

Roadbook



From Bologna to the Lowlands along the Waterways



Roadmap



The route is 43 km long

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Itinerary

A flat and accessible route that combines train travel with the exploration of **land reclamation infrastructure** and the historic centres of the Bolognese plains. The journey sets off from the city centre, offering a view over the **Canale delle Moline**, before heading towards the **Canale Navile**, crossing the **River Reno**, and finally joining the **Ciclovia del Sole (Sun Cycle Route)**.

The itinerary unfolds across artificial canals, gravel roads, and dedicated cycle paths, traversing an orderly agricultural landscape rich in water management heritage, before reaching the towns of **San Giovanni in Persiceto** and **Crevalcore**, prior to the return journey by train to Bologna.

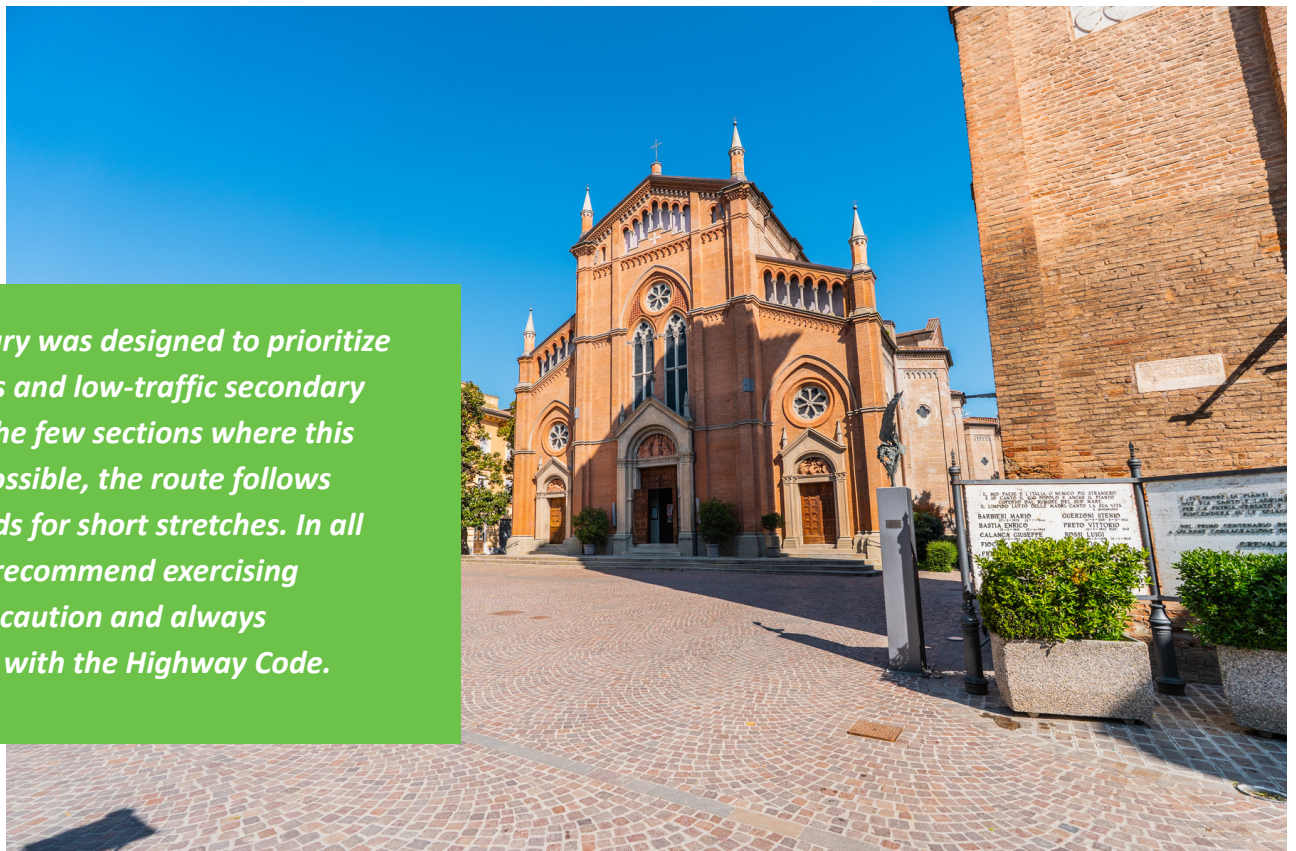
Route Features

- **Terrain:** predominantly asphalt and gravel
- **Elevation gain:** negligible
- **Type:** linear, with bike/train intermodality
- **Suitable for:** cycle touring, gravel bikes, e-bikes

