



# A LAKE FULL OF FLAVOURS

Walking amid  
the fragrances and flavours  
of **Lake Como**

LAGO DI COMO  
ITALIA



A WORLD WITHIN A WORLD



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# FOREWORD



PROVINCIA DI COMO



*The area around Lake Como is famous and appreciated throughout the world for its artistic and monumental masterpieces, its charming landscapes, its fascinating lake and its quality manufactured goods, above all in the field of fashion and design.*

*However, not everyone is aware of Como's agricultural products and the tradition, history and material culture they express.*

*Thanks to this guidebook, the Provincial Administration of Como aims to propose another way of enjoying a stay here, recommending food and wine itineraries during which to enjoy the area's cultural and natural offer.*

*It is therefore an invitation to consider Lake Como not as a stopover, but as a tourist destination per se, to be enjoyed and savoured calmly, carefully and with inquisitiveness.*

*Don't miss it!*

*Provincial Administration  
of Como*

# INTRODUCTION

*Visiting any territory also means discovering its aromas and flavours through its cuisine and its food and wine specialities, in order to turn a journey into a sensory experience. Savouring local products and allowing yourselves to be seduced by the land and water that generated them is the experience this short guidebook to the flavours of Lake Como hopes to offer. Amid vines and olive groves, following the recommendations of those who have immortalized the world's most beautiful lake in literature and poetry, we invite you to discover places that can offer a glimpse of times gone by, just a stone's throw from the hectic pace of city life.*

*"...and be sure you don't go with other boys to the lake to throw stones into the water, nor to watch them fish, nor to play with the nets hung up to dry..." advises Agnes in The Betrothed, hinting at the ability of these places to enchant visitors and make them lose all sense of time.*

*Spending a day on Lake Como, seeking out its most authentic culinary traditions, watching the sun set as its golden glow reflects on the waves and reawakening in the seductive light of the water, surrounded by villas and gardens that exude a 19th-century atmosphere is an amazing experience for anyone choosing Lombardy for a short break or a longer holiday.*



# A LAKE FULL OF WINE

*"On both sides were vineyards, with vines still stretched between their supports; their leaves shone brightly, in various shades of red. Strips of freshly ploughed land showed up black and sharply among the whitish fields of stubble, which were glistening with dew."*

*A. Manzoni  
The Betrothed*

**Below:  
map of the main  
production areas**



Grape growing in the area around Lake Como and on the hills of Brianza has extremely ancient origins. Numerous references are made to it in Roman texts, as well as during the Middle Ages and in the modern era. For centuries, these lands produced wines for both local consumption and for the wider market, particularly for Milan.

It was however from the 19th century onwards that more systematic and scientific reference is made to it, thanks also to the work of the Ampelographic Commission, which left a detailed list of the dozens of grape varieties found locally in the latter half of the 19th century (including the famous Verdesa, a traditional local white variety). Despite production having come to somewhat of a standstill due to a number of reasons

(see the chapter on the Province of Lecco), including the difficulty involved in producing wine on terraced and heavily sloping areas, the region's vine growing and wine producing history is confirmed by numerous documents that bear witness to the close relationship between human factors and the quality and characteristics of these wines. At present, the largest vineyards in the province of Como are concentrated in the Upper Lake area – where Domasino is favourably influenced by the viticulture of the nearby Valtellina area and is showing strong signs of an upturn in interest from grape growers – as well as on the shores of Lake Lugano and the Olgiata Hills, thanks to favourable orographic conditions and the influence of the viticulture of the nearby Canton Ticino.





Vineyards in the upper lake area

## PRODUCT SHEET

In 2008, the rediscovery of viticulture in the Lario area led to the TGI (Typical Geographical Indication) designation Terre Lariane. Although still a niche production, cultivation now extends over a fairly large area that embraces the Provinces of Como and Lecco with two distinct zones; on the one hand, the viticulture of the Brianza area (above all, near Lecco), which centres on the hills of Montevicchia where the majority of production is concentrated and where the protection consortium is based, and on the other, the viticulture of the Upper Lake, which is concentrated primarily on the slopes of Domaso and neighbouring municipalities. Production guidelines cover both white and red wine and permit the use of all the varieties authorised in Lombardy. In recent years, it has primarily been the white wines that have received most recognition.

### THE LEGEND OF TEODOLINDA

Ancient *Via Regina*, which according to tradition was built by Queen Teodolinda, even though the first documents to call it by this name only date back to 1335, was a road that swept the entire western shore of Lake Como as far as Chiavenna. Numerous legends exist about Teodolinda, a queen who was much loved by her people. One of these narrates that in the 7th century AD an edict of the then King of the Lombards forbade his subjects to drink wine, grow vines or eat grapes. The official drink was to be *cervogia*, a sort of bitter and aromatic beer that was extraneous to the traditions of these

parts. The people turned directly to the queen, who listened attentively to their request.

A while later, Teodolinda was widowed and chose to remarry the Duke of Turin, Agilulfo, who immediately set out on a journey to the palace in Monza with his entourage. In line with tradition, when Teodolinda met her future husband, the queen offered him something to drink from a precious sapphire goblet, after having taken a sip herself. Agilulfo was amazed; in fact, the goblet did not contain Lombard *cervogia*, but wine. He enjoyed the wine so much it was subsequently served on their wedding.



### THE WINE OF DESIRE

*"Of the wines of Lombardy, I'd like to talk again about one in particular; Domasino white, produced in the Province of Como, in the upper part, in the north, on the right shore of the lake. I'd like to, but I can't because it's a wine that I don't know as I have never been to Domaso; I've only passed by, a few times, by car, under the rain, without ever stopping. My heart says I wouldn't be betrayed. In the meantime, I like to think of Domasino just as that: as a wine of desire, that no wine could ever equal"* (Mario Soldati – *Vino al Vino (Wine to Wine)*, 1968).

# A LAKE FULL OF WINE



## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- ▲ Departure
- ▲ Arrival
- S. Maria del Tiglio
- Palazzo Manzoni and WWII Museum
- The Crotti in Stazzona

## ITINERARY

Itinerary: The Upper Lake area.

Duration on foot (excluding stops): approx. 3h 30min; by car: 30min.

Our itinerary begins in Dongo, a tourist resort and industrial town in the upper Lario area, situated in the plain formed by the mouth of Albano Torrent. It affords magnificent views of Mount Legnone and northern Grigna. Our first stop is Palazzo Manzoni, the seat of the town hall and where the



men of the Resistance took the Duce and his power elite after their arrest on 27 April 1945, guaranteeing Dongo its place in Italian history. A new immersive reality museum dedicated to the end of WWII 1943-1945 (see box) has been inaugurated inside the building. It narrates the

history of the Resistance on Lake Como and the events that decreed the end of Fascism. On leaving the museum, on the square dedicated to Giulio Paracchini and along the lake front, a series of posters narrate the events of those days and

indicate where the main events took place.

Walk along Via del Mercato to the town centre and visit the small Romanesque Church of St Maria di Martinico, which is normally open. Return towards Palazzo Manzoni and cross the bridge over Albano River to the Franciscan Monastery of Madonna delle Lacrime. About 50 metres further on, take Viale Mons. Bellesini that leads to the Parish Church of St Stefano, which houses precious frescoes. Behind the church is the start of a beautiful walk that in just 50 minutes links Dongo to Gravedona (also accessible by wheelchair). Beyond Gravedona Lido, flank Liro Torrent, cross the bridge over the torrent and continue to the beautiful portico of the Parish Church of St Vincenzo and the Church of St Maria del Tiglio (see box), a masterpiece of local Romanesque style.

After visiting the centre of Gravedona and its lakeside promenade, continue by car or on foot (1h 10min) to Stazzona, an ancient rural village at the mouth of Albano Valley. The name of the village derives from a Roman statio – a place where travellers could rest and change their horses – situated on the mountain road that passes through Germasino and Garzeno and leads to San Iorio Pass. Stop here for lunch or to try a tasting menu at one of the traditional taverns known as crotti (see detail). Descend towards Dongo (45-min walk) for stunning views over the plain and the opposite shores of the lake, towards the small lake of Piona and its famous abbey.



## **ST MARIA DEL TIGLIO IN GRAVEDONA**

A masterpiece of local Romanesque style, the church was built in the 12th century on an early-Christian baptistery of which traces remain in the square perimeter with three apses, the baptismal font and fragments of a mosaic floor inside. The façade features alternating grey and white stones (the latter from nearby Musso) and a massive octagonal bell tower that gives the building its soaring, slender silhouette. Inside, the centrally planned church, with an open timber vault, has two storeys; the lower one with three apses and the upper one featuring an elegant, open loggia. On the left counter-façade, the best preserved fresco is a 14th-century Last Judgement, but one of the church's most important pieces is a wooden Crucifix probably dating from the 12th century. Carved from a single piece with the exception of the



arms, it is the only wooden sculpture on Lake Como.

## **MUSEUM OF THE END OF THE WAR IN DONGO**

To this day, climbing the lakeside road that leads from Como to Dongo still takes visitors on the winding roads the German convoy drove along on 27 April 1945, with



Mussolini following close behind. On that day, after their arrest the Duce and his power elite were taken to grand Palazzo Manzi, which now houses the Museum of the End of the War. On the square now named after Giulio Paracchini, a martyr of the Resistance, Mussolini was found on a German truck. A platoon of Partisans carried out the death sentence on the Fascists here, just after Mussolini himself had been executed by firing squad in Giulino di Mezzegra. The new Museum of the End of the War offers visitors a journey

back in time to relive and try to understand the events that meant the history of World War II intertwined with that of the inhabitants of Dongo ([www.museofineguerradongo.it](http://www.museofineguerradongo.it))

## **THE CROTTI IN STAZZONA**

Located in Avanzonico (515 metres above sea level), Stazzona's crotti are ancient cellars carved out of the rock, in which the temperature all year round is stable at about 8°C. Since ancient times they have been used to store wine, cold cuts and cheeses.

Over time, some of them have opened to the public and have been turned into taverns where, especially on summer weekends, it is possible to eat something and sample some local wine. In August, during the traditional "Crotti Festival" there are even more opportunities to enjoy a delicious day out ([www.comune.stazzona.co.it](http://www.comune.stazzona.co.it)).

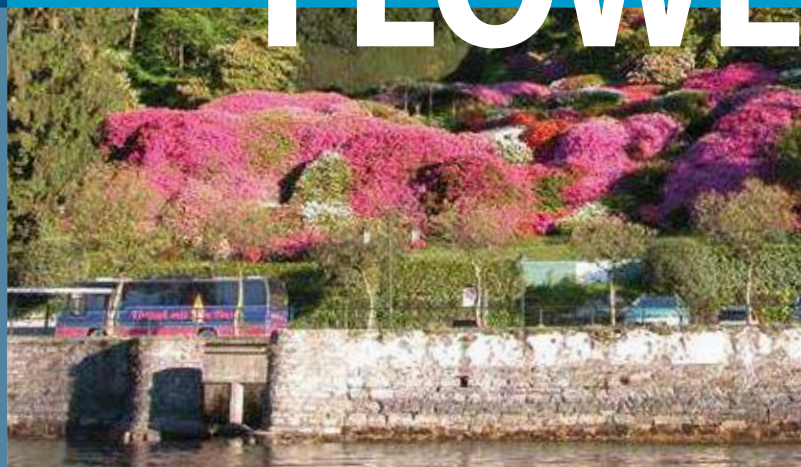


# AS BEAUTIFUL AS A FLOWE

*“A number of young girls (...) were busy laying out patterns of red, blue and yellow flowers on the ground in the streets where the procession was due to pass. But there was one spectacle which spoke more keenly to [his] soul...”*

*Stendhal  
The Charterhouse  
of Parma*

**Below:  
map of the main  
production areas**



Along with animal husbandry, nursery gardening is one of the key agricultural sectors in the province. Nursery gardening on Lake Como first started out by specializing in the cultivation of mulberry bushes, which led to the establishment of the textile industry in Como, and is based on a tradition rich in history and expertise. Suffice to look at the area's landscape to realise how much this craft and at times

this art, can impact on and influence the entire territory and its community. The lush gardens of the sumptuous neoclassical villas created by the precursors of nursery gardening laid the foundations for a sector that, to this day, is unrivalled in the world in terms of professionalism and expertise.

