams that flowed at the bottom of the glacier that anciently crossed the Antigorio Valley.

The starting point is the parking lot in **Crodo** next to the Antigoriana Dairy and Forno Ossolano, where we can buy excellent products for the day's picnic lunch or to take home as a souvenir. There are also public restrooms in the parking lot. Since it is a loop, we can start from any other point on the route; it is crucial to make the loop counterclockwise.

Crodo gave its name to the famous "**Crodino**" and the Mineral Waters that flow from rich springs located near (Lisiel and Nova) and within Spa Park (Valle d'Oro and Cistella) and nearby (Lisiel and Nova). Legend has it that a Crusader was prodigiously cured of illness by drinking these waters on his way back. In Crodo, we can visit the following:

- **Veglia Devero Nature Park visitor center.** Equipped with an information point, exhibition areas, educational workshops, and multimedia apparatus. Includes a sector dedicated to the geological and mineralogical aspects of the area and a sector devoted to the fauna of the Veglia Devero Park.
- **Carlo Brazzorotto Mineral Water Museum.** Created from the collection of more than 80,000 labels and 9,000 samples of mineral water bottles donated by Carlo Brazzorotto, it also includes the first bottling machines of Crodo Spa, posters, and other advertising items.
- **Aldo Roggiani and Angelo Bianchi Ossola Mineralogical Museum.** The mineralogical section of the Piero Ginocchi Study Center houses some specimens by taking care of their educational display, providing scientific support to researchers, and coordinating the scientific research of minerals in the Veglia Devero Park.

From the end of the parking lot, we cross the **Alfenza Stream** over the bicycle-pedestrian bridge. After a few meters, paying attention to cars, we cross the state road to take the road that descends to the right in the direction of Maglioggio.

When we reach the **junction to Maglioggio**, instead of going up to the hamlet, we continue left on a false level along the beautiful little road that crosses the entire green **Verampio plain**.

After passing a canal, we cross the **Toce River** and take a right, skirting the Trattoria della Campagna. From here, following the signs for Orridi Urieggio, the dirt track begins, fording the **Devero Stream** and then climbing gradually.

At the end of the first straight stretch, we reach **Maiesso Bridge**, with the beautiful **Marmitte dei Giganti (Giants' potholes)** carved into the light-colored rock of Verampio's granite gneiss (be very careful when photographing: the rocks are very slippery, do not go off the trails at all).

We do not cross the bridge but continue on the track with wide curves until you reach the entrance to **South Orrido Valley** (South Gorge), the most spectacular, equipped for visiting with metal ladders.

After visiting the South Gorge, we retake the track (be careful, the section has a somewhat uneven surface), which climbs with one last hairpin bend. We pass the upstream entrance to the South Gorge and continue beyond it to the short detour off to the right that allows you to visit **the Orrido di Balmasurda**, equipped with an exceptionally spectacular steel bridge.

Back on the track, we continue to the junction with the paved carriage road (barrier). Behind the beautiful stone hut, we can visit the **Orrido di Nord Est** again and continue along the carriage road towards Premia, passing the **Oratory of Santa Lucia**. After a steep climb, we reach the spectacular **Gola di Balmafredda**, whose vertical walls are famous for climbing.

The carriage road ends as it crosses the Valle Formazza state road.

At the crossroads, we take a right following the state highway for about 70 minutes towards Formazza and then cross over and take the road that goes up towards the village of **Cingio**.

Just before a small stream, we take a left onto the historic **Via del Gries** mule track, which we follow for a while, alternating between sections of mule track and sections on asphalt.

We go through the center of **Premia**, pass the hamlet of **Rodis**, follow the state highway for a short distance, and then take a small road on the right (follow signs **G00 Via del Gries - Sbrinz Route**). The small road immediately becomes a nice wide, flat mule track leading to **Rozzaro**.

It continues along the sports field and, once in **Pioda**, climbs to the hamlet of **Cresta**, where a firebreak trail begins, which halfway up the hillside with some ups and downs (even steep ones), continues to **Beola** and **Croveo**, known as the land of witches. Between 1500 and 1600, the Ossola Valley was hard hit by the Inquisition, which, through investigations and special tribunals, attempted to punish and imprison all those who practiced rites considered "heretical," that is, contrary to the Catholic doctrine.

