

BIKEITALIA



# EXPLORING CUNEO AND THE SURROUNDINGS

*by bike*









# Content

## FOREWORD

p.4

## FOCUS: DISCOVERING CUNEO AND THE GESSO AND STURA RIVER PARK

p.6

## PARKS AND NATURE RESERVES IN AND AROUND CUNEO

p.14

## PEDALLING THROUGH ART AND NATURE: CUNEO, THE GRANA AND MAIRA VALLEYS

p.24

## FOCUS: A JOURNEY INTO BAROQUE

p.32

## CYCLING FROM CUNEO TO MONDOVÌ, VICOFORTE AND CHIUSA DI PESIO

p.40

## BY BIKE FROM CUNEO TO VALDIERI SPA: NATURE AND WELL-BEING

p.48

## FOCUS: FOOD IN AND AROUND CUNEO

p.54

## SERVICES AND INFO

p.62

# Foreword

*“Landscape is the result of an intertwining of nature, history and culture. It is the product of a human and cultural history generated through fusion, exchange, loans, encounter, journeys and conflict, misunderstandings and misrepresentations (...) It incorporates materials, histories, nature, cultural and civil positions”<sup>1</sup>.*

The promotion and protection of this natural and human landscape is one of the aims of the ALPIMED Integrated Territorial Plan, co-financed by the European Union within the framework of the Interreg VA Italy-France Alcotra Programme 2014-2020. ALPIMED aims to interconnect and encourage good practices in the cross-border area of the Mediterranean Alps, not only to increase its attractiveness and accessibility, but also to empower local players, giving them a proactive role in integrated sustainable development.

In particular, the PATRIM project, which made this document possible, intends to encourage development of the eco-tourist micro-destination of the Mediterranean Alps with activity that promotes sustainable activities for exploring the area's cultural and environmental heritage. This publication is all about the Cuneo landscape, immersed in unspoilt nature at the foot of the Alpine chain, among plateaus surrounded by verdant river environments and fertile countryside.

The following pages are a guide to exploring this area along the quiet secondary roads that make up a network of cycle routes suitable for everyone.

<sup>1</sup> Cordero M. and Gautero L. (edited by), *Un paesaggio ritrovato. Dieci anni di Parco*, Savigliano, L'artistica Editrice 2017 p. 23





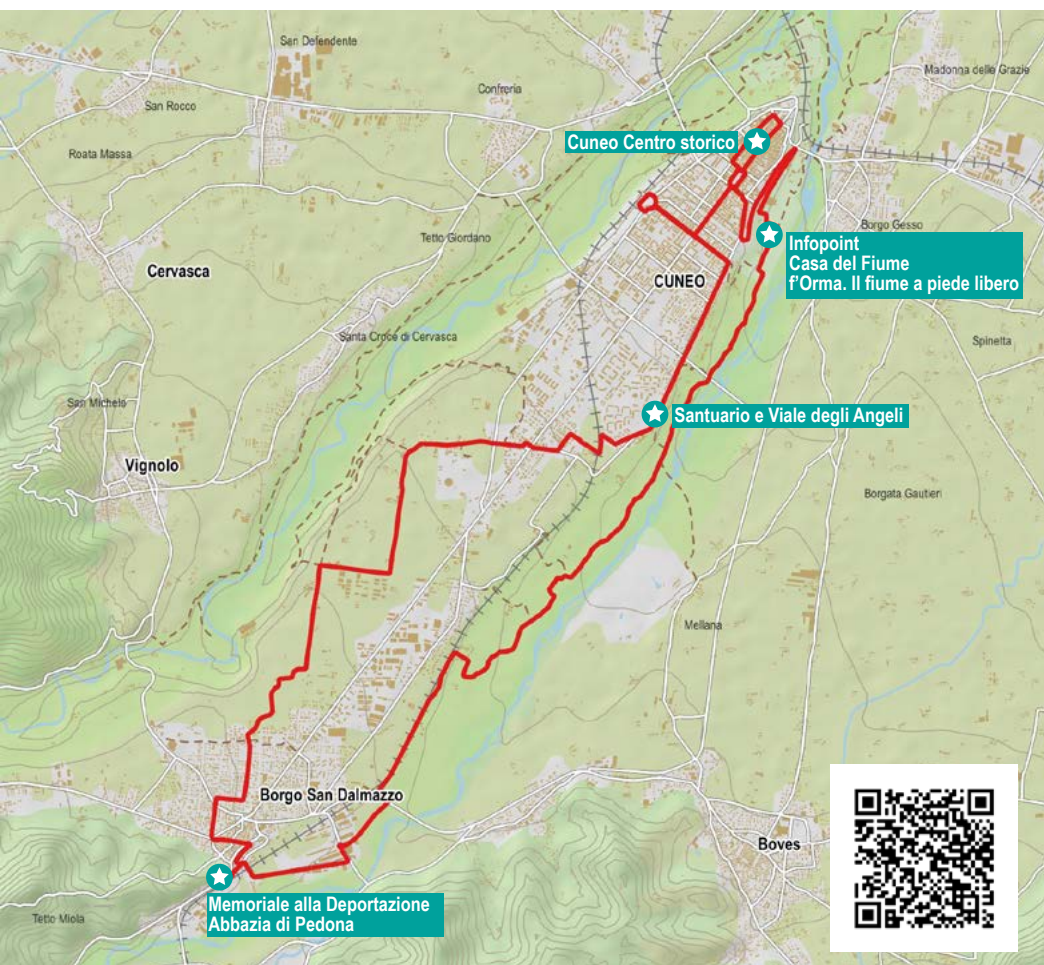
### **THE MEDITERRANEAN ALPS**

The Mediterranean Alps comprise the two Italian provinces of Cuneo and Imperia, and the French department of Alpes-Maritimes, and they stretch over mountains, sea and plains, taking in large towns and small municipalities. The cross-border area is subject to the effects of both Alpine and Mediterranean climates and, with altitudes ranging from 100 to more than 3,000 metres above sea level, it is a veritable treasure chest of biodiversity and an exceptionally valuable heritage of nature and landscape.

# Discovering Cuneo and the Gesso and Stura River Park

Cuneo is a small town built originally to defend the Maritime Alps that surround it to the south. The capital of the Granda region, it stands at the confluence of the Stura and Gesso rivers, which have created a rich natural environment where you can pedal to your heart's content.

↔ 27 Km  
↗ 260 m  
**DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE**



## The City of Cuneo

The city centre of Cuneo stands on a triangular-shaped plateau, hence its “wedge-shaped” structure, and it is rich in historical, architectural and cultural charm, offering unique surprises also from a panoramic point of view.

Walking through the streets in the city centre, you will come across important public buildings, including the Town Hall and the Civic Tower. Religious complexes worthy of note are the Church of Santa Chiara and the Church of Santa Croce, an important example of Piedmontese Baroque architecture designed by Francesco Gallo, a monregalese architect.

The most fascinating sights are probably the narrow



streets of Contrada Mondovì with the former Jewish ghetto and the synagogue and, nearby, Toselli Theatre. Its 13 kilometres of arcades make this city easy to walk (remember that bicycles must be pushed and not ridden under the arcades) and the restaurants here compete with each other to serve the best traditional local cuisines. Difficult to decide which is the best dining choice, but you can't really go wrong with those on the centrally positioned Via Roma. Huge Piazza Galimberti is the real heart of the city and also the market square on Tuesdays



and venue for festivals. Its arcades are home to the Arione pastry shop, where even Hemingway stopped to buy the famous meringue, chocolate and rum cuneesi, still today exactly as this great American writer would have seen it. Piazza Galimberti is named after the local hero, Duccio Galimberti, son of a minister and an Austrian intellectual. Trained as a lawyer, in July 1943 he stood at the window



of his office in what was then Piazza Vittorio (which would become Piazza Galimberti in his honour) and addressed the crowd in the fight against Nazi-Fascism. He died in 1944 after being captured and tortured by his enemies, but thanks to his charisma he is still a key (and symbolic) figure of the Resistance. Today it is possible to visit the Galimberti House Museum, which houses works of figurative art and reproduces a very interesting family environment.

Galimberti House Museum,  
Cuneo



## Gesso and Stura River Park

Cuneo is considered the green capital of Piedmont for its numerous parks and gardens. The city's green lung is the extensive Gesso and Stura River Park, which can be reached from the centre with an easy bike ride suitable for everyone, including children.

