

# The Italian Lakes Tour

**POLKA**  
**DOT**  
*Prestige*  
CYCLING  
HOLIDAYS

*"Featuring the Passo Stelvio, Passo Gavia, Sella Ronda, Dolomites and the Great Lakes of Northern Italy"*

## TOUR OVERVIEW

A fantastic blend of stunning alpine scenery, challenging riding and serene lakeside living, this trip really has it all. Steve Cunningham, your tour leader, has dreamt of running this particular blend of tour for many years and so is really excited to be able to bring it to you in June 2017.

The riding highlights include some of the most famous mountain passes in Italian cycling history, such as the Passo Stelvio, Passo Gavia and Sella Ronda Loop. These are interspersed with more relaxed riding around the Great Lakes of Northern Italy including Lake Garda, Como & Iseo. Rich cultural experiences have been carefully pulled together using our extensive local knowledge and we'll be giving you plenty of time to soak up the history of this fascinating region.

As always, flexible ride and sightseeing options are available thanks to our best in the business guide to rider ratio and multiple van support. This will allow you to ride as much or as little as you like with non-riding partners extremely well catered for with an array of day excursions during the Tour.



**Dates: 3rd-11th June 2017**

**Deposit: \$1,000 AUD**

**Price Starts from: \$6,200 AUD**

**Arrival: Bergamo International Airport**

**Departure: Milan Malpensa Airport**

**Contact: [steve@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:steve@polkadotcycling.com)**

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Ride the infamous Stelvio Pass from up to all three sides
- Visit the stunning lakes of Garda, Como, Lugano and D'Iseo
- Ride the Sella Ronda and take in the best the Dolomites have to offer
- On-road personal coaching and advice from former professional rider and director sportive, Steve Cunningham.
- The "Pro" experience includes the best in the business on road support, with a 1:5 guide to rider ratio.
- Flexible ride options allow you to ride as much or little as you want.
- Our professional soigneur service takes care of everything from baggage transfer to dietary requirements and bike mechanics to physical preparation for the day ahead.
- Non-riders are welcome and extremely well catered for with daily sightseeing excursion options and things to do.
- This tour is guaranteed to depart.



## DAY 1

### Arrival Day

On arrival at Bergamo International Airport de Orio al Serio you will be met by your friendly guide team and transferred to the ancient city of Bergamo.

Once settled into the hotel we will provide assistance unpacking your bike or introducing you to your hire bike. This is always a great opportunity to get to know everyone and for the guide team to give you a briefing on the trip ahead.

If there is time before dinner you are welcome to go out for a spin with a guide and loosen the legs off from the flight, before meeting in the hotel lobby and taking a stroll into the Alta (upper) city. Here you will have your first proper contact with Italian architecture and a series of narrow cobbled streets that lead to several elegant and spacious piazzas.

Dinner – **Welcome dinner**  
Climbing – **Up to 30-40km**  
Stay – **Bergamo 4\***



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## DAY 2

### Lago D 'Iseo

A relaxed start and plentiful breakfast will set the tone for the day with a rolling ride profile to ease yourself into the swing of things and soak up your new surroundings. The main objective of the day is to visit the beautiful Lago D 'Iseo, which is our first lake of the tour and after around 40km of riding there is a great spot for lunch at Taverlona.

After lunch you can decide whether you'd like to complete the loop by riding the final 40km or pay a visit to Franciacorta DOCG best known for its sparkling wines, made with grapes grown on the slopes around Lake Iseo.

Dinner – **At your leisure**

Climbing – **Up to 45-90km**

Stay – **Bergamo 4\***

## DAY 3

### Lake Garda

This morning we will be making an earlier start to begin our journey up to Bolzano, a bustling town, often referred to as the "Gateway to the Dolomites" and known for having one of the highest qualities of life in Italy.

