

The Mediterranean Route

1. Main theme of the Route

The Mediterranean sea is commonly regarded as a unit, even if landscapes, human settlements, cultures, are very different from one coast to another, between two neighbouring countries, and even within the same country.

Indeed the Mediterranean sea features some distinctive characters, depending on the special relationships that all peoples have with sea and nature¹.

Sea has been since ever a powerful means of subsistence: commercial way and production means.

Harbours and markets are spread all around: trading, sailing, building ships, fishing are common businesses - or at least common traditions - almost in every town.

This may explain why Mediterranean coasts are so inhabited, why cities are - or have been - so rich and beautiful, why so many of them attained self government and preserved it for long time, amongst, and within, kingdoms and empires.

Climate is particularly mild and brings warm winters and fresh summers.

Such conditions explain the spreading of cluster-pines, olives, figs, citrus fruits, palms, and herbs like lavender, myrtle, origan, which are so familiar all around the Mediterranean.

Olives groves in particular are typical of these lands: they were already important in the ancient era (the Greek cities), and have been grown for centuries and centuries, so they are a distinctive element of the landscape.

Trees, flowers, aromatic herbs have a special meaning to people living around the Mediterranean - and to tourists too! -since here it is usual spending a lot of time in the open air.

The above elements are the main themes of the Mediterranean route. It is however worth saying that the Mediterranean sea features other very important tourist attractions:

¹ An attractive investigation into the spirit of the Mediterranean has been proposed by Predrag Matvejević. See Predrag Matvejević, *Mediterranski Brevijar*, GZH Zagreb, 1987, which has been translated - as far as we know - in English (University of California Press), French (Fayard, Payot et Rivages), Italian (Garzanti, Hefti).

- an incredibly high number of remains of the ancient era (Greek cities, Roman empires);
- an extraordinary offer of seaside resorts and tourist facilities.

Part of the Italian stretch of the Mediterranean Route runs through the plane of Po river, quite far from the sea; main theme of this stretch is therefore the river, more than the sea.

2. Cycle tourism along the Mediterranean

Mediterranean countries offer very little cycling facilities, in comparison with northern and central Europe. The Mediterranean coast offers, if possible, even less facilities. One reason is that planes along the coast are few and generally narrow, whereas land uses are very intensive: there are just a few roads - or even one single main road - in many sectors of the Mediterranean coast.

The design of the EuroVelo Route has therefore to face one chief problem: the lack of cycling facilities together with the lack of quiet minor roads, suitable for cycling.

One second basic problem is the relief. All along the northern coast mountains follows the shoreline at a very short distance. Avoiding busy coast roads means necessarily climbing mountains. In many cases even main roads go up-downhill, since mountains dive directly into the sea. Cycle tourists will discover - maybe with some surprise - how mountainous are famous tourist seaside regions (Provence, Côt d'Azur, Liguria, Croatia, Greece ...).

One more problem are international borders on the eastern Adriatic coast. The biggest problem is the border between Croatia and Yugoslavia (Montenegro): at present there is no open border on the coast: in fact, the only available border is Vukovar, about 150 km west from Belgrade!

As for international borders - Italy and Slovenia, Slovenia and Croatia, Yugoslavia (Montenegro) and Albania, Albania and Greece - all of them are main roads borders. This means that cycle tourists have to ride in most cases on roads with much traffic. There are minor roads crossing borders, but they are

not open at present, or can be used only by people living near the border.

3. The present report

The Route we are going to describe is to be regarded as a very preliminary proposal. But for a few cases, Mediterranean regions are just starting thinking about long distance cycling routes. Route n. 2 comes out mainly of suggestions by local cycling groups. This means that the proposed Route needs more detailed studies and has to be assessed and approved by local authorities. For all these reasons the final Route might be quite different from the present proposal.

The Route we illustrate consists mainly of minor roads. Local cycling groups or cyclists with direct experience on the field told us these roads do not have too much traffic. Unfortunately it was not possible to collect data on traffic volumes, so we are not able to confirm the information we got. For some roads we even do not have any kind of information; we just found them on the map and thought traffic levels "should" be low, since these roads are narrow and winding, do not connect important destinations or are parallel to more direct or more important roads.

The present report deals with the eastern stretch of EuroVelo Route n. 2, from the Pyrénées (Spanish-French border) to Athens. This part of Route n. 2 concerns seven countries: France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Yugoslavia (Montenegro), Albania and Greece. The report is divided into seven parts, one for each country.

4. The proposed Route

The proposed Route, not considering the Spanish stretch, is about 3.800 km long.

It reaches the most important harbours and railways stations. This facilitates transport modes interchange, and allows avoiding mountainous sections and difficult borders: for instance, the closed border between Croatia and Montenegro may be by-passed by ferry (but this means crossing the Adriatic twice, first from Dubrovnik to Bari and then from Bari to Durrës).

Because of some links with harbours and main railways stations, and because of some detours avoiding high mountain passes, the Mediterranean Route is somehow a winding route.

Mediterranean Route n. 2 - Part 2 from the Pyrénées to Athens

Country	Total length (alternatives not included) km	Signposted stretches km	Stretches with probably medium/heavy traffic km
France	670	70	120
Italy	1.270	100	120
Slovenia	70		15
Croatia	550		60
Yugoslavia (Montenegro)	180		25
Albania	460		180
Greece	580		40
Total	3780	170	560

France

1. Cycling in the South

Long distance cycling is increasingly popular in France. New cycling facilities are being built, and cycle tourism is developing, taking advantage of France leading position on the tourist market.

Both Mediterranean regions, Languedoc-Roussillon and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, offer interesting cycling facilities.

In Languedoc-Roussillon a leading role is played by towpaths along major channels: Canal du Midi and Canal Rhône-Sète. Cycling paths linking the major cities (Béziers, Narbonne, Montpellier, etc.) to these channels and to the sea have been built or are under construction.

In Provence attractive minor roads with little traffic have been signposted for cycling like the one crossing Luberon Regional Park (100 km). Many mountain roads in Provence and Alpes Maritimes do not have many cars and are very attractive for cyclists. Most of them, however, require strong legs!

2. About the proposed route

We looked for a possible route keeping in mind that it would consist of two main stretches very different from one another:

- the western stretch (Languedoc-Roussillon) quite close to the sea and mainly consisting of level roads;
- the eastern stretch (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) typically mountainous and quite far from the sea, since the few coast roads have a lot of traffic.

Our chief referent for the western stretch is a cycling association based in Toulouse (Association VÉLO), which is working on cycling routes and which pointed out a possible cycling route using towpaths and minor roads. A member of Association VÉLO tested personally the route.

The chief referent for the eastern stretch is the Department of Alpes Maritimes, which gave us information and suggestions about the most complicate part of the route, the stretch

from Vence to Menton, which goes through a very inhabited and hilly corridor.

The route we are going to describe, in particular the eastern stretch, is anyway to intend as a work in progress, which needs further investigations and assessments, both by cycling groups and public administrations.

3. Main points of interest

The route reaches some of the most important sea side resorts of the French coast: Côte Vermeille (close to Costa Brava), Port Barcarès, Port Leucate, Cap d'Agde, Sète, Golfe d'Aigues-Mortes (Palavas, Carnon, la Grand-Motte), Nice, Monaco, Cap Martin, Menton ...

In addition to it the route features a lot of cultural and environmental attractions; we mention just a few:

- Perpignan, Roussillon capital;
- Montpellier, which has been the first medical school in Europe;
- Aigues Mortes, fascinating medieval town surrounded with high walls;
- Arles, attractive historical town, with ancient traditions and very lively;
- Camargue Regional Park, well known for its ponds and channels, birds and horses;
- Avignon, historical city surrounded with high walls, ancient Holy See (Pope Clemente V moved here from Rome);
- Luberon Regional Park, attractive mountain district to the east of Avignon, bordered by Durance river;
- Verdon Canyon, impressive gorge excavated by a Durance tributary, where the road runs at more than 300 m above the river;
- Nice, main city and long tradition seaside resort;
- the Principality of Monaco.

A wide range of quality tourist facilities are available all along the route.

Main railway lines link all important cities and tourist resorts along the coast and some centres along the Durance river (Manosque).

4. Route description

We agreed with the Spanish experts working on the cycling route through Spain, that it is necessary to climb the Pyrénées (border between Spain and France) since the route going along the shoreline is not suitable to cycle tourism.

We therefore agreed that the cycling route crosses the Pyrénées through Col de Banyuls, which is not high (357 m) and has no traffic.

From Col de Banyuls the route follows a small hilly road, partly non asphalted, down to the seaside resort of Banyuls-sur-Mer.

From Banyuls-sur-Mer to Port-Vendres (6 km) cyclists have to run on a national road with heavy traffic (RN114) or on a scenic minor road through the mountains, which unfortunately is quite long and very hilly. A third (suggested) possibility is to take the train from Banyuls-sur-Mer to Port-Vendres.

From Port Vendres to Argelès-Plage the route follows a Département road with medium traffic.

The whole stretch from Col de Banyuls to Argelès-Plage is 36 km long.

From Argelès-Plage to Leucate (55 km) the route runs close to the shoreline, partly on minor roads with low traffic, partly on large pavements for pedestrians and cyclists just behind the beaches, partly on reserved cycling paths. From the seaside resort of Barcarès it is possible to reach Perpignan following minor roads with low traffic (14 km).

From Port-la-Nouvelle to Narbonne (20 km) the route follows a new cycling path (finished in June 1998) along Canal de la Robine.

From Narbonne, cyclists might reach Béziers just following towpaths along Canal de la Robine (up to Sallèles-d'Aude) and Canal du Midi (from Sallèles-d'Aude to Argeliers, Capestang, Colombiers and Béziers). Choosing towpaths, however, would mean making a long detour from the direct way Narbonne-Béziers.

We propose therefore to follow minor roads, mostly level and with low traffic, touching the villages of Coursan, Salles-d'Aude, Nissan-lez-Ensérune and Colombiers. In Colombiers the route joins the towpath along Canal du Midi and follows it up to Béziers.

The suggested route Narbonne-Béziers is 34 km long.

From Béziers to Agde (28 km) the route follows cycling paths. The first stretch (Béziers-Portiragnes, 13 km) is already existing; the second one (Portiragnes-St. Marie d'Agde) will be built within a short time.

From Agde to Sète there are two possibilities:

- the national road - RN112 - running along the shoreline (20 km), which is the more direct way but has quite heavy traffic;
- Département roads bordering Thau lagoon (57 km). These roads too, however, have many stretches with heavy and fast traffic.

Our suggestion is to build a cycling path along the national road (RN112). Investigations on the field made by Association VÉLO pointed out that the national road is quite large and that there is enough space for a cycling path (most part of the road already has large asphalted or gravelled banks, partly used for parking). We would like to notice that the national road, running between the sea and the lagoon, is very scenic.

From Sète to Aigues-Mortes (49 km), and from Aigues-Mortes to Beaucaire (50 km), the proposed route follows the towpath along Canal du Rhône à Sète.

We notice that the city of Montpellier is directly linked to the above channel by means of a cycling path (10 km long).

From Beaucaire to Cavaillon (36 km) the route follows minor level roads. From Cavaillon, it is possible to reach Avignon following low traffic roads (27 km).

Cavaillon lies on the bank of the Durance, at the border of Luberon Regional Park. The park is crossed lengthways by a cycling route recently signposted by the Park authority, running from Cavaillon to Forcalquier (about 100 km). Our route follows the first 70 km, up to the village of Reillanne.

The first stretch inside Luberon Regional Park goes from Cavaillon to Apt (42 km). It is a mountain road, but slopes are neither too long nor too steep.

The second stretch goes from Apt to Reillanne; then the route points to Manosque climbing the Luberon mountain (Villemus pass, 655 m). The stretch Apt-Manosque (41 km) features some longer slopes, but not too hard.

The following stretches of the cycling route need further investigations, in order to assess

to which extent they are really suitable to cycle tourism and whether better opportunities are available (even if quite far from the proposed route). We introduce them briefly:

- Manosque - Moustiers St. Marie (48 km), along minor roads with little gradients and probably low traffic;
- Moustiers-St. Marie - Comps-s.-Artuby (49 km), along the famous Corniche Sublime (Gorges du Verdon), with many slopes (not too hard) and - probably - medium/heavy traffic;
- Comps-s.-Artuby - Vence (71 km), mostly along minor roads, with hard slopes and medium/low traffic, featuring the attractive Gorges du Loup, which are already appreciated by cyclists. From Pont-du-Loup it is possible to reach Grasse (famous because of its scent production) following minor roads (13 km);
- Vence - Nice (32 km), following the scenic balcony road pointing down to Carros, on the bank of river Var, and then the road on the right side of Var, up to the urban area of Nice. These roads probably do not have too much traffic;
- Nice - Menton (35 km), following minor roads behind the mountains which border the coast (through the valley of Laghet river) and then running not far from the coast through Montecarlo, Cap Martin and Menton. Some cycle paths or cycle friendly roads, close to the shoreline, are available in Cap-Martin and Menton. But for these facilities the proposed route has probably to follow high traffic roads.