This itinerary, following a winding route that starts right in heart of the city, is mainly off-road but on well-beaten ground, a bike ride with stops along the way that is highly educational.

Ideally, follow the Gesso and Stura River Park itinerary in a clockwise direction: starting from the historic centre of Cuneo down along the avenue from Corso Guglielmo Marconi to Via Porta Mondovì. Those not wanting to pedal down from (or up to) the top of the city can use the panoramic lift at the beginning of Corso Marconi, which takes bikes on board free of charge, up or down the 27 metres of difference in height in just 45 seconds.

*The Gesso and Stura  
River Park nature and  
cycle trails*



## The River House

When you get down to river level, you will immediately come to the Casa del Fiume (River House) which, especially if you have children with you, is worth a stop. This very modern environmental teaching centre organises educational activities, workshops and events to make people more aware of biodiversity and the challenges of climate change.

Once you have filled your water bottle - the water from the Cuneo aqueduct is excellent - it's time to get back on your bike, following the signs on the cycle path.

*La Casa del Fiume*



The Gesso and Stura River Park is a true “green network” of cycle and pedestrian routes that currently total about 100 km and crisscross the entire park.

In order to fully enjoy nature and the scenery in the Park, we have picked out a few routes suitable for hiking or cycling.

Visit the website to check out all the routes and services: **[www.parcofluvialegessostura.it](http://www.parcofluvialegessostura.it)**



## Borgo San Dalmazzo

Si You pedal through green vegetation for several kilometres, along the banks of the River Gesso, through woods and fields both farmed and fallow. Pedalling on the right-hand bank of the river, after Cascina Tallone you come to the railway line, which takes you to Borgo San Dalmazzo train station, where the Deportation Memorial is located.

During the Second World War in fact, a Nazi-Fascist concentration and deportation camp was set up here. From the station, you then head towards the old town centre, where you can visit Pedona Abbey. Foodies will be interested to learn that Borgo is famous for its snail farming. And that's the first 15 km already done.

The last 12 kilometres of this circular route go through the eastern part of the Park, following the signs that lead back to Cuneo alongside the other River, the Stura di Demonte. You then return at a leisurely pace to Cuneo via the hamlets on the outskirts of the city, poetically known as 'Tetti'.



## Cuneo and its Boulevard

At the end of this circular ride, the entrance to the city of Cuneo appears triumphant before you as you pedal along the 3 kilometres of iconic Viale degli Angeli. Built in the mid-eighteenth century with a structure reminiscent of the French boulevards, this tree-lined avenue is lined with glorious villas and, since was been partly pedestrianised, it has become a popular choice with locals for walks, particularly on Sundays. The avenue takes its name from the pretty Sanctuary of the Madonna degli Angeli, which marks the start of your return back into the centre.

The River Park provides a wide range of services. These include bicycle hire and a small bike park that is also suitable for the less experienced.







# Parks and Nature Reserves in and around Cuneo



Cuneo is in fact the gateway to the surrounding Alpine ranges: the Maritime Alps Park, the Mercantour Park in neighbouring France and the Ligurian Alps Park, standing proud to the south.

The richness of this area is a direct consequence of the abundance of water and it translates into an enormous natural heritage.

*Cuneo is rich in nature. Nature parks and protected areas in the lower valley are the natural entrance to the surrounding Alpine ranges.*

## Gesso and Stura River Park

Established in the early 1980s through grassroots initiatives to clean up the area around the rivers and make it more hospitable, the Gesso and Stura River Park is now a large protected natural area and a true green lung around the city of Cuneo. Made up of 14 municipalities, the river corridor is of considerable importance for the



entire ecosystem as a wetland and habitat for numerous plant and animal species, as well as a virtuous example of how synergy and integration have improved the quality of life and enhanced the territory.

The Casa del Fiume (House of the River) is the main structure in the Gesso and Stura River Park, entirely built with sustainable materials and integrated into the landscape to blend in with its natural surroundings. An ultra-modern centre for environmental education, it organises educational activities, workshops and events to bring people closer to nature. It is part of a network of environmental education centres in the French-Italian territory, in particular that of the Maritime Alps and Mercantour parks. The project's inclusiveness, accessibility and sensitivity are also evident in the attention paid to people with disabilities, right down to small details that ensure maximum usability for all.

*The Casa del Fiume is a state-of-the-art environmental education centre for bringing people closer to nature.*

Next to the building is the colourful educational apiary, which offers children and adults the opportunity to learn more about the bee society and its rich and fascinating organisation.



## **f'Orma. Barefoot in the river**

A visit to f'Orma is a must. Il fiume a piede libero is a barefoot experience in a multi-sensory space that offers the emotion of contact with nature, in particular by walking barefoot in the water, on pebbles and sand, elements typical of the nearby river.

F'Orma is a fully accessible and inclusive space designed also for children, who will enjoy the themed trail in search of Gorg, the water giant. Along the Gesso River nature and cycle trail, there is also an educational garden and a butterfly area, which contribute to enriching the unique experience of knowledge and respect for nature that this area offers.

Not to be missed and still in the Gesso and Stura River Park, to the north of the city of Cuneo in the Madonna delle Grazie district, are the artificial Tetto Lupo lakes, with their birdwatching facilities.





## Crava-Morozzo Nature Reserve

About twenty kilometres north-east of Cuneo and easy to reach by bike, lies the wonderful Crava-Morozzo Nature Reserve, which protects one of the most important wetland environments in southern Piedmont.

Entrance is free and access to the reserve is only allowed on foot, bike or horseback. It is a truly unique visitor experience, with great expanses of water, varieties of birds, fish, giant poplars and centuries-old oaks that here



*The Crava-Morozzo Nature Reserve protects one of the most important wetland environments in southern Piedmont, home to hundreds of resident and migratory birds.*

have their ideal habitat. Because of its wealth of fauna, before it became a Nature Reserve, this area, which takes in the municipalities of Morozzo, Rocca de' Baldi and Mondovì, was already protected in 1979 as a LIPU Oasis. The artificial lakes of Crava and Morozzo were built in 1929 for hydroelectric purposes (today they are two state-of-the-art power stations) and gradually became an ideal resting place for many migratory birds from the Mediterranean area. The richness of the different wetland environments has favoured the settlement of numerous animal species, to the extent that about one hundred and fifty species of birds have been recorded to date.

Along the banks of the River Pesio you may glimpse, among others, kingfishers, white-throated dippers,

cormorants, mallards, coots, herons and cute little grebes, chosen as the symbol of this protected area. A must-see paradise for birdwatchers and nature photographers.

There is a Visitor Centre inside Reserve, housed in an old renovated farmstead and also used to host interactive educational games related to species of local fauna. Nearby is the welcoming Oasis guesthouse, with accommodation for families and groups for a pleasant stay in contact with nature.

## Marguareis Park and the Roccarina area

Passing Chiusa di Pesio and its remarkable Charterhouse complex, you come to Marguareis Park, on the border between the French and Ligurian Alps. The largest and most famous alpine karst area in Piedmont, Marguareis Park is dominated by a spectacular plateau, its green meadows rising to an altitude of 2,000 metres. Further down, fir and beech forests create breathtaking scenery that inspires deep breaths and regeneration. Immersed

*Marguareis Park,  
the largest and  
most famous  
alpine karst area in  
Piedmont.*





in this abundance of nature up in the high mountains, softly rolling hills alternate with steep drops and lunar rocks. Marguareis park and the entire Roccarina area are a botanical paradise and animal kingdom of excellence, with roe deer, chamois and wolves in the starring roles. The alpine botanical stations and the garden of wild herbs in the heart of the Park preserve many of the most significant valuable plant varieties to be found in the area between the Ligurian and Maritime Alps.

## The Maritime Alps

The two rivers, Gesso and Stura, which embrace the city of Cuneo, flow down from the Maritime Alps, high peaks that still host the remains of the southernmost glaciers of the Alps, on the borders of Piedmont, Liguria and France.



*The Maritime Alps are the largest natural park and protected area in Piedmont.*

The Gesso Valley, which climbs to the southwest of Cuneo, is an area of breath-taking, unspoilt nature. The Maritime Alps are the largest nature park and protected area in Piedmont. Man already frequented this area in prehistoric times, as testified by rock engravings, and over the centuries soldiers, merchants, shepherds and pilgrims have passed through its valleys. The southernmost edge of the Alpine chain, they divide the Piedmontese plain

from the Nice coast and lie between two passes: Colle di Tenda and Colle della Maddalena. After the Savoy kings chose it as a royal hunting reserve, they established their summer residences in Sant'Anna di Valdieri and San Giacomo di Entracque.