First we will be riding through rural rolling countryside to the world famous Lake Garda. This is the largest lake in Italy at 52km in length and at it's northern end the lake is enclosed by the mountains giving it a Mediterranean climate. It will also afford us the perfect spot for lunch and you can take great photos at the lookout point above Torbole. For those wanting to ride a bit more after lunch we can offer a ride through the famous apple orchards in the valley toward Bolzano.

On arrival at Bolzano, we will take care of your check in, to give you the chance to have a wander round and get to grips with this curious town. You may be surprised to hear German being spoken as much as Italian, which is due to it's Austrian ownership before World War I.

Dinner – **Group dinner at our hotel**

Climbing – **50-90km**

Stay – **Bolzano 4\* in the heart of town**



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## DAY 4

### Dolomites & Sella Ronda

Today we leave the serenity of the lakes behind and go forth into the Dolomite mountain range, a UNESCO world heritage site and one of the most stunning mountain ranges on earth. A short transfer in the vans will get us to the picturesque little alpine village of Santa Christina.

A quick coffee stop and we'll be on our way to tackle the Sella Ronda loop, which entails 90kms of riding and 2,000m of positive altitude gain. This is the first real test of the trip as we traverse the Sella, Gardena, Pordoi and Campagnola passes.

This will be one of the best riding experiences of your life; we love showcasing this part of the world to our clients. After this loop, most will return by support vehicle to Bolzano while others may like to return by bike, some 45km but largely down hill.

- Dinner – At your leisure in the old town**
- Climbing – 90-130km**
- Stay – Bolzano 4\***



## DAY 5

### Explore Bolzano

With the Sella Ronda in the legs and the mighty Passo Stelvio tomorrow, today will be an official Rest Day, giving you the opportunity to explore this most magnificent town. We'll provide you with a range of sightseeing options, including a visit to the Otzi museum and taking one of the many cable cars above Bolzano to capture the Dolomites in all their glory.

For those that can't get enough of the bike, we will put on a ride today from the door of the hotel on a loop that arguably showcases the finest view of the length of the Dolomites chain. There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of the stunning scenery around and preserve those precious memories. A nice descent back into Bolzano will cap off a fantastic day on the bike.

- Dinner – Group dinner**
- Climbing – Up to 70km**
- Stay – Bolzano 4\***



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## DAY 6

### Passo Dello Stelvio

Today for many is the climax of your tour, with the infamous Stelvio Pass on the menu. A short transfer in the vans will get us to base camp at Gorenza, from which the assault can begin.

The Stelvio pass from this side is an impressive 24.3km in length at an average grade of 7.4% and with a net altitude gain of 1800metres. The original road was built in 1820–25 by the Austrian Empire to connect the former Austrian province of Lombardia with the rest of Austria. It is the highest pass in the Eastern Alps, with only the Col de Bonnette in Southern France surpassing it by a mere 45 metres. It is also sometimes compared with Mont Ventoux because there are three ways in which to ride up it, which you will find out later in this tour.

After summiting and feeling a fantastic sense of achievement you will be rewarded with one of the finest descents in Europe to the geothermal alpine town of Bormio.

This will be where we will be stopping for the next three nights and where you will have the opportunity to take a dip into more than two thousand years of history in the Roman Baths and go through the secular caves that lead to one of the hot springs, which feeds the panoramic pool outdoors overlooking Bormio. The mineral water wells up at a temperature from 36° C to 43° C and when combined with the cold tank made from a huge wine barrel, provides the perfect recovery therapy.

**Dinner – Group dinner**

**Climbing – Up to 70km**

**Stay – Bormio Luxury Hotel**



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## DAY 7

### Passo Di Gavia & Roman Baths

Today's ride takes in another of the Italy's most famous climbs the Passo di Gavia. If the Stelvio got the better of you yesterday you are welcome to spend the entire day exploring Bormio or recuperating in the ancient Roman thermal spas for which we will arrange van transfers.

