

Stelvio & Italian Classics Cycle

King of the Mountains



Duration: 6 days

This challenging and truly stunning cycling adventure takes us through the spectacular mountains and lakes of Northern Italy, roads synonymous with the triumphs and suffering of the great heroes of professional cycling.

We set off around beautiful Lake Iseo, and tackle the legendary climbs of the Passo di Gavia (2621m) and the short but fearfully steep Passo di Mortirolo. A brief detour into Switzerland brings us back over the Passo dello Stelvio (2758m) – the second-highest paved mountain pass in Europe, and one of the most impressive roads in the Alps!

Our epic ride ends at Lake Como, with wonderful views and one last climb of the Madonna del Ghisallo, with its small but famous cyclists' chapel.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet Bergamo

We meet at the hotel in Bergamo (approx 1 hour from Milan), where you can check in from 4pm onwards and meet the rest of the group. After some time to assemble your bikes and ensure all is in order for tomorrow, you are free to sight-see. Bergamo is a lovely town lying at the foot of the mountains in Northern Lombardy; if you have time, the cobbled streets and historic buildings of the upper town are well worth exploring. We meet up in the evening for dinner and a detailed trip briefing.

(Lunch not included)

Day 2: Bergamo – Tirano

Leaving the town behind, we ride east through small villages and fields, the contours of the green hills rising around us. It's initially fairly flat, with a few twisting, shady climbs to stretch our legs. We reach Lake Iseo, one of the quieter of the Italian lakes, and enjoy a wonderfully scenic ride alongside it, climbing fairly steadily as we reach its northern end. Our gradual ascent continues – punctuated by a few short sharp climbs – through the Camonica Valley, a wide forested valley dotted with beautiful villages. As we gain height the scenery becomes more impressive, with wide-reaching vistas out over the forested peaks, and glimpses of more dramatic peaks in the distance, while village houses look distinctively Alpine. The gradient ramps up as we come to the upper valley, and into the Valtellina, climbing to Aprica. Our day ends with a wonderful descent to the small town of Tirano. Night hotel.

(Lunch not included)

Cycle approx 148km (92 miles)

DETAILED ITINERARY (cont.)

Day 3: Tirano - Passo di Gavia – Passo di Mortirolo – Bormio

Our legs might be tired after yesterday's long day, but the route profile today is seriously tough! We set off on quiet roads through the valley towards Mazzo di Valtellina, at the base of the Mortirolo. The Passo di Mortirolo (1852m) is a relatively short climb, and first featured in the *Giro* only in 1990, but its steep gradients have given it a fearsome reputation. On the ascent we pass the monument to much-loved Italian cyclist Marco Pantani. Our descent to the Val Camonica gives us some respite, but it's not long before we start climbing again, as we hit the southern slopes of the Passo di Gavia (2621m).

Unlike the Mortirolo, the Gavia has been a regular feature of the Giro since 1960, when it was little more than a dirt road. Cycling history has been made on these slopes, and however tough you find it, take inspiration from following in the pedalstrokes of the elite! This side is the toughest, with gradients kicking up to 16%, and from the first hairpin bend it's a relentless climb. Within a few miles we are in wild mountain scenery, surrounded by panoramas of boulder-strewn pastures, tumbling streams, serene mountain lakes and jagged peaks, often still streaked with snow. After a well-earned breather at the pass, we enjoy a long, more steady descent to the small town of Bormio. Night hotel.

(Lunch not included)

Cycle approx 91km (56 miles)

Day 4: Bormio – Prato allo Stelvio (Trafoi)

Another high pass today, though the Passo di Foscagno (2291m) offers a long, relatively gradual climb – a good stamina-building effort between the tougher days! Our road takes us through Trepalle, the highest village in Italy, and the lovely town of Livigno, before crossing into Switzerland. It's an easy downhill roll along the Swiss Val Müstair before we pass back into Italy. The scenery is wonderful, with lush green pastures and small red-roofed Tyrolean villages with striking churches, set against the high rocky peaks. We eventually reach the foot of the Stelvio, buoyed up for tomorrow's big effort. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 106km (66 miles)

(Lunch not included)



CHALLENGE GRADING

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This ride lies within the **Red** range.

The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions are also taken into account.

The Challenge Factor icon shows the most challenging aspect – the terrain, which features arduous climbs where altitude has additional impact.

The grade reflects the overall trip; some sections will feel more challenging than others. Unusual weather conditions also have a significant impact, and not all people are tested by the same aspects.

DETAILED ITINERARY (cont.)

Day 5: Trafoi – Passo dello Stelvio – Colico

The Passo dello Stelvio (2758m) is the second-highest paved road in Europe and often listed among the best roads to experience in the Alps; its hairpin bends decorate the mountainside with painful-looking regularity. The climbing starts in earnest from the first hair-pin bend: only 47 more to go! The scenery is again dramatic, and you should pace yourself to enjoy it! The last section, with its famous views of the tightly-packed, stony hair-pin bends and the pass, still 600m above us, can be one of the best sights you'll enjoy on a bike – or one of the worst! After time at the pass for the obligatory photos, we enjoy an adrenaline-pumping descent to Bormio and the sweeping valley below. From here our route is steadily downhill on quiet roads as we cruise once more through the Valtellina, all the way to the shores of Lake Como. Night hotel.

Cycle approx 150km (94 miles)

(Lunch not included)

Day 6: Colico – Madonna del Ghisallo – Como; Depart

The shores of Lake Como provide a scenic backdrop for our short morning spin – a stunning way to start our last day. A short ferry ride across the lake brings us to Bellagio, and then it's a short, steep climb of the Madonna del Ghisallo, where the chapel on the summit has become a shrine to cyclists. Made famous by the Tour of Lombardy and Giro d'Italia, this is a challenging last climb, but the views are spectacular! We make time to pay our respects at the hilltop chapel, where an eclectic array of cycling artefacts and an eternal flame commemorates the memory of cyclists who have died. We then enjoy a wonderful descent, and the remaining miles to Como are downhill almost all the way. We finish with a wonderful lunch. From Como there is plenty of public transport back to Milan for your return home.

(Dinner not included)

Cycle approx 65km (41 miles)

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Copyright 2017 / Updated 2018

KING OF THE MOUNTAINS CYCLES

DESIGNED BY CYCLISTS, FOR CYCLISTS

This itinerary is part of our King of the Mountains series. These cycle challenges are capped at a maximum of 15 participants. Running these challenges at lower numbers means our crew can concentrate fully on supporting your experience, but we do require you to be more self-sufficient and experienced than is expected on our standard cycle challenges. For further information and to check you have the required skills and experience, please check [this link to our website](#).