Today, this enchanted paradise has countless alpine lakes and a unique treasure trove of biodiversity: bearded vultures, eagles, ibexes, marmots, chamois, deer and roe deer are all at home here and they coexist with the many hikers and mountaineers who love the nature of the Maritime Alps.



## **Uomini e Lupi Wildlife Centre**

Wolves have repopulated the areas of the Maritime Alps and the French Alps. There is an amazing “Men and Wolves” (Uomini e Lupi) Wildlife Centre in Entracque in the upper Gesso Valley. Here, the life of wolves in packs and solitary wolves is reconstructed on a multimedia tour guided by the narrating voice of a storyteller, offering adults and children the opportunity to learn more about these ancestral animals and their behaviour. After an interesting visit to the story rooms, wolves protected



in the park's enclosure can be seen from the centre's watchtower, if and when they decide to overcome their proverbial shyness. The Men and Wolves Wildlife Centre is divided into two distinct areas with multimedia exhibits dedicated to the wolf as an animal and the wolf as a symbol in human culture. The latter is located in the centre of Entracque, where a fascinating narrative pedestrian route has been created.

## Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve

A unique area from a geological point of view, the small Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve is in Villar San Costanzo, not far from the delightfully picturesque little town of Dronero and at the entrance to the Maira Valley. This protected area was set up to safeguard a very peculiar erosion phenomenon called “Ciciu” in Piedmontese, which means stone puppets. The Ciciu are natural morphological formations with a giant mushroom shape, which emerge at the foot of the Mount San Bernardo massif. It is truly amazing experience to walk through the forest and come across these giant mushrooms scattered here and there.

*Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve safeguards a very peculiar erosion phenomenon called “Ciciu” in Piedmontese, meaning stone puppets.*



## Birds of prey in the Alpine areas

Since the 1970s, the Maritime Alps Park, like the Mercantour Park on the French side, together with a dense network of observatories in other Alpine areas, have participated in the Bearded Vulture project, an international programme to reintroduce the Bearded Vulture, one of Europe's largest and rarest birds of prey, into the Alpine region.

The bearded vulture feeds on the bones of dead animals and was once thought to be responsible for killing sheep. For this reason, it was hunted to near extinction in the early twentieth century. The Maritime Alps and Mercantour are a crossroads for numerous European populations of birds of prey, important for enriching the parks' natural heritage in their role as "scavengers", useful both from a health point of view and for the food chain of the Alpine ecosystems.





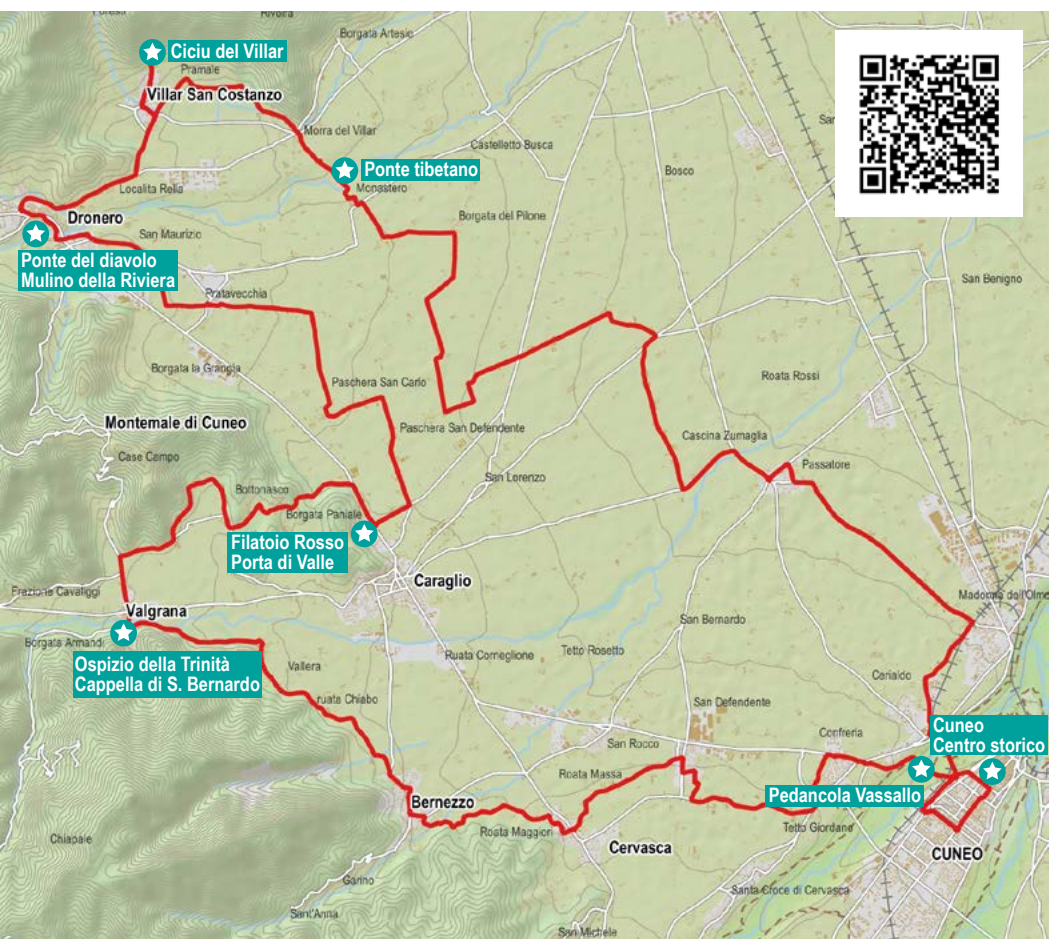




# Pedalling through art and nature: Cuneo, the Grana and Maira Valleys

A pleasant itinerary that is best covered by bike, allowing you to explore the rich territory of Cuneo. It starts in the old centre of Cuneo and develops westwards, passing through the Grana Valley, the Maira Valley, enchanting Dronero and the Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve, before returning to Cuneo city.

↔ 70 Km  
↗ 700 m  
DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE





## From Cuneo to the Grana Valley

From Piazza Galimberti take Via Pascal out of the city, crossing the western part of the Gesso and Stura River Park. You cross the Stura River on the Vassallo cycle/pedestrian path, rebuilt after the flooding in 2000 and a short climb up Via Giola takes you through the village of Confreria and from there you pedal on the flat, along little quiet roads.

Along the way you will encounter only a few cars and one or two tractors as your ride past expanses of fields and orchards, as well as delightful little churches and votive chapels, which together provide an idyllic setting on the outskirts of Cuneo. The route to the Grana Valley is pleasant and not at all demanding. The absence of traffic

Cervasca



means you can thoroughly enjoy the views right along the alpine valley where the landscape has changed very little over the centuries. This flat agricultural area is an excellence in the organic farming sector, particularly in the cultivation of cereals and ancient grains.. In addition to cereal production, the Grana Valley is also famous for its saffron and cheese. After Cervasca and Bernezzo, you

go through the hamlet of Vallera, where you can enjoy a delicious ice cream at Gelapajo, a friend to cyclists who also has a workshop for bike maintenance and charging. Once in the village of Valgrana, art lovers can opt for a visit to the Ospizio della Trinità (Hospice of the Trinity), a fifteenth-century that provided accommodation for pilgrims.

This small building has a rather blasphemous depiction of the Trinity on its facade, depicted in human form. Considered to be heretical, this kind of representation was therefore removed from almost all places except Valgrana, where this is one of the few remaining examples. It is the legacy of the Marquisate of Saluzzo, who ensured free dissemination of art and culture.

The small Chapel of San Bernardo, dating back to the fifteenth century, is also worth a visit to admire its colourful witty frescoes.

