

Particularly scenic loop tours on paved and dirt consortium trails. Overall, the route is not challenging, but it has an elevation gain that has begun to become significant. Beginner cyclists can also tackle a pedal-assisted mountain bike.

It departs from the **Varzo train station**. Other parking is available in the center of Varzo (Via Castelli) or behind the parish church. From Viale Stazione, go straight on **Via Castelli** toward the village center, cross the stream, and turn right into **Via Lincio**, crossing part of the historic center. At the crossroads, take a left (**Via Terrazzi**) until you arrive in front of the beautiful villa of the **Casa per Anziani**, once used as the village hospital.

Here, deviating left for 100 m, you reach the beautiful parish **Church** dedicated to **St. George**, built around 1100 on a pre-existing Romanesque building and later enlarged and remodeled in the 1300s and 1540s. Around 1650, by the will and regalia of **Baron Stockalper**, the so-called "Roi du Simplon," the porch in front of the church's main door was built. There are also some ancient frescoes on the exterior: among them, one can barely catch a glimpse of the facade on the right (precisely on the south corner), a figure of St. Francis that some historians identify as one of the earliest images of the saint in Piedmont, dating from the 13th century, the years when pilgrims and Friars Minor commissioned by the Poverello of Assisi passed through these valleys traveling all the roads of Europe.

In the heart of the historic center, next to the Town Hall, stands the **Medieval Tower**, a massive stone construction. It already existed in 1300 when the Statutes of the Valley were drafted. It forms a body with it, the building that houses the **Trattoria Derna**, formerly a tavern for the cavalymen assigned to transport goods across the Simplon in the 14th century. The tower, a lookout and signal place with other towers scattered throughout the Ossola territory, was renovated in 1571.

The house that faces the Church steps on the other side was also a tower, as tall as the first one, but it was later lowered and modified into a dwelling. Under the recent plasterwork, it retains the stone structure, a door, and a window with white Crevola marble jambs engraved with a Latin inscription from 1582.

Back in front of the retirement home, continue along **Via Cattagna** until you reach this lovely hamlet distinguished by several fine 18th-century mansion villas. The **Cattagna oratory**,

dedicated to Madonna del Carmine, dates back to 1717. Above the facade door, the Vigizzo painter Giuseppe Mattia Borgnis (1701-1761) painted the image of the Madonna del Carmine. At the entrance to the hamlet, continue along **Via Salé**, making a steep uphill turn, then take the first minor road to the right that appears to lead to a small group of isolated houses. Before the houses, on the right, take the consortium track close to ordinary traffic (a small wooden arrow indicates the MTB route) that goes up to the **Oratory of Durogna**, one of the valley's most essential and oldest hamlets.

The Oratory of the Holy Sepulcher in Durogna, more commonly called the Calvary Church, became a devotional destination when, between 1750 and 1770, the fourteen Chapels of the Cross were built up from the Church Square in Varzo.

In front of the oratory, ignore the wooden arrow pointing to Solcio and continue straight along the dirt track that climbs in wide switchbacks alternating between dirt and paved sections, crossing beautiful meadow glades and clusters of characteristic stone huts until you reach the junction with the paved road coming up from **Coggia** (possible variant, see map).

The road continues uphill on the right as it reaches **Dreuzza** and then continues paved with numerous switchbacks until it reaches **Rifugio Pietro Crosta** in **Solcio** (the refuge, in addition to being an excellent refreshment stop, offers free bike charging service and provides tools for small repairs).

On the way up to Solcio, at a certain point, you will encounter red arrows signaling the **Cistella MTB Tour**, which can be followed all the way to San Domenico.

Immediately behind the refuge, you take the dirt track, which is always very scenic and, with some ups and downs, leads to **Alpe Quatè** and **Alpe Moiero**. At Moiero, continue along the consortium track, which immediately becomes paved again and descends to **Dorcìa** (paying attention to the possible cars you may encounter).

