

Tour 4: Tour of the Italian Alps – Trento to Cortina



Saturday 16th July to Saturday 3rd July

It is often said that the Giro d'Italia is harder than the Tour de France. With more severe climbs and harsher weather it has often proved to be a tougher proposition. The climbs of the Dolomites are often packed into the parcours like sardines in a tin giving route profiles that resemble a series of shark's teeth. For most people the thought of even driving such routes seems crazy, but for some of us it is exactly the sort of thing we have dreamed about. And if you are also one of those types then perhaps Team Infinity's Tour of the Italian Alps is for you.

The Tour of the Italian Alps is a week long ride taking in more than 10 of the iconic passes of the Giro d'Italia. With 6 days back-to-back riding covering a total distance of 645km and ascending more than 21,000m this really is a Giro-like challenge. Much like the competition between the Grand Tours, the Team Infinity Tour of the Italian Alps is just that bit more challenging than our Tour of the French Alps. Riding this tour with Team Infinity really has the feel of a pro-team experience.

The Tour of the Italian Alps will take place from Saturday 16th July to Saturday 23rd July (ride days are Sunday 17th to Friday 22nd July). In July the weather is much more favourable for riding than the pro race scheduled in May. At this time of year snow has cleared from the high passes in all but the most extreme cases and warm sunshine can be expected. These are the mountains so nothing is guaranteed.

Like all the Team Infinity Tours you will have 2 Rider Guides and 2 support vehicles per group of 12 riders, hence, you will have all the physical and moral support required to successfully complete this trip and share the fun with likeminded riders. Spare clothing, food, drink and mechanical support is never far away leaving you to enjoy the day's riding. Morning coffee and lunch stops will be taken to separate the big climbs allowing some rest, recovery, refuelling and banter to take place before the rides continue into the afternoon. Rides will finish with a warm down, stretching and protein recovery drinks.

On this tour there are no easy days. It starts with a bang with some lesser known climbs, but the famous ones, starting with the mighty Passo del Stelvio keep coming day after day. The Tour saves the best until last with a spectacular finale on Tre Cime de Lavaredo. To whet your appetite here are the list of climbs we go over on this Tour: -

Passo Lavaze

Passo Valas

Passo dello Stelvio

Passo di Gavia

Passo del Tonale

Passo Mendola

Monte San Pietro

Passo di Costalunga

Passo Fedaia

Passo Pordoi

Passo Sella

Passo Gardena

Passo Campolungo

Passo di Falzarego

Passo Tre Croci

Tre Cime de Lavaredo



Accommodation on the Tour is top class with predominantly 3-star hotels with twin rooms all at half board. However, the first hotel on the arrival night of Saturday 16th July is the 4-star rated Albergo Accademia. This is a top of the line hotel and a great welcome awaits Team Infinity. As a 4-Star hotel it has all the facilities you would expect (All rooms offer private bathroom, telephone, satellite LCD TV, minibar and air conditioning) although perhaps all we will have time to fully enjoy are the dining and sleeping amenities. After a warm welcome everyone will be keen to eat, get to know each other and discuss the plans for the coming days. We will all take an evening meal at an adjacent restaurant and then, depending on personal preference, it may be a late night or an early morning re-building and adjusting bikes.

Team Infinity offers free airport transfer to Hotel Accademia from Venice Marco Polo airport for arrivals before 16:00 on Saturday 16th July. The same applies at the end of the tour: free airport transfer from Cortina to Venice Marco Polo on Saturday 23rd July. For all other travel arrangements please contact us to discuss what options are available.



Stage 1 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775578>

Stage 1

Date: Sunday 17th July

Route: Trento to Meltina

Cols: Passo Lavaze, Passo Valas

Distance: - 117km

Ascent: - 4404m.



