

Bergamo; hiking along ancient trade routes

8 days / 7 nights or tailor made



The ancient city of Bergamo is situated in the hills fringing the plains of the river Po. Further up north the mountains rise as high as 1150 m., leaving behind the bustling activity of the flat lands and giving way to the intimate quietness of woods and alpine pasture.

In ancient days the Via Mercatorum connected the city of Bergamo with the northerly. The tour roughly follows the traces of this trade route and sections of it are still there as if time never passed; beating the track over the old pavement under the green foliage feels like walking in the Middle Ages.

Routes

The tour runs from the city through the quiet hills from which you gradually work your way up into the mountains.

None the less the mountainous surroundings, uphill climbs are limited and the walk, running over forest tracks, unpaved roads and small asphalt stretches is fairly easy going. Not everywhere the route is signed and sometimes it will take a bit of attention finding direction by following the written indications. GPS-tracks are available on request. Maximum difference in altitude is about 500 m. a day. The route back towards Bergamo from the most northern lodging runs along the river Brembo, following a former railway section, now a surfaced cycle/foot path passing, through the village of San Pellegrino, known for its thermal baths.

Accommodations and meals

The first night in Bergamo you will stay in a B&B in the beautiful ancient city; the musea and and the cappuccini in the bar around the corner instantly make you forget your ordinary life. Lodging in Bergamo is based B&B; dinner is excluded but there are -excellent- restaurants nearby.

Lodging in the mountains is full board. Places are all different style but very hospitable, situated on beautiful spots.

You will stay -in order- in a typical village hotel-bar where the locals come for their morning coffee and aperitifs, a lovely situated agriturismo (farmer stay) that keeps goats and is part of a foundation working for the (socialy) indigence, a fabulous B&B (just find out!) and again an agriturismo, situated on top of a hill overlooking Bergamo and the stretch you've covered the preceding days.

Naturally, the agriturismi prepare their plain but tasty dishes using home grown and self produced ingredients.

As hikers that did the tour said; it's the accommodations that turns the tour in a very special experience!

In the agriturismi, on day 3 and 6, you have to share the bathroom.

On walking days you will be provided with a packed lunch.

Period and price

The tour can be started every day of the week from Mid April until October **except on Tuesdays**.

Included in the price:

accommodation based bed and breakfast (7x), luggage transport, lunch on walking days (5x), all dinners except in Bergamo (5x), description of the routes (in English or Dutch), maps, background information. GPS-Tracks on request.

Excluded:

Getting there, city taxes, lunch on the days you stay in the same lodging two nights running and on the day of arrival and departure, dinners in Bergamo.

Travel schedule

(It is possible extending the tour by booking extra nights in the city or in the countryside. Shortening the tour is also possible.)

1. Arrival in Bergamo.
2. Bergamo-Lonno (4.30 / 5.30 hours, 17 km, ↑ 620, ↓ 576 meter, B,L,D).
3. Lonno-Costa Serina (5.40 / 6.40 hours, 21 km, ↑ 700, ↓ 375 meter, B,L,D).
4. Costa Serina-San Giovanni Bianco (4.45 / 6 hours, 16 km, ↑ 360, ↓ 450 meter B,L,D).
5. San Giovanni Bianco - optional roundgoing walk (B,D)
6. San Giovanni Bianco-Prati Parini (5.30 hours, 18 km, ↓ 50, ↑ 480 meter, B,L,D).
7. Prati Parini-Bergamo (4 hours, 11 km, ↑ 250, ↓ 750 meter, B,L).
8. Departure from Bergamo after breakfast (B).

start: every day of the week from mid April onwards til the end of October.

Included meals are signed: B=breakfast, L=packed lunch, D=dinner.

Day to day

Day 1: arrival in Bergamo.

The airport of Bergamo, Orio al Serio, is on a 20 minutes distance from the city; holiday starts after landing! The walled citadel of Bergamo, situated on a hilltop and visible from far away, is a beautiful mediaeval means of defence. The old city within the walls is charming with narrow alleys, squares and nice terraces. But the city is visited much for its cultural heritage; art, historic monuments, museums. You will stay in a B&B within the walls of the old city but away from the hustle and bustle of the main passages.

Day 2: from Bergamo to Lonno.

In the north, city is surrounded by rolling hills covered with villas, churches, vineyards and cypresses. The walk starts at the foot of the mountains, going upwards, passing woods and meadows, leaving behind the bustling activity of the flat lands and giving way to the intimate quietness of woods and alpine pasture. From above you can have a look back at the city beneath and the flatlands of the river Po. On the eastern slopes of the first mountain range you will reach the small village Lonno.

In Lonno you will stay in the village hotel. It's an elementary but hospital place that is much frequented by the locals and most of the rooms offer spectacular views over the lowlands. Here you will also have your evening dinner (included).

Day 3: from Lonno to Costa di Serina.

The following two hiking days of the tour follow the "via Mercatorum", the ancient trade route. Nearby the B&B we join the stretch of it that goes up from the valley into the mountains passing small farms but also crossing a small ski resort. Parts of the Via Mercatorum remained like in the old days; a stone paved path fringed by walls and trees, connecting the villages. Other parts disappeared or were covered by the asphalt road. In any case, this day's hike gives you a good impression of past times.