Valgrana



After the hamlet of Bottonasco, where an avant-garde project is being completed to manage irrigation in the lower valley with a plan d'eau that will be open to the public from 2022, you continue in the direction of Dronero, where we recommend a diversion to visit the interesting Filatoio

E-bike charging  
service

Rosso di Caraglio, the oldest surviving silk mill in Europe. Built between 1676 and 1678, it has been masterfully restored and now houses a museum and exhibition space, a virtuous example of transformation from a silk factory to a cultural factory. Open for educational visits, the Filatoio Rosso di Caraglio allows visitors to relive the



silk production process and its evolution in history, with reproduction of the traditional double-twist spinning system, thanks also to faithful reconstruction of complex machinery of the past.

The structure is also home to the Porta di Valle, where you can get tourist information and buy typical local products.

## **Dronero and the Maira Valley**

After Caraglio, you pedal towards Dronero, entering the Maira Valley, an alpine valley much loved by hikers and outdoor sports enthusiasts.

Profoundly permeated by Occitan culture, the Maira Valley is a welcoming place and a year-round attraction



for visitors and tourists keen on nature, culture and sport. The natural hospitality here is enlivened by the sound of the Occitan language and music, especially when the hurdy-gurdy plays and has young and old dancing together at traditional festivals.

At an altitude of 621 metres asl, the town of Dronero is a jewel set on the slopes of the mountains that mark the entrance to the Maira Valley. A town of medieval origin, Dronero owes its name to the legend of the black dragon that is said to have inhabited this area. It preserves an extraordinary architectural heritage of monuments, churches and noble houses of rare beauty.

Take the time to wander through the tiny streets, squares and porticos in this enchanting village and stop to admire the view from the incredible crenellated Devil's Bridge and the sheer drop down to the Maira River. Also in Dronero is an ancient stone mill, still working in an area where cereal production and flour processing is still an important, highly valued tradition. It is possible to take a tour of the ancient Riviera di Dronero Mill with the Cavanna family as your guides and learn how special flours are produced,

*Devil's Bridge  
Dronero*



how the stone millstones work, and how the water drives the mill wheels, and you can even taste the products in the biscuit factory.

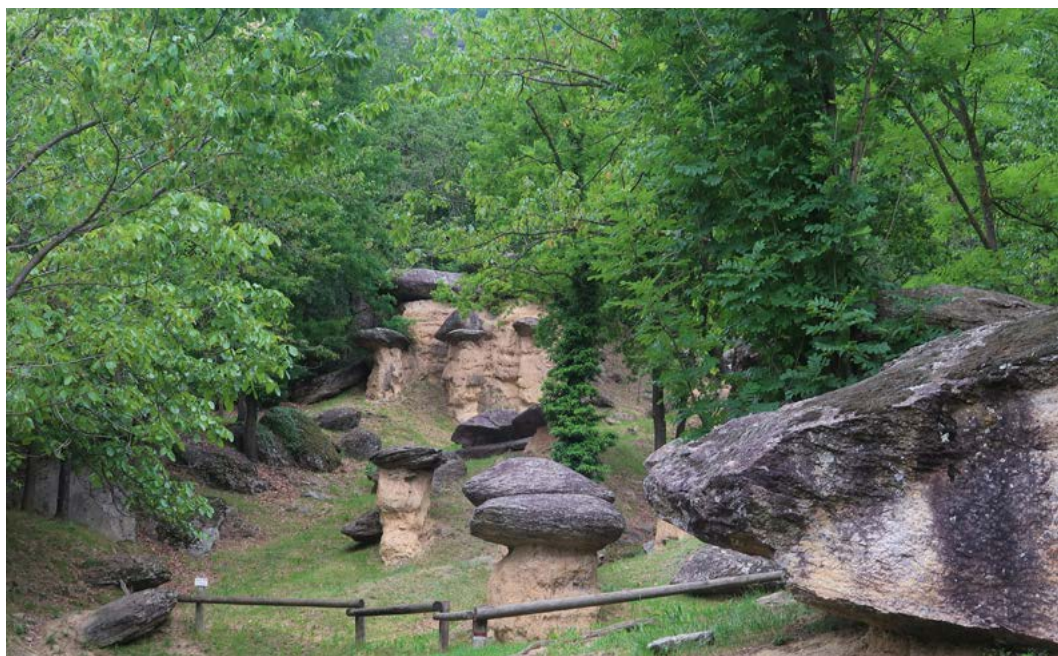
## **Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve**

From Dronero you continue along the provincial road to Villar San Costanzo where a short uphill stretch brings you to the coolness of the enchanting little Ciciu del Villar Nature Reserve, unique from a naturalistic point of view for its peculiar geological characteristics.

The 'Ciciu', or stone puppets, are a very special erosion phenomenon and as you walk through the reserve, you will come across giant mushroom-shaped boulders that hark back to the legend of San Costanzo who, according to one version of the story, transformed his enemies into stone puppets: the Ciciu.

Once your visit to the Reserve is over, you continue in the direction of Morra del Villar and, to reach the hamlet

*Ciciu del Villar  
Nature Reserve*



of Monastero, cross the footbridge over the Maira river, a 70-metre long Tibetan bridge suspended over a spectacular 20-metre drop, a true adrenaline rush.

You complete this looped itinerary by pedalling the remaining 20 kilometres along quiet minor roads, past fruit trees and fields of crops, through relaxing countryside. This route is flat and studded with by typical Piedmontese farmsteads and tiny country hamlets called “Tetti” (roofs) until you reach Madonna dell’Olmo and its Sanctuary in a Baroque style that is very common in the Cuneo area.

From here you pedal beside the railway line and back into the Gesso and Stura River Park until you come to the entrance of the old Cuneo city centre.

*Tibetan bridge  
over the Maira  
river, Monastery*







# A journey into Baroque

Also known as “The city of the 7 sieges” due to its military vocation and strategic position on the border with France, Cuneo has long been linked to the dynasty of the House of Savoy. Precisely because of the numerous sieges laid to the city, most of its medieval traces have been lost. Even the old fortification walls were destroyed with the arrival of Napoleon.

One of Cuneo’s distinguishing features is its 13 kilometres of porticos, which protected traders whatever the season as they filled their pockets thanks to profitable exchange with their French neighbours.

Via Roma, now a pedestrian street closed to traffic, leads to the old city centre, where you can take the lift or climb the 132 steps up to visit the Civic Tower, which, at 52 metres high offers an incredible view out over the city rooftops and squares and a 360° view of the gentle slopes of the Langhe, as far as the summit of Monte Rosa.

*Civic Tower,  
Cuneo*





## Baroque architecture in and around Cuneo

Cuneo and its surrounding area are home to a wealth of valuable architectural, sculptural and pictorial elements of Baroque art, produced between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

The historical, commercial and social vicissitudes of the period generated wealth and opulence, traces of which can still be seen in magnificent palazzos, civic buildings and churches. Baroque art reflects the cultural changes of the time through an abundance of arabesques, curved



lines, stucco and lavish decorations. The motto of the Baroque arts was *docere delectando*, or to create wonder and amazement in the beholder, through intricate skilful decorations with an admirable mix of sculptures, paintings and even stage sets worthy of a theatre, thanks to the absolute mastery of the laws of perspective that resulted in pompous optical illusions designed to celebrate the greatness of the powers-that-were.

One of the figures who contributed most to the development of the Baroque in the Cuneo area was the architect Francesco Gallo, who was behind the urban rebirth of many towns in Piedmont. Francesco Gallo and the architect Antonio Bertola were responsible for the design of the Church of Santa Croce in Cuneo, one of



the jewels of Piedmontese Baroque. Set within the large complex of the Santa Croce hospital, the church's façade is characterised by a concave structure that creates a small churchyard, particularly striking seen from the direction of the districts in the old city centre. The main artists of the period worked on the magnificent interior decoration, which has been well preserved over time. After destruction of its original Romanesque layout, the Church of Sant'Ambrogio di Cuneo was rebuilt at the beginning of the eighteenth century to a grandiose design by Gallo himself. The baroque façade announces rich interiors where a majestic frescoed dome lends impetus and luminosity.



## The Cathedral of San Donato

Built on several levels, the old town centre of Mondovì is a jewel that has been accessible since 1886 thanks to the handy funicular railway that connects the lower part of the town, Rione Breo, to the upper part, Rione Piazza, with rides every five minutes. Since the nineteenth century, Mondovì has been known especially for its ceramics, a rich production that supplied nearby Liguria. Traces of

the Monregalese ceramics district remain in the precious collection housed in the dedicated museum.

Mondovì also has strong Baroque influences and some of the most famous examples of this artistic expression include the Cathedral of San Donato, designed by Gallo in the eighteenth century, and the Belvedere garden, which offers splendid views dominated by the Civic Tower.



