



Epic Cycling Climbs

Epic Cycling Climbs Route 12: Six-Day loop route from Bergamo through Italy and Switzerland



This is a wonderful six-day cycling route through the mountains of Italy and Switzerland, starting and ending in Bergamo. The route combines the best of two different worlds: the lower-lying Bergamo Alps, with their steep climbs and quaint villages, and the dramatic high passes in Switzerland around Piz Bernina and the canton of Graubünden.

Bergamo can be reached easily by plane or train and is an excellent starting point for an Alpine adventure. Overall, the route covers 537 km with 12,780 m of elevation gain over six days, crossing 10 mountain passes, five of which are over 2,000 m. In Switzerland, the route climbs the Albula and Bernina passes and visits the Avers Valley, which seems to have stood still in time. In Italy, highlights include the Passo San Marco and the Splügen Pass, as well as several climbs frequently featured in the Tour of Lombardy.

If the final stage with 116km and 2,890m elevation gain feels too demanding, the last climb on the approach to Bergamo—Passo di Ganda, made famous by the Tour of Lombardy—is optional, reducing the total elevation gain by around 680 m.

A truly wonderful ride, with stages averaging around 2,000 m of climbing, allowing plenty of time to appreciate the dramatic surroundings.

[You can check out the route on Komoot here.](#)



Stage 1 - 69km, 1,640m elevation gain: The route begins in Bergamo city centre and ends in Mezzoldo on the lower slopes of the San Marco pass. The stage is shorter to ease into the ride. After leaving Bergamo, the route follows the Brembo river on side roads till we reach the climb to Dossena which is roughly 10 km long and covers 650m elevation gain, a taste of things to come. Dossena is visited frequently by the Tour of Lombardy and offers spectacular views over the Bergamo alps. After a sharp descent back into the Brembo valley, the climb to the San Marco pass starts which is broken up by stopping for the day in Mezzoldo.

Stage 2 - 96km, 2,260m elevation gain (ride total 165 km, 3,900 m elevation gain): From Mezzodolo, stage two ends in Campodolcino on the approach to the Splügen Pass. First though, the last 1,000 m climbing to the [San Marco pass](#) is on the agenda. This is a fabulous pass, connecting the lower lying Bergamo Alps with the high mountains of the Valetelina. After a long descent to Morbenio, the route stays in the valley for around 40 km, skirting the

top end of Lago di Como and then turning towards the Splügen Pass along the Mera river. The day ends at Campodolcino after the first 800m climbing towards the Splügen Pass.

Stage 3 - 63km, 2,165m elevation gain (ride total 225km, 6,065m elevation gain): This is a magical stage as we cross into Switzerland, climb the rest of the Splügen Pass and end the ride by riding to the end of the [Avers valley to Juf](#) which at 2,126 m altitude is the highest year round inhabited alpine village. But first, the [Splügen Pass](#) covers a tight gorge and treats the rider to endless hairpins either side of the pass, a truly mesmerising road. After the descent, we take road 13 along the valley which criss crosses the motorway 13 till the turnoff to the Avers valley. Before the road was built, the Avers valley was long cut off by a hard to navigate gorge and has maintained its end of the world remoteness and charm and offers a truly unique way to experience the mountains.

Stage 4 - 95km, 2,155m elevation gain (ride total 320km, 8,220m elevation gain): This is another wonderful stage as the route includes the [Albula Pass](#) from Tiefencastel which climbs 1,360m over 22.5 km. First the route descends back through the magical Avers valley to the Hinterrhein valley where we follow the road 13 past the wonderful Viamala Gorge. At Thusis, the route turns right onto the Albula road via the Soliser Viaduct, Albula and Tiefencastel towards the Albula pass. This is a long and hard climb with up to 12% gradient. It is criss crossed by the quaint Albula railway, which goes all the way to the top at 2,360 m altitude and crosses the road on fabulous viaducts. The climb passes the Bergün gorge and after a short descent, the day ends in La Punt Chamuses at the foot of the Albula pass.

Stage 5 - 100km, 1,630m elevation gain (ride total 420 km, 9,850 m elevation gain): Day 5 has less elevation gain as we circumnavigate the mighty Piz Bernina which stands at 4,049 m altitude and the Bernina range dominates the landscape. Coming from La Punt Chamuses, the [ascent to the Bernina pass](#) is with 578 m elevation gain relatively short and is ending at the Lago Bianco, with the railway line always in view. The [descent to Tirano](#) in Italy is long, around 33 km, dropping 1,900 m from 2,325 m to 441 m. This is a good road offering a fast descent. The main climb of the day is the [Aprica pass from Tirano](#), which climbs 780m over 11.5 km before the road descends for the last 25 km to Malonno at the foot of the Vivione pass. To even stage 5 and 6 out, you can carry on for 7.5 km and 360 m elevation gain to Paisco where there is a [hostel](#). This would bring the total of the day to 108 km and 1,990 m elevation gain and shortens the next day.

Stage 6 - 116km, 2,890m elevation gain (ride total 537 km, 12,780 m elevation gain): This stage is either very hard or less hard. If the very hard version is too much, the last climb can be skipped which saves 680 m of climbing and around 10 km of riding and goes right to Bergamo

through the main valley (106 km, 2,200 m elevation gain). First up is the [Vivione pass](#), which sits on a remote and heavily forested road. It is no slouch, climbing 1,369 m over 19.8 km with gradients up to 14% and to an altitude of 1,827 m. This is followed by the [Passo della Presolana](#), a 550 m climb over 8 km. If you had enough climbing at this point, the road goes straight to Bergamo along the Serio river. To complete the full route, carry on to [Passo di Ganda](#) which is a further 680 m climbing over 9.6 km to make this a very demanding day. Alternatively, if you start from Paisco, the stage is 109 km long and climbs 2,530 m.

[You can check out the route on Komoot here.](#)

Alternatively scan the below QR code:

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Switzerland and Italy loop from Bergamo



↔ **537 km** ↗ **12,780 m**



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