These magnificent examples of landscape architecture bear witness to the flair of the “green architects” of Co

mo, thanks to the presence of both rare and unusual botanical plants - including exotic plants - and the harmony of the design. Over time, numerous nurseries have opened, specializing in research, the composition of botanical species and the selection and cultivation of new ornamental plants, bushes and trees.

Evidence of this lies in the presence here of one of Italy's leading research



centres in the sector, the Minoprio Foundation, which is involved in research, dissemination and advanced educational activities.

The uniqueness and specialisation of the sector in the Province of Como has led the Lombardy Region to identify the area as the heart of the Nursery Gardening District of Upper Lombardy, which also encompasses neighbouring provinces.



Gardens of Villa Carlotta, Tremezzo

## PRODUCT SHEET

Over the years, using hybridization techniques, the flower growers of the Como area have patiently produced new botanical varieties and rare species. These include a vast collection of azaleas, rhododendrons and plants belonging to the acidophilic family in general.

Evidence of this can be seen in the lush gardens of Villa Carlotta on the shores of the lake in Tremezzo, a resort in the heart of Tremezzina. They are well worth visiting, particularly in April to enjoy them in full bloom. In the arboreal plants sector too, local nursery gardening excels in the selection and reproduction of a huge variety of ornamental plants.

It is easy to spot production greenhouses and polytunnels, where purchases can be made, on the entire provincial territory.

## AS IN A FILM

*In the collective imagination, the gardens of the villas of the Lario area are romantic places par excellence.*

*"When you look at the sky over Lake Como, it's clear that God exists", commented actor Robin Williams, who filmed here the opening scene of the film What Dreams May Come by Vincent Ward, Oscar award winner for special effects. Over the past century, Lake Como's standing*

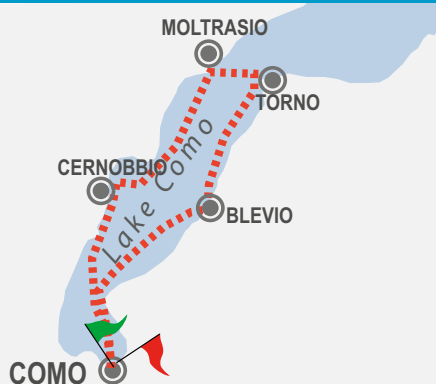
*has reached every corner of the world thanks also to some very famous films. These include Star Wars, Episode II by George Lucas in which the terrace of Villa Balbianello is the backdrop for one of the saga's rare love scenes. The main soundtrack theme, which centres on this romantic moment, is Across the Stars, a tune that provides the backdrop to the kiss between Anakin and Padmé on the lake.*



The terrace of Villa Balbianello

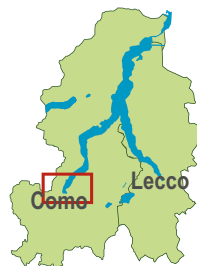
*The hills and mountains of the Lario area have always been of great naturalistic interest where it is possible to find rare and protected botanical species. In 1763 the Padua-born scientist, naturalist and botanist Domenico Vandelli, undertook an exploratory journey on Lake Como. Arriving at the Corni di Canzo (or Canzo's Horns) he was the first to discover and describe a small endemic and to that point, unknown plant. It was a "saxifraga with very closely joined smooth and awl-shaped leaves, a stem with almost no leaves and with many flowers" that the scholar illustrated with great precision in his book Saggio d'istoria naturale del Lago di Como e della Valsassina e altri luoghi Lombardi (Essay on the natural history of Lake Como, the Valsassina and other places in Lombardy); it was named saxifraga vandellii in his honour.*

# AS BEAUTIFUL AS A FLOWER



## MAP LEGEND

- Boat
- ▲ Departure
- ▲ Arrival



Some of these jewels are open to the public; others can only be admired from the water. To discover them, nothing could be better than a boat ride, with stops in some of the small villages overlooking the lake.

Climb aboard a boat in the harbour on Piazza Cavour in Como and settle down to enjoy the landscape of the first basin. Beyond the fountain of Villa Geno, which stands opposite neo-classical Villa Olmo, the boat sets off towards the

## ITINERARY

Itinerary: Discovering villages, villas and gardens from the water.

Duration by boat (excluding stops): approx. 1h

Lake Como is famous worldwide for its splendid villas that, along with their parks and gardens, make it "a unique world in the world". From spring to autumn, camellia, azalea,



Villa Erba, Cernobbio

rhododendron, jasmine, oleander and magnolia blossoms are reflected in its tranquil waters, flooding the area with their scents and colours.

left shore to Cernobbio, where we first come across elegant Villa Erba, with its conference and exhibition centre. Formerly the home of Luchino Visconti, Villa Erba has been used as a location for many films, including Ocean's Twelve starring George Clooney, Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts.

Beyond the jetty in Cernobbio is Villa d'Este, now one of the world's most famous and luxurious hotels, popular with international VIP guests and stars and a venue for top-class conferences. Beyond the villa, annexes and garden, it is possible to glimpse the promontory of Pizzo and the villa of the same name, which owes its fame to its superb park. Just beyond it is Villa Fontanelle and a little further on, in a higher position, the white Villa Passalacqua, recognisable thanks to its beautiful terraced gardens and spectacular staircase. After leaving Moltrasio jetty we return to the opposite shore of the lake towards Torno. Some way off, standing in an isolated position, is the majestic Villa Pliniana, shrouded in charm and mystery, which features in many legends and many tragic and passionate events; it was also the setting of the film *The Woman*. The villa incorporates an intermittent source of water known to Pliny the Elder and Leonardo da Vinci. Heading towards our stopover, is the park of Villa Mia that has been owned by the Saudi royal family for many years.

Beyond the small harbour of Torno it is possible to finally admire Villa Taverna, Villa Roccabruna





(now a luxury, 5-star hotel), Villa Uselli, Villa Da Riva, Villa Cademartori and the unusual Villa Troubetzkoy, which was built by a Russian prince based on the style of Nordic chalets.

However, the first basin is just a taster! The central lake area awaits visitors with Villa Carlotta, Villa Balbianello, Villa Melzi and Villa Monastero, all of which must be seen.

For information on times and ticket costs:  
[www.navigazionezaghi.it](http://www.navigazionezaghi.it)



## VILLA CARLOTTA TREMEZZINA

In 1690, in a basin between the lake and the mountains, marquis Giorgio Clerici commissioned an imposing, but sombre residence with Italian gardens. Its next owner, Gian Battista Sommariva, adorned it with works of art and transformed part of the garden into a romantic park. In the mid-19th century the villa was given by princess Marianna of Nassau to her daughter Carlotta as a wedding gift for her marriage to George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. It was thanks to the latter, a botanical enthusiast, that the landscape garden that has made the villa famous, was created. Visitors can lose themselves in the 70,000 sq m park, amid huge and prestigious trees, rhododendrons and azaleas, ancient specimen of camellias and exotic plants. To complete the panorama of treasures is the interior of the villa with works of art on the ground floor, including magnificent sculptures by Canova and his school, paintings by Hayez and Wicar, a frieze by Thorwaldsen, and carefully-preserved original furnishings on the first floor. Villa Carlotta is open every day from mid-March to mid-November – [www.villacarlotta.it](http://www.villacarlotta.it). There are two picnic areas in its gardens, one of which is covered, as well as a cafeteria and a children's games area.

## VILLA BALBIANELLO TREMEZZINA

The villa was built at the end of the 18th century for Cardi-

nal Durini by incorporating an ancient monastery and is one of the most charming parts of Lake Como. Adorned with a creeping fig, the beautiful loggia offers fantastic panoramic views spanning over the central lake area from Bellagio to Comacina Island. Unsurprisingly therefore, the villa has often been chosen as the setting for feature films – the most famous being *Star Wars* and *Casino Royale*. On the villa's upper floor, which is open for guided visits that can be booked when purchasing the entrance ticket, there is an unusual museum that brings together the art collections and travel souvenirs of the owner, the explorer Guido Monzino, an enthusiast of expeditions and a man of great culture. He bequeathed the villa to FIA, the Italian Environment Fund, in his will. The garden features terraces and balustrades and faithfully follows the lie of the land, which is craggy, steep and rocky in parts and more gently sloping in others. The villa can be visited from mid-March through to mid-November. For more detailed information visit the website [www.fondoambiente.it](http://www.fondoambiente.it).





# AS SMOOTH AS OIL

*“One could then imagine, stretched out before its windows, a broad expanse of lake, smiling villages, gardens bright with flowers (...) that part of the estate which faces south is green with olive trees, and its aspect speaks to the mildness of the winters.”*

*Antonio Fogazzaro  
The Woman*

**Below:  
map of the main  
production areas**



Though at a very high latitude and not in the typical Mediterranean habitat, the Como area has an ancient olive growing tradition. This is thanks to its particular microclimate that derives from the presence of the lake, which mitigates the rigid winter temperatures, and the fertility of the soil that is of moraine origin.

After settling in the Lario area following Julius Caesar's army (1st century BC), it was probably the Greeks who started the cultivation of olive trees and perfected the stone mills used to press the olives and obtain the oil so popular with the Lombard court of Queen Teodolinda (7th century AD) first and the Benedictine and Cistercian monks later.

In 1997 it obtained the coveted recognition of Protected Designation

of Origin (PDO) Lario from the European Union.

The production guidelines provide for the manual harvesting of olives using small mechanical tree shakers, usually in the month of November (but in any case, no later than 15 January), and cold pressing within 3 days. This makes it possible to obtain excellent quality oil with a very low level of acidity. The production zone includes 29 municipalities in the province of Como, situated along the western shore of the Lario, in particular in the so-called Zoca de l'Oli (or Oil Basin) between Sala Comacina and Ossuccio, in Tremezzina and in the Upper Lake area, in the Larian Triangle (between Bellagio and Oliveto Lario) and on the shores of Lake Lugano (Porlezza and Valsolda).

The varieties of olive tree used for PDO production must consist of at least 80% of the traditional varieties of Frantoio, Casaliva and Leccino. Local olives are pressed at one of the two mills on the lake; the more traditional one in Lenno on the Como shore of the lake and the other in Bellano, in the province of Lecco.



Olive trees in Ossuccio  
and Comacina Island

## PRODUCT SHEET

**PDO oil from the Lario area is a top-quality extra-virgin olive oil whose hallmark is very low acidity (less than 0.5%) and a series of excellent quality parameters.**

**From an organoleptic point of view it is a very balanced product – in fact, it has a light, fruity fragrance and aroma with a hint of almond and artichoke, a piquant note and sometimes, a slightly bitter taste. It is bright green in colour, tending towards golden yellow. With regard to its nutritional properties, the oleic acid content is higher than 76% and it contains many substances with excellent antioxidant properties.**



## OIL AND TRADITIONS

*Culinary traditions also bear witness to the historical presence of olive trees on the lake.*

*The use of oil in many typical local dishes, contrasts with the large quantities of butter and lard more commonly used in Lombard cuisine. In some recipes, oil is even drizzled over polenta.*

*In the past, as olive oil was costly and quite rare, other vegetable oils were used instead, such as linseed, rapeseed or walnut oil. Walnut oil, in particular, is referred to in an extract of The Betrothed that recalls the generosity of the monks: (...) so many walnuts in the ordinary collection*

*that in the end another of our benefactors has pity on the poor brother who was doing the collecting and gave the monastery a donkey to help carry the nuts. And they got so much oil out of them, that all the poor people came and took some, each according to his need.*

*With the advent of the industrial era, the cultivation of olive trees in northern Italy was gradually replaced, in areas with a colder climate, by more typical and resistant trees, but in these particular parts of Lake Como it has never been abandoned and the olive oil of the Lario area is now a highly-coveted niche product.*



Olive grove in the Zoca de l'Oli



## MAP LEGEND



Welcome to the so-called oil basin, the northernmost place in Italy where olive trees are cultivated and olive oil is produced. We recommend a delightful walk during which, surrounded by green fields and old popular traditions, you can enjoy spectacular views of the lake and its small island. Easy

## ITINERARY

Itinerary: Zoca de l'Oli and Comacina Island  
Duration on foot (excluding any visits and stops): approx. 1h 45 min.

Tour of Comacina Island: approx. 1 hour (excluding transfer by boat).

Public transport to the departure point:

by bus ([www.asfautolinee.it](http://www.asfautolinee.it)),

by boat ([www.navigazionealghi.it](http://www.navigazionealghi.it)).

