

Alternative start to the Alta Via 1

Villabassa to Lago di Braies

Start	Villabassa railway station
Distance	9.2km/5.7 miles
Total ascent	350m
Grade	1
Time	2hr 30min

In midsummer it can be complicated catching the bus to Lago di Braies due to the compulsory booking system. However, there's a straightforward route that takes 2hr 30min on foot and is well signposted. It begins at Villabassa railway station (which also houses the tourist office) and follows forest lanes and paths as well as quiet roads, offering an insight into rural alpine life and a view over marvellous valleys: a pleasant way to approach the trek and stretch your legs after a long journey. En route you pass through the village of Ferrara where accommodation is available, a handy stopover.

Walk out of **Villabassa railway station** (1157m) and at the signposts turn L (W) for route no.1 on the road. Not far along you duck under the railway line then pass over a main road, onto a wide gravel lane that doubles as a bike track. However, immediately after a nearby timber-yard, part ways with the cyclists and branch L on a quiet narrow surfaced road shaded by conifers. This climbs gently WSW over a rise to a perfectly positioned bench and crucifix gazing over manicured meadows over the Valle di Braies to the massive bulk of Sasso del Signore and its cohort.

Passing farms, descend to a chapel and cross the road onto a white gravel lane past another bench and crucifix. This leads over to a bridged stream where you're directed up to a traditional hay-drying rack and on to the geranium-bedecked houses of **Ferrara** (1206m, 1hr, [bus stop](#), [café-restaurants](#), [groceries](#) and [accommodation](#)).

After the village square and church, no.1 takes a gravel lane R (SW) alongside a stream at the foot of vast slopes of meadows. At a dam on the roadside – and a bus stop – the path flanks the tarmac for 5min. Then go L on a quiet side-road through shady forest, passing a picnic table. A gentle climb leads to the marvellous historic [hotel and baths Bagni di Braies Nuova](#), which served as a base for pioneer climbers such as Wolf von Glanvell from the late 1800s.

A gravel lane proceeds to a bridged stream and no.1 soon forks L as a lovely path, climbing steadily through forest with a number of fallen trees. It finally emerges

on the shore of gorgeous **Lago di Braies** (1494m, 1hr 30min). To your R is the Grand Hotel and the start of Alta Via 1.