

OUTDOOR



ITINERARIES and EXCURSIONS in the PROVINCE of SAVONA

both on foot and
by mountain bike



**Provincia di
savona**

turismo.provincia.savona.it - www.visitriviera.it

itineraries and excursions in the province of Savona

How to use this guide

Walks



This publication describes possible excursions
in the territory of the Province of Savona.
Each itinerary has a colour:

MTB Itineraries



Key

	Motorways		Railways
	Walking Itineraries		Boundary of the Province of Savona
	MTB Itineraries		Parks and Protected Areas
	Trail starting and ending points		Rivers, Streams
	Main roads		Castles, Towers, Shrines
	Secondary roads		Shelters, Caves
			Airports, Ports, Marinas

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The complete network of the trails and excursions of the Province of Savona as well as a video on its sport attractions are available and can be downloaded from turismo.provincia.savona.it and www.visitriviera.it.

The fascination and attractions of the Riviera delle Palme (Riviera of Palms) are not confined to its coast but permeate the hillside and inland areas rich in natural and cultural heritage.

Hillside and inland areas well worth exploring and which allow visitors to forget roads and cars and enjoy quiet trails and country paths on foot or by mountain bike.

Dozens, perhaps even hundreds of trails connect the coastal towns with those on the hills and mountains.
Scenic views, rolling down hills and forests still as vast as thousand years ago.

This small publication aims at suggesting 16 itineraries, ideal to explore and enjoy the wonders of the green background of the Riviera of Palms, from west to east, from coastal hills to the innermost valleys rolling down towards the Po River.

Readers can take their pick: either on foot or by mountain bike, aware as they become that once they have enjoyed one of them, many more can still be discovered.



Itinerary n.1

From Andora to Pizzo d'Evigno (inland of Andora)



A walk along the border

It is a long watershed walk along the westernmost border of the Riviera of Palms. From the sea of **Andora** visitors can enjoy the rolling hills which define the right hand (southern) slope of the **Val Merula**, where olive groves are slowly replaced by wooded land, chestnut trees and mountain top prairies. Areas from which you can contemplate the nearby Ligurian Alps as well as the sea. A sea which is never far away - just turn back.

The itinerary

From the railway station of Andora (10 m) turn right along the road leading to the sea until you reach a bridge over the railways. Cross the bridge towards west (right hand side) into a steep road to the hamlet of **Rollo**. From the XV Century castle of Rollo carry on along a stone paved path among villas and vegetable gardens to reach, in the proximity of the **Colle di Cervo** (320 m), the watershed line defining the Merula Valley which is also the border between the Provinces of Savona and Imperia. Until its end, the trail follows the watershed defining both the valley and the border between provinces. It is marked as a trail for transhumance (when livestock was moved from winter to summer pastures) and was used as an important thoroughfare between the coast and the mountains both for shepherds and livestock. Uphill and downhill through Mediterranean maquis, wooded land and openings. Just after the **Colle Mea** (383 m) is the mark pointing to a rather steep and stony eastward trail leading down to the Merula Valley. Following it, you quickly get to the hamlet of **Canossi** and then the road at the bottom of the valley. By turning right (southward) you get back to the railway station. Those who like longer walks may even carry on along the watershed line and the marked trail thus reaching higher and higher hill tops: **Monte Chiappa** (541 m), where a small round dry stone house (very common in the Ligurian mountains, used in the past by peasants and shepherds alike) can be spotted, **Monte Badia** (566 m), **Pizzo Aguzzo** (757 m), **Monte Ceresa** (913 m).

On to finally reach the highest point, the **Pizzo d'Evigno** or Monte Torre (988 m). It is a long trail with steep uphill and downhill walks which frames the Merula Valley and offers breathtaking views of the Ligurian Alps. To get back just follow the same trail backwards.



above: Stone sculptures by Reiner Kriester
in Vendone and valerian blooming
right: age old olive trees in Garlanda





Useful information about the trail...

On the left of the valley, on a small hill very close to the coastal plain is situated the castle of **Andora**, i.e. the old medieval village. Near it, you can admire the proto-Romanesque church of the Saints James and Philip. Traces of the ancient **Roman Road** to Provence are still visible in the medieval bridge on the Merula River and in the road leading eastwards to the hamlet of **Colla Micheri** which overlooks the fishing village of **Laigueglia**. Worth paying attention is also the trail "Fischia il Vento" (The Wind is Blowing) (1 bis). It is a path of the Heritage Park of the Riviera of Palms in memory of Felice Cascione, one of the earliest partisans of the Riviera di Ponente and also author of the song called "Fischia il Vento". It begins with a large building situated at the "**Passo du Bèu**" near the Passo di San Giacomo. It encroaches the Merula Valley north of **Stellanello**, goes up to **Testico** (470 m), stretches along a panoramic watershed line rich in woods, chestnut woods and then reaches downhill the Lerrone Valley in the direction of the olive groves of **Casanova Lerrone** (250 m). From here, it goes over a second watershed near the small church of **Saint Bernard** (563 m) to then move downhill into the **Arroschia Valley** in the direction of **Onzo** (400 m), an area famous for its olive trees and Pigato wine, and also in the direction of Vendone. Here the sculptures of white stone by Reiner Kriester, half prehistoric megaliths half monoliths, reminiscent of "2001. A Space Odyssey", can be admired. From Casanova Lerrone you may even want to follow the Lerrone Valley downhill and reach **Garlenda**, the "Town of Wine" so as to contemplate "U Ruve de San Roccu", a monumental 250 year old and 24 m high oak tree.

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round with the exception of high summer and winter days when snow, ice or clouds are present on the watershed

Length

9 Km (short trail) / 32 km (long trail up to Pizzo)

Gradient of climb

400 m (short trail) / 1200 m (long trail up to Pizzo)

Difficulty

E

How to reach it

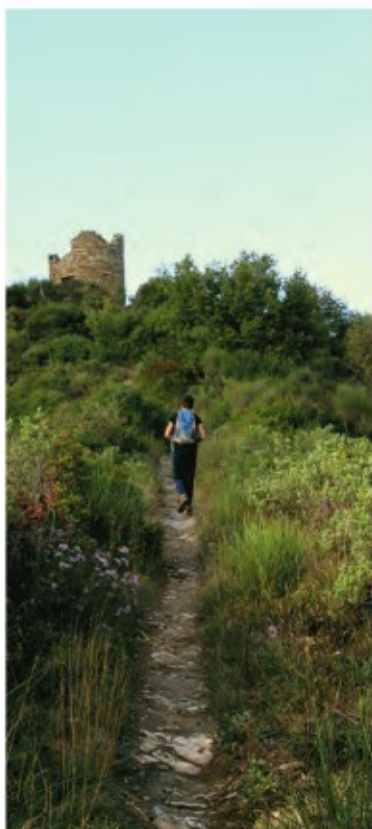
By train: Railway Station of Andora

By car: leave the A10 Motorway in Andora then follow signposts to the Railway Station

Trail mark



From Alassio to Monte Tirasso (inland of Alassio)



above: uphill to the Colle Tirasso.
Broom plants in bloom
right: view of the sea

Adelasia. A beautiful story

Adelasia is a famous character half history and legend of Western Liguria. She was the daughter of Otto I of Saxony, Holy Roman Emperor in the X Century. She fell in love with the equerry **Aleramo**, obviously without her emperor father's approval. She eloped with her lover, left Germany and found refuge with the bishop of Albenga. She later reconciled herself with her father and finally got married. In her honour, the town of **Alassio** was named after her while Aleramo started a dynasty of marquises who ruled the so called "Marca Aleramica" which ranged from the Monferrato, in Piedmont, to central Liguria. At the back of Alassio, green and steep hills rise where easy trails can be enjoyed offering breathtaking views of the town and sea. Some of them lead to the **Monte Tirasso**, at the centre of the short mountainous arch of hills, near the top of which is situated the XVII Century Santuario della Madonna della Guardia. The shrine can be easily reached by car but reaching it on foot from the sea is much more pleasant.

The trail

It is a clearly marked trail ■ ■ and begins in Via Neghelli (20 m) from which it goes uphill near the signpost "Strada pedonale Costa Lupara Crocetta" along the watershed line among the small valleys of the rivers Borbona and Limbo. The trail includes parts of dirt roads, goes past the **Torre Cazzulini** (190 m). It offers a wider and wider view of the bay of Alassio. The rural village of **Moglio** is situated on the other side of the Rio Borbona. The trail goes past the **Casa Caudi** and rises towards the SP 18 road. Once you reach it, carry on left to the **Casa Carmicæ** and on to the **Crocetta** (335 m), where 4 roads from Alassio and the innermost valleys cross.

From here, follow an eastward marked path ● ● (on the right) following the watershed line. Alassio is on the right and the lower part of the Merula Valley on the left. Near a windmill, 450 m, go down hill along a steep trail to the Colle Tirasso (400 m) and the main road. Then, uphill on the slope of the Lerrone Valley, to the north, to reach the parking area of the "strada panoramica" (scenic road) (552 m) from where the **Santuario della Madonna della Guardia** (585 m) can be reached on foot only. It was built in the XVII Century on the site





of a medieval castle on the top of the Monte Tirasso.

Like all shrines to the Virgin Mary built on the Ligurian mountains, it contains simple votive artefacts seafarers offered to Virgin Mary to express their gratitude and prayers. From the shrine a breathtaking view of the sea, the Ligurian Alps and the nearby valleys can be enjoyed. Further downhill, as an alternative to the uphill trail, it is possible to walk from Moglio to Alassio (marked with a +). This alternative can be taken along the road from the Colle Tirasso down to Alassio, just below the hilltop.

Useful information about the trail...

The legend is about a German princess in love, but history defines Alassio as an old centre of seafarers stretching along one of the best beaches in Liguria, i.e. a long beach with a fine sand rich in quartz.