The Cathedral, a jewel of eighteenth-century 'Rococo' Baroque splendour, surprises with its large frescoes, precious paintings, wealth of polychrome marble, the alabaster crucifix on the right-hand nave, its wooden choir and imposing organ. If you have the chance to visit it in the morning or late afternoon, you will notice the enchanting light coming in through the yellow stained glass windows that bring out the golden details of the capitals and friezes in a surprising contrast with the complementary colours of the colonnade.



## Church of San Francesco Saverio in Mondovì

One of the most important Baroque jewels in the Cuneo area is the church known as 'La Missione' dedicated to St Francis Xavier, a sort of laboratory of artistic innovation by the Baroque artist Andrea Pozzo. The result was astonishing and made the painter so famous that he was commissioned to work on important building sites in and outside Italy. Andrea Pozzo succeeded in creating something unique in the Church of the Mission: thanks to masterful use of the laws of perspective, he created an optical illusion that transformed an octagonal barrel vault into a dizzying mock dome, multiplying and amplifying the real space inside the church.

Andrea Pozzo's work in the Church of the Mission in Mondovì has today been enhanced by the Infinitum project, a multimedia itinerary that helps visitors grasp the play of perspective created by the frescoes on the vault and the other treasures inside the church. Through new technologies applied in a theatrical and didactic way to the history of art and thanks to a VR headset, visitors enjoy a unique experience immersed in the architecture and the stories of the people linked to this Baroque jewel. This multimedia show offers a combination of light effects and Baroque music and the protagonist and narrator of the story is an avatar of Pozzo himself, who speaks directly to visitors, accompanying them in their discovery of the building's ingenious solutions.



## The Sanctuary of Vicoforte and the world's largest elliptical dome

One of Piedmont's best-known tourist attractions is the Sanctuary of Vicoforte, whose elliptical dome is the largest in the world. The complex has its origins in a votive pillar decorated with a fifteenth-century fresco of the Madonna and Child, created to propitiate the baking of bricks. A prodigious hunting accident made this place a destination for increasingly frequent pilgrimages, so much so that in 1596 Duke Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy commissioned the construction of a large sanctuary. The sanctuary was supposed to welcome the many pilgrims and become a place for the family tombs; the mausoleum of the House of Savoy was later transferred to the Basilica of Superga.

When both the architect and the Duke passed away, construction came to a halt and work resumed only



many years later. Once again it was Francesco Gallo who, 1728, pulled the chestnuts from the fire by undertaking the daunting feat of building the mighty 74-metre high elliptical dome. It is said that when the dome was ready to be dismantled, given the enormity of the job, the workers refused to remove the supports for fear it would collapse and Gallo himself had to go and take down the scaffolding to demonstrate the stability of the building.

To facilitate the movement of the many pilgrims visiting the Sanctuary of Vicoforte, in 1884 a tramway was inaugurated that stopped right in front of the entrance. It was then decommissioned in the 1950s according to the fashion of the time.



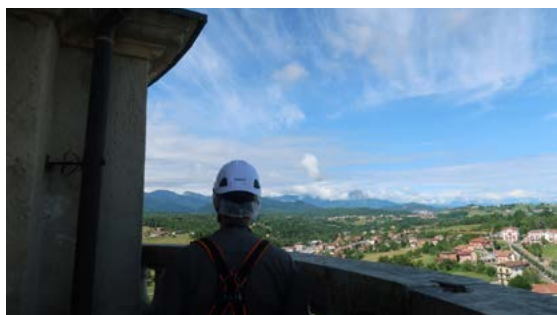


## The experience of the Magnificat

The dome of the Sanctuary of Vicoforte is an amazing sight, not only because of its size but also for its masterful frescoes. Thanks to the Magnificat experience route, visitors can admire the cycle of frescoes adorning this majestic dome from above, with a breathtaking view of the work of art at a height of 50 metres.

Wearing a harness and helmet during a visit that lasts about two hours, you venture up ladders, along girders and on steps on your 60-metre climb to the top of the Vicoforte Sanctuary where you can admire the masterful frescoes up close, fully immersed in art and history. Seeing a church of this size from above is, to say the least, an unusual perspective and makes the Magnificat Route one of its kind in Europe. Once at the top, you will be able to admire the splendid panorama of the Langhe and the Alpine range that surrounds this extraordinary monument.

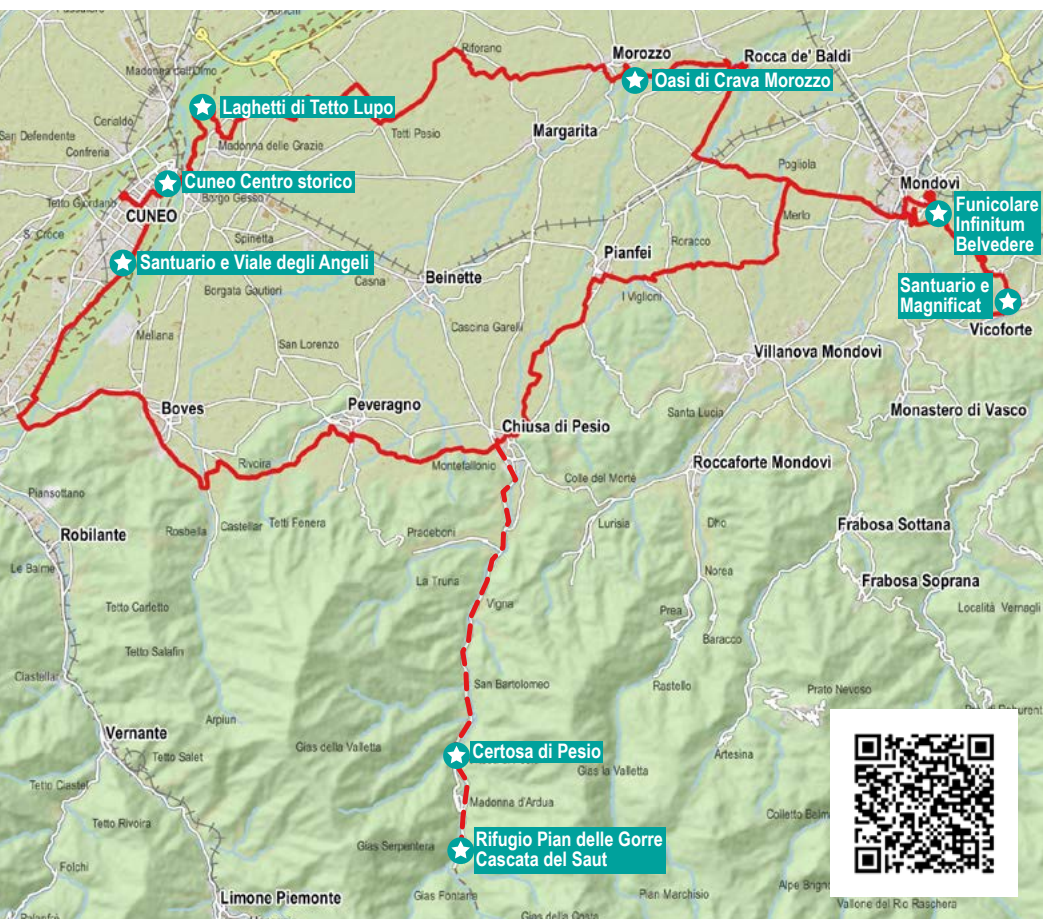
*The Magnificat experiential route is an initiative by Kalatà.*



# Pedalling from Cuneo to Mondovì, Vicoforte and Chiusa di Pesio

Nature, culture and gastronomy are inextricable heritages for exploring on a bike ride that takes in Cuneo, Mondovì and the southern part of the province. The following is a looped itinerary, a journey through nature reserves and cities of art surrounded by the Alpine range. The route starts and finishes in Cuneo and can be divided into two stages, with a night's stay in Mondovì, so that you can stop and savour all the delicacies along the way.

↔ 102 Km  
↗ 1350 m  
DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE



## From Cuneo to Mondovì by bike

From the historic centre of Cuneo you take long Corso Guglielmo Marconi leading downhill and out of the town. At the first large roundabout, turn right into Via Savona and right again at the next roundabout into Via del Borgo Gesso. After a few metres you go downhill again and continue in a northerly direction, cycling through the Gesso and Stura River Park, along the partly unmade cycle path that follows the right-hand bank of the River Gesso. After crossing the river on the handy cantilevered footbridge, you will come to Tetto Lupo in the hamlet of Madonna delle Grazie.