5. Technical facts

The suggested route is about 670 km long.

Near 200 km (30% of the whole route) follow towpaths and cycling paths, that is routes that are car-free or reserved to cyclists.

About 300 km (45% of the route) follow minor shared roads with little traffic.

The remaining stretches, about 170 km, are not enough known or follow roads which may have too much traffic. More investigations and better proposals are therefore needed.

Almost all roads are asphalted.

The stretch from the Spanish border to Cavillon (about 400 km) consists mainly of

level roads. On the contrary, the stretch through Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur is mainly hilly.

As for road authorities, all towpaths are in the charge of Voies Navigables de France, whereas most minor roads belong to the Départements.

As for cycling signpost, the only information we got concern signals installed by Luberon Park authority. These are small rectangular plates made of metal, containing a big arrow over two different backgrounds: white background for signals pointing to Forcalquier, orange ochre for signals pointing to Cavillon. Inside the arrow there is a white logo of a cyclist riding his bike.

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1 - From Pyrenees (Spanish border) to Cavailon (Avignon) - Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	type of road	present traffic level
Col de Banyuls - Banyuls-sur-Mer - Port Vendres - Argelès-Plage	36	357	357	minor roads; national road (from Banyuls-sur-Mer to Port Vendres)	low from Col de Banyuls to Banyuls-sur-Mer; high from Banyuls-sur-Mer to Port Vendres; medium (?) from Port Vendres to Argelès-Plage
Argelès-Plage - St. Cyprien-Plage - Canet-Plage - le Barcarès - Port Leucate - Leucate		10	20	minor roads (60%), cycling paths (40%)	low; car-free (cycling paths)
Leucate - Port-La-Nouvelle - Narbonne		20	20	cycling path	car-free
Narbonne - Coursan - Nissan - Béziers	34	20	30	minor roads, towpath (Canal du Midi, about 10 km)	low, car-free (towpath)
Béziers - Agde - Sète	48	20	20	towpath (28 km), national road	car-free (towpath), high (national road)
Sète - Maguelon - Palavas-les-Flots - la-Grande-Motte - Aigues-Mortes	49	3	3	towpath	car-free
Aigues Mortes - St. Gilles - Beaucaire	50	5	10	towpath	car-free
Beaucaire - Tarascon - Maillane - Eyragues - St. Andiol - Cavailon	36	10	100	minor roads	low
Total					

1.1 - From Pyrenees (Spanish border) to Cavailon (Avignon) - Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental features	Main tourist attractions	Main tourist facilities
Col de Banyuls - Banyuls-sur-Mer - Port Vendres - Argelès-Plage	Pyrenees, Côte Vermeille		bathing facilities (Côte Vermeille); main railway station in Argelès-Plage
Argelès-Plage - St. Cyprien-Plage - Canet-Plage - le Barcarès - Port Leucate - Leucate	ponds and lagoons	Perpignan (14 km from Barcarès, following minor roads)	bathing facilities; main railway station in Perpignan
Leucate - Port-La-Nouvelle - Narbonne	ponds and lagoons	Narbonne	bathing facilities; main railway stations in Port-La-Nouvelle and Narbonne
Narbonne - Coursan - Nissan - Béziers		Béziers	main railway station in Béziers
Béziers - Agde - Sète	Thau basin	Sète	bathing facilities; main railway stations in Agde and Sète
Sète - Maguelon - Palavas-les-Flots - la-Grande-Motte - Aigues-Mortes	ponds and lagoons, Camargue Regional Park	Aigues Mortes, Montpellier (10 km from Palavas-les-Flots, following a cycling path)	bathing facilities; main railway station in Montpellier
Aigues Mortes - St. Gilles - Beaucaire	Camargue Regional Park	Arles (17 km from St. Gilles, following car-free minor roads)	main railway station in Beaucaire
Beaucaire - Tarascon - Maillane - Eyragues - St. Andiol - Cavailon		Avignon (27 km from Cavailon, following minor roads)	main railway stations in Cavailon and Avignon

2 - From Cavaillon (Avignon) to Menton - Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	type of road	present traffic level
Cavaillon - Maubec - Ménerbes - Bonnieux - Apt	42	73	348	minor roads (signposted by Park authority)	low
Apt - Saignon - Céreste - Reillanne - Manosque	41	256	655	minor roads (signposted by Park authority up to Reillanne)	low
Manosque - Pont de Manosque - Valensole - Puimpisson - Moustiers-S.te Marie	48	400	566	minor roads	low
Moustiers-S.te Marie - Comps-s.-Artuby	49	566	1032	minor roads	medium
Comps-s.-Artuby - la Bastide - Thorenc - Gréolières - Vence	71	891	1120	minor roads	low/medium
Vence - Carros - St. Laurent-du-Var - Nice	32	324	324	minor roads	medium
Nice - la Trinité - N.D. de Laghet - Monte-Carlo - Roquebrune - Cap-Martin - Menton - Pont St. Louis (Italian border)	35	20	461	minor roads (60%), main roads (30%), cycling paths (10%)	medium/high
Total)	318				

2.1 - From Cavaillon (Avignon) to Menton - Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental features	Main tourist attractions	Main tourist facilities
Cavaillon - Maubec - Ménerbes - Bonnieux - Apt	Luberon Regional Park		railway station in Apt
Apt - Saignon - Céreste - Reillanne - Manosque	Luberon Regional Park		Main railway station in Manosque
Manosque - Pont de Manosque - Valensole - Puimpisson - Moustiers-S.te Marie			
Moustiers-S.te Marie - Comps-s.-Artuby	Grand Canyon du Verdon		
Comps-s.-Artuby - la Bastide - Thorenc - Gréolières - Vence	Montagne de Thorenc; Gorges du Loup	Vence, Grasse (13 km from Pont-du-Loup, following minor roads)	railway station in Grasse
Vence - Carros - St. Laurent-du-Var - Nice	Baie des Anges	Nice	bathing facilities and main railway station in Nice
Nice - la Trinité - N.D. de Laghet - Monte-Carlo - Roquebrune - Cap-Martin - Menton - Pont St. Louis (Italian border)	Côte d'Azur	Montecarlo, Cap-Martin, Menton	bathing facilities; main railway stations

Italy

1. Cycling in the North

The Mediterranean route through Italy links the Ligurian Sea (Gulf of Genoa) with the Adriatic Sea (Gulf of Venice), following almost the whole course of Po, the main Italian river.

The route has therefore two main themes: the sea and the river. It however features one more attraction: the Alps. Crossing the Alps is indeed expected to catch cyclists' attention: it is a very interesting stretch and has something of a challenge!

It is of course possible to cross the Alps by train, thanks to three different railway lines: Ventimiglia - Cuneo, Albenga - Savona - Ceva and Genoa - Tortona.

The stretch along the Po is really easy cycling. The river flows meandering between two high banks in a low-land very rich and fertile, but with a record of recurrent floods (see the last disastrous one in 1951).

The last stretch of the route, along the northern Adriatic shoreline, is somehow complicate, due to the impressive network of crossing canals, rivers and ponds, that creates a unique environment, good for boats but not so much for bicycles.

In the wide coast area from Ravenna to Grado, hundreds square kms of land covered with water form a huge system of canals, marshes, lagoons, with Venice as a beautiful example of coexistence between man and a wet tough environment.

In the plane of Po river and in Veneto (the region of Venice) most cities and towns are bike friendly. Bike is an all day transport mode, both in town centres and in the country side. Among these cities we would like to mention Ferrara, with its large (and beautiful) medieval and Renaissance centre crowded with bikes.

Many Province Administrations bordering Po river are working on projects about greenways along the Po.

In the last few years the Province Administration of Torino has developed a large network of cycling routes using shared minor roads, which have been signposted for cyclists. Piedmont Regional Administration is

working on a project of main regional cycling routes, one of which will follow the Po.

Province Administrations of Parma, Piacenza and Reggio Emilia are also working on long distance cycling route, both along the Po and from north to south. City and Province of Ferrara are involved with construction-signposting of cycling routes in the area.

Natural park authorities along the Po, like in Piedmont and in the delta region, made and/or signposted cycling paths near the river.

At present, however, a continuous, well down, safe, mapped and signposted route along the Po river doesn't really exist.

We do hope the EuroVelo network will be the key for the definitive development in Italy of a long distance bicycle route

2. About the proposed route

The route we introduce comes out of projects, ideas and suggestions that cycling groups - most of which members of FIAB, the Italian Federation of Bike Friends - and several public administrations have put out in recent years in order to promote cycle tourism.

The suggested route, however, is to be intended as a first proposal, which has to be discussed and studied in more details with the associations and public administrations involved.

3. Main points of interest

Here is just a short list of the greatest features of the route:

- Liguria western inland, with small uphill villages surrounded with olives groves terraces
- Genoa
- Po river natural park (Piedmont)
- Torino
- cities of art along the Po: Pavia, Cremona, Mantova, Ferrara...
- Po delta natural park (Emilia-Romagna)
- Venice and its Laguna
- Aquileia, Grado and its Laguna
- Karst (future international natural park)
- Trieste

4. Route description

The Mediterranean route through Italy attains a total length (alternative routes not included) of about 1.270 km.

It may be divided into four main stretches:

- western Liguria and Cuneo Alps (about 270 km)
- link Genoa - Po river (110 km)
- Po river plane (about 640 km)
- upper Adriatic coast (about 250 km).

Coast roads in Liguria have very heavy traffic and therefore are not suitable to cycle tourists, who have to find their way in the inland (entroterra ligure).

We suggest an inland route linking Ventimiglia with Albenga; Albenga and its plane are a good access to the western Ligurian coast. From Albenga the route may cross the Alps quite easily and reach Piedmont and the plane of Po.

The above route unfortunately cuts off a big portion of Liguria, and most of all Genoa, which is a major harbour and has been one of the most important marine republic in the Mediterranean, that is a hub of all sailing routes and all trades.

We therefore suggest a cycling link from Genoa to the plane of Po (near Valenza Po), crossing the Alps along the valley of river Scrivia. We think this link may be very interesting and useful, since Genoa harbour provides easy access to all major ports and to all tourist destinations within the Mediterranean.

Let us start describing the route.

In Ventimiglia the suggested route points immediately to the mountains. It climbs some hard passes (but gradients are never too high) and reaches once again the sea in Albenga.

A main railway line - with a single rail - links Ventimiglia with Albenga. A new line, with two rails, is under construction behind the old one, which will be abandoned within some years; we do hope it may be recycled for cycling!

The route leaves Albenga climbing the Alps and finally reaches Cuneo. It seems to be a long detour, but it is the only way to avoid both main roads and steep mountain passes.

In alternative to the long route Ventimiglia-Albenga-Cuneo, strong bikers (mountain bike is compulsory) might choose a more direct

route starting from Pigna (about 30 km from Ventimiglia), which follows the mountain ridge marking the border between France and Italy: it is a long fascinating ride at 2.000 m above sea level, on an absolutely scenic military road (not asphalted). There is a penalty, however: while going down to Cuneo, bikers have to ride 27 km of high traffic national road (which anyway may be substituted by train).

The proposed link Genoa - Po river starts from the ferry harbour in Genoa, climbs the mountains behind Genoa following minor roads and reaches the village of Casella (a minor scenic railway also links Genoa with Casella). This stretch features a col across the Apennines (466 m) but is not too hard.

From Casella to Arquata Scrivia the route follows main roads with little slopes down the valley of river Scrivia. Some stretches have medium/high traffic, but may be covered by train; we also notice that this road is quite large and therefore might allow the construction of some kind of cycling paths-lanes.

From Arquata Scrivia to Cornale, close to the Po, the route follows minor country roads, most of which are part of the European path E1.

The Province of Genoa expressed high interest in joining EuroVelo and will do its best efforts in raising the quality of the future cycling route.

Let us come back to Piedmont.

From Cuneo to Saluzzo the route follows minor roads with little traffic. Some of them are already signposted.

In Saluzzo the route meets the Po. It follows the river up to Villafranca.

From Villafranca to Torino the route may continue close to the Po, following minor roads and trails (signposting already planned by park authorities), or else leave the river pointing to Airasca, where it meets the cycling route Pinerolo-Torino. The route to Airasca, like as the route Pinerolo-Torino, have already been signposted by the Province of Torino.

From Torino to Chivasso, Casale and Valenza, the route goes close to the river, following cycling paths, towpaths, trails (non asphalted) and minor roads. Most of them have already been signposted by park authorities (but signposts are scarce).

From Torino onwards, and mostly in Lombardia, Emilia and Veneto, the route follows the Po mainly on the big dike-bank (Argine Maestro), on a road that normally is not closed to the motorised traffic but which anyway may be considered a low traffic road (or even a car-free road).