At the end of the XIX Century, it became famous as a seaside resort with a mild climate, elegant and rich in Liberty style buildings and villas. The so called "budello" – the high street of shops and bars - (Via XX Settembre) runs parallel to the beach. Not to be forgotten is also the "muretto degli artisti" – the wall of artists – decorated and signed by the most famous personalities in the worlds of the Arts, show business and culture of the XX Century.

One of the most interesting parts of the ancient **Via Julia Augusta** which in Roman times linked Liguria to Praveance and Gaul, is the Roman road (2Bis) with its *cippi, piloni* (Roman boundary posts) and funerary monuments which links Alassio to the Roman and Medieval town of Albenga. It starts at the **Capo Santa Croce**, east of the town and at the back of the marina, and leads to **Albenga**, north of the modern Via Aurelia. It is marked by ■. It also offers breathtaking views of the whole coastal arch of Liguria and the nearby **Isle of Gallinara**.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic
Historical

Length

9 Km the round trip

Gradient of climb

600 m

Difficulty

E

Trail mark

■ ■ ● ● +

Recommended gear

Average for excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round with
exception of high summer

How to reach it

By train: from the Railway Station of Alassio on foot or by bus to Via Diaz. Then, north in the direction of the hills. Then, left into Via Neghelli.

By car: take the A10 Motorway of Albenga exit.

Turn left in direction of Alassio. First along the ex-SS582 then the SS 1 Aurelia Bis - NSA 142. Out of the tunnel leading into Alassio, cross the roundabouts with a fountain in via Gastaldi and turn into Via Neghelli at the underpass

Itinerary n.3

From Vignolo to Monte Galero (inland of Albenga)



Climbing mountains

Once more an itinerary characterised by the presence of an important border, this time, towards Piedmont. The **High Pennavaire Valley** stretches between the Provinces of Savona and Cuneo and presents a decidedly Alpine environment and landscape. Its limestone mountain tops have harsh and steep slopes reaching and sometimes exceeding the height of 1700m. In its "arme" – caves – men dwelled already 9000 years ago. Birds of prey nestle above its conifers and prairies which in summer are covered in small flowers. It snows heavily in winter on its mountain tops. On a clear day, the white of the snow offers a stark contrast with the blue of the sea which is never too far, further down. **Nasino** is one of the smallest towns of the Riviera of Palms while the **Monte Galero** is the highest mountain in the entire Province.

The trail

The trail ♦ starts in **Vignolo** (480 m), a hamlet in the area of Nasino on the border with the Province of Cuneo. It stretches along an alpine environment among wooded land and pastures. Shortcuts may make the way shorter or longer along a dirt road climbing uphill from the small valley of the Rio Ravinazzo, a small tributary to the Pennavaire.

When the road reaches 1100 m on the sea level and turns north east, the trail carries on and climbs uphill towards the deep saddle of the **Colle del Prione** (1309 m, "prione" in the local language is a "large stone") situated on the watershed dividing the Tanaro Valley in Piedmont to the north from the Pennavaire Valley in Liguria to the south where the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains unfolds.

Following north-eastwards this steep part of the 10th step of the High Way, whose symbol is , the "**Stone Giants**" can be found. They are interesting stone formations caused by selective weather erosion which has removed the least compact parts of the "Breccie di Monte Galero".

Then, uphill towards the cross on the top of the **Monte Galero** (1708 m), an imposing pyramid of rocks and grass from where the view is breathtaking. Its northern slope in the direction of the Tanaro Valley and its eastern one in the direction of the Neva Valley are covered in thick woods, in stark contrast with the southern barren slope in the direction of the Pennavaire Valley.

Here the itinerary ends while the High Way continues towards the **colle San Bernardo di Gareggio**...



above: Medieval bridge in Nasino
right: Monte Galero watershed





Useful information about the trail...

The rural world of mountain farming still survives among the woods and mountain tops of the Pennavaire Valley. It is a world that struggles to survive but has not completely disappeared yet, far from it. The beans produced in the Nasino area are well worth mentioning. They belong to a variety on the brink of extinction as the so called "marginal" farming was slowly being abandoned. A movement of re discovery, more of culture than traditional food, has come to its rescue. It has some strong chance of success.

Further down the Pennavaire Valley towards the sea, it is possible to reach **Castelbianco**, a town made of scattered centres immersed in a countryside which in spring is covered not in snow but in cherry flowers. Cherries, in fact, are the second produce in terms of quality of the valley. The most famous centre of Castelbianco is **Colletta**, stone built houses on the hilltop with magnificent stone cliffs at its back.

While preserving its medieval atmosphere, it nowadays welcomes people to live or holiday thanks to its mountain environment, its excellent computer connections and electronic facilities of the XXI Century.

Also to be remembered are the so called "pelandroni" – lazy – beans grown in **Erli**, a small town made of small stony centres in the **High Neva valley**. Mountain farming is difficult.

The attempt to bring its produce into the future is therefore an intelligent one.

...for cyclists

From Vignolo, after the parking area, take road to the north that soon gets dirt. It is an easy trail up to the Colle del Priore. From there, continue on foot and reach the hilltop.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions.
Clothing suitable for the altitude

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn

Length

16.5 km the round trip

Gradient of climb

1230 m

Difficulty

E - MC/MC

How to reach it

By car: take the Albenga A10 Motorway exit. Turn into the ex-SS 582 towards Garessio. When you get to Martinetto, take the SP14 up the Pennavaire valley to Nasino. Then to Vignolo for a short tract.

Trail mark



Itinerary n.4

Trails of the Poggio Grande Ceriale - Monte Croce (inland of Ceriale)



The Environmental System of Poggio Grande

Poggio Grande is an area where the environment is safeguarded. It stretches over an area of low hills limited to the west by the narrow and alpine **Neva Valley**, to the north by the just as wild **Varatella Valley**, both valleys eastwardly facing the sea and the only plain in Liguria, i.e. the **Plain of Albenga**.

They are scarcely wooded but very scenic hills close to sea. Beautiful medieval villages are scattered over this area. The network of the Trails of the Poggio Grande offers harsh natural landscapes steeped in history.

It is possible to walk through historical mementoes of "Ilaria del Carretto" from Lucca, who was born in this area, and through the green houses of the Piana d'Albenga, an important centre of modern agriculture.

The trail

It is identified by a **P1** mark. A mark **O** will be soon added. The starting point is in the Piazza della Vittoria in **Ceriale**, a square open to the sea and near to the bastion built in 1526 to fend off Saracen invasions.

Move inland leaving the railway tracks, the Aurelia road, the motorway and the San Rocco River behind you. You may also visit the **Riserva Naturale Regionale del Rio Torsero** - Regional Nature Reserve of the Torsero river. The bed of this river is rich in sea fossils from the Pliocene (5 to 1.7 million years ago). The trail climbs to the medieval town of **Peagna** (123 m) where the **Museum of Palaeontology "Silvio Lai"** can be visited.

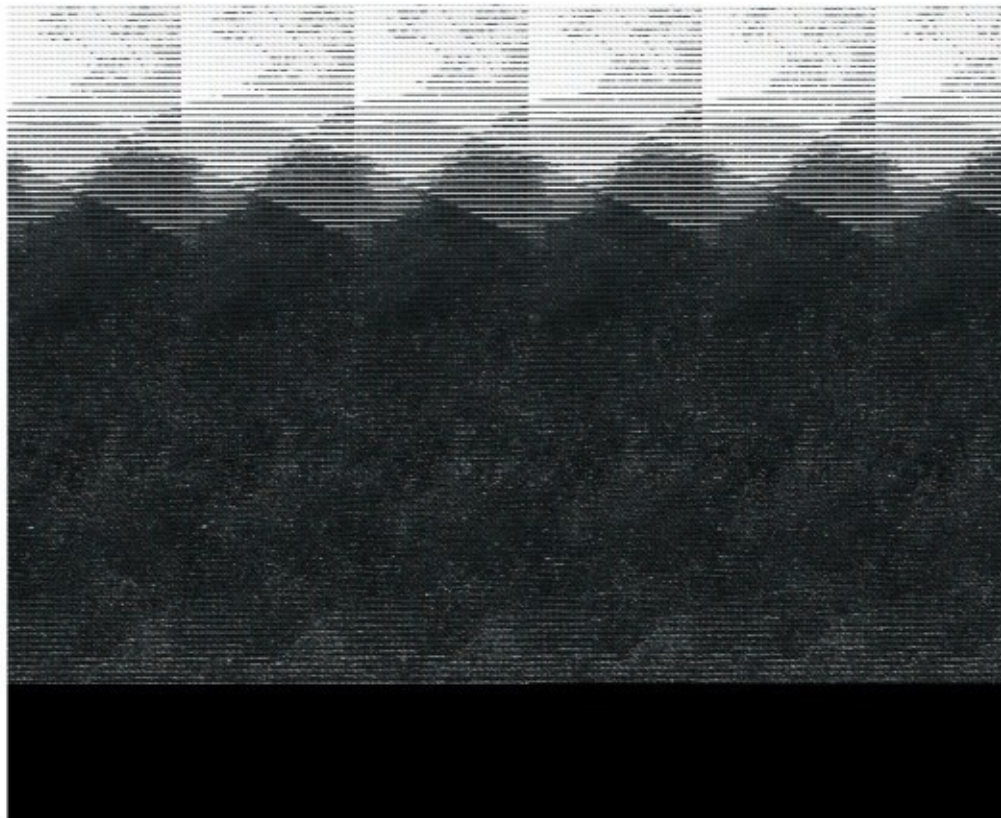
Carry on along a small road leading to the ruins of the Case Paverne (161m) and from here climb on along a dirt road to the **Ibà Valley** following the trail mark **O**.