Those opting to ride can expect a shorter distance of 60km, however the Gavia is not to be underestimated; at 25.6km and 1,400m of climbing it is a significant challenge with some incredible glacial views at the summit. You will be back in time to enjoy the Roman spas this afternoon.

For those who want a little more riding, we can introduce you to the 'mini Stelvio' a snaking road leading to one of the glacial lakes with some 28 switchbacks over 5km – lots of fun.

Dinner – **At your leisure**

Climbing – **Up to 80km**

Stay – **Bormio Luxury Hotel**

## DAY 8

### Stelvio Part II & Umbrail Pass

Today sees another assault on the Stelvio pass, this time from Bormio and on reaching the summit, you will have the option to either descend back down to Bormio or down the serene Umbrail pass into Switzerland in order to ride the third and final side of the Stelvio. The Umbrail Pass (the third way up Stelvio) is indeed one of our favorites, with views into Switzerland, switchbacks through the forest before opening out to a sweeping road cut into the valley, eagles hovering above, Marmots scurrying, wild flowers and streams a plenty.

Retuning to Bormio, you'll start getting a real feel of why so many Italians frequent this oasis of a town in Winter, being one of the finest ski locations in the Alps.

Dinner – **Group dinner**

Climbing – **50-100km**

Stay – **Bormio**



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## DAY 9

### Lake Como

After several days of riding in the Italian Alps and Dolomites, we will have a more relaxed start today as we transfer in the vans out of the mountains to finish our tour lakeside and we can't think of a more fitting place to finish than on Lake Como.

We will be arriving in the beautiful lakeside village Menaggio on the north western shores of lake Como, which will give us the opportunity to offer two rides, depending on your preference for more climbing or more time to explore Como. The first is an 80km point to point with a fantastic little climb over to Lake Lugano, then a larger climb back over to Como. Or you can select a more direct 40km ride along the lake, darting in and out of villages and the seeing some of the most impressive Villas of Italy.

The evening will be our final dinner together and a great chance to reflect on an epic journey and share the many memories you have made with new friends over the last nine days.

**Dinner – Farewell dinner**

**Climbing – 40-80km**

**Stay – Como**



## DAY 10

### Arrivederci

You may wish to stay on in Como and we can highly recommend Bellagio and the climb up to the Cycling Museum if you do. But for those of you that are flying out we will arrange transfers to Milan Malpensa Airport or assist with your departure at Como train station.

**Stay – Como**



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## AM I FIT ENOUGH?

The Italian Alps are a beautiful mountain-scape with very dramatic profiles. The climbs are mostly longer, with shallower inclines, but there are a few punchy climbs to offer a challenge, with plenty of flats and descents too. This means that a reasonable level of fitness would help you get the most enjoyment from this trip. If you have any concerns regarding your health please contact your physician and if you wish to talk to us about this issue, please call.

If you are struggling to handle the riding we will encourage you to make use of the minibus, that is what it is for. We reserve the right to make alterations to the route if we have concerns regarding your health and safety. During the week we are intending for you to have an enjoyable tour, not go home in a heap!

## NAVIGATION

Due to our insistence that our guides cycle on the road with our customers, offer support and advice, they are also able to help you navigate the routes. This means minimal effort on your part to stay on track.

We also make sure to provide the routes on downloadable Garmin files and we also have daily handouts with route profiles, maps and directions to help you, just in case. This also will have the lead guide's phone number so you can always contact them whilst out on the road, if needed.

## GUIDES & SUPPORT

Polka Dot has a high standard for our guides, meaning they must be experienced in the mountains but also approachable for your needs. We have a standard 1:4 guide client ratio which means you will always have someone available to help you; whether with technical help, advice or just an encouraging word.

We have support minibuses out on the road which is fully stocked with carb drink and energy food that will help you keep up your energy and also give you a lift if they need it. You will never be far from someone to look after you.

## INSURANCE

Travel and Medical insurance is not included, but is a condition of our booking terms and conditions. We want to make sure that no one has any issues that will cause them long term problems. And whilst we take every effort to make sure everyone is well taken care of, sometimes accidents do happen.