Both banks are suitable to cycling. In some cases the distance between the banks is about some kilometres; it means that the two sides of the Po may be quite different worlds, both very rich in culture and attractions. We chose only one way: the one we think is the best for cycling (which means some crossings of the river on busy bridges); however, choosing one side means losing something on the other.

Leaving Valenza, the route crosses the Po and points to Pavia (Lombardia). Soon after Pavia it crosses the river again, entering Emilia. Near Bosco Tosca it crosses once again the Po, coming back to Lombardia.

Following the northern side of the river the route approaches the city of Piacenza (Emilia). From Piacenza onwards, it follows mainly the southern side of the river, reaching Cremona, Guastalla, Mantova and Ferrara.

From Ferrara the route continues toward the sea, partly on the southern side of the Po (Emilia), partly on the northern side (Veneto). However, it does not reach the end of the delta: in Contarina it turns to the north, pointing to Chioggia.

From Chioggia to Venice the route follows thin islands bordering the Venetian Laguna, connected to the mainland and to one another by short ferry lines.

After Venice the route continues close to the sea, reaching Jesolo and Caorle.

From Caorle onwards, the route leaves the sea and runs behind the complex systems of rivers, channels, ponds and lagoons bordering the coast.

We tried to choose the best cycling opportunities following minor roads; however, some long stretches follow national roads with no provisions for the two wheels.

The route touches Portogruaro, Latisana, Cervignano (inland centres) and finally points to the sea, reaching Aquileia, Grado and Monfalcone.

From Monfalcone to Trieste we pointed out two alternatives:

- a coastal route following minor roads and pieces of cycle lanes;
- an inland route following moderately hilly roads through the environmentally unique Karst area.

Here are some final notes about cycling facilities all along the route:

- almost in every city with more than 10.000 inhabitants there is a bicycle shop, that is normally closed on Sunday;
- at present the concept of bicycle friendly hotel, or business or whatever else related to cycle tourism is not enough developed.

5. Problems and suggestions

Sometimes the route along the Po follows the low-level towpath near the water. This seat is very interesting and pleasant, seldom with a green canopy of poplars and willows, but due to the frequent (yearly) flooding there are problems in utilising the towpath as a permanent cycle route.

In the wetlands along the Adriatic coast the route might be improved with some small bridges and maybe some small ferries in order to follow trails deeply into this beautiful area, with the possibility to pedal between the sea and the lagoon.

One more problem is the property of the lane on the Po banks. In principle the owner of the bank is the River Po Water Authority (Magistrato del Po) and although this body is not "anti-bicycle", it is reluctant to take any responsibility in terms of maintenance and road safety. It is therefore necessary that the local road authority (we think it should be the Province) applies for a road concession to the Magistrato del Po and then assumes the management (surface, bridges, signs, safety) of the route. Fortunately there are some Provinces (Parma, Modena, Mantova, Reggio Emilia, Cremona) that are eager to take the task. The ultimate shape of the Po cycle route will result from the outcome of this process.

6. Technical facts

The proposed route follows mainly minor roads with little traffic.

Stretches with heavy traffic may be estimated in about 10% of the whole route (120 km).

Two kinds of authorities are in charge of most roads concerned with the proposed route:

- Province Administrations, which are in charge of most non-urban roads else than highways and main roads (national roads);
- Magistrato del Po (Po Water Authority), which is in charge of all towpaths and trails close to the river.

Signposts for cyclists are available on near 100 km of the route (140 km if we include alternative routes), mainly in Piedmont. Most signposted stretches are within Po river park. Signals along signposted routes in the Park, however, are quite scarce.

Signposts within Po park are complex tourist signals, which consists mainly in square metal plates, with yellow background, containing different symbols on the same plate:

- a logo referring to the river
- a logo with a cyclist and a pedestrian
- (sometimes) a number or a letter referring to the route
- one or two opposite arrows with the destination names.

A different kind of signals have been set up by Province Administrations, first of all by Province of Torino². These signals are very similar to the ones applying to car drivers: same shape and dimensions, same background (blue, white or brown). The chief difference is that cycling signposts contain the logo of the bike (standard logo fixed by national laws).

Two main types of signals have been used by Province of Torino:

- big plates containing an arrow, the destination name and the distance;
- small plates containing an arrow and no destination name.

The municipality of Saluzzo (CN) installed a different kind of signposts, consisting in a small metal plate, with brown background, containing the logo of a squirrel riding his bike, an arrow and the number of the cycling route³.

² Up to now the Province Administration of Torino signposted about 350 km of cycling routes in the whole province.

³ The Municipality of Saluzzo signposted about 130 km of country cycle routes around Saluzzo.

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1. Ventimiglia - Albenga - Cuneo. Technical facts

Stretch	Km	start height m ab. s.l.	max height m ab. s.l.	Type of roads	Surface	Traffic
Ventimiglia - Dolceacqua - Isolabona - Pigna	33	10	280	minor roads	asphalt	medium
Pigna - Baiardo - Ghimbegna pass - Badalucco - Montalto Ligure	36	280	900	minor roads	asphalt	low
Montalto Ligure - Carpasio - Col d'Oggia - S. Bernardo di Conio - Colla S. Bartolomeo - Ginestro pass Casanova Lerrone - Garlenda - Albenga	54	315	1.167	minor roads	asphalt	low
Albenga - Zuccarello - Erli - Calizzano	34	5	820	main road (14 km), minor roads	asphalt	medium (main road), low (minor roads)
Calizzano - Caragna - Murialdo Piano - Montezémolo - Murazzano	67	647	739	minor roads; main roads (18 km)	asphalt, gravel (8 km)	low; medium (main roads)
Murazzano - Clavesana - Carrù - Morozzo - Riforno - Cuneo	50	739	739	main roads (28 km); minor roads (22 km)	asphalt	medium
Total	274					

1.1. Ventimiglia - Albenga - Cuneo. Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental attractions	Main tourist attractions	Trains	Notes
Ventimiglia - Dolceacqua - Isolabona - Pigna		bathing facilities in Ventimiglia; Ventimiglia, Dolceacqua	main railway station in Menton, Ventimiglia	hilly
Pigna - Baiardo - Ghimbegna pass - Badalucco - Montalto Ligure	olive groves, landscapes			hilly
Montalto Ligure - Carpasio - Col d'Oggia - S. Bernardo di Conio - Colla S. Bartolomeo - Ginestro pass Casanova Lerrone - Garlenda - Albenga	olive groves, landscapes	batghing facilities in Albenga	main railway station in Albenga	hilly
Albenga - Zuccarello - Erli - Calizzano	landscapes			hilly
Calizzano - Caragna - Murialdo Piano - Montezémolo - Murazzano	landscape; Alta Langa		railway station in Ceva (9 km from the route)	hilly
Murazzano - Clavesana - Carrù - Morozzo - Riforno - Cuneo			main railway station in Cuneo	hilly (18 km); flat (32 km)

2. Alternative route Ventimiglia - Cuneo (mountain bikes only). Technical facts

Stretch	Km	start height m ab. s.l.	max height m ab. s.l.	Type of roads	Surface	Traffic
Ventimiglia - Dolceacqua - Isolabona - Pigna	33	10	280	minor roads	asphalt	medium
Pigna - Madonna del Carmine - Colla di Langan - Colla Belenda - Passo di Colladente - Passo di Tanarello - Monesi	42	280	2.042	minor roads 50%; old military roads 50%	asphalt 50%; gravel, earth 50%	low (50% car-free)
Monesi - Colle del Lago dei Signori - Col della Boaria - Colle di Tenda - Limone Piemonte	47	1.310	2.111	old military roads 70%; main roads 20%; minor roads 10%	gravel, earth 70%; asphalt 30%	low (80% car-free)
Limone Piemonte - Vernante - Borgo S. Dalmazzo - Cuneo -	37	1009	1009	main road 80%; minor roads 20%		high 80%; low 20%
Total	159					

2.1. Alternative route Ventimiglia - Cuneo (mountain bikes only). Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental attractions	Tourist facilities	Trains	Notes
Ventimiglia - Dolceacqua - Isolabona - Pigna		bathing facilities in Ventimiglia; Ventimiglia, Dolceacqua	main railway station in Menton, Ventimiglia	hilly
Pigna - Madonna del Carmine - Colla di Langan - Colla Belenda - Passo di Colladente - Passo di Tanarello - Monesi	landscapes, mountain pastures	alpine refuges available; tourist facilities in Monesi		very hilly
Monesi - Colle del Lago dei Signori - Col della Boaria - Colle di Tenda - Limone Piemonte	landscapes, mountain pastures; Regional Park Valle Pesio e Alta Valle Tanaro	alpine refuges available; tourist facilities in Limone Piemonte	railway station in Limone Piemonte	very hilly
Limone Piemonte - Vernante - Borgo S. Dalmazzo - Cuneo -	landscapes, mountain pastures	Cuneo	railway station in Cuneo	hilly

3. Cuneo - Torino - Casale - Valenza Po. Technical facts

Stretch	Km	start height m ab. s.l.	max height m ab. s.l.	Type of roads	Surface	Traffic
Cuneo - Borghetto - Busca - Verzuolo - Saluzzo	32	534	553	minor roads (signposted from Busca to Saluzzo)	asphalt 90%; gravel 10%	low
Saluzzo - Villafranca Piemonte - Pancalieri - Carignano - Vinovo - Tagliaferro - Torino	66	395	395	minor roads (signposted from Saluzzo to Villafranca)	asphalt	low
<i>Alternative Saluzzo - Torino: Saluzzo - Villafranca - Vigone - Scalenghe - Airasca - Volvera - Stupinigi - Torino</i>	70	395	395	<i>minor roads (almost all signposted)</i>	<i>asphalt 90%; gravel 10%</i>	<i>low, medium (10%)</i>
Torino - S. Mauro - Gæssino - S. Raffaele Cimena - Chivasso	32	210	230	cycling paths 30%; towpaths 30%, trails, other roads. Partially signposted		car-free 80%; low 10%, medium-high 10%
Chivasso (bridge) - Verolengo - Crescentino - Palazzolo Vercellese - Trino - Pobleto - Morano sul Po - Casale	55	183	183	minor roads 90%; main roads 10%. Signposted from Crescentino to Casale	asphalt 70%; gravel 30%	low 90%; medium-high 10%
Casale - Frassineto Po - Valmacca - Pomaro Monferrato - Valenza	28	116	161	minor roads, all signposted	asphalt	low
Total (alternative not included)	283					

3.1. Cuneo - Torino - Casale - Valenza Po. Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental attractions	Main tourist attractions	Trains	Notes
Cuneo - Borghetto - Busca - Verzuolo - Saluzzo		Saluzzo	railway station in Savigliano (13 km from Saluzzo)	nearly flat; cycle map available for 50% of the route
Saluzzo - Villafranca Piemonte - Pancalieri - Carignano - Vinovo - Tagliaferro - Torino	Po River Regional Park	Staffarda abbey, Torino	main railway station in Torino	flat; cycle map available for 30% of the route
<i>Alternative Saluzzo - Torino: Saluzzo - Villafranca - Vigone - Scalenghe - Airasca - Volvera - Stupinigi - Torino</i>	<i>Po River Regional Park</i>	<i>Staffarda abbey, Stupinigi Royal Palace, Torino</i>	<i>railway station in Airasca; main railway station in Torino</i>	<i>flat; cycle map available</i>
Torino - S. Mauro - Gæssino - S. Raffaele Cimena - Chivasso	Po River Regional Park		main railway station in Chivasso	flat; cycle map available (only for Turin)t
Chivasso (bridge) - Verolengo - Crescentino - Palazzolo Vercellese - Trino - Pobleto - Morano sul Po - Casale	Po River Regional Park	Casale	railway station in Casale	flat; cycle map available
Casale - Frassineto Po - Valmacca - Pomaro Monferrato - Valenza	Po River Regional Park		railway station in Valenza	nearly flat; cycle map available

4. Link Genoa - Po river. Technical facts

Stretch	Km	start height m ab. s.l.	max height m ab. s.l.	Type of roads	Surface	Traffic
Genoa - Begato - Torrazza - S. Olcese - Casella	25	10	466	minor roads	mostly asphalt	low
Casella - Busalla - Ronco Scrivia - Arquata Scrivia	30	410	410	main roads	asphalt	medium/high
Arquata Scrivia - Serravalle Scrivia - Castellar Ponzano - Rivalta Scrivia - Tortona - Castelnuovo Scrivia - Casei Gerola - Cornale	55	248	248	mostly minor roads	mostly asphalt	low
Total	110					

