

VIVA VELO

Cycle Tours



Milan Sanremo Charity Ride



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Milan Sanremo - A classic challenge



Milan Sanremo - The history

Milan Sanremo, also called 'The Spring Classic' or 'La Classicissima', as you probably know, is an annual cycle race between Milan and Sanremo, in Northwest Italy. With a distance of 298 km (185.2 miles) it is the longest professional one-day race in modern cycling and is the first major classic race of the season, usually held on the third Saturday of March. The first edition was held in 1907 and originated from an idea proposed by the Unione Sportiva Sanremese. It was won by Frenchman Lucien Petit-Breton, who completed the 286 kilometers (177 miles) in an average speed of 26.206 km/h (16.5 mph). Only 14 riders finished out of the 33 who started! Today it is one of the five monuments of cycling. It was the opening race of the UCI Road World Cup series until the series was replaced by the UCI ProTour in 2005 and the World Tour in 2011. The most successful rider with seven victories is Belgian Eddy Merckx, and Italian Costante Girardengo achieved 11 podium finishes in the interwar period, winning the race six times. In modern times, German Erik Zabel and Spaniard Óscar Freire have recorded four and three wins respectively. In 2023 it was won by Mathieu van der Poel. Being the longest professional one-day race, Milan Sanremo is an unusual test of endurance early in the season and it is often won not by the fastest sprinter, but by the strongest and best prepared rider with a strong sprint finish. Largely flat, the route has included the longer climbs of The Turchino and Le Manie as well as the shorter Capi, Cipressa and Poggio which invite attackers to distance the peloton. In recent years there has rarely been a big selection in the latter stages of the race with many sprinters able to keep up with the main peloton on the climbs. Nonetheless, The Cipressa and Poggio have foiled many sprinters who could not stay with the front group - so beware and make sure you are prepared!



Milan Sanremo - our version



Milan Sanremo - Our challenge

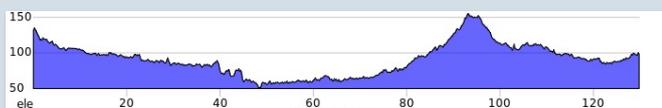
In our version of this classic bike race we don't propose to replicate every detail of the route of the professional race. Slavishly following an actual route (they often change annually anyway) would mean many miles of riding on major roads, and to avoid this we have taken the spirit of the race and given it our own twist. And rather than attempting to ride the whole route in one day as the professionals do, we've made it a little more accessible by splitting the route into three distinct stages. But having said all of that we believe this tour still stays loyal to the original concept proposed by the Unione Sportiva Sanremese (the first version in 1906 was a two stage race) in linking from Milan in the industrial heart of Northern Italy, to Sanremo, the fashionable seaside resort on the Italian Riviera with its trademark Belle Epoque villas. Just like the professional race our route starts in the Piazza del Duomo in the heart of Milan before heading southwest, over the plains of Lombardy and Piedmont, towards the cities of Pavia, Voghera and Tortona, except that we follow the slightly more circuitous but quieter back roads wherever possible. Our route then heads westwards to Alessandria, our first overnight stop. On day two we diverge from the race route which heads almost directly south and enter the Piedmontese hills north of Acqui Terme, making our second overnight stop in the small town of Breo. Day three is the hardest of the tour as we continue to climb out of Piedmont and into Liguria. passing through the picturesque villages of Pieve di Teco, Carpasio and Badalucco before finally turning westwards again after the small town of Taggia. It is then not long before we rejoin the route of the professional race to climb the famous Poggio on our way into Sanremo itself - our final destination. A queen stage day to finish our tour.

Photos - Main: San Remo at sunset. Below left: Basilica of San Carlo al Corso, Milan by [Deensel CC BY-SA 2.0](#). Below right: San Remo at night by [villamania CC BY 3.0](#)



Stage 1 Milan to Alessandria (130 km 460m)

