



## Navaccolli

We're talking about the Nove Colli (Nine Hills), a legend in the tour cycling movement: a long distance race that for years has been a not-to-be-missed event for thousands of Italian and European cyclists. The start of the Nove Colli, held every May, is a spectacular sight to see. But aside from the event itself, the route is there for everyone to try, even only in part if you don't feel up to tackling 205 kilometres and 9 rugged hills in one go.

### Polenta, the first tough breakaway

After departure from **Cesenatico**, you ride without problems as far as **Cesena**, and then **Forlimpopoli** where you start the ascent to **Bertinoro**, the first steep climb on the course, after 30 kilometres. The toughest point is actually after Bertinoro in breaking away towards **Polenta**, with gradients up to 15%. After the descent to **Fratta Terme** there's a fine restful stretch, through **Meldola** and **Pian di Spino**; the last stretch is also the same length. After sixty kilometres you start climbing again towards **Pieve di Rivoschio**. At the start the slope is pretty gentle and easily pedalled, but then becomes tougher. There's also a welcome downhill run that prepares you for a particularly nasty last kilometre. At Pieve di Rivoschio you've covered 64 kilometres.

### The Barbotto commands respect

You start going down again towards **San Romano** and you must watch out because it's a pretty insidious descent. The third hill, the **Ciola**, is in the direction of **Mercato Saraceno**. The gradient is constant and with the right rhythm you climb without great pains. There are plenty occasions for a break at Mercato Saraceno if you feel like it. The **Barbotto** is looming, which is no joke at all because though it's a climb of only six kilometres the last stretch has a gradient peaking at 18%. Of the Nove Colli the Barbotto is the summit richest in cycling tradition: the cyclists of the area feel duty bound to measure themselves up against its hairpin bends. The sixth hill is Montetiffi that you reach after a stretch of road that allows a pause and a pleasant meeting-up: **Sogliano**, home of the famous fossa cheese.

### At Pugliano you're touching 800 metres

The last stretch of **Montetiffi** is pretty heavy going, but it doesn't last very long and the descent is also short, just a couple of kilometres, because at once, with continual breakaways, you approach the 655 metres of **Perticara**. Having crossed the col the descent is vigorous until Ponte Baffoni, where you have covered 135 kilometres. The seventh hill, **Pugliano**, with its 787 metres, is the highest summit of the circuit. You approach it with the tough climb of the **Maiolo** (up to 17%), then the slope gets less treacherous and you come to the village.

### Gorolo, last insult to the muscles

Only two hills to go to complete the enterprise, and the eighth, the **Passo Siepi**, is not one of the most tiring: the gradients are not extreme and it is preceded by a fine downhill run from **Pugliano** to **San Leo**. But at this point, with 160 kilometres and eight ascents behind you, even a flyover would seem too much. The last hill, **Gorolo**, appears terrible and, with its first stretch at 13% and the last peaks at 17%, is an undertaking to be fully respected.

It seems intolerable, no matter how small a ratio you have, but it's the final effort because once you've reached **Gorolo** you head down to the plain and the sea.

You pass **Borghi** and **Savignano**, you pass the river **Rubicon** and now the road is flat towards **Cesenatico**. There's not much to be said: these 200 kilometres, so well devised, represent one of the most exciting challenges for the tour cyclist. As for ratios, a 39x28 is advised but some actually opt for 30x28. To take part in the Nove Colli, phone 0547 672 156.



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