It is a deep karstic valley with woods on the bottom and northern slope, and maquis and garrigue on its southern ones. After some small chestnut woods and a small stone bridge, reach the ruins of Casa Tinchella (292 m). From here, carry on leaving behind the traces of two coal fields where coal was produced in the past. Climb on up to some **Marmitte dei Giganti** - potholes - with perennial small lakes where animals (wild boars, deers) come to drink and amphibians and reptiles dwell. An area, where pine trees have been planted to recover the damage caused by wildfires, shows the way to the hilltop prairies of the **Poggio (or Pizzo) Ceresa** (710 m). It is the ideal place from where to enjoy beautiful views of the coast, the **Plain of Albenga** and the **Neva Valley** at the back, and the Ligurian Alps as background, of the hills of Imperia and even, on clear days, of Corsica. From the Poggio, a dirt road starts leading northeast along the watershed line towards the **Poggio Grande** (813 m) and its massive XIX Century stronghold and the **Santuario di Monte Croce** (740 m), a modern church devoted to Virgin Mary from where to enjoy views of the Varatella Valley and Eastern Liguria as far as the Apuan Alps.



right: the beginning of the Ibà Valley
above: the trail mark P1





Useful information about the trail...

The Plain of Albenga is the result of alluvial deposits of the Neva, Pennavaire, Arascia and Lerrone Torrent Rivers which, just north of **Albenga**, form the Centa River. Albenga is the second town of the Riviera of Palms in terms of importance, with its important Roman ruins and a wonderful medieval centre. Some of the most famous and celebrated produce are farmed in this rich plain, e.g. artichokes, the Pigato wine (wines from Salea d'Albenga and Ortovero, at the two ends of the plain, are excellent), violets and asparagus. Famous is the olive oil produced on the hills of Arascia whose olives are processed in the olive mills of Cisano sul Neva. The "**Road of Ilaria**" unfolds here. It is a trail through the Heritage Park of the Riviera of Palms inspired by the young daughter of Charles I Marquis of Zuccarello, member of one of the oldest and largest feudal families in North Italy. Ilaria was born in Zuccarello and in 1404 married Paolo Guinigi, Lord of the town of Lucca, Tuscany. She died during child birth less than two years later. She was buried in the Cathedral of Lucca in a marble sarcophagus by Jacopo della Quercia.

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round

Length

14 Km the round trip

Gradient of climb

810 m

Difficulty

E

Trail mark

P1 ○

How to reach it

By train: Railway Station of Ceriale. Then, to Piazza della Vittoria.

By car: Leave the A10 Motorway in Borghetto Santo Spirito.

Drive towards Borghetto till you reach the Aurelia Road (SP 1).

Turn right towards Albenga. Ceriale is the first town after Borghetto S.S.

A shortcut is also possible by driving 5 km to Peagna

Itinerary n.5

From Zuccarello to Castelvechio di Rocca Barbena (inland of Albenga)



The border between the mountains and the Riviera

When the Ligurian Alps reach the **Plain of Albenga** they have already turned into rocky and harsh hills. The Plain is the only really flat part of the Riviera of Palms. Its fields, green houses and vineyards yield the very best of Ligurian agriculture. Soon after the plain: the sea. This itinerary asks you to spend half a day enjoying two of the most interesting towns as far as history and urban layouts are concerned in an area between the Riviera of Palms on the sea and on the mountains, i.e. **Zuccarello** and **Castelvechio di Rocca Barbena**. In ancient times it was a thoroughfare named after Ilaria del Carretto. More than a border it could be referred to with the Latin word "Limes". In fact, a long time ago, about 1400 years ago, the hills of this area marked the border between the still Latin and Byzantine coast and the already Langobard inland territory. Some traces still exist. Only historians can detect them, though. Since that time, the stone bridges of the Neva River have been standing over local rivers. It has been a really long time and the local olive mills have been processing olive for just as long.

The trail

The medieval town of **Zuccarello** (120 m), with its surrounding walls, two access gates and a double row of porticoes, a stone bridge and ruins of a castle of the Del Carretto Marquises is our starting point. Leave the town through the northern gate and climb up a clearly marked **♦♦♦**, **T** and **P4** cobblestone path. It arrives at the height of the castle (260 m) without reaching it. Walk along the path marked only with the red rhombs on a secondary ridge, without following a large dirt road. Reach another dirt road unfolding among olive groves. Reach a fork where a signpost shows the way to Castelvechio (307 m), on the left. Follow the sign and you find yourself on the trail **T / P4**. Carry on up to the southern part of the town of **Castelvechio di Rocca Barbena** near the church (406 m). Alternatively you may want to follow the signs **T / P4** leading to Saint John's Chapel (ruins), XIV Century, a haven for pilgrims and passer-bys. The path climbs up and gets back to the trail near the castle. From here, Zuccarello can be quickly reached by climbing an uphill path.



right: Castelvechio di Rocca Barbena
above: dry stone walls among olive groves





Useful information about the trail...

A landscape, half rocks and dolomite limestone and half woods, and breathtaking views of the coast, the sea and the surrounding mountains. These are the main reasons for hiking in this area.

From Castelvetro you may reach **Vecersio** and then the **Santuario di Monte Croce** and the nearby **Poggio Grande** (813 m) on whose wooded top a large and silent fort was built in the XIX Century.

Further down, **Ceriale** is visible with its beaches and a countryside yielding flowers, vegetables and grapes.

Further to the east, **Balestrino** (360 m) is really worth a visit.

The elegant though imposing castle of the Del Carretto Marquises dominates the hamlet.

Just below the castle lies the nowadays abandoned medieval part. Balestrino is famous for its olive oil.

To the south, **Cisano sul Neva** (60 m), also surrounded by medieval walls and crossed by medieval lanes.

It is famous for its traditional "gombi" (olive mills).

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round

Length

6 Km the round trip

Gradient of climb

300 m

How to reach it

By train: Railway Station of Albenga. Then, bus to Zuccarello

By car: take the A10 Motorway exit of Albenga.

Take the ex-SS582 northwards in the direction of Garesio to Zuccarello.

Difficulty

E

Trail mark

◆ ◆ T P4

Itinerary n.6

The Monte Carmo Ring (inland of Loano)



A balcony over the coast and the Alps

The **Monte Carmo** (of Loano to distinguish it from other Monte Carmo of Liguria) is the first real mountains of the Ligurian Alps. It is a rocky formation in the middle of the "dolomites of Savona" from which views are incredible. From its top your eyes can contemplate all Western Liguria. Its proximity to the sea and its height make it possible, on clear days, to see the Ligurian coast and Corsica, and to the north, the Alps of Piedmont and the Valley of Aosta. From a botanic point of view, it is considered the boundary between the Alps and the Apennines.

The trail leading from **Verzi** to the Monte Carmo combines the sunny landscape of the coast with the harsh appeal of the mountains, just as attractive in summer with its luscious beeches and blooming flora as it is in winter with unspoiled and untouched snow.

Just before you start your excursion, enjoy a memorable view of the coast, of Borghetto Santo Spirito, of Loano with its long-stretching beach, its marina, its lanes, the medieval Castello area and its important past as capital town of the Doria family first and of the Savoy family after.

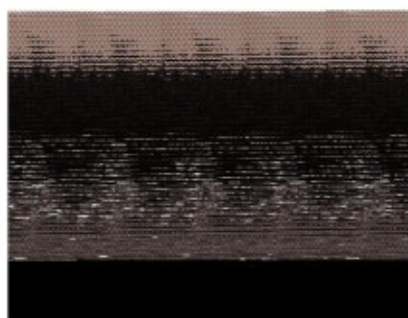
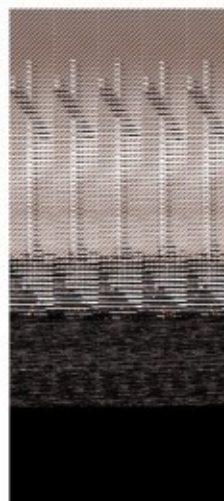
The **rifugio** – mountain shelter – **Pian delle Bosse** (tel. 019.671.790 - info@rifugiopiandellebosse.it) belongs to the Loano section of the Club Alpino Italiano. It is strategically situated and provides an ideal starting point for those who are interested in excursions, in climbing or MTB cycling. It may also be the point of arrival of a short trip allowing you to forget crowded beaches and enjoy the spectacle nature offers.

The trail

Leave the parking area of **Castagnabanca** and take the marked ■ ■ dirt road.

Then, at the fork with the path from Rocca dell'Aia, follow the rocky trail climbing up to a pleasant clearing where the **rifugio Pian delle Bosse** (841 m, c.a 30 minutes) is situated. Climb up through wooded land north of the shelter along the watershed between the northern and southern slopes of the high Maremola valley. It is a trail of dolomite limestone where the Mediterranean maquis gets replaced by beeches tipifying the slope towards the Po River. After a saddle, climb a grassy slope northwards up to the top of the **Monte Carmo** and its big cross (1389 m).

Then, climb down northwards, following the trail mark ■ ■ and reach the **Giogo di Giustenice** (1143 m, picnic area). From here, carry on southwards along a dirt road to quickly leave it for a marked path ▲ leading back to the rifugio Pian delle Bosse.



right: climbing to the top of Monte Carmo above: a dry stone built casella and the Cross on the mountain top.





Useful information about the trail...

For those who like rock climbing, the **Rocca dell'Aia**, a tall rock tower just below the rifugio Pian delle Bosse, offers several recently refitted vie ferrate – special mountain routes –. Geology is a special feature of this area. Caves and buranchi (type of caves) dot the large area surrounding the Monte Carmo on both sides. Nowadays, access to most of them is restricted to speleologists. However, the most famous ones are those of **Toirano** where pre-historical Ligurians dwelled and they can be visited. They can be reached by car from the medieval town of Toirano but also on foot from San Pietrino following down the western part of the **Sentiero delle Terre Alte**. This is an important trail in terms of excursions.