4.1. Link Genoa - Po river. Tourist features

Stretch	Main environmental attractions	Main tourist attractions	Trains	Notes
Genoa - Begato - Torrazza - S. Olcese - Casella		Genoa; Walls park (ancient defence system behind Genoa)	main railway station in Genoa; railway link Genoa-Casella	
Casella - Busalla - Ronco Scrivia - Arquata Scrivia			railway stations all along the route from Busalla to Arquata Scrivia	
Arquata Scrivia - Serravalle Scrivia - Castellar Ponzano - Rivalta Scrivia - Tortona - Castelnuovo Scrivia - Casei Gerola - Cornale			railway stations along the whole route	

5. Valenza Po - Pavia - Cremona - Ferrara - Venice. Technical facts

Stretch	Km	m ab. s. l. (start)	Type of roads	Surface
(Valenza bridge), Pieve del Cairo, Sannazzaro dei Burgondi, Mezzana, Siccomario, Pavia	60	90	Minor roads (except bridges)	asphalt
<i>Alternative: (Valenza bridge), Valenza, Bassignana, Isola S. Antonio, Cornale, (bridge), Sannazzaro</i>	44	90	<i>Minor roads (except bridges)</i>	<i>asphalt (some gravel)</i>
Pavia, (Becca bridge), Albaredo, Bosco Tosca, (bridge), Monticelli Pavese, Orio Litta, Guardamiglio, S. Rocco, (bridge), Piacenza	61	77	First 15 km high traffic, then minor roads (except bridges)	asphalt
Piacenza, Caorso, Castelvetro, (<i>Cremona</i>), Soarza, Villanova d'Arda	60	50	Minor roads (cycle path planned from Piacenza to Caorso)	asphalt 50% macadam 50%
Villanova d'Arda, Zibello, Roccabianca, Mezzani, Brescello, Gualtieri, Guastalla	65	42	Minor roads (cycle path planned for the whole stretch)	asphalt 40% macadam 40% gravel 20%
Guastalla, (bridge), Dosolo, S. Matteo, Borgoforte, (Governolo Bridge), S. Benedetto Po, Quingentole, Revere	60	25	Minor roads	asphalt 40% macadam 40% gravel 20%
Revere, Sermide, Felonica, Stellata, Bondeno, Ferrara	60	16	Minor roads (cycle path planned)	asphalt
Ferrara, Ro, (Berra ferry), Papozze, Bottrighe, Contarina	60	8	Minor roads (cycle path planned from Ferrara to Ro)	asphalt
Contarina, Rosolina, Cavanella, Chioggia, (ferry to Pellestrina), (ferry to Alberoni), Lido, Venezia	50	6	Minor roads	asphalt
Total (alternatives not included)	520			

5.1. Valenza Po - Pavia - Cremona - Ferrara - Venice. Tourist features

Stretch	Cycle tourism facilities	Environment	Other attractions	Notes
(Valenza bridge), Pieve del Cairo, Sannazzaro dei Burgondi, Mezzana, Siccomario, Pavia	Camping: Pavia, Alessandria. Train: Valenza, Pavia	Bird Sanctuary in Frascarolo	Pavia	flat
<i>Alternative: (Valenza bridge), Valenza, Bassignana, Isola S. Antonio, Cornale, (bridge), Sannazzaro</i>	<i>Camping: Alessandria. Train: Valenza, Voghera</i>			<i>moderately hilly; cycle map available</i>
Pavia, (Becca bridge), Albaredo, Bosco Tosca, (bridge), Monticelli Pavese, Orio Litta, Guardamiglio, S. Rocco, (bridge), Piacenza	Train: Stradella, Piacenza	Ticino river Regional Park		flat
Piacenza, Caorso, Castelvetro, (<i>Cremona</i>), Soarza, Villanova d'Arda	Camping: Cremona Train: Cremona, Busseto, Colorno		Cremona, Piacenza	flat
Villanova d'Arda, Zibello, Roccabianca, Mezzani, Brescello, Gualtieri, Guastalla	Youth Hostel: Guastalla			flat
Guastalla, (bridge), Dosolo, S. Matteo, Borgoforte, (Governolo Bridge), S. Benedetto Po, Quingentole, Revere	Train: Borgoforte, S. Benedetto Po, Revere	Mincio and Oglio rivers	Sabbioneta, Guastalla, Mantova (12 km from the route)	flat
Revere, Sermide, Felonica, Stellata, Bondeno, Ferrara	Camping and Youth Hostel in Ferrara Train: Revere, Bondeno Ferrara		Ferrara	flat
Ferrara, Ro, (Berra ferry), Papozze, Bottrighe, Contarina	Train: Ferrara, Loréo	Po delta Natural Park		flat
Contarina, Rosolina, Cavanella, Chioggia, (ferry to Pellestrina), (ferry to Alberoni), Lido, Venezia	Campings avail. Train: Chioggia, Venice	Venice laguna	Chioggia, Venice	flat; cycle map available

6. Venice - Trieste. Technical facts

Stretch	Km	m ab. s. l. (start)	Type of roads	Surface
Venezia, (ferry to Punta Sabbioni), Cavallino, Lido di Jesolo, Caorle	45	2	Minor roads	asphalt (some gravel)
Caorle, Portogruaro, Alvisopoli, S.Giorgio, Latisana	40	4	Minor roads (some stretch with high traffic)	asphalt
Latisana, Precenicco, Carlino, Cervignano, Aquileia, Grado	45	4	Minor roads; high traffic stretch from Cervignano to Grado (18 km)	asphalt (some gravel)
Grado Monfalcone, Sistiana, Trieste (Slovenian border)	70	4	Minor roads; some high traffic stretch from Monfalcone to Sistiana (11 km)	asphalt (some gravel)
<i>Alternative from Monfalcone to Trieste via Karst: Monfalcone, Medeazza, Visogliano, S. Pelagio, Gabrovizza, Villa Opicina, Trieste</i>	34	4	Minor roads	<i>asphalt (some gravel)</i>
Total (alternatives not included)	234			

4. Venice - Trieste. Tourist features

Stretch	Cycle tourism facilities	Environment	Other attractions	Notes
Venezia, (ferry to Punta Sabbioni), Cavallino, Lido di Jesolo, Caorle	Campings available	Venice laguna	Jesolo, Caorle (seaside resorts)	flat; cycle map available
Caorle, Portogruaro, Alvisopoli, S.Giorgio, Latisana	Campings available Train: Portogruaro, Latisana		Concordia Sagittaria-	flat
Latisana, Precenicco, Carlino, Cervignano, Aquileia, Grado	Campings available Train: Latisana, Cervignano	Marano laguna	Aquileia (basilica, archaeological excavations, archaeological museum), Grado (basilica, bathing facilities)	flat
Grado Monfalcone, Sistiana, Trieste (Slovenian border)	Campings available Train: Monfalcone, Trieste	close to Karst	Trieste	moderately hilly
<i>Alternative from Monfalcone to Trieste via Karst: Monfalcone, Medeazza, Visogliano, S. Pelagio, Gabrovizza, Villa Opicina, Trieste</i>	<i>Campings available. Train: Monfalcone, Trieste</i>	<i>inside Karst; Grotta Gigante (tourist cavern)</i>		<i>hilly</i>

Slovenia

1. About the proposed route

The Mediterranean Route will interest Slovenia just for a short stretch, since Slovenian coast is quite short.

We thought of two possible routes, depending both on the future status of international borders in the area, and on the availability of a new cycling path from Trieste to the Italian-Slovenian border of Pesek, passing through Val Rosandra, a Natural Park near the border. The project of the above cycling path, which will go partly through Italy, partly through Slovenia, is supported by local cycling groups and is now under discussion; we hope it may be implemented soon.

As for borders, the only international borders in the area are along main roads; therefore they are not very safe for cycle tourists.

Some small Italian-Slovenian borders are indeed open, but they may be used only by people living in the area. This will no longer be a problem within a few years, since Slovenia is going to enter the European Union. On the contrary, minor borders between Slovenia and Croatia are now completely closed. We hope that in the future they will be opened, but it might take time.

The alternative cycling routes we are thinking of are a long route, via Škočianske jame, and a short one, via Val Rosandra.

The route via Škočianske jame uses international borders but is quite long and follows 13 km of national busy road.

The route through Val Rosandra will take advantage of the future cycling path and is more direct. However, it goes through a Slovenian-Croatian border (Podgorje) which is closed at present.

Both alternatives have been put out on the map with the help of cycling experts living in the area. The routes we draw, however, are to be intended as first proposals, which have to be assessed by cycling groups and public administrations in Slovenia; an agreement is also needed between public administrations in Slovenia, Croatia and Italy.

2. Introducing the route

The following notes describe the stretch through Slovenia, which is part of the route

Trieste-Rijeka. To fully evaluate the Slovenian stretch it would be necessary considering the whole route.

The longer route - Škočianske jame - features:

- Škočianske jame, famous tourist cavern;
- Reka river;
- Ilirska Bistrica, small town on the road Ljubljana-Rijeka and railway station on the line Ljubljana-Rijeka.

The shorter route – Val Rosandra - features:

- Val Rosandra, small but very interesting Natural Park, appreciated by climbers and wanderers;
- a pleasant area in the Karst (Čičarija).

3. Route description

The longer route starts from the Italian-Slovenian border of Basovizza and follows minor roads up to Škočianske jame. Then it continues along a minor road parallel to the river Reka up to the village of Ribnica. From Ribnica to Ilirska Bistrica (13 m) the route keeps along the river but follows the national road Ljubljana-Rijeka. Leaving Ilirska Bistrica, the route continues along Reka river, following minor roads; finally it reaches the Slovenian-Croatian border of Rupa.

The whole stretch is 69 km long and does not feature big gradients.

The shorter route, through Val Rosandra, starts near the Italian-Slovenian border of Pesek, and follows minor roads leading to the small village of Podgorje, just 2 km from the border between Slovenia and Croatia. As we already said, this border is closed at present. The whole stretch is about 16 km long, and has little gradients.

A comparison between the length of the two stretches ought to consider the whole route Trieste-Rijeka. If we include the Croatian stretch, the route Trieste-Rijeka via Škočianske jame attains a total length of near 90 km (69+20,5 km). The alternative route through Val Rosandra has a total length of about 65 km (16+48,5 km).

4. Contacts

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1 –Proposed route (Škočianske jame)

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Basovizza (Italian border) - Lokev- Vremski Britof - Ribnica	34	407	450	low	Karst; Reka river	Škočianske jame (tourist cavern)	
Ribnica - Ilirska Bistrica	13	350?	400?	high			Small town of Ilirska Bistrica
Ilirska Bistrica - Jablanica -Sušak - Novokračine - Rupa (Croatian border)	22	400?	460?	low			
Total	69						

2 – Possible future route (Val Rosandra)

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Pesek (Italian border) - Kozina- Prešnica - Podgorje (Croatian border)		450	507	low	Val Rosandra (natural park), Karst		

Croatia

1. About the proposed route

Croatian coast consists of several mountain chains parallel to the shoreline, with a multitude of narrow islands facing the shore.

A unique main road - the so called Magistrala - borders the coast: it is a narrow road with quite a lot of traffic, particularly in summer.

Highlands behind the mountains features some minor roads with little traffic. However, links from the highlands to the coast are generally very hard and therefore would keep cyclists away from the sea and its attractions (beaches, seaside resorts, historical towns, islands). Moreover some highland roads are wiped out by strong winds and may be quite difficult to cycle.

The cycling route we are introducing tries to avoid high mountains and keeps as close as possible to the sea. In many cases it goes through the islands facing the coast, which is the easiest way to avoid the Magistrala. Islands are not only cycle-friendly: they are real Mediterranean and main tourist attractions!

Most ferry links from the islands to the coast are permanent; however, some of them are scheduled only in summer and must therefore be substituted by alternative routes in the other seasons.

2. Introducing the route

The proposed route attains a total length of 540-560 km, depending on two possible starting points, that is two alternative borders between Slovenia and Croatia.

The routes includes 6 ferry connections, two of which (Baška-Lopar, from Krk island to Rab island; Sumartin-Makarska, from Brač island to the dry land) are scheduled only from the end of May to the end of September.

The route through Croatia has mainly to be regarded as a hilly route. As we already said, mountains are very closed to the sea. We just notice that islands too (which are the remains of former mountain chains) are very hilly! Most roads consist of an endless series of slopes; in most cases, however, slopes are neither very long nor very steep.

The route we are proposing has been defined in co-operation with the Croatian National Tourist Board, on the basis of suggestions coming from cycling experts with a good knowledge of the Croatian coast (in particularly Kvarner Gulf and upper Dalmatia). The route, however, is to be considered as a first proposal, which has to be put down in more details after farther investigations and which has to be assessed by public administrations and cycling associations involved.