Trento - Cortina Stage 1

117.1 km **4,404 m**

Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 4:51:59

From Albergo Accademia in Trento it is a short (10km) ride along the SS12 in the valley to Lavis. At this point we turn East onto the SS612, and follow the Torrente Avisio high up on its North bank, gradually climbing all the way to the town of Cavalese (50km). This steady mountain road is a great chance for us to ride together as a peloton and get to know each other's riding style. We'll use this first section to take it easy and just enjoy taking in the atmosphere and make sure everyone i's okay, that the bikes have been setup right and generally let everyone settle into what is going to be a great week. Cavalese is a great place to stop for morning coffee and a chance for the Team to bond before the climbing starts.

The first ascent of the Stage is Passo Lavaze. This is a category 2 climb with an average gradient of 8% covering 10.3km from Cavalese. It has been covered

in the Giro four times although not always from this southern side. The descent to Bolzano is a big one – over 1500m is lost in 26km. The final sections of the SS241 involve 2 tunnels at 1.5km and 1km length so regrouping at the junction of the SS241 is recommended, l and we can ride together using the support vehicles for extra safety.

Lunch stop is planned at Bolzano which has a nice selection of snack bars. This breaks the first day down into 3 parts. The final 25km passing the mountain village of San Genesio and over the Passo Valas is the day's final major climb. This is a similar climb to Passo Lavaze from Cavalese and flattens out shortly after San Genesio for about 4km before the final 1km at 10% to the pass. The 4km descent to the village of Meltina is a great chance to warm down.

Accommodation for the night is at the cosy Pension Etschblick. This is a traditional chalet style hotel restaurant serving local specialities. It has a bar and lounge and super views of the surrounding mountains – just enough to whet your appetite for the coming days. The underground secure garage

is great for bike storage and for carrying out any adjustments that are needed. Rooms are twin bedded with ensuite shower/wc and have TV and a balcony.



Stage 2 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775685>

Stage 2

Date: Monday 18th July

Route: Meltina to Bormio

Cols: Passo dello Stelvio

Distance: - 123km

Ascent: - 4063m



Trento - Cortina Stage 2

123.3 km **4,063 m**
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 5:07:20

Stage 2 is a Queen Stage as it climbs one of the most famous passes of all Grand Tours – the mighty Stelvio Pass. Famed for the spectacular hairpins on both the [n](#)North and [s](#)South sides this pass is not to be missed.

The day starts gently with the continuation of the high alpine road from Meltina, passing through alpine meadows with splendid views of the valley below. A shallow drop down to the valley and to the town of Merano (27km) is followed by a long flat rising section on the valley road for 45km. Depending on how everyone feels after the tough Stage 1 it might be worthwhile [tak](#)grabbing a morning coffee early today in Merano before the drag up the valley road begins. Although there are plenty of places to stop along the SS38 it [i](#)'s a section of road that is [nice better](#) to get out of the way. Towards the head of the valley at Spondigna we take a left turn and head

towards the Stelvio Pass. Just as we enter the Stevio valley, at the village of Prato allo Stelvio it [i](#)'s definitely worth taking a break possibly for a lunch snack before the real climbing starts. There are some lovely cafes here and we don't need to stray far off the road to find a [nice-pleasant](#) spot.

The one and only climb of Stage 2 starts immediately above Prato allo Stelvio. The Passo dello Stelvio is spectacular and one of the greats of the Giro d'Italia and often features in many cycling related adverts. At 24km it is one of the longest. The average gradient is 8% and it rarely deviates much from this. The [pas](#)s is also one of the highest, topping out at 2676m. With such a constant gradient it can get monotonous but at least with so many hairpin bends (48 if you include 2 near the bottom) the climb can be broken down into many segments. At the time of writing the Strava KOM is Enzo Partel and if you can complete it in less than 1 hour 22 minutes you can [pinch-steal](#) his crown! For us it is more likely to take nearer 2.5 hours. A well-deserved break at one of the summit restaurants will be the order of the day.

