

Cycling Safaris

2021 – Open Italian Alpine Challenge 6 nights / 5 days

This route rides through the Italian Alps and Dolomites, tackling many of the most famous Giro climbs and highest roads Europe has to offer. The scenery is spectacular and of course who can resist the delights of Italian food and wine.



Day 1 – Sunday 4th July - arrival at Lake Como

Suggested flight to Milan Bergamo yet to be advised.

Transfer approx 1 hour to the shores of Lake Como. The 3rd biggest of the Italian lakes and one of the deepest in Europe. Como boasts idyllic shorelines and lovely gardens that has attracted many of the rich and famous to stay.

Day 2 – Monday 5th July - Lake Como to Sondrio

Riding away from the lake, a lovely paved bike path follows the river Adda along green fields of the valley to Morbegno. The town lies at the entrance to several lateral valleys and therefore some interesting easier options are possible. The pick of the cycles however, is to tackle the Passo San Marco.

It has been used in the Giro and although not as high as other passes (1992m) it starts pretty low down, so gains a massive 1742m over almost 27km –so not especially steep. It is a very quiet pass with a lovely combination of scenery. The bike path then beckons again, gradually climbing to Sondrio, a wonderful Alpine town that is famous for its Terraces of Vineyards that many good Italian wines are produced.

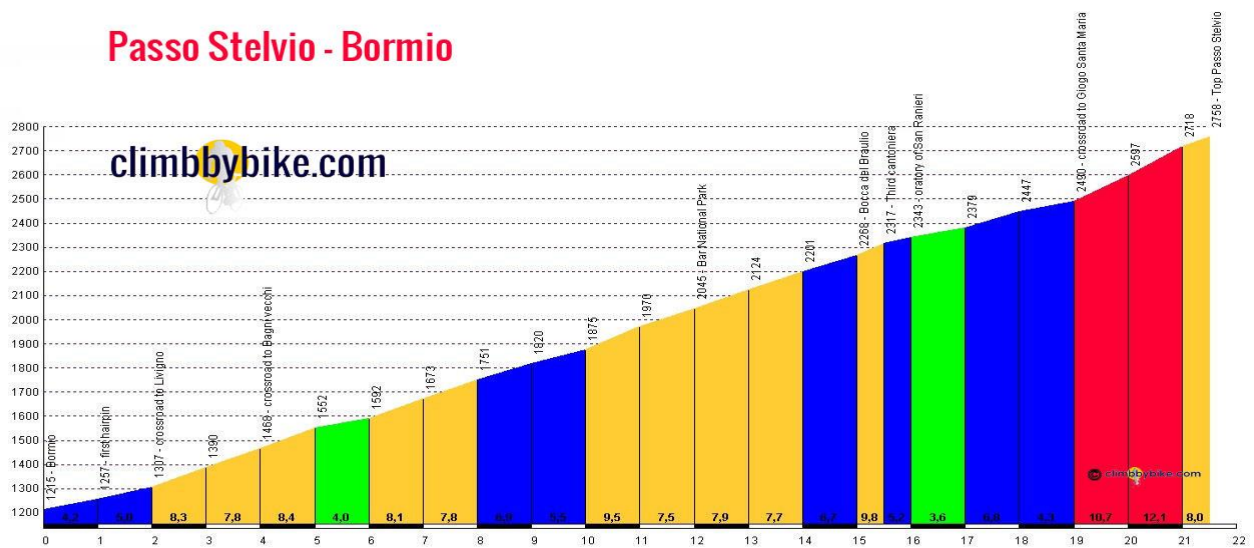


Day 3 – Tuesday 6th July - Sondrio to Bormio (70kms/700m or 116km/2100m)