It unfolds half way up from the coast to the watershed line connecting the feudal town of **Balestrino**, with its castle and abandoned historical centre, to Toirano, which has been awarded the Bandiera Arancione (in recognition of the quality of its environment) and to the **Colle del Melogno** (1028 m) where it joins the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains.

Near the rifugio Pian delle Bosse, the ring of the "caselle di pietra" can be enjoyed. It is a circular trail on the eastern slope of Monte Carmo, in the high Nimbato Valley. Stone built caselle are found all over the Ligurian Alps and they are nothing else but circular dry stone buildings shepherds and farmers used as shelters for centuries.

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Length

8,5 Km the round trip
(14 Km from Verzi)

Gradient of climb

790 m (1245 from Verzi)

Difficulty

E

Trail mark



Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions.
Clothing suitable for the altitude

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn.
Winter days with snow or ice or thick clouds along the watershed area should be avoided.

How to reach it

By train: Loano Railway Station. Then, bus to Verzi

By car: Take the A10 Motorway exit of Pietra Ligure.

Drive westwards. As you hit Loano, follow the signposts to Verzi.

Then, northwards along a narrow road goes past a church.

The road becomes a dirt road still suitable for vehicles.

After about 4.6km from Verzi, reach the parking area of Castagnabanca (altitude 600m)


Itinerary n.7

From the Giogo di Toirano to the Monte Carmo along the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains (inland of Pietra Ligure)



Along the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains

It is a highly scenic trail along the 13th stage of the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains.


The High Way is a well known trail along the watershed from Ventimiglia of 44 stages clearly marked by the well known red-white-red flag .

The provincial road from **Borghetto Santo Spirito** reaches the **Giogo di Toirano** along the Varatella Valley through one of the wildest landscapes of the whole province, i.e. limestone hilltops rolling towards the sea in a succession of fields, crevices, olive and pine trees, surrounded by a silence which does not get interrupted even by the strong northern wind. North of the watershed, the thickly wooded areas of the Bormida of Millesimo River accompany the flow of the river towards Piedmont. The town of **Bardineto** with its unusual castle with 16 sides, its underground buranco, where a rare species of speleomantes (Italian Salamander, *Speleomantes ambrosii* - *S. italicus*) lives, and its famous porcini mushrooms is the main centre of the mountain area. From the Giogo the trail goes on to the peak of the **Monte Carmo**, i.e. the highest, most scenic and alpine peak of the territory of Finale and Loano. Those who would like to carry on exploring may go down to the **Colle del Melogno** hiking through wooded land rich in extremely tall and beautiful beeches, specially in the **Foresta della Barbottina**, one of the most remarkable beech forest in Liguria.

The trail

It unfolds along the High Way. From the **Giogo di Toirano** (807 m), it reaches the watershed through fields, pine forests and woods on the southern slope. Near the **Bric Pagliarina** (1213 m) you come across some stone built "caselle", primitive but useful round dry stone buildings used as shelters by shepherds.

Then, on to the fork leading to the mountain shelter Amici del Carmo (1289 m, private) very close to the top of the **Monte Carmo** (1389 m) and its cross, marking the highest altitude and the most scenic point of the trail. From here, you can see the Ligurian coast, Corsica and the western part of the Alps.

From the mountain top it is possible to go full circle by descending eastwards along the "**Sentiero delle Scalette**" path and the northern slope of Monte Carmo, "**Sentiero dei 5**" (trail mark ) through a wonderful beech forest.

You then join back the trail near the fork for the shelter and finally reach the Giogo di Toirano. Those who are interested in a longer trail (7 bis, 14km in total) may carry on following the High Way of the Ligurian Mountains towards the **Giogo di Giustenice** (1143 m) along a dirt road linking Bardineto to Giustenice. From the Giogo carry on to the Case Catalano (1150 m) and the **Conca dei Carbonari** (1115 m). Following a dirt road through the woods you may get to the state owned forest of Melogno on the slope down to the Po River and go past two XIX Century forts. The **Colle del Melogno** (1028 m) with its large fort, the bar/restaurant "La Baita" and the SP 490 Finale-Calizzano road marks the trail end.



right: climbing to the watershed
of Monte Carmo
above: a signpost of the High Way
of the Ligurian Mountains





Useful information about the trail...

The large beech forests are the real natural gem of this territory, specially the **Foresta della Barbottina**. They offer a really beautiful natural spectacle thanks to the chromatic elegance of beech trees throughout the seasons. In spring, they sport a tender green. The darker shade of green they acquire in summer turns into the rich red of dried leaves in winter when the white of snow matches the grey shade of tall thin trunks.

The **Conca dei Carbonari** is of historical interest. Carbonari used to produce wood coal by setting fire to large cones of wood they had previously assembled and by letting them burn very slowly. Historically important are also the **forts of Melogno**, built at the end of XIX Century.

The Forte Centrale is the main feature of the Melogno pass and of the road from Finale.

The forts Tartagna and Merizzo are situated on two nearby hills. North of Melogno, the SP 490 road goes down to the Bormida di Millesimo Valley thus reaching **Calizzano** (647 m), an elegant mountain holiday resort. Its beautiful long *carruggio* – lane – runs throughout its centre.

Calizzano is rich of History (ruins of the Del Carretto castle), Art (San Lorenzo's steeple and the XV Century frescoes of the Santuario delle Grazie), typical produce (mushrooms) and nature in general (13 springs of mineral water, all linked by a trail).

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions.
Clothing suitable for the altitude

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn.
Winter days with snow or ice or thick clouds along the watershed area should be avoided.

Length

7 Km the round trip

How to reach it

Gradient of climb

600 m (up to M. Carmo)

Difficulty

E

Trail mark



By train: Finale Railway Station. Bus to Loano-Calizzano. Then, get off at the Giogo di Toirano bus stop.
If you go all the way: at the Melogno pass catch the bus to Finale

By car: Take the A10 Motorway exit of Borghetto Santo Spirito. Drive into the SP 60 road to Calizzano to the Giogo di Toirano "Escursionibus" bus service available.
Please call charge free: 800 012727



In the land of the Marquises

The "Marquisate of Finale of the King of Spain", this is what you see in a map of Liguria of 1691. In fact, the **Del Carretto Marquises** ruled the small marquisate of Finale for three centuries. In 1598 they sold it to the Spanish crown which ruled it till 1748 when it became part of Genoa. As the Duchy of Milan also belonged to the Spanish Crown, in the XVII Century, a road was built to link the two countries.

That is the origin of the **strada Beretta**, named after the man who designed it, i.e. the military expert Gaspare Beretta.

The road was opened in 1666 when the infanta of Spain, Marguerite, Philip IV's daughter, passed through Finale, Alessandria and Milan on her way to Vienna to marry the Emperor Leopold of Austria. Hence the other name it is known by: "The Queen's Road". The first part of such an international thoroughfare is not burdened by modern traffic and offers a pleasant excursion from the sea of Finale Ligure to an incredibly green inland area.



The trail

It begins in **Finalborgo** (15 m), one of the Most Beautiful Towns in Italy, founded in 1188 by the Del Carretto Marquises and was their capital from the XV Century to 1748. The Strada Beretta winds up through houses and walls trialmarked with two red balls. It is a cobble stoned and goes past the XVII Century **Castel San Giovanni** on the watershed between the Para Valley and the Aquila Valley, i.e. the two main valleys of the Finale territory. After the imposing ruins of the **Castel Gavone** and its elegant **Torre dei Diamanti** – Tower of Diamonds – the cobblestone road unfolds along the right hand slope of the Aquila Valley up to **Perti** (141 m) and its curious though small church of **Nostra Signora di Loreto** – Our Lady of Loreto – known as "the Church of the Five Steeples", built in Langobard Renaissance style. And then on, half away across the suspended Montesordo Valley to a saddle where the normal road ends. Bear right onto a dirt road past the village of **Montesordo**, beyond which you come across Saint Charles' Church.

Follow the trail mark ●● downhill, to right of the brook, and through holm-oaks reach the **Pian Marino** (280 m) field, i.e. a wonderful open karstic basin surrounded by woods and limestone walls. At the end of the field, follow a path + up to the ex quarry of Finale stone of the **Bric del Frate**. Just after it, you reach the

highest point, 372 m, from where you can enjoy the view of small wild valleys rich in holm-oaks and cliffs.

Now, go down the opposite slope and follow the trail mark ♦♦. You go through leafy holm-oak woods.

At the fork marked "I frati" (295 m), you may want to go further on for few meters on the left and enjoy the view of the Aquila Valley below. Once back at the fork, carry on southwards along the trail marked by three

balls leading to the colletto di **S. Antonino**.

From here, a short detour on the left takes

you to the ruins of the Roman "**Castrum Perticae**" and the church of S. Antonino

(288 m), whose crypt hosts a cave.

Once back to the colletto, reach the

bottom of the valley near the Case Valle

(143 m).

The road, you went up it before, goes down to Perti. Near the Chiesa dei 5 campanili

turn into an unmarked path on the left

going down to Finalborgo following the

Aquila river torrent.



above: the "Church of the Five Steeples"
right: Pian Marino and Castel Gavone



Useful information about the trail...