Technical Data

- **Distance:** 43 km
- **Cycling time:** approx. 3.5 hours (excluding sightseeing)

The itinerary was designed to prioritize cycle paths and low-traffic secondary roads. In the few sections where this was not possible, the route follows busier roads for short stretches. In all cases, we recommend exercising maximum caution and always complying with the Highway Code.



Description

The journey starts in the historic centre of Bologna, where you can peer through the **charming window onto the Moline Canal**: here, the water re-emerges within the urban fabric, introducing the central theme of the route. Leaving the historic centre, you reach **the Navile Canal**; the cycle path of the same name runs alongside it, following a historic route linked to inland navigation and the reclamation of the plains.

The route continues along a short section of the Navile Canal, guiding the cyclist northwards out of the city, where the landscape progressively opens up from the urban grid into open fields. You cross **the River Reno** via the foot and cycle bridge, a transition point between river systems and the land reclamation network.

After crossing the Reno, you join the **Ciclovia del Sole (Sun Cycle Route)** at **Osteria Nuova**, entering the heart of the plains. Here, the route unfolds among **drainage canals**, embankments, and hydraulic works that regulate water runoff and shape the geometry of the **agricultural landscape**.

The cycle path then leads towards **San Giovanni in Persiceto**, crossing an area characterised by cultivated fields and widespread **hydraulic infrastructure**, where the presence of water is constantly managed and integrated into the landscape.

From San Giovanni in Persiceto, you finally continue towards **Crevalcore** along flat stretches immersed in the countryside, reaching the town centre where you can finish the route and easily **return to Bologna by train** from the railway station.



The Moline Canal, the Navile Canal, and the River Reno

Starting from **eXtraBO**, the itinerary unfolds across some of the main **water-related cycle paths** in the city of Bologna. After intercepting the **Moline Canal**, you encounter one of the most significant stretches of Bologna's **ancient hydraulic system**: the canal takes its name from the numerous mills and silk-spinning factories that, between the Middle Ages and the modern era, harnessed the power of the water and helped make Bologna one of the most important **European manufacturing centres**.

The route then continues behind **Villa Angeletti** to reach the **Navile Cycle Path**. Following the course of this medieval canal, you can still see the historic **hydraulic locks** (*sostegni*).

During the **Medieval and Renaissance eras**, the Navile represented a vital **navigable commercial waterway**, connecting Bologna to the River Po and the river network heading towards Venice. Along this canal travelled goods, silk, grain, and materials destined for the **city markets**.

The route continues towards **Trebbo di Reno** as far as the **foot and cycle bridge** over the River Reno. From here, you join the **Ciclovia del Sole (Sun Cycle Route)** at **Osteria Nuova**, cycling along one of Italy's main **national cycle touring axes**, immersed in the landscape of the Bolognese plains.



Insight

The Navile Canal

On this itinerary, you will follow a short section of the Navile Canal, famous for transforming Bologna into one of Northern Italy's primary commercial hubs between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Thanks to inland navigation, goods and people could reach the Adriatic Sea via a literal "water highway", leaving behind a historic and scenic legacy that remains visible along its path today.

The Navile starts in Bologna and flows across the plains for about 35 kilometres, right up to its confluence with the River Reno. Along the route, you will come across ancient navigation locks, bridges, and hydraulic structures that tell the story of a city once renowned for its network of waterways.

Along the stretch covered by this itinerary, you can come across the Battiferro Lock (*Sostegno del Battiferro*), which has existed since 1439. This lock allowed boats coming from the sea to overcome the steep drops in water level on the Navile Canal and reach the city. You will also cycle across the picturesque *Ponte della Bionda* (Blonde's Bridge); dating back to the late 17th century, it allowed the passage of the horses that towed the large barges coming from the Lowlands (*la Bassa*) towards the city.



