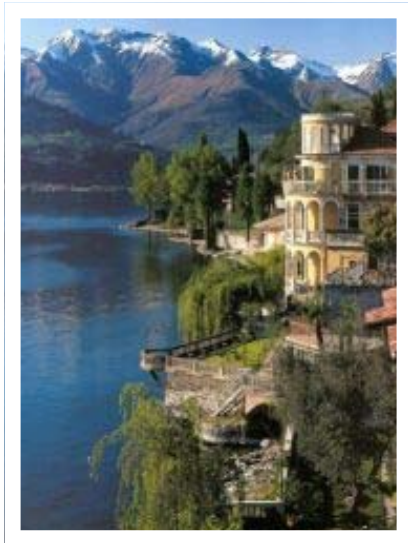


Welcome to the Italian Lake District



The Italian Lake District is a land of dramatic scenery, with lakes and palm trees in the foreground and snow-capped mountains in the background. Morning mists give way to glorious sunshine as you stroll through picturesque lakeside towns of pastel-colored houses, palatial villas and stately gardens. While each of the lakes has its own particular charm, all are renowned for their mild microclimate, boasting cooler temperatures in summer and warmer temperatures in spring and fall than anywhere else in Italy.

Milan is an hour to the south, and Switzerland lies to the north. Come to enjoy the scenery, history, natural beauty and local cuisine. There are many possibilities for activities, including sailing, water skiing, canoeing, hiking, horseback riding, and golf, with seven golf courses near Lake Maggiore and three near Lake Como. Swimming in the lakes is possible, although this is not the main reason to visit.

Arriving in the Lake District

Before booking your flights, it is important to understand the distance from the airport to your villa. There are three airports: Milano Malpensa, Milano Linate, and Milano Orio al Serio.

- **Malpensa** is the largest and most common place to arrive from the USA. It is closest to Lake Maggiore (40 minutes-1.5 hours, depending on whether your villa is south or north on the lake). The airport is 30 km from the southernmost point of the lake and 77 km from the northern tip. For Lake Como, Malpensa is the best choice if you are staying on the west shore. It is about 70 km from Malpensa to the town of Como (about an hour) and 100 km from the villas on the northern part of the lake. Some flights arrive early in the morning before the former villa guests have checked out, so you will need to plan accordingly. Villas are usually not ready until 4-5 p.m. on Saturday for incoming guests except by special arrangement and if they are not occupied that morning.
- **Linate** is located in southeast Milan, about two hours from the villas on the northern part of Lake Como or Lake Maggiore. Linate is good if you are going to Varenna (80 km). Most flights arriving here are from other parts of Europe.
- **Bergamo (Orio al Serio)** is close to Bergamo and is the furthest from the lakes. It could take 2-2.5 hours to drive to your villa, plus you will need time to collect your luggage, go through customs, and pick up your rental car. If you are going to Varenna, you can get there in just over an hour. Make sure you can arrive at your villa on time before choosing to fly into this airport.

Lake Maggiore and Lake Orta



Lake Maggiore is as beautiful as Lake Como but is less expensive and easier to explore because of a passenger rail line and *autostrada* on the west side of the lake, which frees up the west lake road. Lake Maggiore is most famous for its enchanting islands, named for the Borromeo family. Visits by boat are possible.

Lake Maggiore offers a world class botanical garden, Villa Taranto, in Verbania Pallanza, where the warm micro-climate allows tropical plants to thrive. www.villataranto.it/home_eng.htm.

Also there are historic castles, medieval churches, and natural parks (including the largest wilderness area in Italy, the Parco Nazionale delle Val Grande).

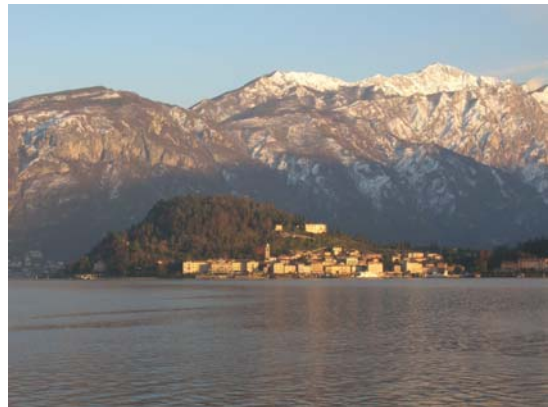
On Lake Orta the car-free town of Orta San Giulio is a gem. Visit the frescoed chapels of the Sacro Monte above Orta San Giulio, with terracotta sculptures depicting scenes from the life of St. Francis.

How to reach Lake Maggiore:

- **By plane:** 20-45 minutes from Malpensa airport
- **By train:** There are trains to Milan, Genoa, Zurich, Basel and Paris.
- **By car:** Motorway A26 and A8 links to Genoa, Milano and the Simplon Tunnel to Brig, Switzerland and the Rhone River Valley.

Lake Como

Lake Como is Europe's deepest lake (1,350 ft) and is 30 miles long, 2.5 miles across at its widest point. It is the most famous of the Italian lakes, and the most scenic. Snow-covered mountains plunge dramatically into the lake. This scenery inspired Shelley and Wordsworth to capture it in verse; Verdi, Rossini, Liszt and Bellini sought to translate its beauty into melody. Lake Como is also the most difficult of the lakes to travel around in, as roads are narrow and winding, and traffic is slow, especially on weekends. The best way to get around is by ferry.



