



MILAN & THE BEST OF THE ITALIAN LAKES

31 MAY - 13 JUNE 2018

AUD 7,990 PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)
AUD 8,980 PER PERSON (SOLO TRAVELLER)





OVERVIEW

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Since 2007, we've been designing itineraries for people, who like us, are fascinated by Italy and believe that an experience, like a good story, is worth sharing in good company. Our small groups and carefully chosen itineraries ensure you will have a delightful and unique Italian journey.

We travel at a relaxed pace so that you can make the most of your time in Italy without racing from one city to another. There is plenty of free time so you can explore that museum that really interested you, indulge in some shopping or just put your feet up and enjoy your holiday.

The tour begins in the vibrant city of Milan, the capital of the Lombardy region and the style capital of the Italian fashion world. In Milan we see some of the major sites; the Duomo, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele and some of the less famous sites like Sant'Ambrogio church and the Poldo Pezzoli museum.

We explore some magical lakes, including the famous Lakes Como and Maggiore and the lesser-known but equally beautiful Lake Iseo and Endine. The group stays in the charming medieval towns of Bergamo and visits a family-run winery in the Franciacorta region.

We'll be staying in just four hotels over the 1415 days to ensure we minimise the time spent packing and moving. Our bases for the tour are Milan (3 nights), Bergamo (3 nights), Verbania (3 nights) and Bellagio (4 nights).

There are 5 lunches and 5 dinners included in the tour in restaurants chosen for their high quality food and wine that is typical of the area we're visiting. And we are always on hand to enjoy a meal together on other occasions.

"We have visited Italy previously, once with a large group and twice independently, but Italian Tours was definitely the most enjoyable. The carefully chosen hotels, cultural visits and local food and wine experiences, combined with a small friendly group, were decidedly a bonus"
Paul (Milan and Lakes 2013)





ITINERARY

DAY 1 - ARRIVE IN MILAN

The tour begins in Milan, where you can check into the hotel during the day to rest up for the excitement ahead or get a head start on the sightseeing and shopping. We meet in the early evening for aperitivi and the chance to watch the Milanese fashionistas doing la passeggiata (the Italian promenade) before we enjoy a welcome dinner at a local trattoria.

Overnight: Milan

DAY 2 - CENTRAL MILAN

We begin our tour in the fashion capital of Italy, but before we start considering Italian designer 'investment' pieces, we'll spend some time acquainting ourselves with the centre of Milan and visiting some of the major attractions. Our morning walking tour will take us to visit the Duomo, the second largest gothic church in the world, with its famous facade covered in sculptures. We will walk through one of the most beautiful shopping arcades in the world, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, and see La Scala, the opera house that is home to some of the most famous operas that have shaped musical history. In the afternoon we visit the Museo Poldo Pezzoli, a fascinating house-museum showcasing one man's extensive collection of art and artefacts.

Overnight: Milan

DAY 3 - MORE OF MILAN

After breakfast we will visit Sant' Ambrogio, one of the oldest churches in Milan, from whose fortress-like structure the bishops of the early Middle Ages wielded their unrivalled power over the city. Our walking tour also includes stops at San Maurizio, home to one of the most complete Renaissance fresco cycles in



Milan.

The afternoon is free time for you to stock up your wardrobe or visit one or two of Milan's art galleries or museums, whose collections are said to rival those of Florence and Rome.

Overnight: Milan

DAY 4 - TOWARDS BERGAMO

Today we leave Milan for Bergamo, but there is something important to see before head to our new base - The Certosa di Pavia. It is one of the most impressive monasteries in the whole of Italy and was built as a mausoleum for the Visconti family.

In the afternoon we head to our new base in Bergamo - where we will check in to our hotel in the medieval part of the town.

Overnight: Bergamo

DAY 5 - BERGAMO

We'll spend our first morning discovering the marvels of this hilltop city. Its gargantuan walls have preserved some stunning medieval and renaissance buildings and art and at the same time spared it from being overwhelmed by tourism. After a guided walking tour in the morning, the afternoon is free for you to relax. The città alta (or high city) where we are staying is the old medieval part of the city. Some people might like to walk or get the funicular down to the città bassa to see the more modern city that flourished in the early 1900s.

Overnight: Bergamo

DAY 6 - LAKE ISEO & WINE TASTING IN FRANCIACORTA

This morning we head out to the Franciacorta region, a little know wine-growing region that produces an excellent wine in the champenoise style. We will visit a family-run cantina, to learn how the wine is made, and of course to taste it!

After lunch we meander along the shores of two of Italy's lesser known yet equally beautiful lakes, Iseo and Endine. We'll follow the stunning lakeside back to Bergamo, stopping for coffee and photo breaks as required.

Overnight: Bergamo

DAY 7 - TOWARDS LAKE MAGGIORE

Today we say farewell to Bergamo, and after a late start, take the road towards Lake Maggiore. We'll stop on the way for

lunch and arrive at our new base in Verbania in time to enjoy "la passeggiata" - an evening stroll - along the lake shore

Overnight: Verbania

DAY 8 - THE BORROMEAN ISLANDS

In the 1600s Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan set out to make two islands on Lake Maggiore a floating cornucopia of style and beauty. They are still owned by the Borromeo family and successive members have all contributed to their development over the centuries right up to the 1950s. Our visit will start with Isola Bella, where we visit the Palace, where even Napoleon was tempted to stay, and the ostentatiously baroque gardens. We visit the Isola dei Pescatori for lunch stopping at Isola Madre on our way back to Verbania

Overnight: Verbania

DAY 9 - LAGO D'ORTA

Just a short drive from Lake Maggiore, Lake Orta is one of the smallest and possibly the most charming of Italian lakes. We will visit the main town on the lake, Orta San Giulio, with its narrow lanes, proud buildings and enchanting promenade that looks out onto the island of San Giulio. We'll also see its Basilica, one of the most important Romanesque (9th century) style buildings in Piemonte. After lunch we'll take a lovely walk with views over the lake to visit the Sacro Monte, the shrine devoted to Saint Francis, before heading back to Lake Maggiore.