Public transport from the arrival point:

by bus ([www.asfautolinee.it](http://www.asfautolinee.it)).

to reach from Como by boat, the jetty in Lenno is the departure point for our itinerary. From here, follow the beautiful lakeside road to the Church of St Stefano and the ancient octagonal baptistery. Rebuilt in the 15th century, the church's foundations stand on an ancient religious site, whilst the baptistery, dating from the latter half of the 11th century, is a superb example of local Romanesque style. From the square, cross the state road using the subway, turn right and after the post office turn into the lane on the left towards the Sanctuary of Beata Vergine del Soccorso. At the "Cooperative", continue for about 50 minutes before turning left. Pass in front of the Church of the Santissima Trinità, take Via Don Cadenazzi, follow it towards the right and then turn immediately left into Viale Libronico. Continue straight on, then turn right at the second junction, following signs for the "Santuario" as far as cobbled Via Castelli. Continue along the road and cross Perlana Torrent to the first chapel. From here, continue along Sacro Monte climb, from chapel to chapel, to the sanctuary, about half an hour away. A centre of religious worship for at least two thousand years this site exudes a sense of serenity, spirituality and beauty. After visiting the church, retrace your



Lenno, the jetty



## THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

*Along the cobbled street that gradually climbs to the Sanctuary of Beata Vergine del Soccorso (419 metres above sea level), there are a series of frescoed chapels decorated with statues and stuccoes by artists of the Intelvesi School. Dedicated to the Mysteries of the Rosary, these small temples were built between 1635 and 1714 and are part of the complex of the Sacred Mountains of the pre-Alps of Piedmont and Lombardy, holy complexes situated at the entrance to the Alpine valleys in places of particular landscape interest. The aim of the Sacred Mountains was to favour, through pilgrimages, consolidation of the faith thanks to a wonderful intermingling of spiritual, architectural, artistic and naturalistic elements, and at the same time to contrast the spread of Protestant Reform. The path ends at the Church of the Beata Vergine, which houses prestigious frescoes and stuccoes as well as a 14th-century Virgin with Child. The statue, which is the subject of particular veneration, is the work of the Campionesi Masters. Even nowadays the sanctuary is the destination for many pilgrims, particularly during celebrations on the feast day of 8 September. The Sacred Mountain of Ossuccio was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2003. A demanding 2-hour walk from the sanctuary leads to the Romanesque Abbey of St Benedetto (11th century), immersed in the unspoilt natural beauty of the Perlana Valley. Although it is usually closed to the public, the hard work is rewarded by magnificent views.*

steps to the fourth chapel. From here, continue along Via Giovanni Castelli for about 600 metres until you cross Via Andrea Castelli on the right. As this point, you will begin to see signs for the Greenway, a 10 km walk that links the villages of Colonno and Griante. The path is marked with blue and yellow signs and by metal manhole covers on the ground bearing the words "Greenway del Lago di Como" (Lake Como Greenway). Here you can decide to continue towards Ossuccio or – from March to October only – to visit Comacina Island. In this case, follow the Greenway by taking Via Andrea Castelli on the right that leads to the jetty for boats to the island near Malagufi Lido and the beautiful Church of St Maria Maddalena, with its picturesque bell tower.

## COMACINA ISLAND

*This is the only island on Lake Como and despite its modest size (600 metres long and 200 metres wide, with a perimeter of only 2 km) it was once an extremely important religious and political site and although it is now uninhabited, it can still be visited.*

*Fought over many times due to its strategic position, it was completely destroyed by the inhabitants of Como in 1169 as revenge for its allegiance to Milan in the long-running war between the two capital cities. It still retains much of its illustrious past including remains of Roman walls and an early Christian baptistery and above all, the Romanesque complex of St Eufemia (11th century). The only buildings that are intact are the Oratory of St Giovanni and three houses for artists built in Rationalist style in 1940 by architect Lingeri. Many artefacts are now housed in the Antiquarium Museum in Ossuccio, where it is also possible to buy tickets for entrance to the archaeological itinerary of the island.*

*For further information:  
tel. +39 0344.56369.*





# PLENTY MORE FISH

*"...near lake (...), on the shore of which I have a number of houses (...) From the second you can observe the fishermen, and from the first you can yourself fish, casting your line from your bedroom and virtually even from your bed as though from a small a boat."*

*Pliny the Younger  
"Letters to family members" book 9, 7*

**Below:  
map of the main  
production areas**



At the beginning of the last century, in the municipality of Gera Lario alone (a small village at the northernmost tip of the lake) there were 53 professional fishermen out of a total of 646 inhabitants. To this day, between Bellagio and Lezzeno, 19 fishermen still support their families thanks to their profession – the largest concentration on the lake. This figure shows

the importance fish has always had in the diets of all those who live on the lake.

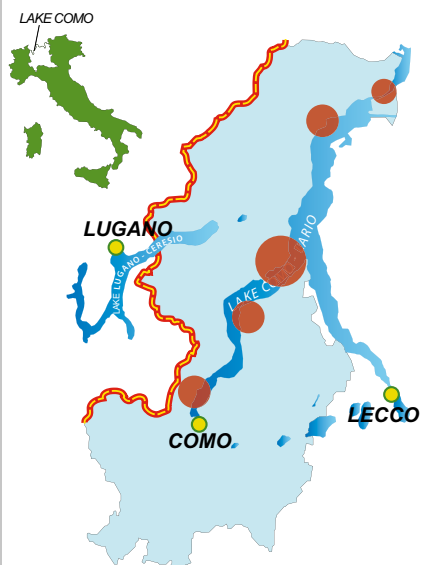
Once an activity purely designed for sustenance, carried out in order to provide the indispensable protein content for a daily diet that was otherwise quite poor and not particularly balanced, in recent decades lake fishing has had a resurgence and now offers local restaurants a product that is hugely

appreciated because it is healthy, it does not impoverish the environment and it can fully claim to be a typical local product.

Local fish is healthy because the waters it lives in are in good health: since the 1980s water quality has improved constantly with particular benefit for the more demanding fish (lavaret, trout, char), which are now abundant and could never live in polluted waters.

The fishing method, using nets cast from boats in the evening and gathered in the following morning, does not impoverish the environment because it is carried out using scientific criteria that guarantee sustainability. Unsurprisingly, the quantity of fish has been constant for years.

In lakeside villages it is possible to enjoy traditional dishes made using locally sourced fish in many small restaurants and in June, to see the typical triangular perches on which fish is placed to dry to prepare the local speciality missoltini. Nowadays, alongside traditional cuisine there are also other innovative specialties, created thanks to modern fish processing techniques (see box).







Professional fishing  
on Lake Mezzola

## PRODUCT SHEET

In terms of the quantity of fish caught and the goodness of its flesh, the king of Lake Como is without doubt leveret. It was introduced into the lake in the mid-19th century precisely for the purpose of increasing consumption of fish and improving the quality of life of the fishermen. A hundred and fifty years later, it is clear that the operation has been hugely successful as lavaret can now always be found in professional fishermen's nets and really does represent their daily bread. The place of honour rightfully goes to the Mediterranean shad and perch, both popular in local cuisine and fished along the entire shore of the lake. It is from the processing of this fish that missoltino, the typical product par excellence of the Lario area, is created. Less common, but still popular with food lovers are the zander, burbot and arctic char. The latter species, which is being caught in increasing numbers, is an excellent indicator of the quality of the lake environment as it only lives in cold, well-oxygenated waters. The presence of trout in the lake, a predator with soft pinkish flesh, also shows the good health of the waters and gratifies even the most demanding palates.

## LAKE FRAGRANCES... ON A PLATE

At the table, Lake Como's fish dishes are famous above all thanks to the delicateness of rice with perch fillets, the gutsy nature of missoltini with polenta and the balanced flavour of lavaret served with a green herb sauce. These dishes feature on the menus of many restaurants, especially in summer when the lake is generous and fishermen never return empty handed.

For those who wish to try something new, lake

fish can also surprise thanks to the variety of flavours and preparation methods, some of which belong to ancient local traditions (soused Mediterranean shad, chub pâté, stewed burbot), whilst others are more recent and due to the growth of workshops specialising in the processing and preparation of lake fish products (spaghetti with lake fish roe, fish-filled ravioli, lavaret Carpaccio, crostini with smoked lavaret).



### "TOC"

In some restaurants in Bellagio, subject to pre-booking (for a minimum of 10/15 people), it is possible to request the preparation of toc, a typical local polenta speciality flavoured with butter and cheese and usually served with missoltini, boiled chicken with stuffing or local salami. The preparation of the dish is an ancient ritual that means diners must sit in a circle around a pot, each with his or her own wooden spoon from which food is lifted to the mouth by hand – hence the name toc or "to touch". When the dish has been eaten and the pot is completely empty, it is reheated, adding red wine, various liqueurs, cloves, pieces of fruit and sugar that are then cooked for another 30 minutes. The drink thus obtained, which is called ragell, is then passed around to all diners as an after-dinner liqueur to aid digestion.

# PLENTY MORE FISH



## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- Boat
- ▲ Departure
- ▲ Arrival
-  Sanctuary of Madonna del Ghisallo and Cycling Museum

is on Piazza della Chiesa and is a fine example of Lombard Romanesque style.

Returning back along Via Garibaldi you cross the heart of the village and at the end of the street is the famous Salita Serbelloni, lined with shops and ancient walls. On the lakeside stand the ancient hamlets of Pescallo, San Giovanni and Loppia, with their tiny harbours and

## ITINERARY

Itinerary: Bellagio to taste

Duration by car (excluding stops): approx. 20min.

By bicycle for sports tourism enthusiasts:

<http://www.cicloviadeilaghi.it>

Bellagio, the pearl of the Lario, stands at the tip of the promontory that divides the two branches of Lake Como. This enchanting position, its superb villas and small houses clinging to one another, its lush vegetation and its mild climate have made it a popular destination for many illustrious figures including Pliny the Younger, Stendhal, Manzoni, Parini, Liszt and Toscanini.



The town is divided into 24 small hamlets that all offer differing, but equally spectacular panoramic views. The most famous of these is Borgo that huddles around its landing berth and boasts staircases, small squares, artisan workshops and restaurants where visitors can enjoy traditional fish dishes. The Basilica of St Giacomo, patron saint of Bellagio,

the gardens of their noble villas, including world-famous Villa Melzi (whose splendid gardens can be visited from March to October). The other hamlets of Bellagio look down on the lake from the hillside, such as Villa Serbelloni with its park, or cling to the sides of Mount San Primo, up to 1,686 metres above sea level. From here, amazing panoramic views span from the Alps to the Po Valley. Let yourselves be enchanted by this hamlet by walking around its narrow streets and climbing its staircases, along with tourists from all over the world. Here the mild climate, similar to that of the Riviera of Liguria, means it is possible to grow bay leaves, olives, palm trees and tropical plants that adorn all the gardens. The waters in front of Bellagio are particularly clean and clear and the beaches have won numerous awards.

From Bellagio it is possible to take a boat ride to Varenna on the Lecco branch, another splendid jewel of Lake Como. If you are travelling by car, leave Bellagio heading towards Lecco and at the roundabout follow signs for Asso-Erba Ghisallo to admire the views from above. Just beyond the cemetery there are splendid views of the eastern branch of the lake and a magnificent expanse of olive trees that stand within the Villa Giulia estate. Continuing along the road, climb up to 754 metres above sea level to the top of Colle del Ghisallo and stop at the small Sanctuary of Madonna del Ghisallo, the patron saint of cyclists, and the adjacent Cycling Museum. Traditionally, this steep climb is tackled by cyclists in the Giro di Lombardia race and has been included in the route of the Giro d'Italia on several occasions.