How to get there:

- **By car or train:** The town of Como is easily reached by motorway (A9). From here, drive along the busy stata road to reach the north side of the lake. Only the east branch of the lake (Lecco to Sondrio) is accessible by train. Lake Maggiore can easily be reached by motorway or by train.
- **By ferry:** Both lakes have an extensive ferry service run by the Navigazione Laghi (www.navigazionealaghi.it/home_e.html)

Attractions:

- **Como** – This attractive town offers culture, art, picturesque beauty, elegant restaurants, and stylish shops.
- **Como to Megaggio** – Luxurious gardens, elegant villas and delightful dining can be found in the charming villages along the lakeshore.
- **The Larian Triangle** – Menaggio, Bellagio and Varenna are famous for their historical villas and stunning views.
- **Varenna** – Located on the east branch of the lake, Varenna offers great train service (1 hr to Milan) and ferry service to the other resorts on the lake.
- **Bellagio** - The loveliest of Como's villages, Bellagio has been called the prettiest village in Europe. It divides the eastern and western parts of the lake and enjoys 360 degrees of indescribable scenery.
- **Menaggio to Colico** – The northern part of the lake is quiet and peaceful, with little villages and family-run trattorias.

Sightseeing

Villas:

- **In Bellagio** – Villa Serbelloni, Villa Melzi, Villa Trivulzio, Villa Trotti, Villa Giulia
- **In Tremezzo** – Villa Carlotta
- **In Ossucio** – Villa Maria and Villa La Carlia
- **The Comacina Island** and historic “Villa Balbianello”
- **In Varenna** – Villa Cipressi and Villa Monastero

Museums:

- **Museum of Silk** – Como
- **Moto Guzzi Museum** – Mandello del Mario, extraordinary collection of motorcycles
- **Lake Boat Museum** – Pianello Lario
- **Monza Race Circuit** – Europe's oldest permanent circuit still in use and one of its fastest, set on the outskirts of Milan (40 km from Como)

And more: Switzerland – Don't forget your passport! See the awe-inspiring Matterhorn in Zermatt and explore the lakeside resorts of Locarno and Lugano.

Not to miss for all the lakes:

Bergamo – The upper town is a full day's visit. See the Colleoni Chapel, the Cathedral, the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (60 km from Como).

Milano – Make reservations in advance to see The Last Supper (Tel: 0039 02 894 1146). Visit the Duomo, S. Ambrogio, La Scala, the art collections at Ambrosiana or Brera, the Sforza Castle. Shop in the fashion district.



Shopping in Milan:

Shops generally open 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 3-7 pm. Department stores stay open through the midday break. On Mondays, food shops are open only in the morning, while other shops are open only in the afternoon.

For designer fashions, go to the “golden rectangle” to find Armani, Gucci, Ferragamo, Prada, Versace, Valentino (Via Montenapoleone); Dolce & Gabbane and Prada (Via Spiga); Fendi (Via Sant’Andrea); and more Armani (Via Manzoni). For boutiques and trendy restaurants, try the pedestrian area around Brera (Via dei Fiori Chiari). Affordable shops can be found in Corso Buenos Aires. For antiques and ethnic shops, go to the Navigli. Don’t miss the delicatessen Peck in Via Spadari, where you will find Italian food specialties and a luxury wine shop.



Boat Rentals:

Centro Nautico – Servizi Turistici
Via Mazzini 3, Belgirate (VB)
Tel: +39 0323-31266
www.lagovela.com



Factory Outlets:

In Milano:

Etro – Via Spartaco 3, tel: 02-550201, Monday 3-7pm, Tuesday-Friday 10 am-1:45 pm, 2:45-7 pm, Saturday 10 am-1 pm

Near Milan

Dolce & Gabbana – Via Rossini 70, 20025 Legnano (MI), 10 am-1:30 pm, 2:30-7 pm

Near Como

Armani Factory Store – Provinciale per Bregnano, Vertemate Con Minoprio (CO), 10 am-2 pm, 3-7 pm

Near Lake Maggiore

Loro Piana – Romagnano Sesia, Via per Novara 484, Tel +39 0163 826875

Fratelli Rossetti – Parabiago (Mi) Via Cantú 24

In Mendisio (Switzerland)

Fox Town-Mendrisio, CH-6850, via A. Maspoli 18, Monday-Sunday 11am-7pm



Wine & Food Visits, Daily Excursions and Cultural Activities

Doorways can arrange some unique and special activities for guests in the Lake District:

- **Meet an Italian Cheese Affineur: Arona, Lake Maggiore.** Tour the grottos of Italy's top cheese affineur, followed by an unforgettable cheese tasting, with accompanying wine.
- **Cooking Class: Angera, Lake Maggiore.** Chef Silvio, whose Michelin-rated restaurant is known for its Piedmontese cuisine, will share his recipes and teach you about food and ingredients.
- **Artisan Beer: Lurago Marinone, Como.** Italy's oldest micro-brewery opens its doors to show you how its "whole" beer is produced. A tasting is accompanied by a selection of appropriate dishes that go with beer.
- **Wine and Oil Experience: Lake Garda.** Visit a family farm on the shores of Lake Garda, where the classic DOC wines of the Garda region are produced, along with extra-virgin olive oil and three types of grappa.
- **Cooking Class: Milan.** Enjoy a hands-on cooking class in the center of Milan.
- **Boat Excursion on Lake Maggiore:** Private motorboat trip around the Borromeo Islands.
- **Guided Tour of Milan:** A pleasant three-hour stroll to see Milan's most famous sights, including Piazza della Scala and Galleria, the Dome Cathedral and Sforzesco Castle.
- **Private Shopping Tour: Milan.** Your guide will lead you through the fashion district. Via Montenapoleone is lined with luxury boutiques, antiques shops, tearooms and cafés. The ateliers of the top Milenese designers are located all along the street.