The women of the Antigorio Valley, in particular, were struck by the inquisitors who scoured the entire area for heresy. Many, between Baceno, Crodo, and Croveo, were accused of practicing demonic rites simply because they were connoisseurs of mountain herbs or because they were of Walser descent, an ancient population of Germanic origin who, with their movements, had brought with them culture and rites often of pagan origin. They were thus brutally tortured, imprisoned, and, in many cases, burned alive. For some years, the Witches Committee has been active in Croveo, intending to bring these ancient stories to light, seeking the truth among the legends and mysteries that have always shrouded these figures.

In Croveo, we recommend a visit to the old town, which is very atmospheric, with the **parish church**, the **Chaplain's Museum**, the **old wine press**, the **old wash house**, and the spectacular **Croveo potholes** (there are dedicated signs on site).

To continue from Croveo, we go down the provincial road and almost to the end of the village (in the direction of Baceno) and take a cattle track on the right that leads to the beautiful **Marmitte della Baulina**, forms of erosion carved into the rock topped by a characteristic stone bridge.

We continue along this track with a rather steep ascent until it flattens out, reaching a nice meadow clearing with a few huts where it crosses the **Historic Arbola Road**, which we follow in the direction of **Graglia** and **Baceno**.

Please beware of the **descent on Graglia**: the mule track is very steep and slippery, so leading the bike by hand is preferable to avoid ruining the bottom.

From Graglia, we descend along the paved road to the first hairpin bend, where a dirt track to **Crino** starts. We follow the track all the way to the end, but instead of descending to Crino, we continue flat along the mule track that comes to intersect the paved road to Cravegna at a hairpin bend. At the next hairpin bend, we take a sheep track through the meadows that soon reaches the center of **Cravegna**, a lovely hamlet in a panoramic position that boasts one of the most beautiful churches in Ossola, the **parish church of San Giulio**. It has a **Romanesque-Gothic** architectural style, with a **splendid facade** and **valuable paintings** in the chancel. Its interior, structured in three naves, is genuinely impressive. Opposite the church, we find the Oratory of St. John the Baptist, the ancient Ossuary, and the imposing bell tower.

In the lowest part of the village, in Frazione Villa, near the small oratory of Santa Croce, we find a restored old **grape press**: it is the last survivor of the 7 presses present in the different localities of Cravegna. The press use (and thus, one thinks the ownership) was communal within a few families.

From the beautiful parish church of San Giulio, we descend on a steep asphalt road to **Navasco** to take the lovely wide mule track (**trail G11**) that descends with two hairpin bends near the **Alfenza Stream**. Just before the bridge, a sheep track branches off to the left that runs along the left bank of the Alfenza Stream and reaches the square next to the Antigorian Dairy, the starting point.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

1. Crossing State Road in Crodo.
2. Crossing State Road in Premia.
3. Short section (200 m) of State Road in Frazione Piazza in Premia.
4. Descent on Graglia: 450 m on a steep and slippery mule track.

TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Ossola /Antigorio Valley Formazza
Place of departure and arrival:	Crodo, Antigoriana Dairy parking lot (525 m)
Number of legs:	1
Length:	18 km
Height difference:	310 m
Total ascent:	620 m indicative
Total descent:	620 m indicative
Difficulty:	BC(MEDIUM)
Average duration:	2 hours
Minimum altitude:	m.a.s.l.
Maximum altitude reached:	m.a.s.l.
Degree of cyclability:	good
Recommended period:	April-October
Presence of dedicated signage:	no
Target audience:	cyclo-hiker, mtb lover

REFRESHMENT POINTS

Crodo, Verampio, Premia, Croveo, Cravegna.

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

CRODO - Località Bagni 20 - 28862 Crodo (VB), Tel. +39 0324 600005 - altaossola@gmail.com

BIKE SERVICE

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

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Albergo del Ponte, **Rental**, frazione Piedilago 3 - 28866 PREMIA (VB) -Tel. +39 347 859 5265 - info@delponte.it - www.delponte.it

CHARGING STATIONS

Albergo Vecchio Scarpone, Via Roma 48 - 28861 BACENO (VB), Tel. +39 0324 62023, info@vecchioscarpone.it, www.albergovecchioscarpone.com

Cooperativa Croveo, Via Centro 8 Croveo - 28861 BACENO (VB), Tel. +39 347 1281725, manuelawitch@yahoo.it

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PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