Rialto (370 m) is made of scattered groups of houses in the countryside at the front of the **Pora Valley**, north of **Calice Ligure**. In this territory the **Cappella della Madonna della Neve** - Chapel of Our lady of the Snow - was built to celebrate the passage of the infanta Marguerite along the Strada Beretta in 1666. The story goes that the queen stopped off at the chapel and some local girls from Rialto offered her some flowers. She accepted them but said: "Not to me but to my queen!" and she laid them on the altar. The 1st of May is when the festival "du massu" is celebrated, i.e. bunches of flowers are brought in procession to the chapel. Just before reaching the Madonna della Neve the trail goes past the **Pian dei Corsi** (1028 m), so called after the almost completely disappeared traces of trenches built here by the troops of Napoleon. The local wind farm has 10 turbines displayed along the watershed line. From the now abandoned NATO base, you may enjoy some free ride trails specially designed for mountain bike riders.

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round with exception
of high summer

Length

10 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

450 m

Difficulty

E

How to reach it

By train: Finale Railway Station. Bus to Finalborgo.
Alternatively, a 30 minute walk.

By car: Take the A10 Motorway exit of Finale Ligure.
Drive down to Finale. At the roundabout take the second exit into Finalborgo.

Trail mark



Itinerary n.9

The Manie plateau

(inland of Finale Ligure and Noli)



Knee deep in the Mediterranean maquis overlooking the sea

This is an itinerary which unfolds along paths and ways which have made the area of Finale extremely popular with bikers at international level. It goes through the deep valleys of the **Manie plateau** and offers a unique natural landscape to enjoy. The sea is never far away. It is, in fact, just below, i.e. not far from the patrician palazzos of **Finalborgo**, just north of the coloured fishing houses of **Varigotti** and its beaches and very close to the ancient walls of **Noli**, the fifth Marine Republic of the Middle Ages. On this plateau you find cultivated fields, vineyards, holm-oak woods, caves and very ancient churches as well as peregrine falcons and the wonderful bloom of the *Campanula isophylla* – bluebell – an endemic species of the area.

The trail

It begins in parking area of the restaurant Ferrin (297 m). Take the dirt road (arrow Osteria del Bosco) leading to the west and to the Church of S. James. If you turn right and follow a normal road you reach the **Arma delle Manie** (264 m), a large natural cave which is also an important archaeological site. From the small square adjacent to the restaurant, take the path ■ ■ leading down to the woods of the **Ponci Valley**.

Get to the bottom of the valley, where you come across one of the five Roman bridges (175 m), i.e. a real feature of this area as this is the old track of the Roman road Via Julia Augusta, I Century B.C.

Turn right uphill, trail mark ●. Near the **Cà du Puncin** cross the "ponte dell'acqua" and carry on up to the small church of Saint James (315 m) near the **colla di Magnone**. Turn right and follow the marked road ⊕ which soon turns into a dirt one leading to viewpoint **Bric dei Monti** (410 m). Go back a few meters and turn left into the downhill eastward (towards the sea) path n°6 ⊕ and reach an open and wide field. From here carry on to an abandoned quarry and reach the main road of the plateau once more. Follow it to a cippus – Roman boundary stone -, on the left of road, where a steep dirt road begins, same mark ⊕.

It is a road of "terre rosse", area made red by a soil rich in clay. Then, reach a small hill overlooking Noli. Bear right along the **Bric dei Crovi**, leaving its top just a few meters above (382 m). Keep downhill, along a dirt road, linking the Manie to the **Semaforo di Capo Noli**. Alternatively you may also continue until you get to the main road.

Turn right and quickly reach the starting point once more. Or else, just follow a path to the right which would lead you through fields, near the restaurant Ferrin.



above: *Campanula isophylla*
right: the Manie Plateau
and Mediterranean maquis





Useful information about the trail....

Finalborgo was founded in 1188 by the Del Carretto Marquises who called it Burgus Finarii.

It was the capital town of their Marquisate from the XV Century to 1748. It is a member of the Association of the Most Beautiful Towns of Italy. It is surrounded by walls, moreover the **Castel San Giovanni** and the ruins of **Castel Gavone** are just north of the town centre. At the Museo Civico del Finale, visitors can understand the plurimillennial history of the area. The plateaus of Finale were once a tropical sea. Lime shells of sea animals sedimented on the bottom to finally turn into **the stone of Finale**, i.e. a pink limestone which characterises the whole area. Several cliffs offer climbers from all over the world an ideal place where to enjoy specially equipped routes.

Prehistoric men dwelt in this area which also proved popular with the ancient Romans. Nowadays, it yields an excellent wine and offers the right environment to rare animals and plants, i.e. the *Lacerta ocellata*, the largest European lizard. The **Arma delle Manie** cave is where more traces of the Middle Palaeolithic man have been found to date. The abbey of Santa Maria di Pia, important early Middle Ages religious centre and the natural heir to the pieve – church – of Finale, is in **Finalpia**.

Finalmarina boasts a beautiful promenade on the sea. Along the coast are located two of the most fascinating fishing villages of Liguria, which can be easily reached by bicycle along the Aurelia. **Varigotti** and its so called "Saracen" houses, because of their architecture and top terraces, overlooking the beach.

Noli is further down the harsh rocks of Capo Noli, one of the Most Beautiful Towns of Italy and fifth Marine Republic of the Middle Ages. In Noli, you can admire the walls, the castle, its porticoes, lanes and the church of San Paragorio... you can also enjoy two types of local fish typical of this area only which have become Slow Food Presidia and Traditional Products of Region Liguria: the "cicciarelli" - *Gymnammodites cicerellus* - and the "zerli" - *Spicara smaris*. You can enjoy them fried or in carpione – fried and then dressed in vinegar –. The wine from the Manie is ideal with this food.

Just west of Noli, the town of **Spotorno** provides excursionists with the one of the longest beaches of this part of the Riviera where they can find rest.

For cyclists

The Manie Plateau can be reached from the coast in about 5 km and with a gradient of climb of 300 m.

Type of excursion

Historical
Naturalistic

Length

11 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

280 m

Difficulty

E - BC/BC

Trail mark



Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions
and MTB

Recommended seasons

All the year round.
In high summer make sure you have
enough water with you.

How to reach it

By train: Finale or Spotorno Railway Station.

By car: Take the A10 Motorway exit of Spotorno.

Drive on to Tosse, Colla di Magnone, Le Manie

Itinerary n°10

From Calice Ligure to Melogno (inland of Finale Ligure)

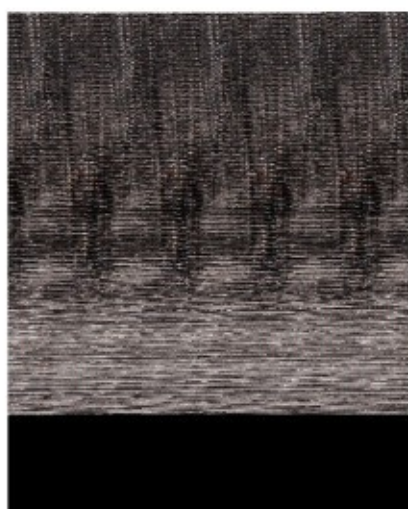


Green hills where farmers and artisans still work

This bicycle trail unfolds inland of Finale and Pietra Ligure, i.e. in the "Middle Liguria" hills which, however close to the sea as they are, are rich in farming activities and offer the rural products of their artisans. Here tourism is of the unobtrusive and self-effacing type. You can cycle through chestnut and holm-oak woods while going past disused old iron foundries and uncommon museums.

The trail

It is marked with ■● and begins in the centre of **Calice Ligure** (70 m), northwards along the SP17 road. Just out of the town, climb uphill along a winding dirt road which goes past **Berea** (275 m) and climb on through the countryside and dense woods of the **high Pora Valley** up to the small watershed (ca. 500m) which, eastwards, overlooks the lateral **Carbuta Valley**. This dirt road gently unfolds through woods up to the **Madonna della Neve** "Our Lady of the Snow" (935 m), a small church built on a pre-existent XVII Century building near a spring, along the SP 23 road. This provincial road runs along the watershed towards the Bormida Valley thus crossing the **High Way of the Ligurian Mountains** ■●. Follow westwards the *provinciale* - b road - (and therefore the High Way) for about a kilometre, and reach the Osteria "Cà du Din" (940 m) located on the viewpoint which is also a crossroad with the SS490 linking Finale uphill to the **Colle del Melogno** (1030 m) and then downhill to the Bormida Valley. From here it is possible to get to the hilltop, where XIX Century forts and tall holm-oak forests can be admired. Near the restaurant, the trail goes follows the dirt road, past the "Casa del Mago" and goes downhill almost parallel to the main road, though at a slightly higher altitude. Pass the rocks of the **Bric Gettina** (1025 m), above you, and of **Rocca Cucca** (874 m) up to the **Piano dei Buoi** (ca. 650 m). Go round the **Monte Collarina** (602 m) and get to the fork to the **Madonna della Guardia** (535 m) where a breathtaking view can be admired in a well equipped picnic area. From here, go downhill along the SS 490 road (500 m). Follow the national road towards the sea up to the junction (290 m) with the provincial road downhill to the left towards the hamlet of **Eze** (190 m) and the Pora River Torrent after which you will find yourself back in Calice.



right: a hamlet of Rialto
above: cycling in the woods





Useful information about the trail...

About the end of the XX Century, **Calice** was a famous centre for the Arts. Painters, sculptors and critics would meet here as it was the place where the artist Emilio Scanavino lived. The **Casa del Console** preserves the memory of that short but intense cultural period.