3. Main points of interest

Main natural features and tourist attractions of the proposed route are:

- Rijeka, main city and main harbour, with ferry links to major Croatian ports;
- Krk and Rab islands, appreciated tourist destinations in Kvarner Gulf;
- Zadar, attractive historical town and tourist resort, with ferry links to major Croatian ports and to Italy (Ancona);
- Šibenik, historical town and tourist resort, at the edge of Krka National Park (famous because of its cascades);
- Split, main city and main harbour, with ferry links to major Croatian ports and to Italy (Ancona). Split is also appreciated as historical city and seaside resort;
- Brač island, attractive tourist destination;
- Makarska and its coast, with very appreciated bathing facilities;
- Dubrovnik, world famous art city and appreciated sea side resort, with international airport and ferry links to major Croatian ports, to Italy (Ancona, Bari) and to Greece (Igoumenítsa).

A wide range of tourist facilities are available all along the cycling route.

Regular ferry lines connecting all major Croatian ports (Rijeka, Zadar, Šibenik, Split, Dubrovnik) allow cyclists to substitute one or more stretches with ferries.

4. Route description

As we already said, the border between Slovenia and Croatia may be crossed near

Rupa, on the mountains behind Rijeka, or near Podgorje, in upper Istria.

The route Rupa - Rijeka (20 km) follows minor roads going down directly to Rijeka.

The route Podgorje - Rijeka (38 km) follows minor roads in upper Istria (Čičarija), with very little traffic. Then it goes down to the sea, not far from Opatija (famous seaside resort), and finally reaches Rijeka.

Both alternatives are to be regarded as hilly routes.

From Rijeka to Malinska (34 km) the proposed route finds its way in the urban area of Rijeka, touching the village of Bakar, following the scenic route bordering Bakar bay and finally reaching Kraljevica, appreciated seaside resort at the entry of the bay. In Kraljevica the route leaves the dry land following the impressive bridge (with a very narrow cycling path) that links the coast with the island of Krk. Then it reaches the seaside resort of Malinska, on the western coast of the island.

The stretch Rijeka-Malinska consists partly of minor roads, partly of main roads, with medium/high traffic; it features many slopes, but gradients are not very high.

From Malinska to Baska (34 km) the route follows minor roads with little traffic through Krk island. It features several slopes, none of which is too hard.

A seasonal ferry, sailing from the end of May to the end of September, connects the small seaside resort of Baska, at the southern end of Krk, to the village of Lopar, at the northern end of the island of Rab.

A minor road, with some slopes (particularly in the first stretch) links Lopar to Mišnjak, at the southern end of Rab.

A ferry line, sailing all year long, connects Mišnjak with Jablanac, on the dry land.

Since the ferry link Krk - Rab is scheduled only in summer, from October to May cyclists must necessarily find their way on the dry land: this means following minor roads behind the shoreline from Kraljevica to Novi Vinodolski (about 28 km) and then cycling on the main road - the Magistrala - from Novi Vinodolski to Jablanac (about 40 km). We must however say that traffic in winter is much less than in summer, since tourist flows are little.

From Jablanac to Prizna (19 km) the route follows a relatively short stretch of Magistrala

(14 km). Unfortunately no alternatives are available, neither in winter nor in summer.

Both connections Jablanac - Magistrala and Magistrala - Prizna features significant slopes, but not very long.

In Prizna a permanent ferry link connects the dry land with Žigljen, on the peninsula of Pag.

From Žigljen to Zadar (79) the route follows the minor road along the thin Pag peninsula, touching the seaside resorts of Novalja and Pag. At the bottom of the peninsula (Ražanac) the route turns right along minor roads leading directly to Zadar.

The route Žigljen - Zadar consists mainly of level roads, but for the first stretches Žigljen-Novalja and Novalja-Pag.

From Zadar to Šibenik (66 km) the route keeps behind the hills bordering the coast, along minor roads with gentle slopes. Some stretches (10-15 km) are not asphalted. A few kilometres before Šibenik the route crosses the scenic Krka fiord, and follows the main road (Magistrala) leading to the city. The final stretch (about 6 km) features high traffic roads.

From Šibenik to Split (69 km) the route leaves once again the coast, following minor hilly roads on the highlands, with little traffic; some short stretches (about 10 km) are not asphalted. Near Trogir, very attractive historical town, the route comes down to the sea. From Trogir to Split the route follows minor roads (with medium traffic) all along the shoreline (the Magistrala runs a little bit higher).

From Split to Ploče two alternatives are available: a summer route, through the island of Brač and a winter route through the dry land.

The summer route leaves the dry land in Split. A permanent ferry link connects Split to Supetar, on the island of Brač. From Supetar to Sumartin, at the eastern end of Brač, cyclists follow minor roads, partly bordering the sea, partly climbing the mountains; most roads have little traffic and are quite hilly. The stretch through Brač is 40 km long.

Sumartin has ferry link with Makarska, chief tourist resort of the coast with the same name. This ferry, however, sails only from the end of May to the end of September.

From Makarska to Ploče (55 km) the route keeps far from the coast, behind the mountains bordering the shoreline. The route follows minor roads featuring very hilly stretches (Hrastovac pass, 601 m).

The dry-land route from Split to Ploče follows minor roads behind the coast: the first stretch goes from Split to Omis (valley of river Vilar); the second one from Omis to Katuni, along the beautiful canyon of river Cetina; the last stretch runs on the highlands behind Makarska coast. In Ravča the winter route joins the summer route coming from Makarska, reaches Vrgorac and finally goes down to Ploče. The dry-land route from Split to Ploče is about 120 km long and features very hilly stretches (Turija pass, 715 m, half way from Grabovač to Vrgorac).

In Ploče the route points once more to the sea: a permanent ferry link leads to Trpanj, on the peninsula of Peljesac.

From Trpanj to Ston (55 km), at the bottom of the peninsula, the route follows minor roads, mainly hilly, with little traffic.

From Ston to Dubrovnik (52 km) the route keeps close to the coast, partly on minor roads, partly on the Magistrala. About 50% of the route has heavy traffic. But for some stretches the route follows level roads, or roads with little gradients.

In Dubrovnik, unfortunately, the route stops. As we already said, the land border between Croatia and Yugoslavia (Montenegro) is closed at present. The only way to go on is taking the ferry to Greece (Igoumenítsa) passing through Bari (Italy). From Bari it is also possible to reach Albania (Durrës).

5. Technical facts

The proposed route is about 550 km long. Near 20% of the route (110 km) runs through islands facing the coast: Krk, Rab and Brač. The route through the island of Rab and Brač, however, may be cycled only in Summer, since in the other seasons ferries do not sail. Dry land alternatives are available but features some stretches with heavy traffic (Magistrala).

The summer route follows mainly minor roads with little traffic; high traffic stretches may be estimated in about 60 km (11% of the route).

Almost all roads are asphalted: not asphalted stretches are probably less than 30 km.

6. Contacts

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1. - Rupa (Slovenian border) - Rijeka. Proposed route - Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Rupa (Slovenian border) - Škalnica - Marčelji - Viškovo - Rijeka		460	460	low

1.1 - Rupa (Slovenian border) - Rijeka. Proposed route - Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Rupa (Slovenian border) - Škalnica - Marčelji - Viškovo - Rijeka		Rijeka historical town centre, Rijeka National museum	ferry connections from Rijeka to Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, and other croatian ports

2 - Podgorje (Slovenian border) - Rijeka. Possible future route - Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Podgorje (Slovenian border) - Jelovice - Vodice - Mune - Zvoneće - Matulji (Opatija) - Diracje - Rijeka		600	660	low

2.1 - Podgorje (Slovenian border) - Rijeka. Possible future route - Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Podgorje (Slovenian border) - Jelovice - Vodice - Mune - Zvoneće - Matulji (Opatija) - Diracje - Rijeka	Karst landscape, Kvarner gulf (beautiful landscape)	Rijeka historical town centre, Rijeka National museum	Opatija famous seaside resort, ferry connections from Rijeka to Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, and other croatian ports

3 - Rijeka - Zadar. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Rijeka - Draga - Vitoševo (Bakar) - Škrlevo - Meja-Gaj - Križišće - Bakarac - Kraljevica - Omišalj - Malinska		10	280	low/medium
Malinska - Dobrinj - Vrbnik - Baška		10	316	low
Baska - Lopar (by ferry) - Supetarska Draga - Rab - Mišnjak	22	10	120?	low
<i>Alternative (winter) route Rijeka - Jablanak: Rijeka - Draga - Vitoševo (Bakar) - Škrlevo - Meja-Gaj - Križišće -Kostelj - Bribir - Novi Vinodolski - Senj - Lokva - Jablanac</i>		10	307	<i>low (40%); medium/high (60%)</i>
Mišnjak - Jablanac (by ferry) - Prizna		10	300?	medium/high
Prizna - Žigljen (by ferry) - Novalja - Kolan - Pag	28	10	250?	low
Pag - Dinjiška - Ražanac - Poljica - Zadar		11	95	low
Total (alternative route not included)				

3.1 - Rijeka - Zadar. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Rijeka - Draga - Vitoševo (Bakar) - Škrlevo - Meja-Gaj - Križišće - Bakarac - Kraljevica - Omišalj - Malinska	Bakar bay; Krk island	Kraljevica (picturesque village); Ostro beaches (Kraljevica); Malinska beaches	Kraljevica and Malinska seaside resorts
Malinska - Dobrinj - Vrbnik - Baška	Krk island	Baška beaches	
Baska - Lopar (by ferry) - Supetarska Draga - Rab - Mišnjak	Rab island	Rab (ancient picturesque village); Rab beaches	Rab seaside resort
<i>Alternative (winter) route Rijeka - Jablanak: Rijeka - Draga - Vitoševo (Bakar) - Škrlevo - Meja-Gaj - Križišće -Kostelj - Bribir - Novi Vinodolski - Senj - Lokva - Jablanac</i>	<i>Bakar bay; Vinodol (vineyards)</i>	<i>Novi Vinodolski and Senj historical town centers</i>	<i>Novi Vinodolsky seaside resort</i>
Mišnjak - Jablanac (by ferry) - Prizna		Jablanac (picturesque village)	Jablanac seaside resort
Prizna - Žigljen (by ferry) - Novalja - Kolan - Pag	Pag island	Novalja and Pag beaches	Novalja and Pag seaside resorts
Pag - Dinjiška - Ražanac - Poljica - Zadar	Pag island	Zadar historical town center; Zadar archaeological museum	Zadar tourist resort; ferry lines from Zadar to Italy, to Rijeka, to Split, to Dubrovnik and other croatian ports

4 - Zadar - Split. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Zadar - Galovac - Gorica - Kakma - Vrana - Banjevci - Putičanje - Zaton - Šibenik		8	156	low
Šibenik - Dubrava - Danilo Gornje - Slivno - Sitno - Prgomet - Labin - Sv. Oštak (Trogir) - Kaštela - Split		34	385	low/medium
Total				

4.1 - Zadar - Split. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Zadar - Galovac - Gorica - Kakma - Vrana - Banjevci - Putičanje - Zaton - Šibenik	Vrana lagoon; Krka National Park (Šibenik)	Krka fiord; Šibenik historical town center	Šibenik tourist resort; ferry lines to Italy, to Zadar and other croatian ports
Šibenik - Dubrava - Danilo Gornje - Slivno - Sitno - Prgomet - Labin - Sv. Oštak (Trogir) - Kaštela - Split		Trogir historical town; Split historical town centre; Diocletian Palace in Split; Split archaeological Museum	Trogir seaside resort; Split tourist resort; ferry lines to Italy, Rijeka, Zadar, Dubrovnik and other croatian ports

5 - Split - Dubrovnik. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Split - Supetar (by ferry) - Postira - Pučišća - Selca - Sumartin - Makarska (by ferry)		9	391	low
Makarska - Tučepi - Hrastovac pass - Kljenak - Ravča - Vrgorac - Umčani - Staševica - Ploče	55	14	601	low
<i>Alternative (winter) route Split - Ploče: Split - Mravince Srinjine - Gata - Zvečanje - Blato na Cetini - Katuni - Sestanovac - Grabovač - Zagvozd - Kozica - Vrgorac - Umčani - Staševica - Ploče</i>		9	715	low
Ploče - Trpanj (by ferry) - Županje Selo - Potomje - Popova Luka - Dubrava - Sparagovic - Ston		10	278	low
Ston - Doli - Banići - Majkovi - Trsteno - Zaton - Mokošica - Dubrovnik		10	100	low/high
Total (alternative route non included)				

5.1 - Split - Dubrovnik. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Split - Supetar (by ferry) - Postira - Pučišća - Selca - Sumartin - Makarska (by ferry)	Brač island, Makarska coast	Supetar beach, Makarska beaches, Makarska historical town	Makarska main seaside resort
Makarska - Tučepi - Hrastovac pass - Kljenak - Ravča - Vrgorac - Umčani - Staševica - Ploče	Neretva delta		
<i>Alternative (winter) route Split - Ploče: Split - Mravince Srinjine - Gata - Zvečanje - Blato na Cetini - Katuni - Sestanovac - Grabovač - Zagvozd - Kozica - Vrgorac - Umčani - Staševica - Ploče</i>	<i>Cetina river; Neretva delta</i>	<i>Omis beaches (6 km from the route)</i>	<i>Omis seaside resort (6 km from the route)</i>
Ploče - Trpanj (by ferry) - Županje Selo - Potomje - Popova Luka - Dubrava - Sparagovic - Ston	Peljesac island	Peljesac beaches	Ston little seaside resort
Ston - Doli - Banići - Majkovi - Trsteno - Zaton - Mokošica - Dubrovnik	Koločep channel	Slano (attractive village); Slano beaches	Slano small seaside resort; Dubrovnik historical city and main seaside resort; Dubrovnik international airport; ferry links to Italy, Greece and other Croatian harbours

Yugoslavia (Montenegro)

1. About the proposed route

As we already told the coast border between Croatia and Montenegro (near Herceg Novi) is closed at present. Some sport groups recently succeeded in passing it, but they had to reach special agreements with border authorities.

