

## Cycle tourism in Varese Province takes off

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**Air, water, green and sun are the elements that have always characterised those who love Varese Province** and tourism that has always existed here, but that has never properly taken off.

**To make this territory fly, two wheels may be enough.** This was discussed today, during a presentation in **Borgo di Mustonate**.

**Why just here? Because** in the “Guestrooms” of this section of the gentle Alpine foothills, which slopes down from the mountain to the lake, a project of a “widely spread” hotel has been created (it is the first in Varese Province, and the third in the whole of Lombardy), and has become part of the “**Lake Maggiore Bike Hotel**” circuit. This group, association, or maybe we should say “Product Club”, has equipped facilities for tourism on two wheels, with times, places and even bicycle workshops specifically designed to accompany the solitary tourists in search of themselves, or a family with children, for a weekend, or even a group of friends who travel the world in this way, with a bit of adventure and a few kilometres in their legs. **The project can count on the support of Lombardy Region and of the Chamber of Commerce in Varese.**

The potential, for Varese Province, of this form of tourism, which is growing by 10% per year, can be seen in the numbers, which are astounding; they were presented by **Fabio Lamera**, of the Lake Maggiore Bike Hotels, who, with a study from the University of Bologna in hand, spoke of a “turnover of **€3.2 billion a year, and sideline business of €44 billion, in Italy alone.**

There **are already 8 facilities in Varese Province that have joined this project**, with **about a hundred rooms**, that provide cycle tourists with comfort and services. How does a hotel become a Bike Hotel? For example, as in the case of Mustonate, **by turning a saddle room into a bicycle workshop**: there are no harnesses or leather, but chains, saddles and tools to repair bicycles, to wash them, and storage, when the owners stop to sleep or to enjoy the scenery.

**Or by adapting a range of services specifically to the needs (and times) of those who tour by bicycle**; you might be held up by a storm, or delayed a few minutes because of a puncture, which is what happened to **Lorenzo Franzetti**, who, with his wife, **Alessandra Doridoni** (she was one time) manages **LibEreria** in Ispra, which, together with the **Bottega del Romeo**, is a centre that, for some time, has been a must for enthusiasts of this discipline; they provide technical and tourist advice, and promote the territory.

The owner of **the Borgo di Mustonate, Francesco Aletti Montano**, also spoke during the presentation. “We’re offering **10 new suites as part of, and with respect for, the concept of the ‘widely spread’ hotel**: rooms are 400 metres from each other, there’s a lot of green, we’re to the “Campo dei Fiori” Park, and to the main roads that will take you to the lake in a few minutes. The aim is to be known, to collaborate with other facilities in the area who believe in this project, which is dedicated to cycle tourism, investing in local flavours.”

There is still a lot of work to do in the province, as **Giuseppe Ferrari of FIAB** (the Italian Federation of Friends of the Bicycle) reminds us. “For example, **to complete the cycle connection between Varese town and its lake**,” but cycle tourists like the province. **In about one year, 2000 were counted**; tourists who have enjoyed the Alpine foothills by bicycle. This number is one-tenth of those who visited Emilia Romagna, but there, it is another story, and it is not just a question of plains and slopes.

di Translated by Roberto Dall’Aglio (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)