## VILLA MELZI

*Con le sue semplici e severe With its simple and severe neo-classical lines, Villa Melzi was designed by the architect Giocondo Albertolli in 1808, based on a commission by Francesco Melzi d'Eril, vice-president of the Napoleonic Italian Republic. The park surrounding it, the first example of an English garden on Lake Como, was built with great attention to detail by levelling the land or creating small hillocks, with the aim of making the area seem larger than it really is. The distribution of vegetation was the culmination of carefully thought-out studies, designed to increase the optical illusion. Among the garden's trees and flowers there are also interesting sculptures, a small lake filled with water lilies, an orangery that houses a museum and the neoclassical family chapel. Stendhal wrote extensively about the villa, whilst the pianist and composer Franz Liszt loved to spend time in its park and in particular, in its Moorish gazebo overlooking the lake where he composed *Après une Lecture de Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata* or*



*Dante's Sonata. The garden can be visited from the end of March to early November.*

For information:  
[www.giardinidivillamelzi.it](http://www.giardinidivillamelzi.it)

## VILLA SERBELLONI

*Villa Serbelloni is situated on the promontory of Bellagio in a splendid panoramic position*



*overlooking the two branches of Lake Como and Lecco. The villa has an ancient history; the property of the Sfondrati family since 1533, in 1788 it passed to the estate of Count Alessandro Serbelloni whose main interest focused on the immense park that visitors can now walk through to discover ancient, exotic and rare trees, sculptures and the ruins of mediaeval buildings. In 1907 it was sold to a Swiss company that turned it into Hotel Serbelloni*

*The hotel was purchased by Princess Ella Walker, who in 1959 bequeathed it to the Rockefeller Foundation. Today Villa Serbelloni is a place for scholars to meet and stay. Its park can be visited from March through to November, with guided visits every day*

*except Monday.*

For info and bookings:  
Promobellagio  
Tel./Fax +39 031.951555  
[www.promobellagio.it](http://www.promobellagio.it)

## SANCTUARY OF MADONNA DEL GHISALLO

*At the top of the demanding Salita del Ghisallo, a key stage on many Giro d'Italia and Giro di Lombardia cycle races, this tiny church houses many mementos of cycling champions – the bicycles used by Bartali, Coppi and Merckx in their victorious Tour de France races, the special bicycle used by Moser for his world hour record and many pink, yellow and World Championship jerseys.*

*By the 1990s there were so many of these keepsakes that they could no longer fit in the small church and so the Cycling Museum was designed and built adjacent to the sanctuary.*

For information:  
[info@museodelghisallo.it](mailto:info@museodelghisallo.it)  
[www.museodelghisallo.it](http://www.museodelghisallo.it)



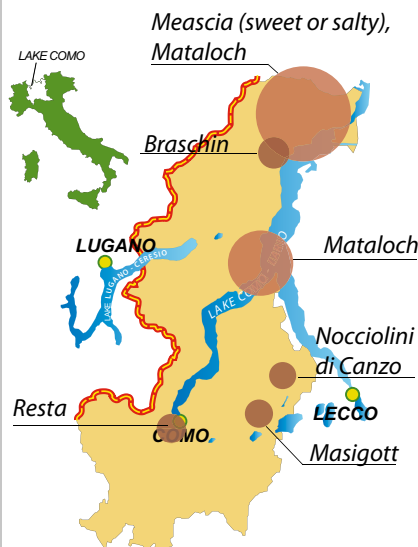
# AS GOOD AS... BREAD

*"I will celebrate  
with verse  
The lively and  
agile farmers  
Dotted around the  
fields  
And the tireless  
arms  
Behind the wheat  
that ripens".*

*Giuseppe Parini  
The Odes*



**Below:  
map of the main  
production areas**



*Pan Meino and Cutizza are produced  
on the entire provincial territory*

The cultivation of cereal crops was and still is common on the plains and hills of Como, as is testified by the presence of water mills for grinding the grain (for example along the Lambro River in Merone, on the Seveso River in Fino Mornasco and along the Lanza and Faloppia Torrents).

In the past, to make bread, use was made not only of wheat (white bread,

only for the wealthier families), but also of corn (yellow bread), millet (so-called pan de mej), rye, oats, barley and other lesser cereals. The most popular white breads, whose history dates back to Austro-Hungarian domination, are the michetta and rosetta loaves, two so-called "puffed" bread that is completely hollow inside and whose consistency is given solely by its crisp,

crunchy crust.

Traditionally in the Como area and Lombardy in general, corn flour is used to prepare polenta, which is flavoured with cheese from the valleys, butter or simply accompanied by meat, game and the famous missoltini (see the box in the section dedicated to fish). In past centuries, the skilled use of poor ingredients, mixed together in a balanced manner, a feature so characteristic of local cuisine, played its part in saving the population from illnesses typically linked to famine, such as pellagra, which were instead rife in the Veneto and the Po River Valley.

The typical produce of the mountain zones is chestnuts and many traditional dishes use them – either fresh or dried, whole or ground – in the preparation of cakes, fresh pasta, polenta and focaccia bread. More recently, chestnuts have also been used in the production of beer. Thanks to the ease in working it and its natural resistance to atmospheric agents, it is also traditional to use chestnut wood in the construction industry, for example for poles.





Agricultural land in Guanzate

## PRODUCT SHEET

Of all the “homemade” cakes, the one that stands out is *cutizza* (also known as *paraa*), a fried focaccia made using the little white flour once available, sugar and milk. Sometimes also containing apples, it was served as a snack or dessert. To prepare bread, on the other hand, flours made using poorer cereals, such as corn, were used.

White and yellow flours are used to make typical and traditional cakes such as *braschin*, *masigott*, *pan meino* (or *pan de mej*), either sweet or savoury *meascia*, *nocciolini di Canzo* and *resta*, all of which are recognised by the Lombardy Region as “traditional food products”.

*Meascia* (or *miascia*), known also as *turta di paisan*, is a traditional cake of the mountain regions of the western Upper Lario area, which is also considered a poor dish. It is prepared using a base of stale bread that is kneaded together with white or yellow flour, with the addition of fresh or dried fruit. Numerous local and family versions exist.

In the patisseries of Canzo visitors will find a large selection of typical *nocciolini*, small, crumbly hemispherical biscuits similar to *amaretti*, but made using hazelnuts.

### COMO'S “CIABATTA”

In the 1970s, thanks to the creativity of bakers from the Como area, a completely new product became popular; it was called *ciabatta*. It is said that it was from this very recipe that the guidelines registered in 1982 in Adria in the Province of Rovigo, under the name *ciabatta polesana*, draw inspiration. Unlike Como's *ciabatta*, which was created to meet the need to reuse leftovers from “puffed” breads by “refreshing” them with water, for the so-called *polesana ciabatta* “type 1 Italia” whole flour is

used. This lends itself to longer proving and the final result is more fragrant. It is this latter version that has become popular throughout Italy and indeed worldwide.



Mill on the Lanza river



Pan de Mej

Made using millet flour (or *mej*) and corn flour, *pan de mej* (or *pan meino*) is a soft sweet bread whose hallmark is the scent of dried elderflowers, which are sprinkled over its surface.

Still prepared by many pastry chefs to this day, this typical Lombard cake was once only made on 23 April to mark the feast of Saint George, the patron saint of dairy farmers.

After signing their annual milk contracts, the families of dairy farmers and farmers in general celebrated these new agreements by eating *pan meino* soaked in fresh cream.



# AS GOOD AS... BREAD



## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- ▬ Departure
- ▬ Arrival
-  Monumental complex of Galliano (Cantù)

We descend now towards Canzo, a holiday resort with beautiful stores and elegant patisseries, ideal for a stop to taste some delicious nocciolini.

A kilometre south of the village is Lake Segrino, a small lake in the Pre-Alps that is suitable for swimming. It is flanked by a 5-km

## ITINERARY

**Itinerary:** From the lake to the small lakes, searching for ancient mills

**Duration by car:** approx. 2h 30m (excluding stops and visits)

We depart from Como and head towards Bellagio to Blevio, Torno, Careno and Nesso, delightful hamlets with small, colourful harbours situated on the eastern shore of the Como branch of the lake



Mill in Baggero

that are all well worth visiting. From Nesso – where we will find Orrido, a waterfall that drops into a tall and narrow gorge that divides the village in two – we divert towards the plateau of Tivano where we can stop for a while and enjoy some traditional polenta dishes. We cross the entire upland, which stands 900 metres above sea level, and on the peak of Sormano, is an observatory run by the Brianza Astronomy Group (for opening times to the public: [www.osservatoriosormano.it](http://www.osservatoriosormano.it)).

cycle and foot path and has a few free beaches as well as a lido, where an entrance fee is payable. Continuing along the lake, we head towards Pusiano, where we find the largest of Brianza's lakes. The lake offers one of the most beautiful natural spectacles of the entire Brianza area and can be enjoyed from above by climbing Mount Cornizzolo (1,240 metres above sea level) or from the still unspoilt shores. Lake Pusiano is the only lake in Brianza to have an island. If you wish to admire its beauty and charm from the water, the best place to do so is on board the electric boat Vago Eupili, with excursions running from April to October departing from Bosio Parini (info: [www.prolocobosio.it](http://www.prolocobosio.it)). In this area, dotted with so many waterways, as Giuseppe Parini recalls in his Odes, ancient agricultural trades flourished. It is therefore worth making a detour to Merone, a small industrial town situated between the two small lakes of Pusiano and Alserio and crossed by the River Lambro. Along the river there were once over 40 mills with more than 240 millstones, which were used to produce flour and oil. In the charming village of Baggero, which stands in a 8-hectare oasis in the Lambro Valley Park, there are still four mills (former oil mill and press) with a system of four metal wheels and bulkheads that are still in working order (for information: [www.parcovallelambro.it](http://www.parcovallelambro.it)). Before returning to Como, we continue to the city of Cantù, famous for its furniture and lace production, where the spectacular monumental complex of Galliano stands in Via S. Vincenzo (see box).

**VILLA PLINIANA IN TORNO**

Built at the end of the 16th century for the Spanish governor of Como, Anguissola, the imposing Villa Pliniana incorporates an intermittent fountain called Pluviana, which was already well-known to natural history lovers such as Pliny the Elder and Leonardo da Vinci. After crossing the subsoil and passing under the villa, the torrent drops into the lake from a lancet arch that skims the surface of the water. Shrouded in mystery and charm the villa features in many at times passionate, at times tragic legends and events.

Thanks to its dark and mysterious atmosphere, in 1942 Mario Soldati chose it as the setting for his film *The Woman*, which is based on the novel of the same name by Antonio Fogazzaro. Indeed, Fogazzaro himself visited the villa and was struck by its brooding atmosphere that is said to have inspired the novel, which is set in an unspecified place.


**BASILICA OF  
ST VINCENTO  
AND BAPTISTERY  
OF ST GIOVANNI  
IN GALLIANO (CANTÙ)**

The architectural complex of Galliano, which consists in the Basilica of St Vincenzo and the Baptistery of St Giovanni, occupies a key place in the artistic artefacts of Lombard Romanesque style. Ac-



cording to legend, the basilica was built on the ruins of an ancient pagan temple around the 6th century AD. However, the first confirmed documentation of the church's existence regards its consecration in its current form, which took place in the 11th century when its custodian was Heribert of Intimiano. We have him to thank for the series of frescoes on the walls of the central nave that represent one of the best pictorial cycles from the period found in northern Italy. Situated to the right of the church, the baptistery was

built in the 11th century. It is preceded by a pronaos and topped by an octagonal lantern. Inside, the baptismal font was carved out of a large millstone dating from the Roman period.

**THE SMALL LAKES  
OF THE ARTIST**

Giovanni Segantini, one of the leading exponents of Italian divisionism, whose work can be found in some of the world's top museums, settled in Pusiano from 1880 to 1885 to work in direct contact with nature and his research on light led him to paint numerous rural landscapes and scenes.

The water environments of the small lakes of Brianza (Lake Segrino, Lake Pusiano and Lake Annone in particular), horses at the ford, fishing boats and dawns and sunsets, which inspired one of his most important works "*Ave Maria a trasbordo*", still offer the same charm to this day.



# AS SWEET AS HONEY

*“(The bees) collect honey that is extremely sweet, delicate and extremely wholesome, forming their combs and collecting wax, useful for thousands of purposes in daily life, they are patient of fatigue, toil at their labours (...) well aware that they are about to form what will prove to be an object of desire.*

*Pliny the Elder  
Natural History*



As cave paintings prove, the history of beekeeping in Europe has ancient origins (since about 7000 BC). However, few people know that it was an illustrious figure from the Como area, Pliny the Elder, who carried out one of the first studies on the world of bees and the production of honey. Pliny the Elder, who was born in 23 AD in Como, was a Latin author and one of the leading interdisciplinary academics of ancient times.

Given the different nectar-producing botanical species (both spontaneous and cultivated) present in the Como area the types of honey produced in the Lario area are acacia or false acacia (common in the plains and on the hills), chestnut (above all on the mountains of the Larian Triangle, the Intelvi Valley and the central and upper Lario), lime, honeydew

or woodland, mixed flowers, high mountain, raspberry, rhododendron and tree-of-heaven.