The only open border is the one with Albania (Hani i Hotit), which however is quite far from the coast (about 75 km, if one follows main roads).

At present, the main door to Montenegro coast is Bar.

Bar, Montenegro and Yugoslavia chief harbour, has regular ferry links with Italy (Bari). Another ferry line connects Bar with Greece (Igoumenítsa), but the ferry has to sail through Bari. In times of lower international tensions a ferry line connects Bar to Albania (Durrës) and to Igoumenítsa (Greece).

We worked therefore on a possible cycling route through Montenegro which allows cycle tourist to go from Bar to Hani i Hotit, on one side, and from Bar to Herceg Novi, on the other side, hoping that in the next future the border near Herceg Novi me be opened again.

We must also notice that Bar is not far form a minor border with Albania (Murigan), which might lead directly to Shkodër and to the Albanian coast.

We looked for minor roads suitable to cycle tourism on a good map at the scale 1 to 200.000. Then we submitted our proposal to the Cycling Union of Montenegro, which expressed a great interest in joining the project. The Cycling Union has links with many cycling groups all over the world, and organises in Montenegro training and tourist trips for foreign cyclists.

The cycling route we introduce is to be intended as a first proposal, which still needs to be validated by local experts and public authorities.

The proposed route attains a total length of 184 km and follows mostly mountain roads (please notice that Montenegro means "black mountain!").

The national railway Bar-Podgorica allows avoiding one of the hardest stretches of the whole route (Sutoran pass, from Budva to Virpazar).

2. Main stops of the route

The proposed route starts in Bar, both main harbour and appreciated sea side resort.

The route climbs Rumija mountain, just behind Bar, and reaches the village of Virpazar, on the south-western bank of the beautiful Shkodër lake.

In Virpazar the cycling route forks: one branch points to Podgorica and Hani i Hotit; the other one to Budva and Herceg Novi.

Main stops of the stretch from Virpazar to Hani i Hotit are:

- Rijeka, picturesque village at the very end of a small fjord diving into Shkodër lake;
- Podgorica, Montenegro capital, main railway station on the line Bar-Belgrade.

Chief stops on the stretch from Bar to Herceg Novi are:

- Budva, picturesque centre and well known seaside resort;
- Tivat, small town and seaside resort on the bank of Tivat bay;
- Boka Kotorska, one of most attractive fjord in southern Europe;
- Herceg Novi, nice town at the beginning of Boka Kotorska.

3. Route description

From Bar to Virpazar (31,5 km) the route follows a minor road up to Sutoran pass (884 m), featuring a very long slope (13 km with an average gradient of 6,5%). The route offers beautiful views both on the Adriatic sea and on Shkodër lake (on the other side of the pass).

Instead of climbing Sutoran pass, Virpazar may be reached with a long detour on the hillside of Rumija mountain, following a minor road which does not avoid slopes, but which is indeed less hard. The alternative road, with a total length of 74 km, features long and impressing views on Shkodër lake.

From Virpazar to Podgorica (48,5 km), the route follows minor roads, in a land of hills and waters, among which the attractive Rijeka fjord. Slopes are present but mostly soft. From Podgorica to Hani i Hotit (24,5 km) it is difficult to find a route other than the national road. Further investigations should assess whether cycle-friendly alternatives are available or not.

From Virpazar to Budva (31,5 km) the route follows minor country roads (mostly not asphalted) going up the valley of Oranouska river and reaching the main road Cetinje-Budva, very close to Seoštik pass (876 m). After the pass the route points down to the sea, following the main road or preferably a parallel not asphalted trail. Near the village of Martinovići (5 km from the pass), the route turns right on a minor (asphalted) road, winding down to Budva.

The above stretch is very hilly; detailed investigations in the field should assess whether gradients and country roads are suitable to cycle tourists.

From Budva to Tivat (31 km) the route follows a minor roads parallel to the national road (Magistrala) going to Tivat. After 5 km it crosses the Magistrala and follows the minor road climbing Grbalj mountain, which separates the main road from the sea; then the route follows minor hilly roads, parallel to the coast, up to the town of Tivat, on the eastern bank of Tivat bay.

A ferry line links Tivat with Kamenari, on the opposite side of the narrow Verige fjord which separates Tivat bay from Kotor bay. The route continues on the other side of bay, following a minor road close to the shoreline, up to the city of Herceg Novi.

The whole stretch is 17 km long.

4. Technical facts

All roads considered in the above proposal are minor roads, but for the stretch Podgorica - Hani i Hotit, which is a national road and is 25 km long (14% of the whole route).

Non-asphalted roads may be estimated in about 20 km (near 11% of the whole route).

5. Contacts

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1. Stretch Bar - Virpazar. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Bar - Tuđemili - Sutorman pass - Limljani - Virpazar (mountain route)		10	884	low
Bar - Dobra Voda - Krute - Brajše - Rastiš - Arbnes - Kostanica - Donja Briska - Dorji Murići - Šestani - Seoca - Virpazar (longer alternative route)		10	500?	low

1.1. Stretch Bar - Virpazar. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Bar - Tuđemili - Sutorman pass - Limljani - Virpazar (mountain route)		Stari Bar (old picturesque village); Bar beaches; Shkodër lake (beautiful view)	Bar seaside resort; ferry lines from Bar to Italy and Albania; rail links from Bar to Podgorica and Belgrade
Bar - Dobra Voda - Krute - Brajše - Rastiš - Arbnes - Kostanica - Donja Briska - Dorji Murići - Šestani - Seoca - Virpazar (longer alternative route)		Stari Bar (old picturesque village); Bar beaches; Shkodër lake (beautiful view)	Bar seaside resort; ferry lines from Bar to Italy and Albania

2. Stretch Virpazar - Podgorica - Hani i Hotit (Albanian border). Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Virpazar - Komarno - Riječani - Rijeka Crnojeviča - Rvaši - Gornji Kokoti - Farmaci - Donja Gorica - Gornja Gorica - Podgorica		10	250?	low
Podgorica - Tuzi - Hani i Hotit (Albanian border)		30	65	medium?
Total	0			

2.1. Stretch Virpazar - Podgorica - Hani i Hotit (Albanian border). Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Virpazar - Komarno - Riječani - Rijeka Crnojeviča - Rvaši - Gornji Kokoti - Farmaci - Donja Gorica - Gornja Gorica - Podgorica	Shkodër lake; Rijeka Crnojeviča (fiord)	Podgorica (Montenegro capital)	Podgorica (medium city); rail links from Podgorica to Bar and Belgrade
Podgorica - Tuzi - Hani i Hotit (Albanian border)	Shkodër lake		

3. Stretch Virpazar - Herceg-Novi. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Virpazar - Dupilo - Optočiči - Seoštik pass - Martinovići - Budva		10	876	low/medium?
Budva - Prijedor - Glavati - Pobrđe - Vranovići - Đuraševići - Mrčevac - Tivat		10	300?	low
Tivat - Donja Lastva - (ferry) - Banić - Đenovići - Meljine - Herceg-Novi		10	50?	low/medium?
Total				

3.1. Stretch Virpazar - Herceg-Novi. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Virpazar - Dupilo - Optočiči - Seoštik pass - Martinovići - Budva		Budva (picturesque village) Budva beaches	Budva seaside resort; Sv. Stefan seaside resort (7 km from Budva)
Budva - Prijedor - Glavati - Pobrđe - Vranovići - Đuraševići - Mrčevac - Tivat	Tivat bay	Tivat beaches	Tivat seaside resort
Tivat - Donja Lastva - (ferry) - Banić - Đenovići - Meljine - Herceg-Novi	Tivat bay, Boka Kotorska (beautiful fjord)	Herceg Novi historical centre	Herceg Novi (little town)

Albania

1. About cycling in Albania

It is not easy to speak about cycle tourism in Albania.

Bikes are very popular in Albania, but long distance cycling is mainly a matter of selected sport groups. Roads conditions are generally very bad, due to a long-time lack of maintenance; even the most important roads - like Tirana-Durrës - are filled with big potholes. Some roads leading to the borders - for instance the one leading to the Greek border going to Ioannina - are in much worse conditions, since up to 1991 borders were closed and completely neglected.

As for foreign tourism, it concerns mainly the most important cities, with direct international connections: Tirana and Durrës. An increasing number of day trippers reach by ferry from Greece (Corfu and Igoumenítsa) the southern port of Sarandë, a pleasant seaside resort very close to Greece.

Unfortunately, due to political tensions, the difficult economic situation and fightings in Kosovo, travelling in Albania may be unsafe at present.

But let us look to the future. A general program for roads maintenance and construction has been launched, supported by European funds and partners. The national government, in co-operation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development made a tourism development plan which should affect, among other regions, the coastline. The World Bank recently agreed to support quality tourism and development in Albanian Ionian coast (from Vlorë to Sarandë), included the rehabilitation of the coast road from Butrint (near Sarandë) to Llogarait pass (half-way from Sarandë to Vlorë)⁴.

As for cycle tourism, interesting contacts have been recently set up between foreign cycling groups and Albanian groups. In 1997 the Albanian Cycling Union together with others foreign cycling and pacifist groups took part to a "Friendship Tour" promoted by the Soros Foundation in Albania. The tour started from

Rome and reached Ancona, Durrës, Fier, Vlorë, Sarandë and Butrint⁵.

In Spring 1998 Bikeabout, a no profit organisation based in the USA, which promotes peace and co-operative understanding through bicycling and the increased use of technology in education, did a cycling trip in Albania, with the support of the Albanian Cycling Union. The trip, due to political tensions at the time the Bikeabouts came to Albania, was limited to the stretch Tirana-Durrës⁶.

2. About the proposed route

The Albanian Cycling Union suggested us an ideal cycling tour all along the Albanian coastline, from Yugoslavia (Montenegro) to Greece. The proposed tour follows main roads, the same roads that would be used to cross Albania by car, but for the southern stretch (car drivers would certainly prefer the inner route Vlorë-Gjrokaster instead of the coast route Vlorë-Sarandë).

The proposed route meets some important EuroVelo requirements: it reaches major cities and ports, leads to attractive tourist destinations (beaches, seaside resorts, natural parks, lakes and lagoons) and has mainly small gradients. The problem is that traffic conditions seem in most cases incompatible with cycle tourism. In many cases traffic is neither very high nor very fast (due to the small width of the roads and to the bad maintenance), but we have to expect that in the next future, along with the economic growth and a better road maintenance, the number of cars and lorries will considerably increase.

For these reasons we looked for alternative routes linking the same urban and tourist destinations but using minor roads. We did it at the desk on the base of a detailed road map, at the scale 1 to 300.000. Unfortunately we did not succeed in discussing in detail our job with the Albanian Cycling Union.

Our suggestions must therefore be intended as a first proposal, which need to be validated

4 Albanian Daily News n. 853, August 6 1998 (<http://web.albaniannews.com>).

5 More information may be found in the Internet Web site of the Soros Foundation in Albania: <http://www.soros.al/tour>

6 More information at <http://www.bikeabout.org>.

by local experts and by investigations in the field. It is also very important that the final route is directly suggested by Albanian cycling groups and Albanian public authorities.

We must however say that looking for bike-friendly roads, with little traffic, might be a very hard bet, since - as we hope - Albania might develop quite fast, and traffic conditions might be very difficult to foresee.

3. Main stops of the route

The most important stops of the route, as for tourist attractions and for travel services (international and inland connections, tourist accommodation, etc.), may be described as follows:

- Shkodër in the north, very ancient and very picturesque city, both for its urban characters and for its environmental features (Shkodër lake);
- Lezhë, not many kilometres south from Shkodër, good access to beaches and bathing facilities;
- Krujë, 30 km north from Tirana, small historical town, very close to all Albanians' hearts (castle belonging to Skanderbeg, Albanian national hero);
- Tirana, Albanian capital city and unique international airport (29 km - 30 minutes from the city);
- Durrës, the most important Albanian city in ancient times and the main Albanian port, with ferry connections to Italy (Bari). Durrës is also an attractive sea side resort;
- Karavastar lagoon (some 20 km west from Lushnië), with high potential tourist interest both for its environmental features (national park) and for its beaches;
- Fier, medium size city near the important archaeological excavations in Apollonia;
- Vlorë, second Albanian port and attractive natural environment (sweet hills, Narte lagoon, Vlorë bay);
- Sarandë, third Albanian port and very attractive seaside resort, which in normal times has ferry links to Greece (Corfu and Igoumenítsa). Not far from Sarandë are the famous archaeological excavations of Butrint (UNESCO World Heritage Site).