The final 21 km of the day are all downhill. Take care because this can be fast and dangerous both in the dry and in the wet. Enjoy it. At the bottom is the mountain town of Bormio where we will stay for the night. We are residing in 4-star Hotel Baita Clementi, a magnificent hotel with all the comfort you would expect from this rating such as twin bedded rooms with ensuite shower rooms, TV and wifi connection. The restaurant serves high quality traditional cuisine, suitable to top up the reserves and the bar is a great place to relax and chat in the evening probably anticipating tomorrow's slightly easier adventures.



Stage 3 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775842>

Stage 3

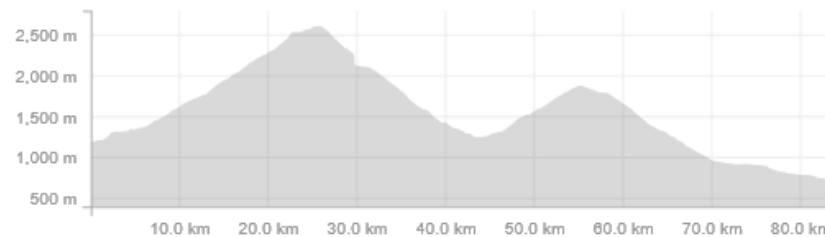
Date: Tuesday 19th July

Route: Bormio to Cles

Cols: Passo di Gavia, Passo del Tomale

Distance: - 120km

Ascent: - 3290m



Trento - Cortina Stage 3

120.0 km **3,290 m**
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 4:59:17

After a pretty tough day on Stage 2 a slightly easier day would be nice. But in keeping with the history of the Giro d'Italia Stage 3 starts with another beauty – Passo di Gavia. This is one of the greatest passes on a bike and at 2652m is the 10th highest paved road in the Alps. In the cycling world it is frequently used on the route of the Giro, having appeared 8 times since, and including, 1988 when it was the scene of a major snowstorm. It is an Hors Category climb.

Although the climbing starts immediately from Bormio the angle is easy for the first few kilometres. The middle section through the woods is full of hairpins but is much steeper. The final section above the treeline in the high mountains is awesome, with the final few kilometres, passing a lovely lake, and the final few kilometres being almost flat. Like on any high mountain pass it can be pretty cold even in July.

A restaurant on the summit offers shelter and a chance to regroup and warm up. At least having the 2 support vehicles with spare clothing means we do not need to carry extra clothing on the bike, and can call for assistance when required.

The descent off the Gavia is steep and narrow, and contains a tunnel about 3km from the summit. It is only about 600m long, but care is required as it is badly surfaced and unlit. It is worth using the support vehicles to guide us through this short section.

At the foot of the south side of the Gavia is the quaint mountain village of Ponte di Legno (44km). This is a good place for a lunch snack stop before the second and final pass of the day – the Passo del Tonale. This is much smaller than the Gavia, ascending only 625m in 11km on a wide well surfaced road. The descent off the Tonale is a fast affair and superb fun racing together. It lasts for 40km before the final part of the stage circumnavigating Lago di Santa Giustina.

The resting place for the night is the Hotel Viridi. This “green” hotel offers a relaxing stay [and](#) caters especially for cyclists on their tours around the region with good traditional local food such as tartiflettes and the famous Savoyard Fondue, twin rooms with ensuite shower rooms, Satellite TV, wifi and a secure garage for the bikes overnight.