There are two small artificial lakes here that go to make up a wetland area and a refuge for various species of birds. This place, where peace and quiet reign supreme,

*Paths in the  
Gesso and Stura  
River Park*



has become a birdwatching paradise, thanks also to a specially built structure, from which it is possible to observe various species of migratory birds such as herons and cranes.

The first 30 kilometres of the itinerary are downhill and, leaving the area of the Tetto Lupo lakes, you follow secondary country roads with little traffic, which, after



Tetti Pesio and Riforano, will bring you to Morozzo, the gateway to the wonderful Crava-Morozzo Nature Reserve. Enjoy one of the most important wetland environments in Piedmont, which is home to and protects resident and migratory birds, and pedal under the foliage of the trees and through the thick reeds of this welcoming haven. At the end of the 3 km of well-beaten dirt track, you leave the Reserve and pedal up to Rocca de' Baldi, a pretty village overlooking the River Pesio. With the village behind you, turn left at the first roundabout on straight Via Pogliola and start climbing up to the town of Mondovì.

*Rocca de baldi*



## Discover Mondovì

Once you get to Mondovì, about 40 kilometres from Cuneo, we suggest you stay overnight in the town so that you can continue your journey the next day and have time to enjoy the artistic, architectural and culinary delights that this place has to offer. Mondovì is a picturesque town situated at an altitude of about 400 metres asl. The hill on which it stands, called Monte Regale, gives its name to its inhabitants, the Monregalesi, and, with its gentle

slopes facing the Langhe and the nearby Alps, it offers breathtaking views.

The characteristic of this town is its multi-level structure: the ancient and charming Piazza district is at the top, while Breo is at the foot of the hill, on the River Ellero plain. To make it easier to get from the lower to the upper town, a funicular railway was built at the end of the nineteenth century and has now been completely renovated. Its large windows allow visitors to enjoy a unique view of the Ligurian Alps and the Langhe during their ride up.

A town with an ancient artisan vocation, Mondovì experienced an economic boom between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the birth of numerous manufacturing activities, especially textiles and ceramics, and the arrival of the railway. Signs of its splendour and prosperity are still visible today in the wealth of artistic



elements you will see as you walk through the medieval alleyways of the old town centre. Among the many masterpieces, the Church of the Mission is noteworthy, a jewel of Baroque architecture inside which the magnificent frescoes on the false dome stand out, enhanced by

the Infinitum project which, provides visitors with a 3D viewer that allows them to travel among the frescoes in a spectacular play of perspectives (see the section on the “Focus Barocco” ebook).

Thanks to a microclimate that is particularly favourable for hot-air balloon flight, Mondovì is also the capital of this pastime and it is not unusual to see them suspended in the sky—an exciting sight for young and old alike.

## The Vicofort Sanctuary and the Magnificat

If you have chosen to stay overnight in Mondovì, leave your luggage here and take a trip to Vicoforte (7 km), where you can visit the imposing Sanctuary of the Nativity with the largest elliptical dome in the world.

The return to Mondovì is downhill and after a day packed with nature and culture, an aperitif accompanied by the typical Rakikò is a well-deserved treat that will taste even better at the Piazza district in Mondovì.

*Piazza Carlo  
Emanuele I,  
Vicoforte*





## From Mondovì to Cuneo, via Chiusa di Pesio

The second stage of your tour exploring the beauties of the Cuneo area starts from Mondovì in the direction of Chiusa di Pesio and ends in the town of Cuneo.

You leave the city of Mondovì, first following Via San Bernardo to continue along long Via Vecchia di Cuneo, and then take advantage of the farm roads that go past farmsteads and cottages recalling this territory's strong link with agriculture and typical products. The hills of Monregalese gently accompany the ride, the view of which is interrupted from time to time by woods and fruit trees.



After passing the hamlet of Merlo you continue in the direction of Roracco and Pianfei along Via Vecchia Pianfei and start to climb gently and steadily towards Chiusa di Pesio. In just a few kilometres you will go through so many hamlets and villages, that it will be easy to find places to stop for a bite to eat, a coffee or simply to rest your legs. If you feel like it, from Chiusa di Pesio you can opt for a diversion to the Certosa di Pesio, a fascinating place from which a path leads to Pian delle Gorre, where you can refresh yourself in the cool air and perhaps enjoy a visit to the Saut waterfalls.

Back in Chiusa di Pesio, follow the old Montefallonio road

away from traffic to reach the village. The road is slightly uphill, but it isn't a hard ride and you are accompanied by the green of the cultivated fields and the fragrances of the countryside. A short descent leads to Peveragno, land of the sweetest strawberries, and then you will arrive in the hamlet of Rivoira, where the descent begins that will accompany you to the end of this tour.

After Boves, a pretty village with a chestnut museum, the route continues in the direction of Fontanelle, where the Regina Pacis Sanctuary is located, and then, after crossing the River Vermenagna over an arched iron bridge, you will come to the village of Borgo San Dalmazzo, where



the cycle path enters the Gesso and Stura River Park. For the last ten kilometres of the route, you pedal along the left-hand side of River Gesso until you reach the centre of Cuneo. After passing through the railway subway off Lungo Gesso, you ride along Via Vecchia di Cuneo and long Viale Mistral which, as it enters Viale degli Angeli, makes a triumphant entrance into the city of Cuneo, lined with fabulous Art Nouveau villas that recall the regality of French boulevards.

*Borgo San  
Dalmazzo*



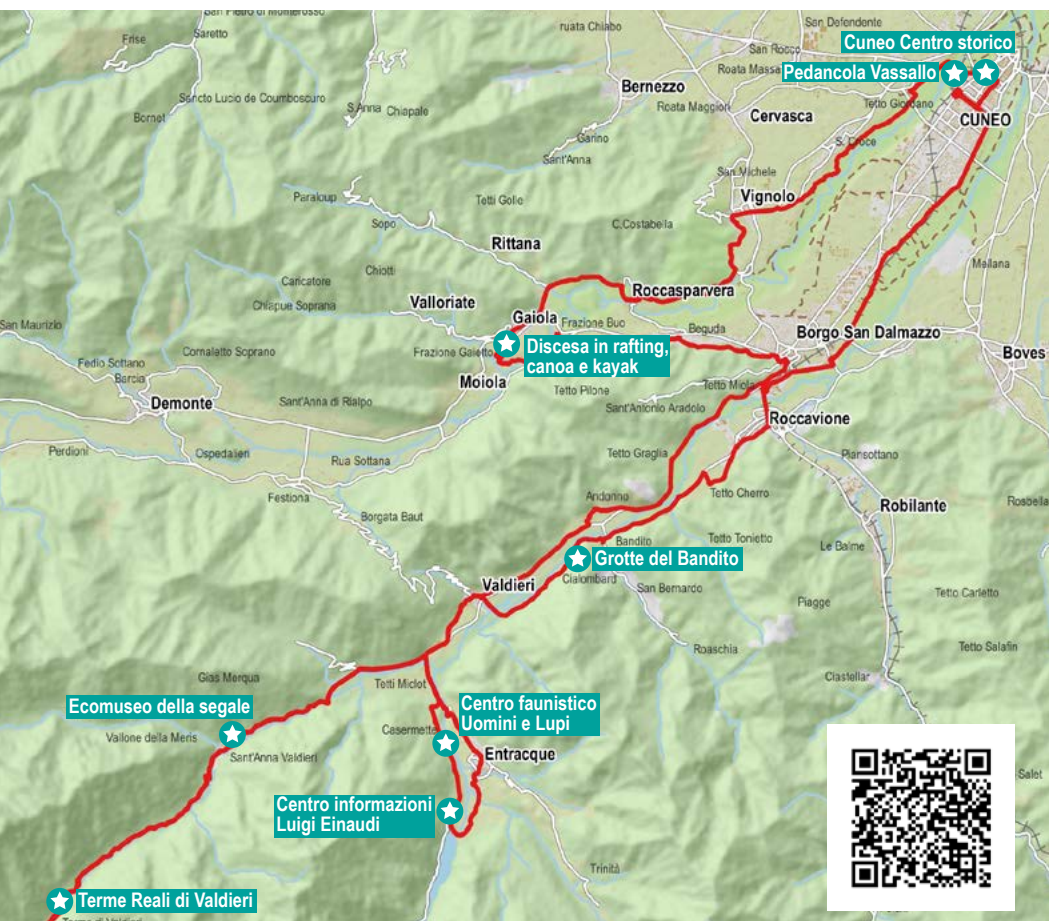




# From Cuneo to the Terme di Valdieri spa, cycling in nature and wellbeing

With the arrival of summer, there is nothing more refreshing than pedalling along the waterways that lead from Cuneo to the Terme di Valdieri spa in the enchanting setting of the Maritime Alps.

