



↑ Via ferrata Ceria Merlone, an extension near Rifugio Fratelli Fonda Savio.
↓ Tunnels built during the First World War along the via ferrata De Luca Innerkofler, a possible extension.

but it is classed as an easy via ferrata. Nevertheless, since it includes one 40m (131 ft) vertical step, climbing experience and equipment are essential for this entire stage. After negotiating the cables, tunnels, and ladders as far as Forcella Rimbianco (2,176 m/7,139 ft), the trail climbs back up to Rifugio Fratelli Fonda Savio, perched on a high col in one of the most dramatic locations imaginable. After this hard stage, you will have earned your evening meal and bed in the hut.

The next day is almost as hard as the previous one, with more aid sections and much steep, rocky ground to negotiate before a descent to Rifugio Col de Varda. At this point, the official line of the AV4 descends to the village of Misurina before taking the bus to Passo Tre Croci (1,809 m/5,935 ft) and then an easy trail to Lago di Sorapiss, but a route more in keeping with the trail’s challenging nature veers further east, descending wooded slopes to the Albergo Cristallo at a road, then climbing to the Lago di Sorapiss more directly. This high Alpine lake, cradled in a cirque beneath the glaciated Sorapiss Group, is incredibly beautiful. Stay at Rifugio Vandelli next to the lake.

Day four is probably the hardest overall, and it begins with a tough section: the Via Ferrata Alfonso Vandelli, traversing around one arm of the mountain to the Bivacco Comici, a red metal cabin offering emergency shelter. This via ferrata is vertical in places and very exposed. Afterward, the Sentiero Minazio continues south to Forcella Grande (2,255 m/7,398 ft), another spectacular col. The stage ends at Rifugio San Marco.

Onward through the high ground north of Monte Antelao (3,263 m/10,705 ft), the highest mountain in the eastern Dolomites,



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↑ The protected section of the hike to Lago di Sorapiss.
← The austere landscape of the Forcella del Ghiacciaio.