Stage 4 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775879>

Stage 4

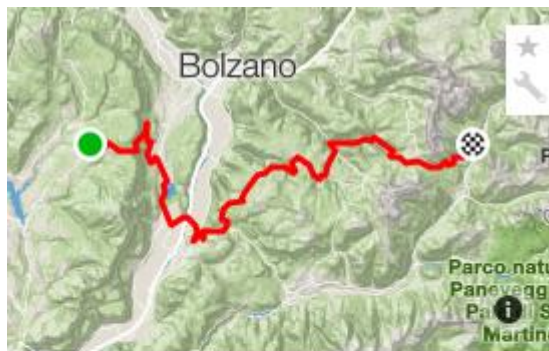
Date: Wednesday 20th July

Route: Cles to Pozza di Fassa

Cols: Passo Mendola, Monte San Pietro, Passo di Costalunga

Distance: - 89km

Ascent: - 3196m



Trento - Cortina Stage 4

89.0km **3,196m**

Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 3:42:04

After a relaxing evening we start the day off with a gentle ascent of the Passo Mendola. This little known climb is a delight and an example of why it is not all about the big and the famous passes, although for the first time it is included in the Giro d'Italia 2016 on Stage 16, but from the East.

The second climb of the day is another lesser known climb – Monte San Pietro. It was traversed in the 2005 edition of the Giro on a brutal Stage 13 that also went over the Passo di Costalunga on the same route that we will follow today. Monte San Pietro is a pretty quite steep climb in the initial 15 km averaging nearly 9%, however the upper section is much flatter with undulations over the pass and onto the next highest point of Alto de Nova Ponente. Theis countryside is very peaceful and the roads are great for team riding.

A snack break in the village of Pontenova will provide a boost for the final 23km of the Stage which includes an ascent of the Passo di Costalunga. It is nearly a 900m climb in 14km so the average is around 6.5% but there are some short steep sections up to 15%. Again the roads are good quality and the traffic is quiet so the ride can be done in groups.

Tonight the hotel is called Hotel Monzoni. It is situated in Pozza di Fassa – the town at the end of the Costalunga descent. This 3-star chalet style hotel offers great views of the Dolomites. We have twin rooms with TV and ensuite bathrooms, and if you still have energy left after a hard day you may like to take a swim in the heated indoor pool, or perhaps you prefer a sauna. The hotel offers great food and there is of course a bar to retire to in the evening.



Stage 5 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775924>

Stage 5

Date: Thursday 21st July

Route: Pozza di Fassa to Corvara

Cols: Passo Fedaia, Passo Pordoi, Passo Sella and Passo Gardena

Distance: - 97km

Ascent: - 3347m



Trento - Corvara Stage 5

96.6 km 3,347 m

Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 4:00:54

The penultimate day; Stage 5, is another day of the hills. Slightly longer and a little more climbing than Stage 4, it forms part of a classic tour of the Dolomites and covers 4 of the famous passes – Fedaia, Pordoi, Sella and Gardena.

Passo Fedaia is the first climb of the day and stands alone from the other 3. It has a gentle approach up the wide valley road with the Dolomite mountains standing proud ahead. A right turn at Canazei takes us through Alba and Penia where the pass proper starts. The climb is 8km long and averages 7%, but given the early part is around 3% then the upper sections make up for it with 8 and 9% ramps. On your right the mass lump of the North Face of the Marmolada appears, but I'm sure eyes are more likely to be fixed on the wheel in front, and the mind intent on keeping the gaps small.

The descent to the East is fast – initially with a few sweeping bends, then hairpins, followed by a long steep straight. The town of Caprile in the valley is a welcome sight as it's likely the speed of the descent will have cooled us all down and we'll be ready for a coffee.

From Caprile it is more than 1200m climbing to the summit of the next climb – Passo Pordoi. The steepest section is climbing out of Caprile and up on to the SP48 road high up on the North bank of the Torrente Cordevole. Once the SP48 is reached the route flattens for a while until the town of Arabba is reached. Here the Passo Pordoi climb starts for real. This Category 2 climb is 9km in length with a steady gradient at 7%.

At the summit of the Pordoi is a warm welcoming café-bar, just like on the summits of the following 2 climbs – Passo Sella and Passo Gardena. Any, or all(!) of these make suitable snack stops. The climbs between the ms are not long with Passo Sella being 5.5km long at 7% gradient and Paso

Gardena being 6km long at 4% gradient. Which one(s) we stop at and for how long will depend on the weather and our own condition. Corvara, our destination for the day is only 30km away from the summit of Passo Pordoi, or approximately 1.5hrs riding.