In the rocky **Marémola Valley**, above **Magliolo**, the remains of the XVIII Century iron foundry of **Isallo** (280m) can be admired. Here, the iron ore from the Isle of Elba was processed. Those who enjoy climbing can climb the "**Ferrata degli Artisti**" route up the **Bric dell'Agnellino** (1327 m) and cross a spectacular Tibetan-style bridge. A lot further down, along the main trail, a road goes downhill from the SS 490 road to **Bardino Nuovo** (250 m) in the municipality of **Tovo San Giacomo**, where the **Museo dell'Orologio** - Museum of Clocks - is well worth a visit as it bears testimony to two centuries of activity of the Bergallo family, real masters of the art of watch making. Carry on and reach **Giustenice** (140 m), the ruins of its castle and the stone seat where the podestà - law officer - of Pietra Ligure would sit and administer justice. Further down, along the sea, discover "a Pria", a limestone rock after which the fishing town of **Pietra Ligure** was named. Not far away, the tourist can visit the **Valdemino caves** in **Borgio** and the 4 "Mediterranean" hamlets of **Verezzi** (200 m), one of the Most Beautiful Towns of Italy. The view from Verezzi is spectacular, highly picturesque and traditional at the same time as it offers to the eye quintessentially Ligurian features such as vineyards, broom plants and sun drenched rocks.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for cycle excursions

Recommended seasons

All the year round. Winter days with snow along the watershed area should be avoided.

Length

27 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

1000 m

Difficulty

MC/MC

How to reach it

By train: Finale Railway Station, then by bus to Calice

By car: Take the A10 Motorway exit of Finale Ligure. Drive downhill to Finale. At the roundabout, take the second exit into Finalborgo. Then, turn left again to Calice.

Trail mark



Itinerary n.11

The ring of Osiglia lake (inland of Savona)



A lake hidden within woods

The trail unfolds in the undergrowth vegetation surrounding the **Osiglia lake** which with its 13 million cubic meters of water is the largest artificial lake of the province of Savona.

The dam was completed in 1939 and it submerged a part of the town, including the church.

The Osiglia lake is a large blue spot within the intense green of the surrounding wooded land.

It offers a romantic and relaxing landscape where camping, canoeing and cycling and fishing all make pleasant activities.

The trail

At the bar-restaurant-hostel "L'imbarcadero", on the western bank of the lake, in the place called Barberis, take the northward road along the bank. You may enjoy a better view of the lake if you get to the middle of the **Manfrin Bridge** which crosses the lake. After about 2 km, at the bottom of a bend with a wooden bridge, take a dirt road on the left uphill along the rio di Bertolotti through beech and chestnut woods up some sharp bends to the hamlet **Tecchio Gamba** (874 m). As you hit the hamlet, turn left into a dirt road flanked by chestnut trees half way up the slope.

When you reach some ruins, bear right following the "ramp" arrows and then turn right once more into another dirt road. After the fork, the road carries on level and then rises towards a beech forest up to the **Colle della Barossa** (996 m).

From here, follow the marked trail ● (i.e. a small dirt road further to the left) leading through a beautiful beech forest at the front of the valley, then downhill to the hamlets Ocella and Rossi. Near the **chapel of San Rocco**, turn left downhill to the provincial road. Bear left and you will get back to the imbarcadero.



right: the Osiglia Lake
left: a grey heron
above: wood from the generous forests





Useful information about the trail...

The five hamlets immersed in the woods of the Bormida di Millesimo Valley form the municipality of **Murialdo**, the ancient "Murus Altus", which boasts more than twenty religious buildings, the most important of which is the Church of San Lorenzo a Ponte with a XIV Century portal, a sandstone high relief, XV Century frescoes...

The territory of Murialdo hosts a small but important natural gem of the Riviera of Palms, i.e. the **wilderness area of the Monte Camulera** (1028 m) safeguarding a large wild and uninhabited forest.

Those who do not like excursions or are too young to remember what life was like before television would surely enjoy the Monte Camulera (you can reach it from Osligia following a path) and the life of farmers of Murialdo by visiting at the Museum "C'era una volta" – Once upon a time – of Riofreddo.

Highly appreciated produce of the woods of Murialdo are its blueberries and **dried chestnuts**, which once were the staple diet of farmers and nowadays have become refined food and a Slow Food Presidium.

Chestnuts and wild fruits are also some of the riches of **Massimino** (530 m), not far from Murialdo but overlooking the Tanaro Valley in Piedmont. Massimino is also worth mentioning as it is the smallest municipality in the Riviera of Palms.

From the distant past of the world of farming to a future characterised by the production of renewable energies: near the **Colla Baltera** (809 m) on the watershed, to the east above the town of Osligia, a small wind farm is clearly visible. It was the first one to be built in the area. It is shared by the municipalities of Osligia and of Bormida in the near Bormida di Pallare valley. Not far from here, the traces history has left in the Napoleonic trenches are still visible at the **Cima Ronco di Maglio** (1003 m) which can be reached both from Osligia and from the Colla Baltera following trail **T**.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn

Length

12 Km the round trip

Gradient of climb

360 m

Difficulty

E


How to reach it

By train: Cengio Railway Station. Then, bus to Osligia

By car: Take the A6 motorway exit of Millesimo.

Then, take the Sp51 to Murialdo, fork for Osligia

Trail mark

ramp 

Itinerary n.12

Parassacco river (Bormida Valley) "Una Montagna di Amici"



A part of Liguria reminiscent of Piedmont

The naturalistic area Rio Parassacco stretches for about four hectares of the municipality of Cengio. It is especially interesting from the point of view of geology, botany and fauna. It is rich in "calanchi" – badlands – of marl and sandstone, created by the erosion caused by the Parassacco River and its contributors. The river, with its clear water rich in water fauna, flows through mixed wooded land typical of the vegetation of valley. All the area of the Bormida di Millesimo and Spigno Valley offers many excursions: to the three trails of the Parassacco River you can add those of the "Bormida natura" – Bormida nature –, the "Feudi Carretteschi" – Del Carretto Fiefs – and Grande Traversata delle Langhe – Crossing the Langhe – network.

Such trails allow excursionists to immerse themselves in the civilisation of farming and forestry, in the history and food tradition of a Ligurian valley very reminiscent of Piedmont.

The trail

From the car park (440 m) follow the trail **1001** "Una Montagna di Amici" - a Mountain of Friends - along a small road at the bottom of the valley. In the first part, those fond of fitness may follow the "Percorso Vita" - trail of life - boards. Near the **Case Coppi**, the trail turns right up through the woods.

Follow the wooden signposts until you reach trail **1001** n° 7 and the "Via dei Feudi Carretteschi" - the way of the Del Carretto fiefs - which unfolds through woods, along watershed lines and openings to the Bric della Posa and the Bric del Ribera. Go past the ruins of some farms of **Montecerchio** and, then, near a votive niche turn left and leave the dirt road leading to Carretto. Carry on along the dirt road unfolding along the slopes of the **Monte Baraccane** to get to its top (764 m).

The **Gran Tour delle Langhe** takes place here among cultivated and gentle hills.

At the Case Gatti, briefly carry on along a road you soon leave to go downhill to the Piloni from where a steep path goes downhill on the right slope of the Parassacco Valley near the fork of Case Coppi.

From here, get back to the car park.



right: walking in the woods
above: calanchi and the trail mark
of una "Montagna di Amici"





Useful information about the trail...

The double **Bormida Valley** (of Millesimo and of Spigno) is steeped in nature, history and culture. The Medieval centre of **Millesimo** is really worth a visit. Millesimo, one of the Most Beautiful Towns of Italy, has an ancient bridge, patrician palazzos, Romanesque churches and a magnificent sundial. Further away but still worth mentioning are the imposing castle of **Roccavignale**, the bucolic ruins of the castle of **Cosseria**, the battlefield of one of the very many Napoleonic battles fought in this valley, and the water spring Seizi hidden in the woods of **Plodio**. In **Rocchetta di Cairo**, the Bormida di Spigno River is crossed by a beautiful stone bridge called of the Alemanni. The ancient **Beretta road**, in XVII and XVIII Centuries, linking the Marquisate of Finale to the Duchy of Milan, passed through here. Finally, once you have reached the end of the trail, you may want to enjoy the "star" of the Ligurian Langhe: the **Mushroom of Piana Crixia**, i.e. a tower made of earth and rocks with a large top. It is a four meter large ophiolite resting on a highly eroded conglomerate, i.e. the unusual result of weather erosion and geology which is absolutely worth photographing.

For cyclists

In Cengio, take the road to Rocchetta di Cairo. After the town, turn left into the trail **BN**. Go past the Case di Laion and other farms. Where four roads cross marked by a wooden cross, take the dirt road of trail **001**.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Length

13 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

400 m

Difficulty

E - MC/MC

Trail mark

001 **BN**

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions and excursions by MTB

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn

How to reach it

By train: Cengio Railway Station. Then, follow the signs to Rocchetta. Then, turn left to Montaldo.

By car: In the town centre of Cengio, follow the signs to Rocchetta and, then, turn left to Montaldo. Large parking area after the hamlet of Montaldo.

The Natural Reserve of Adelasia (inland of Savona)



Where Industry safeguards the Environment

The Committee of the Bormida Valleys and some illuminated factory managers of 3M Italia, which back then owned the area, created it in 1989. Nowadays, the **Adelasia Reserve** belongs to the Province of Savona. It is a real gem, unfortunately not as famous as it deserves to be.

The High Bormida Valley, i.e. the greenest heart of the province of Savona, contains it. Its trails offers a Liguria almost unimaginable, i.e. populated by wild animals and monumental trees just very reminiscent of what it must have been like several thousand years before man appeared on stage.