The itinerary we propose goes from the city of Cuneo to the spa in Valdieri on a journey of discovery between the two valleys of Stura and Gesso.



## From Cuneo to the Stura Valley

From lovely Piazza Galimberti, the go-to meeting place in old Cuneo city centre, pedal down Via Pascal and then turn left at the roundabout and continue for several kilometres along Via Basse Sant'Anna, which leads west out of the city. Once past the tracks, which pass over the Soleri viaduct, the route crosses River Stura di Demonte on the Vassallo footbridge and into the Gesso and Stura River Park.

The first 10 kilometres of the itinerary take you through peaceful green countryside along Via Antica di Vignolo,



past farmsteads and cultivated fields, in close contact with the River Stura and its connecting canals, to Vignolo. The itinerary follows the course of the River Stura and the ride is pleasant and relaxing towards Roccasparvera, a village with a medieval feel. In Roccasparvera, stop for a quick lunch at La Fame, an old wood-fired bakery that has been restored by two ambitious young people who sell not only bread and cakes but also baked ula, one of the tastiest and most traditional recipes from the Cuneo area.

## Gaiola anda rafting

As you enter luxuriant Stura Valley, through dense woods surrounded by the mountains of the Alpine range, you will start the uphill pedal from Roccasparvera towards Gaiola. The Stura valley has an important vocation for outdoor sports, including hiking, mountaineering and climbing, and Gaiola in particular is a reference point for rafting, canoeing and kayaking. This stretch of the River Stura is perfect for learning the rudiments of water sports, perhaps with a cooling ride down the river.

After the River Stura di Demonte, through tiny, rustic hamlets known as 'tetti' (roofs), you continue along Via dei Boschi to Borgo San Dalmazzo. From here you take via Rivetta, which runs alongside the Bealera Nuova canal and pick up Via Valdieri and then continue alongside River Gesso, climbing gently up to Valdieri, a charming town in the Maritime Alps Park.



## Entracque, a holiday village

Riding up from Valdieri, it's worth making a diversion to see Entracque, a typical mountain holiday village renowned since the nineteenth century as the area was chosen by the Royal House of Savoy as a royal hunting reserve and, more recently, it has become a popular choice with mountain enthusiasts in both summer and winter.



Hydraulic engineering enthusiasts will also have the opportunity to visit the “Luigi Einaudi” information centre in the municipality of Entracque, where they can learn all about how the Valle Gesso dam system works, a complex link that uses mountain water and involves three high altitude reservoirs, making the Entracque hydroelectric plant the largest in Italy and one of the largest in Europe.

## **Men and Wolves Wildlife Centre**

The area, as you can imagine, is rich in unspoilt nature and you might even come across the wild animals that freely inhabit this wonderful area.

Entracque is home to the Men and Wolves Fauna Centre (Centro Faunistico Uomini e Lupi), where the life of the wolf is explained, offering adults and children elements of knowledge that help overcome the fear that has always accompanied stories about this predator.



## The Royal Baths in Valdieri

After your stop in Entracque, get back on the road again and, after an initial downhill section, you will then continue gently uphill for about 6 kilometres, taking you up to an altitude of 978 metres asl and Sant'Anna di Valdieri. Here you can visit the Eco-museum of Rye, an important reference centre that brings together the history and local traditions linked to this ancient cereal. And it is precisely the lost traditions, the ancient values of life in the countryside and a reawakening of the culture of the valley that has prompted six courageous women entrepreneurs to start over, working to combat local depopulation and bringing new life to the village, so much so that they have named Sant'Anna di Valdieri the "Women's village".

*Grotte del Bandito  
Reserve in Roaschia*



After about 6 kilometres we reach the Terme Reali di Valdieri (literally the Royal Baths), where in summer you also have the option of the bike-on-bus service that lets you put your bikes into the bus luggage compartment free of charge. The hot water and sulphur springs here have antioxidant, depurative, soothing and regenerative properties, and an ancient history: the first spa was built way back in the sixteenth century and in the eighteenth

century King Carlo Emanuele III decided to build his Regio Baraccone by the side of this precious water. In the nineteenth century, the beneficial waters of Valdieri became the spa of the Royal House of Savoy. Later, King Victor Emmanuel II visited the baths and decided to turn the area into a Hunting Nature Reserve and even had several royal summer residences built in the surrounding area, thus preserving the natural area.

## **The return trip to Cuneo**

Loosen your muscles and enjoy some gentle pampering with the waters of the Royal Baths, breathing in all the fragrances of the mountains in a total well-being experience that engages all the senses, and then, regenerated, set off again for Cuneo. From here, it's about 36 kilometres back to the city, pedalling slightly downhill through chestnut woods and naturalistic areas including the Riserva della Grotte del Bandito in Roaschia, literally the "Bandit's Cave", where remains of the cave bear have been found. Following the right-hand bank of the Gesso stream, water will still be your companion as you near the end of your journey.





# Food in and around Cuneo

The Cuneo area, with its fields, orchards and Alpine valleys, is a constant source of new discoveries into history, culture and local food, a fusion of tradition and innovation. The appeal of the area's numerous parks and nature reserves goes hand in hand with its unique products, which generate wealth, identity and beauty. The Cuneo area stands out for its approach to agriculture and livestock breeding with a strong focus on organic production, aiming to avoid chemical contamination of



the soil, animal feed and as a consequence the food that ends up on our tables. A choice of quality that led to the area hosting the first Slow Food presidia, turning the Cuneo area into an example to follow.

Of all the typical local crops, cereals definitely stand out. Wheat, barley and rye have had a profound impact on the history and culture of these places, as demonstrated by the various museums and cultural centres linked to the history of farming in the area.

## Paste di Meliga Biscuits and the Dronero Mill

Ancient Riviera Mill stands at the entrance to the Maira Valley, Dronero's hidden treasure and a highly characteristic element in terms of research into and enhancement of its agricultural tradition.

The mill's fascinating long history began six hundred years ago, when the local Benedictine monks decided to build a water mill to grind flour, taking advantage of the nearby canal. Abandoned and fallen into disuse, the mill was then acquired by the Cavanna family, who renovated it lovingly and restored it to working condition. The mill now stone grinds special flours that are used to make



bread and biscuits with the genuine taste and aroma of times gone by. Worthy of mention are the biscuits made with ancient Piedmontese “meliga” corn, the basis for a rich breakfast or a nutritious snack during a bike ride.

## Rye and the Museum of Sant’Anna di Valdieri

According to an ancient adage commonly heard in the Gesso Valley: “Rye is bread, and bread is life”. And it is

precisely rye that has historically been the queen of the province of Cuneo. Today, after a period of crisis which led to its traditional cultivation being abandoned, people are now starting to produce this important cereal once more, one which is well suited to the Alpine areas of Piedmont. Used for food, beer, straw and even as roofing material, rye adapts easily to all conditions. This is one of the reasons why in the Maritime Alps there is talk of a true “rye civilisation”, for the important contribution that this grain has made to building the identity of local communities. The eco-museum in Sant’Anna di Valdieri is a place that gathers memories and a point of reference for the re-appropriation of the sense of belonging of the entire valley community, starting with research and enhancement of local traditions.

## Cuneesi and Master pastry chefs

Under the delightful porticos of the city of Cuneo, as well as in Mondovì, Dronero and in every village you pass through in the vast province, you will be met by delicious aromas wafting out of the laboratories that handcraft the

*Cuneesi are Cuneo's typical sweets and those made to the original recipe by the Arione pastry shop in Piazza Galimberti are famous*





sweets and pastries that make the art of Piedmontese pastry-making famous throughout the world. Cuneesi are this city's typical sweets and those made to the original recipe by the Arione pastry shop in Piazza Galimberti are famous: their crunchy chocolate shell hides a meringue and a creamy filling that comes in different flavours. The most traditional one is rum.