Evidence that beekeeping is closely linked to local culinary traditions is clear in the use made of honey in popular confectionery products, in particular in the preparation of some cakes such as mataloch, a typical sweet bread from the central and upper Lario area, and in some versions of resta (or resca in local dialect) and pasquale, a traditional cake of the city of Como (see box). The presence of healthy bee hives is also thanks to the quality of the environment as bees are an extraordinary biological indicator. It is also thanks to their tireless pollination work that Lake Como has such a rich biodiversity.





## PRODUCT SHEET

The various types of honey produced can have quite marked differences in terms of colour and fragrance (ranging from the very light, clear colour of false acacia honey, to the very dark colour and bitter notes of chestnut honey), due also to their different nectar component (the denomination only indicates the primary floral species)

With the exception of false acacia, the other types of honey tend to crystallize over time as they are not subjected to stabilizing heat treatments (pasteurisation).

As well as honey, bees make other products with excellent nutritional and therapeutic properties, including propolis, pollen, beeswax, honeydew. Local honey is also used to prepare jams, marmalades and almond and hazelnut cakes and desserts. The majority of Larian beekeepers practice the technique of nomadism, in other words they move their hives to where the various nectar-producing plants blossom.

### RESTA AND MATALOCH

*Butter, sugar, lemon zest, raisins and candied fruit are just some of the ingredients of resta (or resca in the dialect of Como), the traditional cake of Como that was once only prepared on Palm Sunday. A small olive branch used to be added to the batter mixture, which in some recipes also includes the use of honey. The word resca (which in local dialect means fish bone), as well as incisions in the shape of a spike on the surface, appear to refer to some of the classic symbols of spring rebirth.*

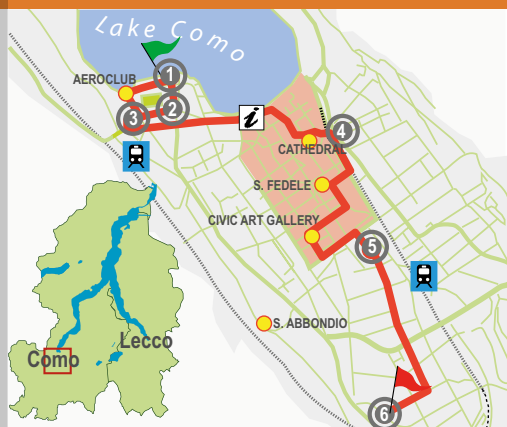
*Today, it can be found in pastry shops all year round.*

*Mataloch on the other hand is a cake typical of the central and upper lake area. It too is an elongated type of panettone flavoured with aniseed, thanks to the use of fennel flowers. Its origins appear to date back to the period of Spanish domination. The batter is full of ingredients (sultanas, candied citron and orange peel, walnuts, hazelnuts and dried figs, as well as honey) that may vary depending on where it is made.*



Resta





## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- ▲ Departure
- ▼ Arrival
- Italian Rationalism Itinerary:
  - 1 Monument to the Fallen and Canottieri Lari
  - 2 Novo Comum and public swimming pool
  - 3 Casa Giuliani Frigerio
  - 4 Ex Casa del Fascio
  - 5 Covered Market
  - 6 Sant'Elia Nursery School
- Other points of interest along the way

## ITINERARY

**Itinerary:** Como, the cradle of Italian Rationalism  
**Duration on foot:** approx. 1h 15m (excluding time for visits)

Como, the main town of the province of the same name, is also the “capital” of its lake, which it overlooks, surrounded by gently-sloping hills. With its cathedral and mediaeval walls, the Romanesque basilicas of St Fedele, St Carpofo and St Abbondio and its villas, parks and gardens it is a city that deserves more than a one-day visit. The website [www.lakecomo.it](http://www.lakecomo.it) is full of suggestions for your stay. Don't miss the old town centre with its squares and lively narrow streets where you can enjoy refreshments or go shopping, the splendid Villa Olmo, the funicular railway for Brunate from which to enjoy the views, a boat ride, a visit to the hangar (home to the world's oldest flying boat organisation and flying boat school) and a walk in Spina Verde Park where Baradello tower stands (1158).

Como was the birthplace and home of Pliny the Elder, Pliny the Younger, Pope Innocent XI and Alessandro Volta and in more recent times, Antonio Sant'Elia (Futurist) and Giuseppe Terragni (Rationalist), world famous early 20th century architects. We recommend a walk around the city to discover some of the most splendid examples of Italian Rationalism.

We begin with the Monument to the Fallen (see box) and continue as indicated on the map, which will lead us from the Novocomum to the Casa del Fascio and then the Municipal Art Gallery and

Sant'Elia Nursery School (see boxes for more detail).

We head to Via Mentana where we find Casa Cattaneo Alchieri (at no. 25), by the Rationalist architect Pietro Lingeri. We recommend stopping at the covered market, which was built during the same period by the Milanese engineer Mario Levacher.

His pseudo-monumental architecture, so typical of the Fascist period, can be compared to Rationalist architecture. Levacher won a competition to design the market amid considerable controversy and it was heavily criticized precisely due to its excessive monumentality, which was considered obsolete. Amongst others, a design by the Terragni brothers was rejected.

The producers' pavilion is today the seat of Como Farmers' Market (on page 42) where you'll find Lario honey, missoltini, cheeses and bread for sale, along with all the other typical local food products.



A view of Como

## THE RATIONALIST QUARTER

*Tra gli anni venti e gli anni In the 1920s and 30s, the city of Como was in great ferment: a group of young architects from Milan Polytechnic began constructing buildings and monuments that had never been seen before. The Monument to the Fallen, the starting point for our itinerary around the city that is the symbol of Italian Rationalism, was designed by the brothers Giuseppe and Attilio Terragni who, following an order by the prefect, had to comply with a sketch by architect Sant'Elia. Despite the "Futurist" imposition, the work of cleaning the façade ornaments present in the sketch and the possibility of free expressive capacity inside the monument meant that, once completed, Giuseppe Terragni was able to recognise the piece as "decidedly Rationalist". In the same quarter, in Viale Sinigaglia, we can admire the Novocomum, a residential building in whose layout it is possible to identify the principles of Rationalism: a parallelepiped with two C-shaped lateral wings, where the architect worked on the juxtaposition of full spaces and voids. To understand the innovative reach of the project, we cannot overlook the period in which these buildings were constructed. Nicknamed the "transatlantic" due to its unusual shape, the Novocomum caused such uproar that the traditionalists called for it to be demolished. In the same street we can admire the former Casa Balilla – which is now a municipal*



*pool – and, returning towards the Monument to the Fallen, the seat of the Canottieri Lario, both designed by Gianni Mantovano a few years later.*

*In Viale Masia, opposite Corridoni Primary School, we find Casa Giuliani-Frigerio, the last building designed by Giuseppe Terragni.*

### THE FORMER CASA DEL FASCIO AND THE SANT'ELIA NURSERY SCHOOL

*The cornerstone of modern architecture, Como's former Casa del Fascio (which now houses the offices of the Financial Police) was designed in 1932 by Giuseppe Terragni in*

*a splendid location near the city's cultural and religious pole. Classic elements are reinterpreted in a personal and Rationalist key with the use of glass and concrete for the supporting structure, four different façades and a modern loggia on the front. Terragni left nothing to chance, personally designing the walls, handles, skirting boards, floors, fixtures, lamps, tables and desks. The interior can be visited subject to authorisation being granted by the Provincial Headquarters of the Financial Police.*

*Still an infants' school to this day, the Sant'Elia Nursery School is situated on a single floor and features huge windows that connect it to the exterior. Open to nature and at the same time protected from traffic, this small school has two wings, which house the classrooms and various service rooms. Inside, a protected garden guarantees a connection with the lush greenery, sun and light outside, elements that Terragni considered fundamental for all human beings.*

*For visits inside:*

*[asilosantelia@comune.como.it](mailto:asilosantelia@comune.como.it)*

*Per visite all'interno:*

*[asilosantelia@comune.como.it](mailto:asilosantelia@comune.como.it)*



# CHEESE!

*“But in spite of these and other economies (...), in spite of gifts of curds, of mascherpa, of goats’ cheese, of chestnuts and walnuts that were always pouring from the townsfolk, Luisa could not make ends meet”.*

**Antonio Fogazzaro**  
*The Little World of the Past*



**Below:**  
map of the main  
production areas



Cheese making is the most important and most common activity for farms in the Como area, especially in the mountain zones. Both fresh and mature cheeses are made using cows’ milk, goats’ milk and a combination of both. Cows’ milk cheeses include typical Semuda, magro di Bellagio, Lariano di latteria and Lariano di alpeggio, whilst goat’s cheeses include Lariano di capra (both

fresh and mature) and goat cheese obtained with lactic and presamic coagulation (particularly famous is Caprino di Caslino d’Erba). Mixed milk cheeses include delicious Zincarin, made from whey or ricotta with the addition of aromatic herbs and pepper.

The mountain pastures of the Lario area boast great quality and variety in terms of composition of vegetation and flora, which have been se-

lected over time by the mild and temperate climate, sunny slopes that are never too cold, moist and fertile soils that are slightly inclined and altitudes that are never too high.

Thanks to these favourable conditions, over the centuries, the practice of taking animals to mountain pastures has become increasingly popular among small local communities that, as a result, have selected autochthonous cow and goat breeds and chosen dairy and cheese-making techniques that are deeply rooted in the food traditions and habits of their lands of origin.

In the autumn-winter period and in early spring, milk was given to the rotational dairies present in many villages. Today, many farmers have opened their own small cheese-making factories, where they sell direct to the public, or have taken over running former dairies (for example, in San Fedele Intelvi, Cerano Intelvi and Laino) whilst some former dairies house museums dedicated to farming civilisations (Ethnographic Milk Museum in Carlazzo and Museum of the Valley in Cavargna). There are still some cooperative dairies in Bellagio (Latteria Sociale di Bellagio) and in Dongo (Latteria Alto Lario).

*Lariano d’Alpeggio is produced in the entire provincial territory using cow’s milk cheese, Lariano di latteria, Zincarin and Ricotta del Lario (also known as Mascherpa) are produced on the entire provincial territory.*



Cows grazing in Val d'Intelvi

*Polenta uncia* (or “grey” polenta) is a typical dish of the Province of Como whose original recipe calls for the use of *semüda* cheese.

The cheese is cut into cubes and added to the polenta, after it has been cooked in a copper pan. Everything is then flavoured with abundant

melted butter, as well as garlic and sage, and served piping hot.

It can be enjoyed in some typical restaurants and above all, in some of the area's mountain refuges or huts. It is a rich dish and a complete meal that can be served with mixed grilled meats or a platter of local cold cuts.

## PRODUCT SHEET

**Semüda** is made from unpasteurised skimmed cow's milk, rennet and salt. Its shape is usually cylindrical (average diameter 20-30 cm), with a maximum height of 8 cm and a weight of 2 - 4 kilograms. The cheese has an uneven scattering of holes and a soft consistency. Its colour varies from straw yellow to light green. The cheese is matured in natural caves called “crotti” or in cellars, for a period of between 40 days and 18 months.

**Lariano d'alpeggio** is a semi-hard cheese with sometimes many or sometimes fewer tiny holes, depending on the milk enzymes typical of each valley. It is made using full fat or semi-skimmed milk, salt and natural rennet and can contain up to 30% goats' milk. It is matured on average for 40-45 days



Lariano d'Alpeggio cheese

in summer and 50-60 days in winter.

**Lariano di capra** is the name given to either fresh and mature cheeses obtained with lactic or presamic coagulation. As well as containing goats' milk, rennet and salt, they can be flavoured with herbs, pepper, various spices and garlic.

**Zincarlin**, which has a characteristic spherical or truncated cone-shapes, is made using an acidic rennet or ricotta with the addition of salt and pepper. It may also contain herbs, various spices and garlic.

The typical fresh goats' cheeses known as **furmagitt de cavra** are also obtained thanks to the farming of goats, which adapt well to the pastures of the mountains of the Lario.



Zincarlin cheese



# CHEESE!



## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- Cable car
- Departure
- ▲ Arrival



## ITINERARY

**Itinerary:** In the delightful border pasturelands  
**Duration by car (excluding visits, stops and cable car to Pigna):** approx. 1h 45min.