The variations available to us when plotting this route are enormous but we have decided to follow the professional race route - at least in terms of the towns through which it passes - for the majority of day one. Just like the pro race we'll be starting outside Il Duomo, Milan's famous cathedral where there'll be time-a-plenty to take a photo or two before heading south out of the city. Navigating out of major cities is never easy but fortunately we have the option of taking the Alzaia Naviglio Pavese cycle path for much of the first 20 kilometres. And indeed we could remain on this cycle route all the way to Pavia, but in our view there is only so much cycle route one can take in a day, and we have opted instead to move onto the slightly more circuitous but perhaps more interesting country roads at the small town of Casarile. Next stop is Pavia where we can maybe grab a coffee before, still following the direction of the pro race, we head onto the town of Voghera again via the smaller country roads. Voghera is approximately half-way on the first day's route so lunch can be taken here or if the weather permits we will arrange a picnic roadside as the countryside after the town opens up to give views of the distant Apls and the Piedmontese hills which will be our destination on day two. Then it is on to Tortona which is at the top of the only real climbing on day

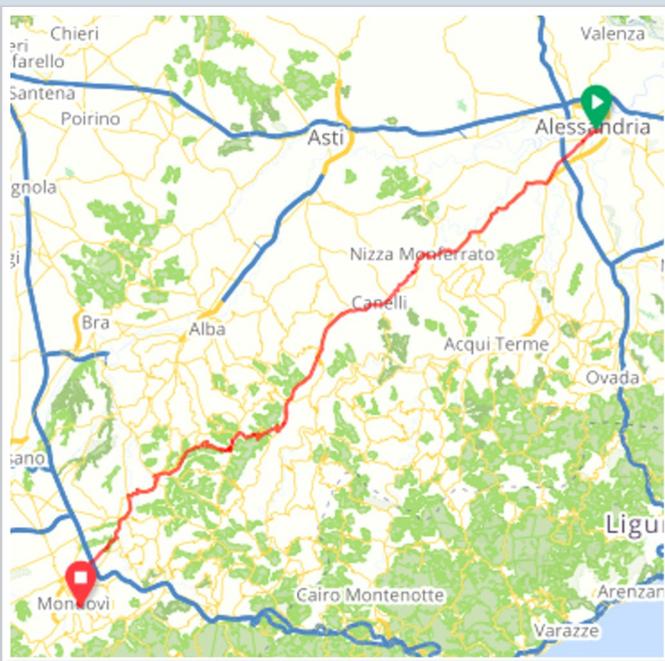


one. After Tortona we diverge from the pro race route which continues to head south towards Novi Luguria and Ovada and head due west for the first time. The post lunch section will most likely be around 60 kilometers and once more we avoid the main roads - despite the A21 autostrada attempting to foil us! - as we wend our way towards our first night's stop in Alessandria. And so will end stage one of your challenge. Nothing to fear here and a day that, like the professional race, is going to be a day for the Rouleur: flat and a great day to warm up the legs for the greater trials that lie ahead.



Stage 2 Alessandria to Breo (113km 1650m)

Stage two of our Milan Sanremo Tour is, as they say, a day of two halves. The first, like day one, continues in the spirit of the pro race and is flat. The second foreshadows the final day and contains over



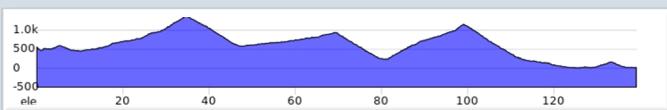
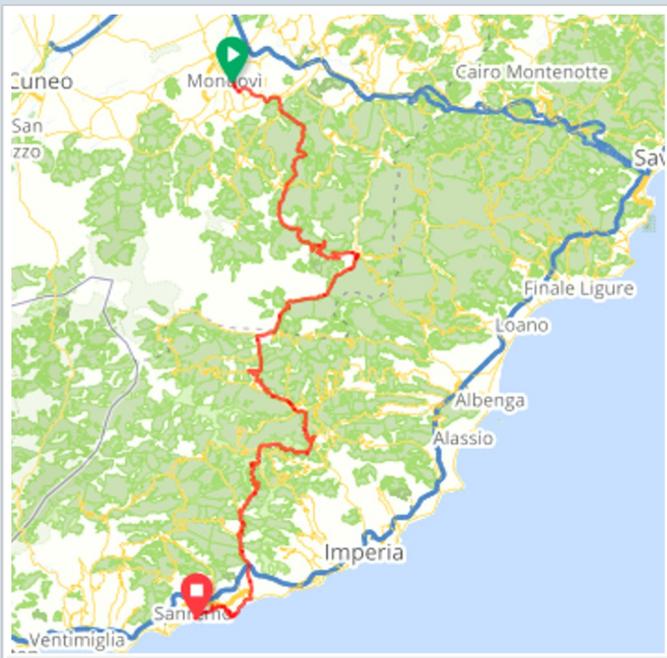
1000 meters of climbing. But by the time this climbing starts, the legs should be well and truly warmed up. Alessandria is not a huge town and after a couple of kilometers or so we leave it behind and head out into the Piedmontese countryside again. And when we say countryside we mean countryside for we are rarely troubled by a town or village apart from the little settlement of Cantalupo until we reach Nizza Monferrato. The flat theme then continues as we pass the small villages of Calamandrana, Canelli, and the larger town of Santo Stefano Belbo where we'll stop for a coffee in the square as we prepare for the first real climb of the tour. The road starts to rise gently at first and is little more than false flat to start with - until we reach Boscia. After a short descent the next 4 kilometers see us climbing in earnest with gradients touching double digits in places. As this is the first climbing of any note on our route we think it best to get it under our belts before we look to take lunch in Serravalle Langhe at 74 kilometers into the day. After lunch the road rolls a little before we descend for a dozen kilometres into the small town of Dogliani. There is