But even in the province there is no lack of flavours: if there is something Cuneo is famous for, it is chestnuts and marron glacés, as well as nougat, delicacies that melt in your mouth, perhaps between one bike ride and another.



## Fruit and vegetables

Cycling through vast expanses of orchards and fields that colour the territory of Cuneo and its surroundings, you will discover lots of products characteristic of the local gastronomic identity. Try juicy Madernassa pears from the Grana Valley, sweet round apricots from Costigliole and tasty strawberries from Peveragno, while the earth has its own treats with Caraglio garlic and its unmistakable delicate aroma. Climbing through the lush woods in the valleys, chestnut trees reign supreme and, as well as providing delicious honey, there is also their

gift of the famous chestnuts, mainly enjoyed roasted to herald the imminent arrival of winter. Exported all over Europe, Cuneo chestnuts are harvested in more than one hundred municipalities in the province and represents a long-standing tradition in this art, handed down from generation to generation.

## Cheese and meat

The undisputed king of the cheeses produced in the Cuneo area is Castelmagno P.D.O., a semi-hard cow's milk cheese with unmistakable eyes and greenish-blue veins. It is only produced in the municipalities of Monterosso Grana, Pradleves and the area of Castelmagno and it



is easily recognised precisely due to its crescendo of flavour, which ranges from mild to strong, depending on how mature it is, although it is at its best after long maturation. Eaten alone or used as the main ingredient in typical Piedmontese dishes, Castelmagno should also be tried with a simple spoonful of lime honey, although, to be honest, the best way to enjoy it is with rice or potato gnocchi.

Raschera P.D.O. is made from wholesome mixed milk produced in the alpine pastures of the Cuneo area. It is a soft cheese with a mild flavour that offers the palate the

scent of alpine pastures and also excellent served in a typical Piedmontese fondue. Beef from the Piedmontese breed is famous throughout the world and the Cuneo area in particular has an extremely refined and recognised history of cattle breeding. Of the many mouth-watering meats, two to try at least once are bue grasso or "fat ox" from Carrù and the typical capon from Morozzo.

## A glass of something good

Although less famous than those produced in the nearby Langhe, Cuneo also has a respectable wine production, albeit on a small scale. One of the local wines that stands out is Quagliano from the Saluzzo hills, a sweet red wine whose pleasant aroma goes well with both Cuneo pastries and the proverbial cheese and pear pairing. In the past, due to its diuretic qualities, Quagliano was used for the so-called "grape cure"; today, however, it is considered a fine wine and, among others, we would like to recommend that produced by the historic Azienda Agricola Fornero di Busca. For an unusual aperitif or a surprising after-meal drink, Rakikò is a typical Mondovì liqueur that has been skilfully blending local herbs since 1895.

*Quagliano from the Saluzzo hills, a red wine, produced by the historic Azienda Agricola Fornero di Busca*





## Gastronomic culture in the mountains

The culture of old-fashioned food is becoming so popular among the province's mountain communities that it has given rise to the Montagnam project, set up in Rittana in the Stura Valley by seven small producers who, with support from the European Union and the Piedmont Region, have networked their activities with the aim of promoting the area and its local products. One of the small businesses that have joined this stimulating project is Debora's "Andata e Ritorno" food and drink shop, a place where you can taste the valley's products and, if necessary, hire an e-bike.

*Debora of "Andata e Ritorno", the bar and grocery shop in San Maura in Valle Stura.*





## Services

### GESO AND STURA RIVER PARK

Infopoint, Piazzale Walther Cavallera 13, Cuneo, Tel. 0171 444501 | [www.parcofluvialegeossostura.it](http://www.parcofluvialegeossostura.it), [parcofluviale@comune.cuneo.it](mailto:parcofluviale@comune.cuneo.it)

### A.T.L.

Local Tourist Agency for the Cuneo area, Via Pascal, 7 (piazza ex Foro Boario) 12100 CUNEO - ITALY Tel. +39.0171.690217 - FAX +39.0171.631528  
[www.cuneoholiday.com](http://www.cuneoholiday.com) | [info@cuneoholiday.com](mailto:info@cuneoholiday.com), [iatcuneo@cuneoholiday.com](mailto:iatcuneo@cuneoholiday.com)

### CÔNITOURS

Tourist operators consortium in Cuneo Also rents out bikes  
[www.cuneoalps.it](http://www.cuneoalps.it) | [info@cuneoalps.it](mailto:info@cuneoalps.it)

### VALLE STURA EXPERIENCE

Consortium of Businesses in Valle Stura di Demonte  
[www.vallesturaexperience.it/il-consorzio/](http://www.vallesturaexperience.it/il-consorzio/)  
[info@vallesturaexperience.it](mailto:info@vallesturaexperience.it)

### EMOTION ALP

Tourist operators consortium | [www.emotionalp.com](http://www.emotionalp.com)

### BECCHIS CICLI

Bike sales hire and repairs in Boves tel: 0171.380.134 in Mondovi tel: 0171.380.134 | [www.becchiscicli.it](http://www.becchiscicli.it)

### LA CICLOVIA

Bike sales and repairs in Confreria (Cuneo) tel: 0171 611430  
| [info@laciclovia.bike](mailto:info@laciclovia.bike) | [www.laciclovia.bike](http://www.laciclovia.bike)

### BIKE HOUSE

Outdoor Point - ENTRACQUE E-Bike hire and Guide  
Tel: +39 339.5269316  
[www.facebook.com/BikeHouseEntracque/](http://www.facebook.com/BikeHouseEntracque/)

### GRANDABUS

Bus hire with bike transport option  
[www.buscompany.it/airone/](http://www.buscompany.it/airone/) | [noleggio@buscompany.it](mailto:noleggio@buscompany.it)



## **ENJOY BISALTA**

Association of producers and traders in the Pesio Valley.  
enjoybiscalta.com/ | enjoy.biscalta@gmail.com

## **GRANDA BIKE TOUR**

Outdoor Services, [www.grandabiketour.it](http://www.grandabiketour.it)

## **How to reach Cuneo**

### **BY TRAIN**

The main railways stations are in Cuneo, Fossano, Savigliano, Mondovì, and Borgo San Dalmazzo. Trenitalia Tel. Call Center FS 892021 | [www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it) For detailed info see [www.trenitalia.com/en/services/travelling\\_with\\_yourbike.html](http://www.trenitalia.com/en/services/travelling_with_yourbike.html) under the "On regional trains" section

### **BY CAR**

A21 Turin-Piacenza: Asti Est exit onto the A33 Asti-Cuneo and off at the Sant'Albano Stura exit A6 Turin-Savona: continue on the A33 Asti Cuneo and off at the Sant'Albano Stura exit

### **BY PLANE**

Cuneo Levaldigi S.p.A. Airport  
Turin Caselle International Airport

### **BY BUS AND URBAN TRANSPORT**

Out of town services, Conurbation of Alba, Bra, Urbano Saluzzo, Mondovì (funicular railway and buses), Fossano and Savigliano Offices:

Via Circonvallazione, 19 12037 - Saluzzo (CN) | Freephone number: +39 800.111.773 | Tel: +39 0175 - 47.88.11

Email: [consorzio@grandabus.it](mailto:consorzio@grandabus.it)

Cuneo Urban and Conurbation Service  
Offices:

Discesa Bellavista, 11 12100 - Cuneo (CN) | Freephone number: +39 800.338.171 | Tel: +39 0171 - 488544

Email: [info@grandabus.it](mailto:info@grandabus.it)

Grandabus Ticket Office

Offices:

Via Carlo Pascal, 7 (Ex Piazza Foro Boario) - 12100 Cuneo Tel: +39 0171-30.16.17 Email: [biglietteria.cuneo@grandabus.it](mailto:biglietteria.cuneo@grandabus.it)

Edited by  
Journalistic masthead registered at the  
Tribunal in Rome with no. 92/2013 on  
13 May 2013.

# BIKEITALIA

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Produced by



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in collaboration with:



Parco fluviale  
Gesso e Stura



E-book funded as part of the Interreg Alcotra Programme  
financed by Italy and France 2014-2020 - Piter ALPIMED -  
PATRIM Project



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ALCOTRA  
Programma Operativo di Sviluppo Regionale  
Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale



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Published in September 2021