DAY 10 - LAKE COMO & BELLAGIO

After a late start, it's goodbye Lago Maggiore as we head for our new base on Lake Como, the lovely lakeside jewel of Bellagio. Our route takes us across the border into Switzerland so you'll have the chance to judge whether the "Swiss" side of the lake is any better! We'll arrive in Bellagio in time for an aperitivo and dinner.

Overnight: Bellagio

DAY 11 - VARENNA AND FREE TIME

After a fairly long day travelling yesterday, we slow the pace down a little today. We catch the ferry across to Varenna just in time for a leisurely stroll around this pretty village and lunch. The afternoon is free time, although for the more active of you there are lots of options: a visit to the Gardens of Villa Melzi in Bellagio, an energetic walk up and over the hill to the hamlet of Pescallo or a ferry ride to the northern parts of the lake. There are lots of options we can help you plan.

Overnight: Bellagio





DAY 12 - COMO & FREE TIME IN BELLAGIO

We have a slightly early start today to get the fast ferry service down to Como, a small and aristocratic mediaeval city, from which the most famous and romantic of the Italian lakes – Lago di Como – takes its name. We'll be following in the footsteps of generations of European visitors as we visit Santa Maria Maggiore, the exceptionally beautiful duomo set in a magnificent mediaeval piazza. We'll explore the city's cobbled streets, stroll along the elegant lakeside promenade. In the afternoon, you are free to stay on in Como for an afternoon of shopping, or head back to Bellagio to simply relax and enjoy one of Italy's prettiest resort towns.

Overnight: Bellagio

DAY 13 - THE VILLAS CARLOTTA & BALBIANELLO

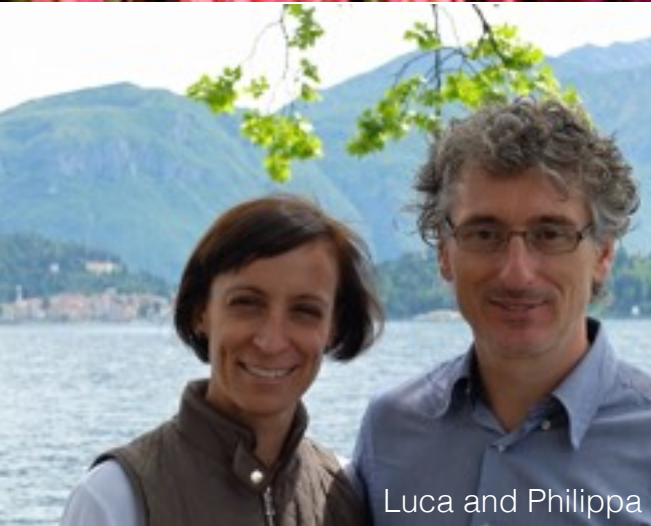
Today we ride the ferry again, heading across the lake to visit a couple of the most charming of the aristocratic ville that sprung up along Como's shores across the centuries. We visit Villa Carlotta, with its spectacular gardens and Villa Balbianello, recently immortalised as the location of Darth Vader's marriage in the more recent Star Wars trilogy, but with a longer and very illustrious heritage. From Menaggio we head back to Bellagio for a well-earned dinner in a local trattoria.

Overnight: Bellagio

DAY 14 - BELLAGIO AND FAREWELLS

Our tour ends after breakfast today. Stay for another relaxing morning in Bellagio, or take the group transfer back to the Milan's Malpensa airport. We are more than happy to help those who wish to stay on in Italy organise the rest of their trip or book a transfer to other destinations.





Luca and Philippa



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ◆ Tour leader on hand for duration of tour from the start of the tour in Milan to the final day
- ◆ Transfer to Milan's Malpensa airport or Milano Centrale station at the completion of the tour
- ◆ Accommodation (on a twin-share or double basis) in 3 or 4 star hotels
- ◆ All breakfasts and 5 lunches and 5 dinners (wine, or something softer if you would prefer, is included with all lunches and dinners)
- ◆ All land travel in Italy in private, air-conditioned mini-coach (we also use the ferry service on Lakes Como and Maggiore)
- ◆ Entry fees to all attractions listed in the itinerary
- ◆ Expert, local guides at many attractions
- ◆ All gratuities and local taxes

WEATHER

Early summer is a lovely visit Italy, with temperatures expected to be in the mid to high 20s during the day but some years the weather can be a little changeable, so you should be prepared for some cooler weather and the possibility of some rain. We always recommend packing a light jacket or raincoat.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

We don't place any age limitations on the tour and welcome anyone with a moderate level of physical fitness. Specifically, you should be comfortable on your feet for up to 3 hours with short breaks and confident on the cobblestones and uneven surfaces. We will always do our best to accommodate everyone, including offering alternative arrangements where possible for people who for some reason cannot take part in an activity.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

We try to keep our single supplement as low as possible. For this tour the supplement is \$990.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is compulsory when travelling on one of our tours. Please contact us if you need help arranging travel insurance.

BOOKING

If you would like to book a place on this or any other tour, or if you have some questions about the itinerary, please don't hesitate to contact Luca or Philippa at Italian Tours.

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