then a punchy little ascent of a couple of kilometres as we head towards Farigliano. Thereafter we have a short plateau section which rises and falls before we join the SP282 and head ever so gently upwards towards San Giovanni Govoni where we begin the climb to our overnight stop in Breo. This is a pretty little hilltop town overlooking its more modern sister Mondovi which our route avoids by taking the twisting back roads towards Carassonne. These roads are not only quieter but afford great views across the landscape to the northwest from whence we have just come.

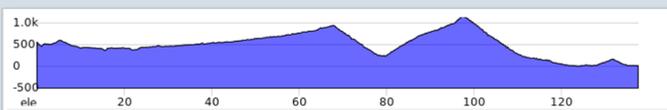


Stage 3 Breo to Sanremo (140km 2000/2600 m)

We have saved the best until last! It is true we have now veered from the professional race route by some distance but the practicality of using the exact same roads, many of which are too busy to cycle on comfortably when not closed, mean it is a necessity.



Stage 3 - Option 1 Profile (140 km 2600 m)



Stage 3 - Option 2 Profile (140 km 2000 m)

But it is not hard to make a virtue from this necessity and we needed no second invitation to take the more scenic route through the hills of Piedmont and Liguria. We have devised two alternative routes for this last day. For those whose legs are feeling good we have an epic option taking the quieter strade provinciali roads from Breo to Garessio (as shown on the map on this page). Both routes are the same length but this one has an additional 600m of climbing. The second option takes the busier but more direct and gentler climb along the SS28. But don't worry, you won't have to decide which route you will take until you've had a chance to test your legs on the first two days. After reuniting at Geressio where a coffee might be in order we'll press on as the road continues to climb towards Colle di Nava. We will then descend for approximately 11 kilometers into Pieve di Teco. The next 18 kilometers see us ascend the Colle d'Oggia but we break the climb at a little under half-way to take lunch at Serravalle Langhe. Thereafter just 11 kilometers of climbing remain until the top but it is worth it as the views from the top are stunning and you have the reward of a beautiful 25 kilometer descent into Sanremo where the famous Poggio (3.6 km at 3.5%) awaits you. After three days and some 400 kilometers of cycling this comparatively small lump will doubtless test your legs as it does those of the professionals before you complete your Milan to Sanremo challenge on the famous Via Roma.



Accommodation

Viva Velo chooses its hotel partners very carefully. On the Milan Sanremo Challenge we have selected four star establishments wherever possible and always try to seek out the charming and characterful if we can. In Milan we have splashed out and gone for the four star [Hotel the Square](#) as we think its central location is an ideal starting point for our trip. In Alessandria we have opted for the three star [Hotel Londra](#) which is a two minute walk into town. For our stop in Breo/Mondovi we have chosen the beautiful [Albergo dell'Academica](#) right in the heart of the old town, and for those taking our strong recommendation to tarry an extra night and savour your achievements you'll be staying at the four star [Grand Hotel Londra](#).