4. Route description

As we already said Hani i Hotit, on the northern side of Shkodër lake, is the only international border between Albania and

Yugoslavia (Montenegro). A small road, passing by Muriqan, might cross the Albanian-Yugoslavian border on the southern side of Shkodër lake, but is closed at present. This road would be an interesting cycling route, since it keeps closer to the coast and avoids main roads.

From Hani i Hotit to Shkodër (hotel accommodation) the route goes along the plane on the eastern bank of the beautiful Shkodër lake. The main road - 35 km long - might partially be substituted by minor roads, but the maps we have do not show a clear alternative.

From Shkodër to Lezhë - 50 km - the route goes through a cultivated plane, pointed with small villages and bordered with hills with terraces. Hotel accommodation is available in Lezhë. To the east of the main road, some minor roads going in the same direction seem to be quite suitable to cycle tourism.

From Lezhë to Fushë-Krujë - 48 km - the main roads goes on the foot of the mountains, touching villages and industrial plants, like the ones near Laç. From Fishe-Krujë a side road - 10 km - leads to the historical town of Krujë (hotel accommodation); this roads features some hard slopes.

As an alternative to the main road from Lezhë to Laç, cycle tourists might follow minor roads through the plane that has been reclaimed after the second world war (like most planes along the coast). As for the stretch from Laç onwards, the best cycling alternative might be the mountain road linking directly Laç to Krujë. This road seems to have steep and long slopes and might not be suitable to all cycle tourists.

From Fushë-Fruje to Tirana - 21 km - the route goes along the plane. There are two main roads, and a third one passing by Tirana airport. Probably all roads have too much traffic. Therefore it seems necessary to find a better alternative.

Tirana is linked to Durrës - about 40 km from the capital - by means of two roads; neither of them has significant slopes. The one more on the north is faster and has partially been converted into a highway. The other road, following the river Erzen, is more narrow and winding, but anyway seems to have much traffic. Better alternatives may probably be

found not far from the road on the north, but need further investigations.

The stretch Durrës - Fier (hotel accommodation) is quite long: 79 km along the main road, 100 km using minor roads. We hope that in the next future new hotels will be available both in the town of Lushnië and along the coast (Divjakë beaches; Karavastar national park).

From Durrës to Kavajë it seems quite difficult - at a first glance - to find alternatives to the main road. From Kavajë to Fier minor roads suitable to cyclists - and indeed more interesting - might be found close to the shoreline.

The above roads are mainly level and introduce to the wonderful landscapes of southern Albania: olive groves, orchards, vineyards, terracings.

Fier is linked to Vlorë (hotel accommodation) by a level main road, 37 km long. The landscape - a mix of waters, hills, orchards - is beautiful. Minor alternative roads may probably be found, but need further investigations.

The stretch Vlorë-Sarandë (hotel accommodation) is the longest one. The main road following the shoreline is 138 km long, and climbs a high mountain pass (Llogarait pass, 1.027 m). The traffic is low at present, and the landscape is extremely beautiful: forests covering the northern side of Llogarait pass (national park), amazing views on the sea, picturesque villages, terraces, orchards, real Mediterranean flavours. Because of high gradients, this road is suitable only to a minority of cycle tourist. Even for them, the stretch Vlorë-Sarandë might be too long. However, cyclist groups may probably find accommodation in the little town of Himarë (74 km from Vlorë); as for the future, the predicted tourist development of the coast might bring more tourist facilities.

An alternative to the hilly coast road might be the minor road Vlorë-Borsh (85 km), passing behind the mountains facing the coastline. This road follows Shushices river and reaches the sea through a lower pass, touching small villages, with no tourist accommodation. From Borsh to Vlorë (35 km) the route should follow the national route or - preferably - minor roads to be found upon detailed investigations.

The most interesting cycling connection between Albania and Greece would be the

coast road Sarandë - Butrint - Konispol (Albania) - Skála (Greece) - Kestríni - Igoumenítsa. However, this border is closed at present, and the road - not asphalted and neglected since long - is in very bad conditions. Its cyclist and tourist interest is anyway high: it goes parallel to the island of Corfu, very close to the coast, borders Butrint lake, touches Butrint archaeological excavations, avoids significant slopes and is indeed the quickest link between Albania and Greece (60 km from Sarandë to Igoumenítsa).

Waiting for the opening of this border, the best link to Greece is the ferry Sarandë-Igoumenítsa or Sarandë-Corfu-Igoumenítsa. The only road border open at present is Kakavi, a mountain border 46 km from Sarandë and about 150 km from Igoumenítsa!

5. Technical facts

The proposed route is about 460 km long.

Main roads linking Hani i Hotit, Shkodër, Lezhë, Fushë-Krujë, Tirana, Durrës, Kavajë, Lushnië, Fier, Vlorë and Sarandë are national roads.

The main roads from Hani i Hotit to Vlorë are widely damaged with potholes (even the main road Tirana - Durrës). The coast road Vlorë-Sarandë is very narrow and even more damaged.

As for present maintenance conditions almost all roads are not suitable to cycle tourists.

As for traffic conditions, we estimate that 70% of main roads (330 km on a total length of 460 km) have too much traffic.

Following alternative minor roads would reduce the stretches with too much traffic to about 180 km (40% of the whole route).

6. Contacts

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1. Shkodër - Tirana. Technical facts

Main route	Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	traffic level	Alternative route following minor roads	Km	max height m above s. l.
Hani i Hotit - Shkodër	35	16	50?	low/medium ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	35	
Shkodër - Bushat - Balldren - Lezhë	50	16	16	medium ?	Shkodër - Qyrsaç - Trashan - Kallmeti i Madh - Lezhë	51	150
Lezhë - Tresh - Zejmen	10	10	10	medium ?	Lezhë - Ishull i Lezhës - Shënkoll - Zejmen	14	10
Zejmen - Milot - Laç	14	10	30	medium ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	14	
Laç - Mamurras - Thumanë - Borizanë - Fushë-Krujë	24	30	35	medium ?	Laç - Krujë (Kurbin mountain)	40	600?
Fushë-Krujë - Krujë	10	30	300?	medium ?	(see above)		
Krujë - Fushë-Krujë	10	300?	300?	medium ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	10	
Fushë-Krujë - Kamez - Instituti Bujqësor - Tirana	21	30	110	high ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	21	
Total	174					185	

(*) We assume, for the moment, to use main roads

1.1. Shkodër - Tirana. Tourist features

Main route	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Hani i Hotit - Shkodër	Shkodër lake (very picturesque)	Shkodër, historical town (very picturesque); Rozafat fortress, near Shkodër; Folk Museum	hotel accommodation in Shkodër
Shkodër - Bushat - Balldren - Lezhë	Lezhë beaches		hotel accommodation in Lezhë; seaside resort in Shengjijn (10 km from Lezhë)
Lezhë - Tresh - Zejmen			
Zejmen - Milot - Laç			
Laç - Mamurras - Thumanë - Borizanë - Fushë-Krujë		Krujë, historical town; Skanderbeg's castle in Krujë	hotel accommodation in Krujë
Fushë-Krujë - Krujë		Krujë, historical town; Skanderbeg's castle in Krujë	hotel accommodation in Krujë
Krujë - Fushë-Krujë			
Fushë-Krujë - Kamez - Instituti Bujqësor - Tirana		Tirana historical museum; Tirana archaeological museum; Tirana Park	hotel accommodation in Tirana

2. Tirana - Vlorë. Technical facts

Main route	Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	traffic level	Alternative route following minor roads	Km	max height m above s. l.
Tirana-Durrës	41	110	110	very high ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	41	
Durrës - Kryqëzim-Plëpat - Kavajë	20	5	25	high ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	20	
Kavajë - Lekaj - Gosë - Rogozhinë	17	25	25	high ?	Kavajë - Hajdaraj - Kalush - Rogozhinë	30	50?
Rrogozhinë - Lushnië - Fier	42	20	20	medium ?	Rrogozhinë - Divjakë - Kryekuq - Libofshë - Mbrostar - Fier	50	50?
Fier - Koshovicë - Levan - Ura e Mifolit - Vlorë	37	15	95	medium ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	37	
Total	157					178	

(*) We assume, for the moment, to use main roads

2.1. Tirana - Vlorë. Tourist features

Main route	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Tirana-Durrës	Durrës beaches	Durrës historical town; Durrës roman ruins; Durrës archaeological museum	hotel accommodation and seaside resort in Durrës; ferry connections from Durrës to Italy, Yugoslavia (Montenegro), Greece and other Albanian ports
Durrës - Kryqëzim-Plëpat - Kavajë			
Kavajë - Lekaj - Gosë - Rogozhinë			
Rrogozhinë - Lushnië - Fier	Karavastar lagoon (national park); Divjakë beaches; Apollonia archaeological excavations (12 km from Fier)		hotel accommodation in Fier
Fier - Koshovicë - Levan - Ura e Mifolit - Vlorë	Narte lagoon; Vlorë bay (very picturesque)		hotel accommodation in Vlorë; ferry connections from Vlorë to Italy and other Albanian ports

3. Vlorë - Sarandë. Technical facts

Main route	Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	traffic level	Alternative route following minor roads	Km	max height m above s. l.
Vlorë - Orikum - Llogarajt pass - Himarë - Borsh	103	10	1027	low ?	Vlorë - Drashovicë - Kotë - Brataj - Kallarat - Kuç - Fterë - Borsh	85	700?
Borsh - Lukovë - Sarandë	35	150?	300?	low ?	apparently difficult to find (*)	35	
Total	138					120	

(*) We assume, for the moment, to use main roads

3.1. Vlorë - Sarandë. Tourist features

Main route	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Vlorë - Orikum - Llogarajt pass - Himarë - Borsh	Llogarajt forest (national park); beautiful views over the sea (coast road); picturesque villages (coast road)		hotel accommodation in Vlorë; accommodation for groups in Himarë
Borsh - Lukovë - Sarandë	picturesque terracing (orchards in Lukovë and Sarandë); Sarandë bay; Butrint archaeological excavations (16 km from Sarandë)		hotel accommodation in Sarandë; ferry connections from Sarandë to Greece (Corfu and Igoumenítsa) and other Albanian ports

Greece

1. About the proposed route

Population has a relatively low density in Greece (less than 80 inhabitants per sq. km); moreover, near 30% of the population lives in Athens and its surroundings.

Greece offers therefore a good number of minor roads with little traffic, most of which are suitable for cycle tourism. The main problem is that Greece is really a mountainous land!

With the help of the Friends of the Bicycle in Athens we tried to find a cycling route from Igoumenítsa (very close to the Albanian border) to Athens, going whenever possible along the coast (Ionian coast, northern sides of Pátra and Corinth gulfs). The proposed route has a total length of about 580 km.

Our working tool was a good geographical map at the scale 1 to 250.000.

The route we are introducing is a first proposal that has to be defined in more details upon farther investigations, with the agreement of public authorities and cycling associations involved; the Friends of the Bicycle have just started working on it.

The proposed route meets almost all EuroVelo requirements, reaching major cities and ports and leading to highly attractive destinations, like beaches and seaside resorts, lagoons, lakes and very important archaeological parks (among which Delphi sanctuary). The only problem are gradients: tourists cycling through Greece must expect slopes and descents behind every corner. The route we propose has indeed some steep slopes; most of them, however, are neither too long nor too hard.

Some difficult stretches may be substituted with ferry links, from-to the coast harbours of Igoumenítsa, Astakós (small harbour with ferry connections with the Ionian islands), Pátra and Piraeus (Athens). The stretch Thíva (Thebes) - Athens, which features some hard slopes, may be substituted by train.