The cool and sunny Intelvi Valley, delimited by Lake Como and Lake Lugano, is the ideal holiday resort for those who love nature and mountain sports. The territory boasts alpine mountain pastures where animals graze freely on typical herbs and flowers that give the excellent cheeses produced in this valley great flavour and beneficial properties.

Here, in the past, to combat poverty, as well as farming the population turned to trafficking.



Contraband goods, stacked into huge sacks called briccole, found their way clandestinely over the most impervious mountain paths, carried on the shoulders of the so-called spalloni. The Small Museum of the Financial Police and of Contraband in Erbonne (S. Fedele Intelvi) is a collection of items and artefacts from that time.

The area offers numerous opportunities for trekking on the gentle slopes and in the cool woods so plentiful in this area on the border between Italy and Switzerland. The website [www.lariointelve.it](http://www.lariointelve.it) is full of suggestions and itineraries.

Of the numerous possible attractions, we recommend a trip to Pigna, a small mountain village (900 above sea level), which stands in a green plateau that offers spectacular views of the lake and surrounding mountains.

We begin in Argegno, a delightful little town on the shores of the lake, which can be reached by boat or by car. The cable car, on the provincial road just outside the village, was inaugurated in 1971 and links the town to the hamlet of Pigna in about five minutes. From here, visitors can enjoy splendid views of the lake and surrounding mountains. Pigna is also an excellent departure point for wonderful excursions to discover where mountain cheeses are produced in the Intelvi Valley.

Back in Argegno, we continue by car towards S. Fedele Intelvi. The extremely winding road climbs steeply before opening out onto vast and sunny plains surrounded by chestnut woods. The valley boasts numerous restaurants and inns where you can stop to taste some local produce or enjoy lunch. After Dizzasco we continue as far as Castiglione, San Fedele, Pellio and Lanzo, tiny villages just waiting to be discovered. Finally we reach the hamlet of Scaria, an ancient village well worth visiting, in particular the late Baroque Church of St Maria di Scaria, brimming with frescoes, statues and reliefs and one of the finest examples of late Baroque style in Europe. A few minutes' walk away is the beautiful Church of St Nazaro and St Celso. From Pellio we can descend along the SP 14 towards the shores of Lake Lugano, with beautiful views of the village of Osteno.

We now flank the village of Porlezza, a resort popular with the Dutch, Swiss and German above all. From here it is possible to continue as far as the outlying hamlets of the municipality of Valsolda, on the border with Switzerland, that are the backdrop for the novel *Little World of the Past*, the masterpiece by Antonio Fogazzaro.

### THE INTELVESEI MASTERS

Since ancient times, the Intelvi Valley was famous for the skill and talent of its artisans: master masons, stonecutters, sculptors, artists and stucco workers whose craft was handed down through the generations for centuries and whose talent earned them the title of “masters”. These families were commissioned to work not only in Italy, but all over Europe. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Intelve-



Church of St Maria di Scaria

si Masters were famous in particular in the plastic decoration of stucco and scagliola. The latter is an artistic technique that imitates inlaid marbles with the use of gypsum and mineral and vegetable pigments. Examples of this process can be found in numerous churches in the valley and in the Stucco and Scagliola Museum in Cerano Intelvi, which can be visited subject to booking: Tel. +39 3487930214

### PIANO LAKE RESERVE

The Piano Lake Nature Reserve is part of the complex of areas



protected by the Lombardy Region and is recognised as a Site of Community Importance by the European Union. The environment boasts a wealth of wild fauna; roe deer, deer, badgers, foxes and squirrels, as well as frogs and salamanders, fish and over 100 species of birds populate the reserve. Ideal for visits at any time of year, Piano Lake is particularly attractive in winter, when its surface ices over and the snow designs Nordic-looking landscapes, and in September, when nocturnal excursions are organised to listen

to the call of the deer during the mating season.

An eco-museum and well-organised visitor centre welcome tourists and school groups with an interesting programme of guided visits.

For information:

[www.riservalgodipiano.eu](http://www.riservalgodipiano.eu)

### THE PLACES MADE FAMOUS BY FOGAZZARO

Antonio Fogazzaro spent long periods of his life in his villa in Oria, a small outlying hamlet of Valsolda, on the Italian shore of Lake Lugano. From this peaceful place the author drew inspiration for his novel *The Little World of the Past*. Indeed it is almost entirely set in the villages of Oria, Albogasio, San Mamete, Puria and Castello: Franco's garden, the harbour of Ombretta, the villa of Niscioree and the cemetery are all in Oria.

Villa Fogazzaro Roi, which still houses the furnishings, books and most treasured possessions of Antonio Fogazzaro, is now the property of FAI, the Italian Environment Fund, and can be visited on request (for information: [www.fondoambiente.it](http://www.fondoambiente.it)).



Fogazzaro's house

# A TASTE OF THE PROVINCE OF **LEC**

*Lecco and the Valsassina, Bellano and Varenna, Brianza and Montevecchia: itineraries and products to discover the Lecco area. Duration by car (excluding visits and stops): approx. 2h 30min.*



## MAP LEGEND

- Itinerary
- Wayfarer's Path
- ▲ Departure
- ▼ Arrival

mulberry was being abandoned because of a crisis in the breeding of silkworms. To make up for the loss of these resources, people began to grow some of the most popular aromatic herbs used in Lombard cuisine on the terraces of Montevecchia (now part of the Natural Park of Montevecchia and the Curone Valley). In particular, they grew sage and rosemary, which adapted well to the favourable microclimate and the absence of frost. In recent years, many other herbs have been added to the traditional ones

## ITINERARY

### THE FRAGRANCES OF MONTEVECCHIA

The history of the sage and rosemary of Montevecchia begins in the early 20th century when the vines, which had always been present in this area, were attacked and damaged by grape phylloxera. At the same time, the cultivation of



Slopes typical of Montevecchia



including basil, marjoram, mint, oregano, lemon balm, coriander and tarragon, to name a few.

The particular care taken with the plants, which are still transported by shoulder from one terrace to another in conical wicker baskets called *gerla* and the removal of weeds, done manually using small mechanical appliances, ensure the product is of exceptional quality and recognised by the Lombardy Region, which has included Montevecthia sage and rosemary in the list of traditional food and agricultural products.

### TERRE LARIANE TGI

Terre Lariane is a TGI (Typical Geographical Indication) product of the provinces of Lecco and Como, which has been recognised since the 2008 vintage. The two most important production zones are the hills of Brianza around Montevecthia and the Upper Lake Como, where the terraced vineyards and significant differences in temperature give the wine the elegance, freshness and body that are typical of this territory.

Already well known at the time of Strabone (63 BC – 19 AD), the largest wine producing area on Lake Como is in Montevecthia.

In 1968 Mario Soldati described this territory thus: “The terraces of Montevecthia are in one of the most beautiful positions in Brianza [...] High mountains defend it from the north winds.

The mist and fog that rise from the plains and the lakes brush it fruitfully: it is now clear that the most delicate and exquisite wine is always made using ripe grapes at the very limit of the

climatic and geononic conditions necessary for life”. Towards the end of the 19th century, a series of factors led to the gradual abandonment of the terraces of Montevecthia: Poor financial profitability due to the difficulty of growing grapes on very short slopes and the arrival of a parasite in 1880, the grape phylloxera, which decimated vineyards led to the gradual decline of agricultural activities.

The last decades of the 20th century triggered a return to grape growing, thanks to the fact the area began to attract tourists, drawn here by its beauty and its variety of landscapes: lake, hills and mountains. This drew numerous potential consumers here and helped consolidate and redeem a historical agricultural reality and a top quality product.

For information: [www.terrelarianeigt.it](http://www.terrelarianeigt.it)



### LEONARDO'S FERRY BOAT

Leonardo's ferry boat connects the villages of Imbersago (LC) and Villa D'Adda (BG), situated on the opposite bank of the River Adda. It is the reproduction of a ferry boat designed by





Leonardo da Vinci that was intended to exploit the current, based on the so-called “Parallelogram Law”. This craft, which underwent various re-elaborations from 1513 onwards, takes travellers from one shore to the other and can transport up to four cars.

A cable, stretched taut between the two shores, allows the boat to be manoeuvred by just one man. Nearby, less than 6 kilometres from the Imbersago ferry, the spectacular bridge over the River Adda is one of top architectural works in iron created in Italy. Designed by the Swiss engineer Jules R  thlisberger and built between 1887 and 1889, the bridge stands 85 metres above the level of the river and is a total of 266 metres long.

## **THE PLACES MADE FAMOUS BY THE BETROTHED**

Finally, on Thursday, a man came to the convent and asked for Agnese. He was a fishmonger from Pescarenico, who regularly went down to Milan (...)

It is impossible to mention Lake Como without referring to The Betrothed. The city of Lecco, with its neighbourhoods and quarters, is a constant reminder of Alessandro Manzoni’s masterpiece. We recommend a visit to the ancient quarter of Pescarenico, south of the city, where Brother Cristoforo’s monastery was and where it is possible to visit the Church of St Materno and St Lucia, which houses very rare 17th-century wax

and papier-m  ch   plastic compositions and the Trinity by Cerano. Continue to the north of Lecco where there are two neighbourhoods that vie to be where Lucia’s house was located – the tiny hamlet of Olate, thought to be the birthplace of the “betrothed bride”, and Acquate. Higher up, on the promontory of Zucco, is believed to be where Don Rodrigo’s villa once was, although it is now a Rationalist building. Meanwhile, a rural road that leads to Germanedo should mark the site of the famous “ambush” of the Bravi. Furthermore, the quarter of Chiuso is where the tailor who welcomes Lucia when she is freed is thought to have lived and where the famous conversion of the Unnamed took place. Finally, a visit to the home of the Manzoni family, which the writer reluctantly sold, is obligatory. The building now houses Manzoni Museum, where manuscripts, first editions and other memorabilia relating to the life and work of the author are exhibited.

## **THE CHEESES OF THE VALSASSINA**

A land that produces a number of protected designation of origin (PDO) cheeses, such as taleggio, gorgonzola and quartirola, the province of Lecco can be considered one of the cradles of the Italian cheese-making industry. In the last decades of the 19th century, in Ballabio alone three companies were founded that have become part of the history of cheese-making in Italy and the world – Galbani, Locatelli and later,



Invernizzi.

Alongside industrial production, which has made this area famous in every part of the world, it also still boasts top quality artisan production. Five cheeses from the Lecco area have been recognised as traditional food and agricultural products by the Lombardy Region – Fiorone and Robiola from the Valsassina, typical stracchino and stracchino from the Valsassina and mascherpa d'Alpe from the valleys of Lecco.

### CAVIADINI OF BARZIO

Caviadini are simple, short - crust pastry biscuits that are typically diamond-shaped or knotted. They

are so delicious thanks to the use of wholesome ingredients, the fact they are kneaded by hand and the care taken in cooking them.

They have an ancient history: made in Barzio since the 18th century, towards the end of the 19th century they became popular in the entire Valsassina thanks to the development of the first forms of tourism. Nowadays, all pastry shops and bakeries in the valley display caviadini in their shop windows and sometimes make versions with chocolate, honey or sugar sprinkles. Legend has it that their name comes from the numerous attempts made by the chef to invent the recipe and please his lord; as they were tested out so many times they were called cavie, which means “guinea pigs” in Italian.

### PREMANA, CUTLERY FOR ALL RECIPES

Premana, a small village in the Valsassina 1,000 metres above sea level, is the largest centre for blade and scissor production in Italy. The history of manufacturing cutting weapons in



this mountain town originates from the art of working iron that was so widespread in this area. The “miracle of Premana”, however, dates back to the late 19th century when many of the village’s men were forced to emigrate and open small shops and workshops in cities such as Venice, Verona and Milan. In 1869 one of these immigrants, Ambrogio Sanelli, returned to the village and began making cutting blades to sell to his faraway compatriots. This activity quickly engaged many other villagers and the number of family-run workshops increased rapidly. To this day, in such a small village, there are more than 150 companies, mainly family-run businesses, involved in the production of scissors and knives. Their products, which all bear the hallmark PREMANA Collective Quality Brand, issued by the Chamber of Commerce of Lecco, are now exported all over the world. In recent years, by investing in research and product quality, the



artisans of Premana have managed to survive competition from the global market making this small town, with just over 2,000 inhabitants, where there is no unemployment and where there is always a shortage of labour, a sort of “clinical case” for economists worldwide to study.