The trail

The trail is called "The Heron Trail" n.1 and is marked throughout with . It begins at the Reserve entrance at **Traversine** (710 m) along the provincial road that from Altare leads to **Montenotte** and **Pontinvrea**, in the proximity of a monumental beech which is numbered among the monumental trees of Liguria. Take the dirt road, closed off by a bar. Up the slopes of the **Bric del Tesoro** to the **Cascina Miera** (844 m) which offers hospitality to excursionists. Soon after the Cascina, you come across signposts to an alternative route of the **High Way of the Ligurian Mountains** near a structure devoted to animal observation. Carry on westwards through hazelnut, downy oak and European hornbeam woods with unkempt thick undergrowth. Several species of birds and roebucks roam this area. Carry on to the beautiful **faggeta** - beech forest - **di Castellazzo**, populated by woodpeckers, jays, owls and wild boars. Many of the openings you may come across were used to produce wood coal. At a marked fork, turn left and climb uphill to the beech forest of the "**barricate napoleoniche**" - Napoleonic trenches -, which still nowadays bear testimony to the battle fought here in 1786. Once you have regained the trail, carry on straight along a leafy dirt road running along the border of the Reserve. After, the beech forest, the **Conca Chiappa** (766

m) is an interesting point for the observation of birds of prey and migrating birds.

The trail goes downhill along a small torrent through a wild landscape, over a difficult terrain, through thick chestnut woods, brooks. As you come across red arrows, follow them backwards till you reach a double tree, i.e. a maple and a hornbeam whose trunks got partially fused together. From here, carry on to the fields of the **Cascina dell'Amore** (625 m).

Cross the large field over and bear left to gain once more the woods. After a short uphill climb reach the **Rocca dell'Adelasia** (698 m) whose summit can be easily attained by climbing few small schist rocks and from where it is possible to enjoy a view of the surrounding "sea of green".

At the foot of the rock, carry on eastwards avoiding trail n.1 which goes uphill on the left, but follow a path through the woods marked **1** and **3**, thus reaching the provincial road at the entrance of the Reserve.



above: the High Way trail mark
and an orchid
right: Cascina Miera





Useful information about the trail...

The rock is linked to Adelasia, daughter of Otto I of Saxony and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in X Century, who according to the legend founded the town of Alasio. In fact, a cave opens in the rocky slope. Here Adelasia and her lover Aleramo, not yet Marquis of the Empire, found shelter when they eloped from Germany. Napoleon Bonaparte started his glorious enterprise, which would lead him to the creation of a French Empire and the conquest of half Europe, in Liguria.

The mountains and hills of the Riviera of Palms witnessed the important clashes between the French and Austro-Piedmontese armies. The Battle of Montenotte was fought on 12 April 1796 in the wooded land surrounding the Reserve.

However, it was just only one of the many battles which took place in those months in the mountains of the Riviera. In the place where two of the main three spring brooks forming the Bormida river (those of Mollare and of Pällare) join to create the Bormida of Spigno, the ancient Romans founded Cairum.

Nowadays, **Cairo Montenotte** (338 m) is the most important town of the **Langa of Savona**.

Its land yields wood and truffles. Here, people speak a dialect which is nearer to what is spoken in Piedmont than in Liguria. Cairo sports an elegant historical centre with vividly coloured houses, porticoes and still preserves part of the XIV Century walls. The nearby town of **Carcare** is similar too. Just further away is **Ferrania**, where connoisseurs can enjoy wonderful examples of Liberty – Art Nouveau – industrial architecture.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn

Length

8 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

250 m (ups and downs)

Difficulty

E

Trail mark

A 1

How to reach it

By train: Cengio Railway Station. Then, follow the signs to Rocchetta. Then, turn left to Montaldo

By car: Take the A6 motorway exit of Altare. Drive in the direction of Carcare and turn right to Ferrania. After the rail way tracks turn right again to Montenotte. At Bivio – fork – Sella turn left into the SP 12 road to Montenotte Superiore. After 5 km, before Traversine, you will find a parking area and the entrance to the Reserve.

Itinerary n.14

The Rocche Bianche Road (inland of Savona)







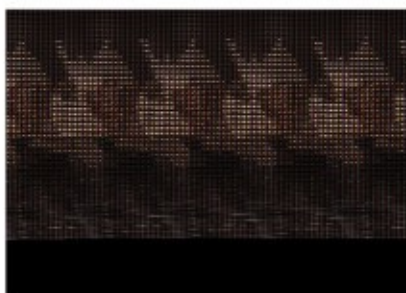
Cycling in the Bosco di Savona

This trail is immersed in the endless green of the **Bosco di Savona** – Savona woods –, i.e. a thick luscious forest covering both slopes of the watershed towards the Po River, north of the town of Savona. It was here that the wood, necessary to the shipyards of the Republic of Genoa, was produced for centuries. It creates an unusual bond between the beech forests of the Bormida valley and the beaches of the coast. It connects the farmhouse food of the countryside north of Savona with the flavours of the Riviera. The Colle di Cadibona (459 m), or even better the **Bocchetta di Altare**, marks the conventional geographical (but not geological) border between the Alps and the Apennines.

Altare (405 m) is an important centre of Ligurian traditional activities, i.e. for centuries glass has been processed here and the Liberty style Villa Rosa hosts the Museum of Glass and Glass Art.

The trail

Stage 16 of the **High Way of the Ligurian Mountains**  is the beginning of this trail, near the northern entrance of the tunnel on the ex national road from Altare to Savona. Turn right and climb uphill through a small leafy valley. After less than 1 km, the road turns into a dirt road and reaches uphill the slope of the **Monte Burotto** (745 m) where one of the three XIX Century fortresses is situated. From here, the dirt road runs almost level along the natural gas pipeline, leaving, beyond leafy tree tops, the town of Vado Ligure and the sea on the left, the Bormida Valley on the right with the western Alps as background. After the pipeline, the road rises towards the **Monte Baraccone** (819 m) and goes round it into thick woods. It then goes downhill along a MTB trail along the western slope to the Colle Baraccone (663 m). Carry on, a bit uphill and downhill, along a dirt road to the **Colle del Termine** (663 m) where many roads cross. The road gets wide and bears left through tall beeches on the southern slope of the Bosco di Savona. After a while, the High Way rises to the right towards the watershed line but the dirt road carries on with mark  and  almost level or slightly downhill. Pay no attention to the fork to the left to the bridges of the Trexenda river and soon after a second fork (662 m) bear left, avoiding the part of the road climbing up to the right towards the Colla di San Giacomo. Here you come across the trail mark  up to the **Rocche Bianche** (620 m), i.e. limestone rocks whose candour stands out against the green of the woods. From here, near a monument to the II World War Resistance Movement, a small road rises to the left. Pay no attention to the fork leading to the La Porada holiday farm but stick to the main though bumpy road. Reach **Montagna** (260 m), where you can find a water fountain in the picnic area in the school yard. From here, go downhill along a narrow road. Near the **Trexenda torrent** (80 m), the road rises up again along the SP 29 road towards **Roviasca** (250 m). After the village, carry on for about 1 km (Via Verne) and then continue in the same direction avoiding a small road rising to the left. You then find the uphill trail just after an abandoned quarry. From here, to the right, quickly reach downhill the town of Altare.



above: *Cistus albidus*
right: the Rocche Bianche





Useful information about the trail....

Following the High Way westwards up to the **Colla di San Giacomo** (799 m), you can go down towards the Bormida di Mallare through the **beech forest of Benevento** (800 m) where you may spot its famous monumental beeches. The adjacent Bormida di Pällare valley preserves some traces of the past such as **Le Pietre di Napoleone** - the stones of Napoleon - (530 m) near Biestro, i.e. carved boulders perhaps used for French cannons as well as the **prehistoric petroglyphs of Bric Gazzaro** (560 m).

From the Colle di Cadibona, the **Quazzola Valley** rolls down towards the sea. In 109 B.C. the ancient Romans built the via Aemilia Scauri here, which later Augustus changed into the via Julia Augusta.

Five stone bridges still exist, bearing testimony to such an important thoroughfare of the past.

Two of them are still in use. At the bottom of the valley, among the hills of **Quiliano** and the port of **Vado Ligure**, which replaced the Roman town Vada Sabatia, you come across vineyards producing the red wine "Granaccia" and the white wine "Buzzetto", two of the most typical wines in Liguria, as well as the fields where apricots of Valleggia are grown. Along the coast, west of Vado, the **Natural Reserve of Bergeggi** safeguards the secluded small beaches of the wild **Capo Maiolo** and a small green/purple sea cave, where Neolithic men dwelled. Opposite, the **Isle of Bergeggi** with its sea gulls stands out in the blue of the sea. And finally, just a few words about **Savona**, whose inland territory hosts this trail.

It is the largest town in the Riviera Ligure di Ponente and at least two thousand years old.

It has a nice historical centre with narrow lanes and richly frescoed patrician palazzos, a **Sistine Chapel** and the imposing **Priamar stronghold** hosting the Archaeological Museum. The harbour welcomes goods and cruise ships. A typical product is the myrtle-leaved orange, i.e. a small citrus fruit which has become a Slow Food Presidium.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Length

34 Km the round trip

Gradient of climb

900 m

Difficulty

MC/MC
(some parts BC)

Trail mark



Recommended gear

Average gear for cycle excursions

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn.

Winter days with snow or ice or thick clouds along the watershed area should be avoided

How to reach it

By train: Railway Station of Altare

By car: take the A6 motorway exit of Altare. Drive to the centre of town.

Itinerary n.15

From Palo to the Monte Beigua (inland of Varazze)




The Beigua mountain, a sheer drop to the Riviera

Those who live along the coast look up to the **Monte Beigua**, though a not really high but imposing Apennine mountain, almost in awe. It is imposing though friendly. In autumn, fog partially hides it. In winter, snow blankets it. In spring, green tender grass grows all over it. Pine and beech trees cover its inner slopes. It was one of the mountains holy to the ancient Ligurians, who, perhaps, when its northern and chilly wind blew on its summit in winter, perceived the breath of a god. The Beigua massif preserves some of the most unspoilt corners in Liguria. Its forests, valleys, fields, villages and rivers are safeguarded by the **Parco Regionale Naturale** - Regional Natural Park. Its almost alpine landscape still keeps traces of pre industrial glass factories as well as of ocean outcrops rich in rare minerals.