We would recommend an Insurance Group called World Nomad, that we like for their level of care and insurance. Visit their website using [this link](#) to get a quote.

## FINANCIAL PROTECTION

We take your financial protection very seriously. In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with Polka Dot Cycling Ltd are fully insured for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from the cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of Polka Dot Cycling Ltd.

We have full insurance for this arranged by Towergate Chapman Stevens through HCCI International Insurance Company PLC.

## TRAVEL

We ask that you all fly into Bergamo Orio Al Serio International Airport as this is closer to our starting point on this trip. We also ask that you book your departure from Milan Malpensa Airport. We can arrange transfers to and from Milan Linate Airport for a supplementary charge which is costed on a case by case basis.

For this trip, we ask that you arrive before 5:30 pm so that we can get you to the first hotel with enough time for bike set up, dinner and the briefing about the trip and next day.



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## FOOD

On our trips you eat like the pros! With the constant use of energy, we know that the best way for people to be comfortable and keep their energy up; they must eat "little and often". This means no bloating, discomfort and losing energy. We carry a full range of snacks and energy drinks suitable for cyclists along with quiches, baguettes, fruit, cakes, sweets (like the infamous Haribo!), cereal bars, nuts, crisps and more.

## NON-RIDING GUESTS

On our trips we want to make sure that your guests have as much fun as you, without the cycling. We will have a guide on to take any of our non-riding guests on trips to places of interest, shopping excursions or sight-seeing along the route.

We can then arrange for either a lunch for the non-riders, separately, or we can reunite the whole group so they can eat together.

## ACCOMODATION

We want our trip to be as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible which means using quality hotels. We use mainly 4\* and Superior 3\* accommodation.

We prefer to use more personal and authentic hotels on our trips, to give you a real feel for the area but we aim for comfort and quality above all else. We vet our accommodations very thoroughly before we use them on our trips. This means no nightmare hotels so you can get a good night sleep.

Please note all prices quoted are based on two people sharing a room. We can of course arrange single occupancy at an extra cost of \$1500/person.

## BIKE HIRE

If you would prefer to not go through the hassle of travelling with your bike, then we can arrange a hire bike for you for the supplement of \$500. There is also the possibility of upgrades.

Please contact us for more information on the bikes available on your particular trip.

## EXTRAS & UPGRADES

- Single Room Supplement ... \$1500
- BMC or Giant Defy/Avail Bike Hire ... \$500

## INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE

- 15 spots available making for a personalised tour.
- All transfers including airport pickups and drop-offs.
- 9 nights in carefully selected 4 Star and Superior 3 Star hotels.
- Daily regional buffet breakfast.
- 5 nights of the finest Italian cuisine including selected wines and beverages.
- 4 evening meals will be left open, giving you the freedom to explore local options that our local experts will recommend and make bookings for you.
- Full on-the-road support, using well-equipped vans to provide quality "ride food & drinks", mechanical support, first aid, shower, changing facilities and WiFi.
- Flexible lunch options with local cafes or Pro musette packed lunches.
- On and off the bike photography by the team, so you can take home those wonderful memories.
- A welcome pack including a Polka Dot Cycling jersey, printed maps and profiles, local information and more.

## NOT INCLUDED

- Flights are not included in the price of the holiday, but we always happy to make recommendations.
- Travel, Medical or Bike Insurance

## FINALISE YOUR BOOKING

To assure your place on this tour, please contact Niamh via [niamh@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:niamh@polkadotcycling.com). We will send a pro-forma for you to complete and we will arrange to take a deposit of \$1000 per person.

For any further questions about this tour, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Steve either by phone **0061 (0) 488 918 900** or email [steve@polkadotcycling.com](mailto:steve@polkadotcycling.com).

**We look forward to seeing you out on the Tour with us and creating some unforgettable memories!**