Veglia Devero Nature Park Visitor Center (Crodo fraz. Bagni), Carlo Brazzorotto Mineral Water Museum (Crodo fraz. Bagni), Aldo Roggiani and Angelo Bianchi Ossola Mineralogical Museum (Crodo fraz. Bagni), Verampio Lake, Crego power plant, Marmitte dei Giganti (Maiesso), South Gorge, Balmasurda Bridge and Gorge, Northeast Gorge, Balmafredda Gorge, Antica ghiacciaia (Premia town hall), Church of San Michele (Premia), Casa De Rodis (fraz. Rodis), Eighteenth-century houses (hamlet of Rodis), Antica pesta (hamlet of Pioda), Antico Torchio (Croveo), Croveo parish church, Croveo bridge and potholes, Baulina bridge and potholes, Antico Torchio (Cravegna), San Giulio parish church (Cravegna).

In the vicinity

MAGLIOGGIO

The centuries-old chestnut tree, an imposing tree more than 25 meters tall with a trunk circumference of 8.50 meters, is listed as a monumental tree in Piedmont. From Maglioggio, a further short detour to the hamlet of CRUPPO provides a view of the spectacular gorge of the Rio Antolina, surmounted by a characteristic stone bridge.

VICENO

Beautiful stone architecture and Mountain Muso House.

BACENO

Parish Church of San Gaudenzio, a national monument.

Standards of behavior

1. Stay on the trails

Respect the trail and any prohibitions on access. Respect private property.

2. Leave no trace

Respect the land. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable than dry trails. Stay on existing trails, and do not create new ones. Don't take shortcuts by cutting corners. Take any litter with you.

3. Drive carefully

A moment's distraction can endanger both yourself and others. Abide by speed limits and ride so that you can always control your bicycle. Always wear a helmet.

4. Don't scare the animals

Animals are easily startled by an abrupt approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise. Allow them enough space and time to adjust to your presence.

5. Give right of way

These trails are not only for bicycle use but also shared by hikers on foot. So, especially downhill, speed should be moderated: around a bend, someone may be coming up. Let other trail users know you will overtake them through a friendly greeting or a bell. Bicyclists must give way to all non-motorized trail users. Cyclists proceeding downhill should give the right of way to those going uphill. Make any overtaking as safe and polite as possible.



REMINDER:

BIKERS MUST ALWAYS GIVE WAY TO OTHER USERS

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR BIKERS

Since the first mountain bikes appeared, the N.O.R.B.A. (National Off-Road Bicycle Association) drew up a code of conduct intended to regulate off-road activity with full respect for nature and other frequenters of the mountains and trails.

Many clubs, organizations, associations, and schools throughout Italy have adopted the N.O.R.B.A. Code. It consists of a series of general tips that, if followed carefully, can help make this sporting and hiking practice so much in vogue today more enjoyable for everyone.

N.O.R.B.A. Code

1. Always give priority to hikers on foot.
2. Slow down and use caution when approaching and overtaking hikers on foot or other cycle walkers, always making sure to signal your arrival well in advance; avoid cackling or shouting instead, apologize, and greet politely.
3. Keep mountain bike speed under control at all times, and approach turns with extreme caution, anticipating sudden obstacles. The pace should be commensurate with the type of terrain, the type of trail, and each person's experience.
4. Always stay within the marked path, thus minimizing environmental impact (permanent damage to surrounding vegetation and subsequent soil erosion).
5. Do not disturb or frighten domestic or wild animals; give them time to move away and off the path.
6. Do not, for any reason, leave garbage in the wake of your passage; you should pick up your own and, when possible, also those abandoned by other "distracted" hikers.
7. Always respect private and public property, leaving gates, mobile barriers, or bars as they are found. In any case, go directly to the landowners to ask for permission to pass. "No trespassing" often means "Please ask permission if you want to pass."
8. During cycle hiking, it is always advisable to be self-sufficient. The destination to be reached and the speed at which one moves should be proportionate to the psychophysical fitness and skill of the driver, the equipment, the environment, the terrain, and, above all, the weather conditions.
9. Never undertake a cycle tour alone, except in cases of force majeure. Stay away from isolated areas distant from major roads, and always leave clear directions regarding the route to be taken and the estimated return time.
10. Minimizing the impact with nature: stealing only images and memories and leaving, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of one's vehicle.