You can walk along torrents where trout and spawn thrive and where it is pleasant to stop and enjoy a fresh water fall and then reach a peak, a sheer drop to the sea and overlooking far away snow peaked Alps.

The trail

The trail is marked  and begins in the main square of the ancient rural village of **Palo** (650 m). Go up to the church and cemetery and then carry on along a dirt road leading to **Sassello**.

After a wide opening, take another dirt road on the left going along an artificial passage dug in the rock. The red road unfolds among chestnut, pine and beech trees.

After a short climb, take a slightly rising road among coppice and ferns grown on an ancient landslide crossed by brooks where it is not difficult to see the black and yellow spotted swift salamander. You are now above the small valley of the brook La Ciappa (900 m) beyond which the first beeches become visible. Carry on along the watershed past, to the west, the Monte Cucco to reach, downhill, and pass the **Veirera** farms (980 m). The name of this hamlet is reminiscent of the very many glass centres which developed in this area in the Middle Ages thanks to the abundance of the turquoise siliceous stone, an indispensable raw material for the production of glass, and of wood and lime. After getting to the path from Sassello marked with , the trail bears right to the Punta Pragiroso (1140 m) and uphill southwards through woods of chestnut and beech trees, some of which are very tall. Carry on below the western slope of the Monte Ermetta where plants thin down and the blue/green serpentinite rock is visible on the surface.

As you reach the southern slopes of the Bric Veciri you come across the **High Way of Ligurian Mountains**  (1223 m).

Take it and you will find yourself surrounded by the sky and endless views reaching as far as the sea, including Corsica, Genoa and the Alps. The round summit of the Monte Beigua (1287 m) is not far now.

The **small church of Regina Pacis**, once the only guardian of the holy mountain top, is now dwarfed by aerials and passive repeaters and marks the trail end.





Useful information about the trail...

One thousand and five hundred years ago, the sea of green on the slopes of the Monte Beigua and the large area reaching downhill the Po plain, were the hunting ground of the Orba, reserved to the Langobard kings and named after the most important river in the area. Nowadays, several are the traditional features: the woods, last traces of the old forest, the stone walls of the farms, scattered over the area of **San Pietro d'Olba** (550 m), main centre of the municipality of **Urbe**.

Sassello, one of the most important centres of traditional Ligurian food, is famous for its amaretti - sweet macaroons - and cold cuts.

above: the small church of Regina Pacis and the summit of the Monte Beigua
left: view of the sea

...for cyclists

Take the road from Palo to the summit of the Beigua through Veirera, Piampaludo and Pratorotondo. The above explained trail is easier downhill.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic

Length

18 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

640 m

Difficulty

E - T/BC

Trail mark



Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions.
Clothing suitable for the altitude

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn.
Winter days with snow or ice or thick clouds along the watershed area should be avoided

How to reach it

By train: Railway Station of Albisola, then bus to Sassello Urbe.
Get off in Palo

By car: take the A10 motorway exit of Albisola.
Turn left into the SP 334 road to Sassello, then the SP 49 to Palo.

Itinerary n.16

From Varazze to the Monte Beigua (inland of Varazze)



From surfing the waves to the summit of the mountain holy to the ancient Ligurians

Experts maintain that the best waves for surfing are those of the sea of **Varazze**.

Start here and go uphill through olive groves and pine woods to reach the areas where the prehistoric Ligurians dwelled.

And further on, to enjoy the views and the beech forests of the untamed **Parco Regionale del Beigua** - Regional Park of Mount Beigua -, i.e. one of the largest in Liguria.

The trail

Start in the centre of Varazze and follow the provincial road along the Teiro torrent till the beginning of the Via Bianca, where you find the mark **+**.

Go up some steps through vegetable gardens and uncultivated fasce - traditional portions of land limited by dry stone walls. Take a narrow road confined between two walls up to the watershed between Teiro and Arzocco. Near the small **church of San Giuseppe** (164 m) turn into a mule track leading through woods to the **Chapel of the Beato Jacopo** (318 m), the most famous person from Varazze.

Jacopo da Varagine, friar, writer and chronicler and bishop of Genoa, lived in the XIII Century.

Carry on to and beyond the **Passo Valle** (368 m). Go past the Bric della Forca and reach the **Passo del Muraglione** (395 m). From here, carry on to **Le Faie**. After the fork for **Alpicella**, take Via Faie till you come across an uphill path on the left through chestnut and oak trees up to the **Casa La Preisa** (570 m).

Then, cross the road and along some fields to reach a stone paved mule track to the **Rifugio di Pra Riundo**. Turn into a path along the large and scenic watershed way, among shrubs and surfacing rocks, and go past a pine forest on the slope of the mount **Pria Faia**.

Get into the beech forest on the slopes of the **Monte Cavalli**, past an aqueduct structure for the intake of water (1050 m) situated in a wooded area characterised by boggy openings.

The last stretch of the trail is steep and rises uphill. Climb through beech trees up to prairies of the top and finally arrive to the large summit of the **Monte Beigua** (1289 m), the **small church of Regina Pacis** and a 360° panorama.



above: the fork for the Monte Priaiaia
right: on to the summit





Useful information about the trail...

The **Beigua Regional Natural Park** safeguards a real gem of Ligurian nature.

It is a rocky massif rich in hills, forests, pastures, wild fauna, old farms and fresh rivers, i.e. a landscape which would not be out of place in the Rocky Mountains. It is part of the Ligurian Apennines, though. It probably was one of the three holy mountains, holy to the ancient Ligurians. Throughout the millennia shepherds and passers by carved its rocks leaving pictures of stylised human figures, geometrical symbols and crosses.

On its southern slope, near **Alpicella**, Neolithic men left traces in caves and crevices, i.e. along the so called **megalithic trail**. The **Museo Archeologico** - Archaeological Museum- is really worth visiting.

Not far from the **Deserto di Varazze** (you can reach from the trail from the Chapel of the Beato Jacopo or by taking the road from the Passo del Muraglione) is a place of wild beauty, dark with holm oaks and laurel trees. Its Carmelite hermitage is a shrine of spirituality and mysticism.

Near Varazze, the hamlets of **Stella**, scattered the valleys of the Riobasco and Sansobbia rivers, are worth the excursionists' attention. Along the coast, the brightly painted facades of the houses of **Celle Ligure** and the ceramic artistic creations of **Albisola Superiore** and **Albissola Marina** cannot be missed.

Type of excursion

Naturalistic
Historical

Recommended gear

Average gear for excursions.
Clothing suitable for the altitude

Recommended seasons

From spring to autumn. Winter days with snow or ice or thick clouds along the watershed area should be avoided

Length

20 Km (the round trip)

Gradient of climb

1290 m

Difficulty

E

Trail mark



How to reach it

By train: Railway Station of Varazze. Then, to Viale Nazione Unite and along the Teiro river to reach Via Piave (SP542). Beyond the motorway overpass and right into via Bianca where you find the trail mark and the sign Monte Beigua.

By car: Take the A10 motorway exit of Varazze.

Drive along the Aurelia (SP1) road and turn right into the city centre up to the fork for Pontinvera in Viale Nazioni Unite. Carry on as above explained.

Excursions in the province of Savona

Info for hikers



All the trails of this booklet can be classified as suitable for Tourists/Excursionists in terms of difficulty. Therefore, they are generally not particularly challenging as most of them unfold along marked tracks. However, excursionists should never forget that they are in a natural environment and that every excursion requires an appropriate and adequate physical and technical preparation.



Few practical recommendations:

- Wear trekking shoes. Sometimes trainers are simply not enough and do not offer adequate protection. Some trails are really rocky.
- Wear comfortable clothes suitable to the season and the altitude (often an altitude of 1000 m can be reached)
- Get the last weather forecast update
- Make sure you have enough water and food with you
- Do not forget maps of the area
- Do not forget that your cellular may not work for lack of signal
- Do not overestimate your physical abilities

Enjoy your excursions!

Difficulty chart

T - Suitable for tourists, along country road or well tracked mule tracks

E - Suitable for excursionists, the trail unfolds along path or tracks well visible and usually marked.

Sometimes it may be steep. Usually the most challenging stretches are adequately taken care of.

ATTENTION:

Trails may be affected by the weather. If you find them different from what here described, write to turismo@provincia.savona.it

...and for cyclists

Excerpt from the Codice di Autoregolamentazione del
Cicloescursionista
(Guide for Excursionists/Cyclists)
Club Alpino Italiano
Gruppo Cicloescursionismo mtb – www.mtbcai.it



Environmental recommendations

- All trails have been chosen on the basis of the relevant environment in order to allow the use of a MTB without damaging nature. Please keep to the marked trail
- Please ride your MTB in an eco friendly way. Avoid dangerous manoeuvres, e.g. sideslipping by blocking the back wheel.

Technical recommendations

- Please use a technically reliable bike.
- Your clothes, gear and general equipment should be adequate for the trail
- Wear a well fastened helmet

Safety recommendations

- Your speed must be appropriate to your riding abilities, to the visibility and the trail so as not present dangers to yourself and others.
- Hikers have right of way. You should politely let them know you are approaching. Use your voice or another effective way.
- Do not overestimate your physical, technical and athletic abilities when choosing a trail.

Enjoy your ride!

Difficulty Chart

TC (tourists). Trail along dirt roads suitable for cars

MC (cyclists of average technical abilities). Trail on dirt roads with uneven surface or paths with even surface

BC (technically experienced cyclists) Trail on dirt roads with really uneven surface and along mule tracks or paths with uneven or irregular surface. Some natural obstacles are possible, e.g. rocky steps or tree roots)

OC (cyclists with excellent technical abilities). Just like above but along paths with really uneven or irregular surface. Obstacles are present on the trail.

The symbol + may be found when the trail gets really very steep.