### SCAPINÀSC OF THE UPPER VALSASSINA

Scapinasc, which were traditionally prepared and indeed, still are prepared to mark the feast

of the patron saint of Crandolo, St Anthony Abbot, recall the awkward shape of the scapin, which in local dialect refers to a bulky, hand-knitted sock made using coarse and felted wool, once worn around the house. These sweet ravioli parcels originated in the Upper Valsassina in the first half of the 17th century, when the cultivation of buckwheat began in the valley. In fact, the same cereal is used to make the pasta for Valtellina's famous pizzoccheri. Scapinasc are considered a complete meal thanks to the filling that contains all



**Crandola's famous "scapinasc"**

the ingredients available in the area: from grated cheese, to finely chopped dried fruit (pears, apples, figs and prunes), to milk and grated stale bread.

## **BELLANO AND THE NOVELS OF ANDREA VITALI**

The delightful village of Bellano, on the eastern shore of Lake Como, is the backdrop for all the novels by the writer Andrea Vitali. Every street in the village, every viewpoint and every donkey trail ended up in his books; in fact, whenever you walk around the village's narrow streets it feels as if you are about to meet one of his main characters.

Enthusiasts of the work of Andrea Vitali can find a map on the Municipality of Bellano website ([www.comune.bellano.lc.it](http://www.comune.bellano.lc.it)) with indications of the places where the amazing adventures of his characters are actually set.

Situated at the mouth of the Valsassina, the village offers enchanting views and delightful walks to



**Bellano, panoramic view**

discover the magnificent landscapes of the lake and the inland area.

## **VILLA MONASTERO VARENNA**

An ancient monastery and noble residence, Villa Monastero, which is owned by the Province of Lecco, is now a conference centre of international



**Villa Monastero**

renown. It is where Enrico Fermi held his lessons in 1954 during the second course of the Italian Physical Society (SIF), which has organised its summer courses in this venue since 1953. The villa's gardens are filled with exotic plants, statues, small temples and balustrades.

The name of the villa derives from the ancient Monastery of St Maria that belonged to the order of the Cistercians and was founded with all probability before the 13th century. In 1567, the monastery was suppressed by Cardinal Federico Borromeo and it became a private residence. Since 1953 the villa has hosted scientific, administrative and cultural courses and conferences, now promoted and managed by the Province of Lecco and Villa Monastero Institute, its organisational body ([www.villamonastero.eu](http://www.villamonastero.eu)).

## THE WAYFARER'S PATH

The so-called "Wayfarer's Path" flanks the eastern shore of the lake, passing through all its main towns. It offers a unique opportunity to discover the artistic and natural beauty of the resorts dotted along the coast from Lecco northwards.

The path traces an ancient route that once went from the area near Milan as far as Switzerland and that, along with the lakeside road, bears witness to the role this area played in trade links. The path climbs from Abbadia Lariana to halfway up the hill, passing in and out of the villages, and continues as far as Colico



Lierna, panoramic view



Brivio and river Adda

before turning inland to the foothills of the Valtellina and from there to Sorico, in the Province of Como. It covers a total of about 45 km and therefore, has to be covered in stages. Depending on your level of training, it can be divided into 3 or 4 stages. Thanks to the fact it often intersects with the Lecco-Colico railway line, it can be covered one stage at a time, with walkers returning to their departure point by train. The fact the path doesn't climb too high up the mountain and has an excellent exposure mean the itinerary can be covered in any season.

For stage durations and detailed maps visit: [www.leviedelviandante.it](http://www.leviedelviandante.it)



# LAKE FLAVOURS... IN THE PAN



## SOUSED FISH



*Level of difficulty: medium*

*Preparation time: approx. 45 minutes*

*Ingredients for four people:*

*300 g lake fish*

*A little flour*

*Extra-virgin olive oil*

*1 onion*

*1 celery stalk*

*1 carrot*

*Juniper berries (optional)*

*1 garlic clove*

*Black peppercorns*

*Sprig of thyme (wild if possible)*

*2 bay leaves*

*Glass consisting of two parts white wine and one part white wine vinegar*

*Salt and pepper to taste*

Clean, gut and descale the fish then toss it in flour and fry gently in a little olive oil until golden on both sides.

Cut the onion into rounds and sweat down in a separate pan.

Cut the celery and carrot into strips and add to the pan with 3 or 4 juniper berries, 2 black peppercorns, a sprig of wild thyme and 1 or 2 bay leaves.

Immediately pour over enough liquid – consisting of two thirds of white wine and a third of white wine vinegar (or half and half for those who prefer stronger flavours) – to cover the fish.

Bring to the boil and then cook over a low heat for about ten minutes.

To finish, pour all the hot liquid and vegetables over the fish and allow to rest in the fridge for at least 24 hours. Serve cold.

Can be stored in the fridge for a few days.



Pescallo



## POLENTA UNCIA



*Level of difficulty: easy*

*Preparation time: approx. 1 hour*

*Ingredients for 6/8 people*

*750 g cornmeal flour*

*250 g buckwheat flour*

*2 litres water*

*Salt*

*Butter*

*4 garlic cloves*

*8 sage leaves*

*6/700 g half-fat mountain cheese  
(like Semuda)*

Mix together the two different types of flour. Bring the water to the boil in a copper pan, add the salt then sprinkle in the flour a little at a time.

Cook for the time necessary (approx. 40 minutes), continuing to stir all the time.

Once cooked, spoon a layer of polenta into a dish.

Add a layer of cheese cut into pieces, then another layer of polenta and so on until all the ingredients have been used.

End with a layer of cheese.

Melt the butter in a saucepan with the garlic and sage until it begins to foam and turns a nutty brown colour.

Pour over the polenta.

## RICE AND FILLETS OF PERCH



*Level of difficulty: easy*  
*Preparation time: 30 minutes*  
*Ingredients for four people:*  
280 g rice  
300/400 g lake perch  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
100 g butter  
1 whole egg  
A little flour (approx. 2 tablespoons)  
Breadcrumbs  
A few sage leaves

Cook the rice in plenty of boiling salted water. In the meantime toss the fillets in the flour then the egg and finally in the breadcrumbs. Fry in a pan with some olive oil and a knob of butter until they are golden brown on both sides. When cooked, drain the rice and serve, sprinkling with grated Parmesan cheese. At this point, place the fillets of fish on top, arranged to look like the petals of a flower. In a separate pan, sauté the sage leaves in butter and pour over the dish. Serve piping hot.

## LAVARET WITH BUTTER AND SAGE

Replace the perch with lavaret and follow the same fish preparation method as the above recipe for rice with fillets of perch. Serve with a side dish of salad or with roast, boiled or mashed potatoes.

## POLENTA AND MISSOLTINI



*Level of difficulty: easy*  
*Preparation time (excluding the cooking time for the polenta): approx. 15 minutes*  
*Ingredients:*  
Polenta  
Missoltini  
Vinegar  
Water  
Parsley  
Oil

Cook some yellow polenta, form into a small “loaf” and allow to cool before cutting into approx. 1 cm thick slices. Rinse the fish in warm water and vinegar to eliminate any excess salt and fatty residue. Beat delicately with a meat hammer then cook for a few minutes on a hot griddle (or alternatively, in a sloping saucepan taking care to ensure they do not fry in their own oil). Grill the slices of polenta separately. Remove the scales from the fish using a sharp knife then place them next to or on top of the slices of polenta. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and drizzle with vinegar and oil.

## CUTIZZA



*Level of difficulty: easy*

*Preparation time: approx. 20 minutes*

*Ingredients for two cutizze or fried cakes  
(28/32 ø frying pan):*

*200 g white flour*

*250 ml milk*

*1/2 yellow apple (optional)*

*1 whole egg (optional)*

*1 glass water*

*Pinch of salt*

*Sugar and icing sugar*

Mix together the flour, milk and eggs in a bowl, then beat with a whisk while adding a little water to obtain a smooth creamy mixture. Peel the apple and cut into thin slices before adding to the mixture.

Pour about two fingers of seed oil in a pan over a low heat. When the oil is hot, use a large ladle to pour the mixture into the pan, covering the base with a thin layer of batter.

Alternatively, for a lighter version, use just a drizzle of oil and a non-stick frying pan, taking care to ensure the cakes do not stick.

Cook over a lively heat until the bottom begins to brown, then flip over and continue cooking for about ten minutes on the other side.

Once cooked, drain on some kitchen paper then sprinkle with sugar and icing sugar. The cakes should be prepared at the last minute and enjoyed piping hot.

## MEASCIA



*Level of difficulty: easy*

*Preparation time: 20 min. plus 1 hour cooking time*

*Ingredients:*

*200 g cornmeal flour (like fioretto)*

*125 g white flour*

*Pinch of salt*

*90 g sugar*

*2 eggs*

*250 ml milk (+ ½ glass more if the mixture is too stiff)*

*200 ml extra-virgin olive oil*

*20 coarsely chopped walnuts*

*7 finely chopped dried figs*

*80 g sultanas soaked in warm water*

*2 small or 1 large apple cut into thin slices*

*2 small or 1 large pear cut into thin slices*

*1 sachet baking powder*

*A little rosemary (optional)*

Cream the sugar and the whole eggs together. Pour in the milk and mix well. Mix together the two different types of flour and add, continuing to stir, with a pinch of salt.

Add the extra-virgin olive oil and mix together well; the mixture should be creamy, but not too wet. Add the dried fruit, apple and pears and mix together well.

Lastly, add the baking powder and pour the batter into a cake tin. The cake batter should not be more than 4 cm deep.

Bake in a pre-heated oven for 45/60 minutes at 180°C.

Once cooked, if desired, sprinkle the surface of the cake with some sugar and a few rosemary leaves, either whole or chopped.



# TASTING AND SALE



## CERTIFICATION MARK

### THE SAPORI DI TERRA, SAPORI DI LAGO BRAND LABEL

Since 2002, the Saponi di terra, Saponi di lago (Flavours of the Land, Flavours of the Lake) brand has guaranteed the traditional nature of the preparation of local products. Set up in order to protect and promote the food and wine heritage of Lake Como, the brand has triggered a virtuous circle linking tourism, gastronomy, agriculture and artisan production. Traditional products can only use the brand if they are made following specific guidelines that respect traditions. The products protected include traditional cakes like Braschin, Masigott, Meascia, Nocciolini and Resta, cheeses like soft goat's cheese, Casoretta, Formaggella di Caglio, Semuda, Stracchino and Zincarlin, Larian cheeses and Ricotta del Lario, head salami, honey and liver mortadella, to name a few.

### CONSORTIUM FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS OF THE PROVINCE OF COMO

The traditional products made by companies that are members of the Consortium for the Protection of the Traditional Products of the Province of Como can use the Saponi di terra, Saponi di lago label. The consortium takes part in local markets and street markets and its products are also on

sale at the tasting corner in Lariofiere Exhibition Centre, at Latteria Alto Lario in Dongo, at some Consorzio Agrario di Como e Lecco sales outlets and at some large supermarkets. For more information contact: Consorzio per la Tutela dei Prodotti Tradizionali della Provincia di Como  
Piazza Camerlata, 9 - Como  
Tel. +39 031.59.16.24 - [www.saporidicomo.it](http://www.saporidicomo.it)

## SALES OUTLETS

### COMO FARMERS' MARKET

Situated at the entrance to the walled city inside Como's covered market (a 1930s building of great historical and architectural interest), Como Farmers' Market is without doubt well worth a visit. Over 20 local farms from the mountains, plains and hills, as well as professional fishermen, sell their produce, including cheese, dairy products, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, bread, flour, honey,





jams, preserves, flowers and plants directly to their customers.

#### **COMO FARMERS' MARKET**

Como - Covered market - Via Mentana, 5

Producers' Pavilion

Opening times:

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday:

8.00 am – 1.00 pm

Local farmers in the producers' pavilion at Como covered market can be recognised thanks to the Co.MAC (Consorzio Mercato Agricoltori Comaschi) consortium brand label.

#### **LATTERIA ALTO LARIO IN DONGO**

The sales outlet of the Latteria Alto Lario in Dongo sells all the best dairy produce of Lake Como, such as traditional Semuda and Lariano, which are made in the adjacent cheese factory, as well as other cheese typical of the heritage of the Valtellina.

In the welcoming sales outlet, the Latteria also sells excellent Laghi Lombardi del Lario PDO olive oil, delicate local honey, fish such as misultin (Mediterranean shad) and other lake fish, homemade jams, typical local cakes like braschin, the best local wines and traditional cold cuts.