Insight

The Sun Route

The Bologna section of EuroVelo 7, the cycle route stretching from North Cape to Malta, passes here. The first Italian section was inaugurated on April 13, 2021, at the former **Bolognina station**, a symbolic site where a tragic train accident occurred in January 2005.

Built along the old Bologna–Verona railway line, the Ciclovía del Sole also offers the advantage of **bike–train intermodality**: at the train station, you can board or alight with your bicycle to reach another point along the route.

Beyond the historic town centres, the Sun Cycle Route (Ciclovía del Sole) offers the opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside and reach additional points of interest along the way.

In Emilia-Romagna, the Ciclovía del Sole is fully completed along the **Concordia sulla Secchia–Osteria Nuova** section. It is also possible to continue towards Bologna by following a temporary route while the remaining infrastructure is being completed.

For more information, visit www.cicloviadelsole.it.



San Giovanni in Persiceto, the round village

Continuing northwards along the **Ciclovia del Sole**, you reach **San Giovanni in Persiceto**, a vibrant town where you can immerse yourself in history, art, and local traditions. A defining feature of the town centre is the **Borgo Rotondo**, the ancient medieval core of Lombard origin, easily recognisable by the unusual **circular urban layout** that makes this historic centre unique.

You can also visit **Piazzetta Betlemme**, famous for its colourful **trompe-l'œil murals** that transform the building facades into an open-air art gallery, created by the Hollywood set designer **Gino Pellegrini**.

In **Piazza del Popolo**, you will find the **Collegiate Church of San Giovanni Battista** (Collegiata di San Giovanni Battista), which houses masterpieces by **Guercino**, Albani, and Gandolfi. In the piazza, you can also step onto the **largest open-air sundial in the world**, a work that beautifully combines artistry and ingenuity.

San Giovanni in Persiceto is famous for its **historic Carnival**, one of the most original in Italy thanks to the unique tradition of the spectacular "**spilli**"—allegorical floats that magically transform right before the audience's eyes. It is also the birthplace of the writer **Giulio Cesare Croce**, creator of the famous character **Bertoldo**, a symbolic figure in local popular culture.



Insight

The High Waters Collector

The High Waters Collector Canal (*Canale Collettore delle Acque Alte*) is one of the main hydraulic engineering works in the lower Bolognese plains, serving as a testament to the major land reclamation projects that shaped the region during the 20th century. It originates in the municipality of San Giovanni in Persiceto, in the locality of Lorenzatico, and flows for 27 kilometres before emptying into the River Panaro at Foscaglia, in the municipality of Finale Emilia.

The establishment of the Ecological Rebalancing Area has led to environmental redevelopment works, enabling the Canal to serve as an ecological corridor and contributing to the conservation of several habitats and numerous animal and plant species.

Along the canal, which is lined with meadows and reedbeds, various plant species can be observed—including the field gladiolus, purple clematis, and spiked star-of-Bethlehem—as well as animals such as the Italian crested newt, the European pond turtle, the cormorant, the Eurasian bittern, the kingfisher, and the sparrowhawk. The fish fauna consists of species typical of the Po Valley canals and rivers: chub, rudd, bleak, stone moroko, gudgeon, crucian carp, carp, catfish, mosquitofish, pumpkinseed sunfish, largemouth bass and, on occasion, tench, eel, and Southwest European nase.



Crevalcore, birthplace of Marcello Malpighi

Along **via Matteotti**, the town's main buildings come into view. Reaching the piazza, you will see the bronze monument to **Marcello Malpighi** taking centre stage—a sculpture by Enrico Barberi dating back to 1897. Crevalcore was indeed the **birthplace** of the famous physiologist.

Behind it stands the **Church of San Silvestro**, rebuilt at the beginning of the 20th century to replace the previous 14th-century church. This intervention created the space for the piazza by **setting back the church facade** and rotating its axis by **90 degrees**.

The **civic tower**, offset from the church, also serves as the bell tower. Continuing along the main street in the direction of **Porta Bologna**, you will encounter the **Teatro Comunale** on your left, designed by Antonio Giordani, decorated by Gaetano Lodi, and inaugurated in 1881. The theatre is currently undergoing recovery and restoration works following the 2012 earthquake.

From **Crevalcore Railway Station**, you can then catch the train back towards Bologna, returning from your itinerary to **Bologna Centrale**.



Thank you for cycling with us!

For more information and other itineraries:

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