Then, with some very steep hairpin bends, you descend sharply until you cross the provincial road Varzo - San Domenico. Alternatively, before the final hairpin bends, it is possible to deviate onto a path leading to the **Bosco delle Fate (Fairy Woods)** and then directly to **San Domenico (this section, however, is unsuitable for beginners)**.

For the return to Varzo, follow the provincial road. The more experienced can follow the old mule track that passes through **San Bernardo** and cuts through the hairpin bends on the stretch to Gebbo.

Another interesting downhill variation (not suitable for beginners) passes through the hamlet of **Colla** and, along a beautiful paved mule track, reaches the center of **Varzo** directly.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The main route is on dirt tracks and paved roads, so it is easy, but the elevation gain has become significant. Beginner cyclists can also tackle it with an assisted mountain bike.

The **Maulone variant** follows the consortium track and is a possible variant to reach Alpe Solcio: starting from Maulone, it saves about 400 m in elevation gain.

The **Coggia variant** follows the narrow-paved road and allows you to visit this quaint hamlet.

On the other hand, the **Bosco delle Fate variant** and the **Colla variant** are on trail/mule track, so they are not suitable for beginners.

POINTS OF ATTENTION

The consortium tracks are closed to ordinary traffic, but authorized consortium members' cars can still travel them. Use caution and moderate speed when descending.

TECHNICAL DATA.

Relevant geographical area:	Ossola/Val Divedro
Place of departure and arrival:	Varzo
Number of legs:	1
Length:	30.0 km
Height difference:	1358 m
Total ascent:	1408 m indicative
Total descent:	1408 m indicative
Difficulty:	BC (MEDIUM)
Average duration:	3 hours 30 minutes
Minimum elevation:	530 m.a.s.l. (Varzo station)
Highest altitude reached:	1889 m.a.s.l. (ridge between Alpe Coatè and Alpe Moriero)
Degree of cyclability:	total
Recommended period:	June-October
Presence of dedicated signage:	no
Target audience:	mtb lovers, cyclo-hiker

VANTAGE POINTS

CAI Pietro Crosta Alpine Shelter, Alpe Coatè and Alpe Moiero.

EATERIES

Varzo, Alpe Solcio, San Domenico.

BIKE SERVICE

San Domenico Ski, **Rental**, locality San Domenico - 28868 VARZO (VB), Tel. +39 0324 780868, www.sandomenicoski.com

CHARGING STATIONS

E-bike Charge, at Bar Centro, Piazza della Torre - 28868 VARZO (VB)

Rifugio Pietro Crosta, locality Alpe Solcio - 28868 VARZO (VB) Tel. +39 0324 634183 Tel. mob. +39 340 825923434, www.rifugiocrosta.it

San Domenico Ski, San Domenico locality - 28868 VARZO (VB), Tel. +39 0324 780868, www.sandomenicoski.com

PLACES OF INTEREST

Along the route

VARZO

St. George's parish church, medieval tower, historic center with beautiful stone architecture.

CATTAGNA

Eighteenth-century mansions.

DUROGNA

Oratory of the Holy Sepulcher - Calvary Church and Way of the Cross.

COGGIA

Oratory of the Assumption of the Beata Vergine Maria (Year 1606-1616).

COGGIA

Oratory of St. John the Baptist (1730).

Antique grape press.

Numerous viewpoints over the valley and the mountains of the Simplon range.

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, sudden movement, or loud noise. Allow them enough space and time to adjust to your presence.

5. Give right of way properly

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. Bikers must give way to all non-motorized trail users. Bikers proceeding downhill should provide 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 NORBA (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 NORBA 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.

NORBA Code.

1. Always give the right of way to hikers on foot.
2. Slow down and use caution when approaching and overtaking walkers or other cyclo-hikers. Always signal your arrival well in advance, avoid cackling or shouting, 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 route, 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 as a result 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, movable 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. It is always advisable to be self-sufficient during cycle hiking. The goal to be reached and the speed at which one moves should be proportionate to the psychophysical fitness and ability 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 far from major roads, and always leave clear directions regarding the route and estimated return time.
10. Minimize impact with nature: steal only images and memories and leave, at most, the barely perceptible imprint of the wheels of your vehicle.