2. Main stops of the route

The most important stops of the proposed route, both in terms of tourist attractions and of travel services (international ferry lines, tourist accommodation, etc.), may be described as follows:

- Igoumenítsa, most northern Ionian harbour, with ferry lines to Italy, Croatia and Albania (Sarandë). Igoumenítsa is just in front of Kérkira (Corfu) island, one of the oldest and most appreciated Greek seaside resorts, with international airport and regular ferry lines to Italy, Croatia and Albania (Sarandë);
- Ípiros coast, with nice beaches and nice seaside resorts (Párga), widespread ancient remains (among which Nikopolis) and non-intensive tourism;
- Préveza, main town of Ípiros coast, and main access to the Ionian island of Lefkáda, well known seaside resort;
- Akarnanía coast, highly scenic shoreline, with small seaside resorts (Mytikas, Astakós), facing Ionian islands at a very short distance. The small port of Astakós has ferry links to Ionian islands and other Greek harbours;
- Náfpaktos, attractive town at the western end of Corinth gulf. Náfpaktos is not very far from Pátra, offering international ferry links to Italy, Croatia and Turkey;
- Itéa, small centre on Corinth gulf, basis for the ascent to Delphi;
- Delphi sanctuary, chief Greek archaeological park, navel of the ancient era and fixed destination for every traveller;
- Elikón mountain, scenic relief all along the Corinth gulf, fixed cycling alternative to high traffic roads from Delphi to Thíva;
- Thíva (Thebes), main town on the way from Delphi to Athens. Thíva and Athens are linked to one another by train;
- Párnitha mountain, fixed cycling alternative to main roads from Thíva to Athens;
- Athens, chief tourist destination, with all kind of international and inland links, by air, sea and rail.

Refreshment and accommodation (hotels and other kind of facilities) are available at quite short intervals all along the route. However, some mountain stretches (Astakós-Náfpaktos; Náfpaktos-Itéa; Delphi-Thíva) need further investigations about present services availability.

3. Route description

Igoumenítsa harbour is indeed the easiest access to Greece coming from Albania. But for times of high political tension, ferry lines connect Sarandë (Albanian most southern harbour) with Igoumenítsa. Another international ferry connection links Sarandë with the Ionian island of Kérkira (Corfu), just in front of Igoumenítsa (Igoumenítsa and Kérkira too are linked by ferry).

As we already told a very bad (and not asphalted) road connects Konispol, the most southern Albanian village (35 km south from Sarandë and very close to the border) with the Greek village of Skála (20 km north from Igoumenítsa).

Unfortunately the border is not open at present, even if frontier authorities may, in some cases, allow tourist group to pass through it. We must notice that also the road from Sarandë to Konispol is in bad conditions.

From Igoumenítsa to Párga (49 km) we propose a minor road along the coast, which passes by Sívota and Pérdika. It is a scenic route, touching a pleasant seaside resort (Sívota) and nice beaches, which however features many slopes (Párga mountain); moreover, the first stretch of the route (about 10 km) is a national road (though not with very high traffic).

Further investigations should assess real conditions and gradients of the coast road, and the possibility to avoid the national road. It seems also necessary to check traffic conditions of the access to Párga, which is a highly attractive seaside resort, even if small.

From Párga to Préveza (61 km) the route follows a first stretch of inner minor roads, with some slopes, and then the level road along the coast, which generally has not high traffic, even if it is a national road. Main environmental features are the many rivers and Ambrákia lagoon (near Préveza). The route touches some archaeological parks.

From Préveza to Aktio, just in front of Préveza (on the opposite site of Préveza Straits) it is necessary to take a ferry: the planned bridge will non be ready before several years.

From Aktio to Vónitsa (15 km) the route follows a national road with high traffic.

After Vónitsa it follows a minor road all along the shoreline, with absolutely beautiful views on the close islands of Lefkáda, Itháki and other smaller ones. Traffic is little, but the road

features many slopes; however, none of them is very long, even if some are steep.

The whole stretch Préveza-Astakós is 56 km long.

From Astakós to Matarága (65 km) the route leaves the sea, following a minor road. The first stretch is really mountainous, with a quite steep slope; then the route turns into a level road, bordering Aheloós river and the planes behind Messolónghi lagoon.

The coast road Messolónghi-Náfpaktos is a national road with quite a lot of traffic; the cycling route has therefore to leave the sea and pass behind the mountains bordering the coast. So the route points to Matarága, with some (easy) slopes through a land of hills and waters. Matarága lies to the southern bank of Trichonis lake. A short stretch of the route (less than 10 km) is not asphalted.

From Matarága to Náfpaktos (48 km), the route goes along the southern bank of the lake; then it leaves the lake and points to the coast, climbing two passes, which however are not very hard.

All roads from Astakós to Náfpaktos are minor roads with little traffic.

From Náfpaktos to Lidoríki (58 km) the route follows minor inner roads. The first stretch climbs up the mountains bordering the northern side of Corinth gulf. The second stretch follows Mornos river, up to Mornos lake. Lidoríki is a small centre on the eastern bank of the lake. The whole road is very scenic but also very hilly: a real pleasure, but mainly for experienced cyclists!

From Lidoríki to Itéa (50 km) the route follows a minor mountain road bordering the southern and eastern sides of Lidoríki mountain. It is a scenic but hilly route offering nice views on Corinth gulf. A few kilometres before Ámfissa the route points to the coast, following a minor road going down to Itéa.

As an alternative to the mountain roads Náfpaktos-Lidoríki-Itéa (108 km), cyclists might choose the national road from Náfpaktos to Itéa (77 km). This road has much more traffic, but is easier and much shorter than the other ones, which might prove to be difficult for medium cyclists.

From Itéa to Delphi (17 km) the route follows a major road bordering the beautiful olive groves leading to Delphi; finally, with some

hard slopes, it climbs up to Delphi, on the hillside of Mount Parnassus. The route is asphalted and very steep; unfortunately in certain seasons it may have a quite heavy traffic. However, Delphi is absolutely worth seeing!

From Delphi to Dístomo (32 km) the route follows minor mountain roads, featuring some hard slopes and some non-asphalted stretches (about 5 km). This route too offers nice views on Corinth gulf.

The route from Dístomo to Thíva (Thebes) is 77 km long. The first stretch, from Dístomo to Thísbi (40 km), follows a mountain road, with continuous slopes and descents. The following stretch Thísbi-Thíva (37 km) is also a minor road, mostly level.

From Thíva to Athens (69 km), the route follows minor roads, climbing up - with some hard slopes - the relief leading to Párnitha mountain. Then it crosses the regional border with Atikí and goes down with steep descents towards Filí and Athens. Some stretches (maybe 10 km) are not asphalted.

4. Technical facts

The proposed route through Greece attains a total length of about 580 km. It uses only shared roads. Most of them are minor roads, but some are national roads (about 150 km). The longest stretches of national roads is the road Náfpaktos-Lidoríki-Ámfissa and the road Párga-Préveza; however, both do not seem to have high traffic. Stretches on national roads with heavy traffic may be estimated in about 30-40 km, that is 6% of the whole route.

Some mountain roads are not asphalted: they attain in total about 25-30 km, that is 5% of the whole route. The longest non-asphalted stretches are from Angelókastro to Lisimáchia, in the Elikón mountain (from Delphi to Desfína) and on the way from Thíva to Athens (Pástra mountain, Párnitha mountain).

5. Contacts

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1. Igoumenítsa - Náfpaktos (and Pátra). Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Igoumenítsa - Platariá - Sívota - Pérdika - Agiá - Párga	49	10	300?	low/medium?
Párga - Mesopótamo - Lygia - Kanáli - Nikópoli - Préveza	61	10	100?	low/medium?
Préveza - Vónitsa - Páleros - Mytikas - Astakós	56	10	200?	low/medium
Astakos - Lesini - Gouria - Angelokastro - Klisorevmata - Mataraga	65	10	300?	low
Matarága - Káto Makrinou - Vlahomíndra - Náfpaktos	48	100?	300?	low
Total	279			

1.1. Igoumenítsa - Náfpaktos (and Pátra). Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Igoumenítsa - Platariá - Sívota - Pérdika - Agiá - Párga	Kérkira (Corfu) island (beautiful view on Kérkira)	beaches (Sívota, Karavostasi, Párga); Parga (picturesque village)	Hotel accommodation in Sívota and Párga (sea side resorts)
Párga - Mesopótamo - Lygia - Kanáli - Nikópoli - Préveza	Ambrákia lagoon	Nekromanteion oracle; Nikópolis archaeological excavations (with museum); Préveza and Nikópolis beaches	hotel accommodation in Préveza; international airport (mainly summer) in Préveza
Préveza - Vónitsa - Páleros - Mytikas - Astakós	Ionian islands (beautiful view on Lefkáda, Itháki, Cephalonia)	Páleros, Mytikas (picturesque small villages)	hotel accommodation in Vónitsa and in the small seaside resort of Mytikas and Astakós; ferry connections from Astakós to Itháki and Cephalonia
Astakos - Lesini - Gouria - Angelokastro - Klisorevmata - Mataraga	Ionian islands (beautiful view on Itháki, Cephalonia, Zákintos); Messolónghi lagoon		hotel accommodation in Etolikó and Messolónghi (12 km from Etolikó)
Matarága - Káto Makrinou - Vlahomíndra - Náfpaktos	Trichonis lake	Velvina archaeological excavations; Náfpaktos (picturesque little town); Náfpaktos beaches	Hotel accommodation in Náfpaktos (seaside resort); ferry connections from Pátra (20 km from Náfpaktos) to Italy, Croatia, Turkey and other Greek ports.

2. Náfpaktos (and Pátra) - Delphi. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Náfpaktos - Chiropígado - Filothéi - Lidoríki	58	10	400?	low?
Lidoríki - Malandríno - Vouníhora - Agía Evthimía - Itéa	50	100?	200?	low?
Itéa - Delphi	17	10	400?	low/high
Total	125			

2.1. Náfpaktos (and Pátra) - Delphi. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Náfpaktos - Chiropígado - Filothéi - Lidoríki	Mórnos river; Mornos lake		Hotel accommodation in Lidoríki
Lidoríki - Malandríno - Vouníhora - Agía Evthimía - Itéa	Lidoríki mountain (beautiful view over Corinth gulf)	Physkeis archaeological excavations; Itéa beach	Hotel accommodation in Itéa
Itéa - Delphi	Hrissó olive groves; Parnassus national park	Delphi sanctuary (archaeological excavations; museum)	Hotel accommodation in Kírra, Hrissó and Delphi

3. Delphi - Athens. Technical facts

Stretch	length Km	starting height m above s. l.	max height m above s. l.	present traffic level
Delphi - Desfína - Dístomo	32	400?	600?	low
Dístomo - Stíri - Kiriáki - Agía Ána - Thísbi - Eloría - Léfktra - Melissohóri - Thíva (Thebes)	77	600?	700?	low
Thíva - Neohoráki - Dafnoúla - Píli - Filí - Néa Liósia - Athens	69	218	800?	low/medium
Total	178			

3.1. Delphi - Athens. Tourist features

Stretch	environmental features	tourist attractions	tourist facilities
Delphi - Desfína - Dístomo	Elikó mountain		hotel accommodation in Desfína and Dístomo
Dístomo - Stíri - Kiriáki - Agía Ána - Thísbi - Eloría - Léfktra - Melissohóri - Thíva (Thebes)	Elikó mountain	Ossios Loukas monastery; Thíva (Thebes) archaeological museum	hotel accommodation in Thíva (Thebes); rail connection Thíva - Thebes (min rail link)
Thíva - Neohoráki - Dafnoúla - Píli - Filí - Néa Liósia - Athens	Párnitha mountain	Párnitha national park; Kleistón monastery; Athens (Acropolis; ancient agorá; roman agorá; Pláka quarter; archaeological museum; Cyclades art museum; Byzantine museum; etc.)	hotel accommodation in Athens and other neighbour centres; international airport in Athens; ferry connection from Piraeus (Athens harbour) to Italy, Turkey, other Mediterranean countries and most Greek ports

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Mediterranean Route.....	1
1. Main theme of the Route.....	1
2. Cycle tourism along the Mediterranean.....	1
3. The present report.....	2
4. The proposed Route.....	2
France.....	3
1. Cycling in the South.....	3
2. About the proposed route.....	3
3. Main points of interest.....	3
4. Route description.....	4
5. Technical facts.....	5
6. Contacts.....	5
Italy.....	9
1. Cycling in the North.....	9
2. About the proposed route.....	9
3. Main points of interest.....	9
4. Route description.....	10
5. Problems and suggestions.....	11
6. Technical facts.....	11
7. Contacts.....	12
Slovenia.....	21
1. About the proposed route.....	21
2. Introducing the route.....	21
3. Route description.....	21
4. Contacts.....	22
Croatia.....	23
1. About the proposed route.....	23
2. Introducing the route.....	23
3. Main points of interest.....	23
4. Route description.....	23
5. Technical facts.....	25
6. Contacts.....	25
Yugoslavia (Montenegro).....	29
1. About the proposed route.....	29
2. Main stops of the route.....	29
3. Route description.....	29
4. Technical facts.....	30
5. Contacts.....	30
Albania.....	33
1. About cycling in Albania.....	33
2. About the proposed route.....	33
3. Main stops of the route.....	34
4. Route description.....	34
5. Technical facts.....	35
6. Contacts.....	36
Greece.....	41
1. About the proposed route.....	41
2. Main stops of the route.....	41
3. Route description.....	42
4. Technical facts.....	43
5. Contacts.....	43
Overview maps.....	

ANNEXE

Overview maps