Dinner and overnight stay in a splendid old building on a meadow in the woods, a 10 minutes walk from the village. The Agriturismo is part of a foundation working for the (social) indigence and has a part the process of re-integration. It is a simple but beautiful retreat. Overnight stay is including dinner.

It is possible to book an extra night in Costa di Serina. In the route book you will find the description of an optional roundgoing hike.

Day 4: from Costa di Serina to San Giovanni Bianco.

Roughly following the traces of the "via Mercatorum" evoked by the silence in the woods and the peace on the meadows, one gradually fancies himself in past times, in which the speed of pace was the fastest possible in a mountainous environment like this. The hike passes a.o. the village Dossena, far before Christ already habitat thanks to iron ore. After Dossena it goes downhill towards San Giovanni Bianco situated on the river Brembo.

Dinner and overnight stay in a fabulous B&B just outside the village.

Day 5: San Giovanni Bianco.

The cosy B&B is situated in a hamlet just above San Giovanni Bianco. Hidden in the narrow valleys and above the porches there is this fairytale universe in which you feel nurtured and fondled.... Actually, the landlady writes fairy tales besides cooking like a kitchen goddess... Tell me the weight you gained here despite of walking...

From here, still following the "via Mercatorum" one of the finest examples of ancient village can be visited; Cornello del Tasso, in his total declared a monument. You can choose between a short and a long hike for visiting Cornello del Tasso but if you really want a day of rest you can choose for spending your day on the balcony of the B&B reading a good book and going for a drink in San Giovanni Bianco.

Day 6: from San Giovanni Bianco to Prati Parini.

During history, small trade routes that criss-cross the area connecting villages, were overruled by tracks designed for military reasons. Today's hike follows the "via Priuli", the successor of the "via Mercatorum". It follows a former railway section now turned into a cycle/foot path (surfaced), running over the banks of the river Brembo on which the most curious place is San Pellegrino, a thermal place, built in Liberty style including Grand Hotel and Casino. This daytrip differs from the ones before but is at least as interesting. The last part of this daytrip goes upwards through meadows and woods for reaching the Agriturismo, situated on a hill top. Part of the first half of the day trip can also be covered by bus; Seen the ascent of the latter half you could give it a thought...

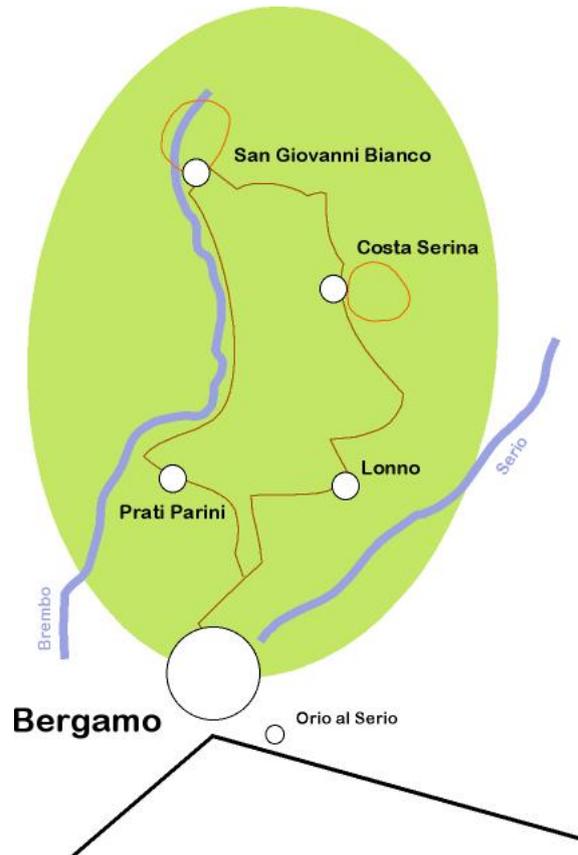
Dinner and overnight stay in the Agriturismo, a former bird-catching structure, situated on the top of a hill and only reachable by foot. The family that runs the place is a typical farmers family, keeping cows that come up here during summer. Your luggage will be brought up by a funicular body. It is one of the oldest Agriturismi in Italy and exactly the way an agriturismo is ment to be: you will be immersed in everyday mountain life. A place out of time, giving view -on clear days- on the Apennines and the Swiss and French Alps.

Day 7: From Prati Parini to Bergamo.

Prati Parini is situated on a hill top with 360° view. Almost the whole tour can be visually traced from here. But for now, the hike goes back to where it started; Bergamo. Downhill, once more the silence of the woods, for then facing present time and all that is related to it, already waiting for you at the foot of the mountains.

In Bergamo dinner is not included; there are many nice restaurants in the old town and surroundings.

Day 8: Bergamo. Departure after breakfast



Tailor made

The standard tour is the best option for getting to know the different aspects and places of interest along the trail.

For those interested in the arts and culture in a more urban setting we suggest booking an extra night in Bergamo.

For adding a days rest in the countryside (with an optional round going hike) you can opt for an extra night in Costa di Serina.

On request the tour can be shortened by skipping one of the two nights in San Giovanni Bianco. A 7 days / 6 nights or a 6 days / 5 nights tour is possible by interrupting the tour in San Giovanni Bianco. In that case you can get back to Bergamo by bus or taxi.