The route continues on the lovely bike path beside the Adda river, gradually climbing its way towards the mountains and offering wonderful views. The day is deliberately kept short so that those who wish can tackle the infamous climb that is the Mortirolo. This is not the longest or most beautiful of climbs. It is however known as a “leg breaker” and the Mort in the name gives a hint as to its murderous past. An average gradient of 10.5% and a maximum of 18% topping out at 1852m, says plenty but perhaps the words of Mark Cavendish say it all “its savage, f**ing savage”

Day 4 – Wednesday 7th July - Bormio to Bolzano (130km/1800m – 2800m descent)

Today is the big day. The Stelvio. Considered by many to be the roof on Europe (only two roads are higher) as it tops out at a massive 2758m. The climb from this side gains 1533m over 22km with an average of 7.1%. Haven't reached the top there follows one of the great marvels of engineering as you tackle the 48 Hairpin bends that lead to Prato. Here another paved bike path leads the way through apple orchards and pleasant villages to Bolzano. A city of beautiful Pastel coloured houses surrounded by green hills with a rich market of Alpine cheeses and cured hams. The city is an anomaly where the majority speak Italian in a predominantly German speaking region.



Day 5 – Thursday 8th July - Bolzano to Levice Terme (100km/940m)

Bolzano is a city of cyclists and radiating from the city are bike paths along the various river valleys. Initially there will be many cyclists on the paths on the edge of the city until you pick up the river Adige path as it winds its way spectacularly to Trento. Trento is a lovely easy going city with much to admire as stone castles, renaissance fountains and medieval frescoes radiate out from the Piazza del Duomo. Apple Strudel and Beer Halls mingle with this Italian feel as the Austrian and Italian intermingle. The destination is on the lago di caldonazzo, a magnificent lake that is lovely spot to swim with the temperature in the 20C-24C range.



Day 6 – Friday 9th July

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Levice Terme to Vicenza (106km/680m or 135km/2200m)

The Lago di Caldonazzo is the source of the Brenta river and the easy mainly downhill bike path that follows this river is another scenic and wonderful ride. The path will lead all the way to Bassano del Grappa (although of course there is the extra option to tackle Monte Grappa). Bassano is a charming medieval town nestled on the river Brenta. A well-known and much photographed wooden bridge (Ponte Vecchio) spans the river and there is much in the way of Palladian architecture to be seen. The town's most famous export is the drink to which it gives its name, Grappa.

It is then a few more kms to reach Vicenza. This is the adopted home of Palladio, whose genius would create Vicenza and the surrounding villas that today are a UNESCO world heritage site that also happens to offer many great bars and restaurants to enjoy.

Option: Monte Grappa

Visible from as far away as Venice, this mountain dominates the Veneto much like Ventoux does Provence. It has a dark past from two World Wars and the 1st world war battle led to the name change of Bassano del Grappa to honour the thousands that died on the mountain.

For the cyclist it offers nine different possible routes to the summit with a variety of scenery and a claim to be one of the hardest climbs in Europe. From Romano d'Ezzolino (the classic climb) it is 26.5km with an average gradient of 5.9%. Topping out at 1745m. An obligatory stop in Ponte San Lorenzo and the signed photos left by Bartali and Pantani.

Day 7 – Saturday 10th July

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Departure

It's 2.5 hour long transfer to Venice Marco Polo Airport for the direct flight back to Dublin while the bikes are brought back overland. The suggested flight is yet to be advised.

Price:	€1455pps	(based on a minimum of 20 participants)
Single supplement	€335.00	(limited availability)

Includes:

- 6 x accommodation in minimum 3 star hotels
- 6 x dinners
- 5 x Lunches
- Snacks on route
- 2 x Cycling Guide
- Support vehicle carrying luggage with Bike Mechanic
- One Set Transfer from Milan Bergamo to Como (flight to be advised)
- One Set Transfer from Vicenza to Venice Marco Polo Airport (flight to be advised)
- Careful Transportation of bikes from Dublin to Start and back from Finish
- Fully Researched cycle routes
- Insurance for bike transportation
- Flights not included