Founded in order to promote and preserve the cheese-making traditions of the Upper Lario and Ceresio Valley, the Caseificio Alto Lario di Dongo was set up in 2010 thanks also to the contribution of the Comunità Montana Valli del Lario e del Ceresio and the Province of Como.



Cow's and goat's milk is collected and processed by Delebio Cooperative which, to this day, collects milk from most farmers in the Upper Lario area and processes it locally into cheeses and dairy products typical of Lake Como guaranteeing continuity and ever-increasing qualitative standards.

OPENING TIMES - Monday - Saturday:

8.30am - 12.15pm / 3.30pm - 7.15pm

Sunday: 9.00am - 12.15pm

Via Statale, 178 - 22014 DONGO (CO)

Tel. +39 0344.82184 - [www.latteriaaltolario.com](http://www.latteriaaltolario.com)

#### **TASTING CORNER AT LARIOFIERE**

At Lariofiere Exhibition Centre in Erba it is possible to taste traditional local products at any event being held there.

It is a special space designed to help enhance local products, where visitors can taste and purchase goods.



**BOX LARIOFIERE** - Lariofiere is a multipurpose space, a successful trade fair centre and the ideal place for corporate meetings or events involving the general public. It is a venue that specializes in the presentation and marketing of products and a natural choice for conferences, concerts or social, cultural or sports events.

It is a well-organised and flexible facility located in a territory that has considerable potential and offers a considerable number of initiatives.

Address: Lariofiere Exhibition Centre

S.S. 639 - ERBA - [www.lariofiere.com](http://www.lariofiere.com)

# WHERE AND HOW A PRODU



Do you want to find out about typical local products?

As part of the “A Lake Full of Flavours” project, professional farmers and fishermen in the province of Como are opening the doors to their companies, inviting visitors to watch the various production and processing phases and taste some of the delicious produce.

Alongside your tourist itinerary of Lake Como,



visit a company that makes local products and you'll enjoy an unmistakable experience in extremely enchanting places.

There's so much to satisfy even the most curious palates: honey extraction, cheese making, vegetables and fruit picked straight off the tree, the





discovery of vineyards, wine cellars and olive groves with an old mill, an excursion by boat on the lake to watch a professional fisherman at work, trekking on an ass to discover mountain pastures and barns.

There's even an opportunity to taste and perhaps buy produce directly from farmers.

By scanning the QR code on this page or



visiting the website [www.lakecomo.it](http://www.lakecomo.it) you'll find a map with the addresses of the companies taking part in this initiative. For each producer you'll also find the activities offered, opening times, references and lots of other useful information for your visit.



[www.lakecomo.it](http://www.lakecomo.it)

*Scan the QR code with your mobile device to find out the companies that joined the programme.*



# TOURIST INFORMATION



*The Lake Como area is in the heart of the foothills of the Alps in Lombardy, north of Milan, which is about 50 km away and a stone's throw from Switzerland. The area is divided into the provinces of Lecco and Como, whose main cities are 40 km apart. Its proximity to mainline stations, airports and motorways means it is possible to reach Lake Como using whatever means of transport you deem most appropriate. Lake Como can easily be reached by car from the main cities of Lombardy and from Switzerland.*

## BY CAR

### COMO

To reach Como from all over Italy it is necessary to travel via the large motorway junction of **Milan**. At Viale Certosa follow signs for Como/Varese/Autostrada dei Laghi, then take the **A9 Lainate-Como-Chiasso**.

For the city centre of Como we recommend the **Como Centro** or **Monte Olimpino** exits.

To continue along the western shore of the lake we recommend the **Lago di Como** exit.

From **Switzerland** it is possible to reach Como via the **A2 Basle-Chiasso motorway**.

### LECCO

**From Milan** (50 km) **SS 36** Nuova Valsassina, a handy superhighway that reaches Lecco in less than 1 hour.

**From Como** (30 km) a necessary route for those coming from Varese and the Canton Ticino. Follow **state roads 342, 639 and 36** to reach Lecco in about 45 minutes.

**From Bergamo** (35 km) the main access route for those coming from the east, **state roads 342 and 639** lead to Lecco in approx. 50 minutes.

**From Sondrio** (80 km) **SS 38** to the Fuentes junction then continue along **SS 36** towards Lecco.

## BY TRAIN

### COMO

**Trenitalia/TreNord:** from Milan Central or Milan Porta Garibaldi stations for Como San Giovanni. Duration: between 40 minutes and 1 hour.

**TreNord:** from Milan Cadorna Train Station connections with Como Nord Lago (Milan - Como line) and with Erba and the Valsassina (Milan-Asso line). Duration: approx. 1 hour.

**SBB Swiss Railways:** from Zurich and Lugano,



Lake Como, first basin

Lugano-Chiasso-Como line for Como San Giovanni. Duration from Lugano: 1 hour.

#### LECCO

**From Milan** Milan-Sondrio-Tirano line. Direct and local trains from Milan Central and Porta Garibaldi stations. Duration: 40 minutes on the direct line, with trains leaving every hour (approx.).

**From Como** Como-Molteno-Lecco line. Frequent trains departing from Como San Giovanni station. Duration: approx. 1 hour and 10 minutes, changing in Molteno.

**From Bergamo** Brescia-Bergamo-Lecco line. Frequent trains connect the two main provincial towns. Duration: 40 minutes on the direct train.

**From Sondrio** Tirano-Sondrio-Lecco-Milan line. Intermediate stops at the main resorts on the shores of the lake (Colico, Bellano and Varenna) for direct trains, other stops for local trains. Duration: approx. 1 hour and 20 minutes for direct trains.

## BY PLANE

Lake Como is easily connected with the airports: Milan Malpensa, Milan Linate and Bergamo – Orio al Serio

#### CONNECTIONS WITH COMO

From **Milan-Malpensa** connections to Como by Malpensa Express trains, changing in Saronno. See [www.malpensaexpress.it](http://www.malpensaexpress.it) and [www.trenord.it](http://www.trenord.it)  
From Malpensa a rail network connection is also available that goes to Milan Central Train Station.

From **Milan-Linate** ATM shuttle bus for Milan Central Train Station and train for Como San Giovanni.

From **Milan Bergamo-Orio al Serio** shuttle bus for Milan Central Train Station and train for Como San Giovanni.

#### CONNECTIONS WITH LECCO

From **Linate** and **Malpensa** there is a coach service every day that connects the airport with Milan Central Train Station every 30 and 20 minutes respectively. From Malpensa there is also a new rail network connection that goes direct to Milan Central Train Station.

From **Bergamo-Orio al Serio**: AtB bus no.1 for Bergamo Train Station and then direct trains to Lecco (every 40 minutes).

#### USEFUL WEBSITES:

- Malpensa and Linate Airports:  
[www.sea-aeroportmilano.it](http://www.sea-aeroportmilano.it)
- Orio al Serio Airport:  
[www.sacbo.it](http://www.sacbo.it)
- Nord Milano railway:  
[www.trenord.it](http://www.trenord.it)
- Trenitalia railway:  
[www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it)

For more information on the Lake Como area, its many attractions, places of interest, key events and the numerous activities it is possible to take part in there, tourists will find various Tourist Information Boards (IAT offices) in strategic places on the territory.

# TOURIST INFORMATION



Ossuccio, bell tower of the Church of St Maria Maddalena in Stabio

At the IAT Tourist Information Board offices, which are open all year round, even the most demanding visitors will find comprehensive material such as maps, guidebooks, brochures and all the information they may need to enjoy a holiday to the full.

## **COMO TOURIST INFORMATION BOARD (IAT Office)**

Piazza Cavour, 17  
Tel. +39 031 269712 - Fax +39 031 240111  
[lakecomo@tin.it](mailto:lakecomo@tin.it)

## **BELLAGIO TOURIST INFORMATION BOARD (IAT Office)**

Piazza Mazzini (wharf)  
Tel. and Fax +39 031 950204  
[prombell@tin.it](mailto:prombell@tin.it)

## **MENAGGIO TOURIST INFORMATION BOARD (IAT Office)**

Pizza Garibaldi, 8  
Tel. and Fax +39 0344 32924  
[infomenaggio@tiscali.it](mailto:infomenaggio@tiscali.it)

## **LECCO TOURIST INFORMATION BOARD (IAT Office)**

Piazza XX Settembre 23,  
c/o Palazzo delle Paure  
Tel. +39 0341 295720 / 721  
Fax +39 0341 295730  
[info.turismo@provincia.lecco.it](mailto:info.turismo@provincia.lecco.it)

## **PROVINCE OF COMO**

**Tourism Department** - Via Borgo Vico 171  
22100 COMO - [www.lakecomo.it](http://www.lakecomo.it)  
[infoturismo@provincia.como.it](mailto:infoturismo@provincia.como.it)

## **OTHER USEFUL ADDRESSES**

### **NAVIGAZIONE LAGO DI COMO (NLC)**

Via per Cernobbio, 18 - 22100 Como  
Tel. +39 031 579211 - Fax +39 031 570080 -  
[www.navigazionelaghi.it](http://www.navigazionelaghi.it)  
[infocomo@navigazionelaghi.it](mailto:infocomo@navigazionelaghi.it)

### **ASF BUS SERVICE**

(urban and extra-urban bus lines)  
Via Asiago, 16/18 - 22100 Como  
Tel. +39 031 247111 - Fax +39 031 340900 -  
[www.asfautolinee.it](http://www.asfautolinee.it) - [info@asfautolinee.it](mailto:info@asfautolinee.it)

### **COMO BRUNATE FUNICULAR RAILWAY**

Piazza De Gasperi, 4 - 22100 Como  
Tel. +39 031 303608 - Fax +39 031 302592 -  
[www.funicolarecomo.it](http://www.funicolarecomo.it) - [info@funicolarecomo.it](mailto:info@funicolarecomo.it)

### **ARGEGNO-PIGRA CABLE CAR**

Via Spluga - 22010 Argegno  
Tel. +39 031 821344



View of Brivio from the River Adda

## **WEBSITES AND APPS**

**OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE LAKE  
COMO TOURIST SYSTEM**  
[www.lakecomo.it](http://www.lakecomo.it)



Comballo on Lake Como

### THE WAYFARER'S PATHS

A website and an app to help you discover all the history, nature and culture of Lake Como, the Valchiavenna and Mesolcina at a snail's pace. The Lake Como area has a rich and varied history linked to trade between the north and south of Europe - communication routes crossed by wayfarers, traders, smuggles, pilgrims and armies that over the centuries have allowed men and goods to circulate freely, despite geographical and political boundaries. Choose the stretch that suits your interests, the places you want to visit and the services you want to book from the comfort of your own home.

[www.leviedelviandante.it](http://www.leviedelviandante.it)

Apps: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lineacontinua.soledivetro.LeVieDelViandante&hl=it>  
<https://itunes.apple.com/it/app/id934655273?mt=8>

### RATIONALISM IN THE PROVINCE OF COMO

The "Rationalism in the Province of Como" App is a 55-minute multimedia itinerary dedicated to 20th century Rationalist architecture on the western shore of Lake Como, Tremezina and Comacina Island, passing via Cernobbio to the city of Como itself.

Available in Italian, English and German it can be downloaded from <http://itunes.apple.com/it/app/razionalismo-in-provincia/id708396280?mt=8> or the Google Play Store address <http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.provincia.razionalismo>.

The podcast is available at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/razionalismo-in-provincia-di-como>

### THE GARDENS OF LAKE COMO WESTERN BRANCH

Free iPhone application.

Photographs, maps, information and curious facts designed to show all the beauty the Como area has to offer. Discover Lake Como by exploring its historical gardens and parks and followings paths and searching for hidden gems and breath-taking panoramic views using your smartphone.

Link: <http://itunes.apple.com/app/gardens-lake-como-west-branch/id502416492?mt=8> and from international App Stores.



Bellagio, Gardens of Villa Melzi



# TOURIST INFORMATION

## A LAKE OF FLAVOURS ITINERARIES

1 A LAKE FULL OF WINE

2 AS BEAUTIFUL AS A FLOWER

3 AS A SMOOTH AS OIL

4 PLENTY MORE FISH

5 AS GOOD AS... BREAD

6 AS SWEET AS HONEY

7 CHEESE!

8 A TASTE OF THE PROVINCE OF LECCO









Villa Balbianello, Tremezzina



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