We are staying for the night in Hotel Royal This 3-star hotel offers a warm welcome to cyclists and is a great place to relax, recover and enthuse about a superb day in the saddle. Team Infinity have booked a number of quadruple apartments each with TV, wifi and ensuite shower room. The cuisine at Hotel Royal is traditional and will satisfy the best appetite, and believe me there will be some big appetites. We a're almost guaranteed to spend the evening chatting in the bar and preparing for the final Stage to Cortina tomorrow. The hotel also has sauna, whirlpool, solarium and indoor heated swimming pool.



Stage 6 - <https://www.strava.com/routes/3775972>

Stage 6

Date: Friday 22nd July

Route: Corvara to Cortina

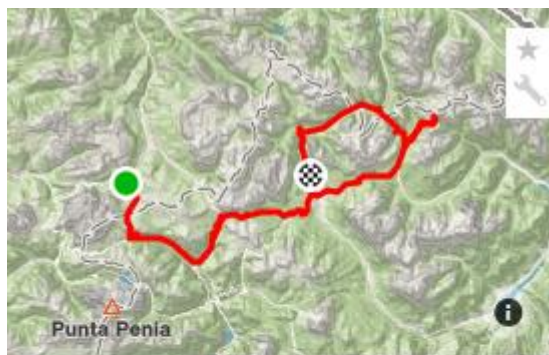
Cols: Passo Campolongo, Passi di Falzarego, Passo Tre Croci, Tre Cime de Lavaredo

Distance: - 99km

Ascent: - 2884m



The Final Stage! And the least climbing! But with the hardest ascent of the tour at the end – Tre Cime di Lavaredo.



Trento - Cortina Stage 6

98.6km 2,884m
Distance Elevation Gain

Est. Moving Time 4:05:54

Stage 6 is a nice continuation from Stage 5 of the exploration of the Dolomites. The first 2 passes of the day are often ridden in conjunction with the Pordoi, Sella and Gardena of yesterday, for example, on the Sella Ronda or on the Maratona de Dolomiti. Passo Campolongo, starting immediately from Corvara, is similar in size to Passo Sella at 5.5km but less steep at 5.5% gradient. It ~~is~~ a ~~nice~~ pleasant warm-up for the Passo di Falzarego which is almost twice as long and a similar angle of 6%. Falzarego has a wonderfully ~~ly~~ adventurous feel to it, climbing through the trees with ~~ocasional~~ occasional glimpses at what appears to be a road high in the cliffs above. Could that possibly be where we are going?

From the Passo di Falzarego at 2047m it is a 17km descent to Cortina. And although Cortina is our final

destination the day is not over. It has just begun. Climbing out of Cortina over the Tre Croci forms the first part of the ascent of Tre Cime di Lavaredo. At 7.8km long and 7% gradient the Tre Croci is a decent pass in its own right. But most of us will have our minds focussed on the BIG climb of the day.

Tre Cime di Lavaredo has been seen on the Giro many times, first in 1967 and more recently in 2013. From the picturesque Lago di Misurina it is 6.8km to the Rifugio Auronzo and an average gradient of 8%. Note that the road does go on a little higher to a car park above the refuge – go there if you wish. However, the final 3km ~~have~~ have an average gradient of 13%. This is a tough old climb.

Once we have recovered, possibly with some food at the refuge, there is one final circuit to do to complete the Tour. Following the descent of the toll road back to the lake, an anticlockwise 23km

ride taking in the small rise of Cimebanche brings us to the outskirts of Cortina and to our lodging for the last night together. We will stay at the 3-star Hotel des Alpes. This is a traditional family run mountain hotel with sauna and Jacuzzi and a great bar for celebrating success.