Photos - Above: Pool at the Grand Hotel Londra, Sanremo. Below left: Bedroom at the Hotel Londra, Alessandria. Centre: View from the Albergo dell'Academica, Breo. Below right Bedroom at the Albergo dell'Academica, Breo





Viva Velo - the bespoke cycle tour company



Viva Velo is a cycle tour company founded on the principle that cycling should be fun for all, and which aims to cater for all cyclists from hard-bitten racers through club riders to the relative beginner. As well as providing first rate cycling tours at a reasonable cost to individuals and groups, Viva Velo helps charities and companies organise cycling events and trips. Viva Velo has worked with a number of charities including Barnardo's, Beating Bowel Cancer (now Bowel Cancer UK), and Bikes4Cancer and has provided logistical and support services for their fund raising through cycling. We have also organised corporate trips and events, providing route planning and ride leader services to ensure the safety and enjoyment of participants. As experienced cyclists we can help you keep your staff or fund raisers safe and secure while providing the framework and structure to ensure everyone enjoys their adventure or challenge. Our tours are always tailored to the needs of each group, and individuals will be matched with riders of similar ability. Our ride leaders will ensure that stronger riders are challenged at all times but that no one will ever be left behind. But don't take our word for it: check out our fantastic customer feedback on our website www.vivavelo.uk or on the page opposite

This brochure is designed to give you a flavour of the Milan Sanremo event which we feel sure will provide both a challenge and an unforgettable experience in just a few short days away. But if you have any questions or queries we are here to help. Whether it be to design a training programme to help you prepare for the ride, or just simply answering questions about what you will need to bring with you on the tour, we are here waiting to help so please don't be shy and get in touch. We are looking forward to seeing you on this trip which, we are sure, will last long in your memory for many years to come.

Just some of what our clients said . . .

"We (31 rugby vets) have just returned home after an off-road MTB tour from our rugby club in Ruislip West London to Brighton over 2 days which Viva Velo organised. I cannot compliment these guys enough, they were awesome. Everything went smoothly from the planning, the support over the days, the quality of the venues they arranged for lunches and overnight stays to the final coach pickup and drop off back to our club. We will definitely be using them again... 100% recommend them, you won't be disappointed."

Oli Huddle - Ruislip RFC

"I have been on a few [cycling] trips [with other companies] and Viva Velo is by far the standout provider."

Jeremy Blanchard - multiple trip client



"This is an exceptional team who each provide a different skill set with excellent knowledge in their specialist area but overall provide really great support. They are also very kind and decent people too who care a lot about the quality of what they provide."

Catherine Whitehead - returning client



Feedback

"Highly recommend Viva Velo - I worked closely with Dyll to create a bespoke 6 day package for a small corporate group. The planning process was well managed and easy, no request was inconvenient, and the trip itself was fantastic. Amanda and Trevor looked after our group extremely well and they had a brilliant time. A big thank you to all the team."

Briony Lewis - bespoke Dolomite trip

"I have cycled with Viva Velo a few times and am a huge fan. Deeply knowledgeable, supportive and kept us all safe. They made riding a pleasure and, at the same time, knew when to help you just achieve that bit more."

Mark Flannagan - ex CEO Bowel Cancer UK

Read more of our reviews on our [website](#).

Itinerary:

05.09.24 - **Arrive Milan.** Transfer to hotel and build bikes

06.09.24 - **Stage 1: Milan to Alessandria** (130 km - 460m)

07.09.24 - **Stage 2: Alessandria to Breo** (113 km - 1650m)

08.09.24 - **Stage 3: Breo to Sanremo** (140km 2600/2000m)

09.06.19 **Transfer from Sanremo to Nice airport**

Viva Velo is a bespoke cycle tour company. We have found that long or extended weekend trips like Milan Sanremo Challenge are very popular as they provide a challenge and an unforgettable experience while minimising your time off work. For the Milan Sanremo Challenge we have scheduled a Monday return as we feel having this extra day will significantly enhance your enjoyment



- meaning you can celebrate your achievement on the Sunday evening and then pack up and be ready to fly out on the Monday in a relatively leisurely way. Although we would strongly recommend this option we can arrange a Sunday transfer for those wishing to fly back on Sunday night but would caution that this could make your last day more stressful than it should be.

Price £1500 per person



Prices

What you get:

- Quality accommodation in 3 and 4 star hotels on a bed and breakfast basis
- Return transfers from/to Milan and Nice airports
- Return bike transport from London to Italy
- Full vehicle support to transfer your luggage each day.
- A qualified mechanic to support you on the road
- Picnic lunches each day
- Our experienced ride leaders to guide you all the way
- Full itinerary and route information in advance
- GPX files on request

Flights, evening meals* and drinks are not included.

* These can be organised for the group by our staff. Just select the relevant option when booking.

