



THE ITALIAN LAKES AND LOMBARDY

6 - 19 JUNE 2024





OVERVIEW

AUD 9,390 (P.P. TWIN
OR DOUBLE SHARE)

AUD 10,490 (P.P. SOLO
TRAVELLER)

Since 2007, we've been designing itineraries for people who are fascinated by Italy and want to travel at a relaxed pace to make the most of their time in Italy. Our small groups and carefully chosen itineraries ensure you will have a delightful and authentic Italian holiday.

This 14-day tour explores the magical Italian Lakes, with stays on both Lake Como and Maggiore. We visit some of Italy's lesser-known lakes, including Lake Orta and Lake Iseo. And we venture out from the lakes to explore the Lombardy region.

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 less famous sites like the splendid Renaissance frescoes in San Maurizio and the Poldo Pezzoli Museum.

We also stay in the charming hilltop town of Bergamo, where you can lose yourself in the twisting medieval streets.

With private boat trips, guided tours in many locations, exclusive visits to wineries and producers where you'll be treated like family, meals in carefully selected, authentic restaurants and long stays in each location, this is the best way to see this wonderful area of Italy.

We stay in just four bases on this tour with three nights in Milan, three nights in Bergamo, three nights in Verbania on Lake Maggiore and four nights in Bellagio, on Lake Como.

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ITINERARY

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN MILAN

The tour begins in Milan, where we provide a private transfer from Malpensa or Linate airport to our hotel. You can check into the hotel during the day to rest up for the excitement ahead or get a head start on 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 (D)

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 (B)



DAY 3 - MORE MILAN

This morning, we will explore some of Milan's lesser-known attractions, including the stunning Renaissance frescoes in San Maurizio, the Castello Sforzesco and the Brera district.

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 rival those of Florence and Rome.

Overnight: Milan (B)

DAY 4 - TOWARDS BERGAMO

We say goodbye to Milan this morning and head northeast towards the charming medieval town of Bergamo, our base for the next three nights.

We stop at the Certosa di Pavia, one of the most impressive monasteries in Italy, built as a mausoleum for the Visconti family.

We drive on to Bergamo in the later afternoon, checking into our hotel, right in the medieval centre.

Overnight: Bergamo (D)

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 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 stay 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 (B, D)

DAY 6 - LAKE ISEO AND WINE TASTING IN THE FRANCIACORTA

This morning, we head out to the Franciacorta region, a little-known wine-growing region that produces excellent wine in the Champenoise style. We will visit an award-winning, family-run cantina to learn how they make Franciacorta before sitting down to a meal in the agriturismo, accompanied by a selection of their wines.

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 (B,L)

DAY 7 - MONZA AND ON TO LAKE MAGGIORE

Today, we say farewell to Bergamo and take the road towards Lake Maggiore.

It's not much of a detour to Monza, where a local guide will show us around the centre, visiting the Duomo and the Chapel of Theodelinda, home to the "Iron Crown of Lombardy," created in the early Middle Ages. The Iron Crown is purportedly the oldest Royal insignia in Christendom and was used to crown the Holy Roman Emperor for centuries.

After lunch, we will drive on to our new base in Verbania in time to enjoy "*la passeggiata*" - an evening stroll - along the lakeshore.

Overnight: Verbania (B,L)

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. The Borromeo family still owns the islands, and successive members have all contributed to their development over the centuries up to the 1950s.





We'll take a private boat to visit the ostentatiously baroque palace and gardens on Isola Bella. The Palace is so grand that even Napoleon was tempted to stay!

We visit the Isola dei Pescatori for lunch.

You'll arrive back in Verbania in the middle of the afternoon and have some free time to look around the town.

Overnight: Verbania (B,L)

DAY 9 - LAGO D'ORTA

Just a short drive from Lake Maggiore, Lago d'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 Piemonte's most important Romanesque (9th century) style buildings.

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.

Overnight: Verbania (B,L)

DAY 10 - NORTHERN LAKE MAGGIORE AND TO LAKE COMO

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 stop for coffee in Lugano in Switzerland before returning to Italy for a lakeside lunch. We'll drive towards Lake Como, taking the ferry to arrive at our new base in Bellagio.

Overnight: Bellagio (B, L)

DAY 11 - VILLA CARLOTTA AND FREE TIME

After a reasonably long day travelling yesterday, we have a more leisurely itinerary planned for today. In the morning, we catch the ferry to Villa Carlotta, the magnificent villa that looks back across the lake to Bellagio. The villa is now a museum, housing works by Canova, Tadolini and





Hayez, amongst others. The enormous botanical gardens of Villa Carlotta are very varied, with formal Italian gardens, a rhododendron forest, azaleas and various exotic plants.

The afternoon is free time for you to explore Bellagio further, take a walk to the pretty hamlet of Pescallo or visit the gardens of Villa Melzi. There are lots of options we can help you plan.

Overnight: Bellagio (B)

DAY 12 - THE VALTELLINA

You'll leave the shores of Lake Como behind this morning to visit the Valtellina, famous for its pretty mountain scenery, cheese and wine production. You'll have the chance to learn more about, and try, the latter when you visit a historic winery for a guided tour and degustation.

You'll stop for lunch at a local trattoria before returning to Bellagio in the afternoon.

Overnight: Bellagio (B,L)

DAY 13 - LAKE CRUISE AND VILLA BALBIANELLO

You begin the day in style with a private boat tour of the central lake, seeing many of the towns and villas from the best vantage point: the water.

We'll stop to visit Villa Balbianello. The magnificent gardens and the property's position on the promontory make this the most spectacular spot on the entire lake.

Our boat will drop us to the town of Varenna, where you can spend the afternoon exploring the windy streets and quaint shops.

Our final group dinner in Bellagio.

Overnight: Bellagio (B,D)

DAY 14 - FAREWELLS

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

Overnight: NA (B)



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

STAY

- ❖ Three nights in Milan in a centrally located hotel just a few steps from the Piazza del Duomo
- ❖ Three nights in Bergamo, in a design hotel in the old city
- ❖ Three nights in Verbania, in a lake-front hotel (lake view rooms)
- ❖ Four nights in Bellagio at a family-run hotel with lake-view rooms

INCLUSIONS

- ❖ Private transfer from Milan airports at the start of the tour
- ❖ Group transfer to Milan Malpensa or Milano Centrale station at the end of the tour
- ❖ Tour leader on hand for the duration of tour from the start of the tour in Milan to departure from Bellagio
- ❖ Accommodation (on a twin-share or double basis) in 3 or 4-star hotels, carefully chosen for their location, charm and service
- ❖ Breakfast daily and five lunches and five dinners (wine, or something softer if you would prefer, included with all lunches and dinners)
- ❖ All land travel in Italy in private, air-conditioned mini-coach (we also utilise the ferry service on Lakes Como and Maggiore)
- ❖ Entry fees to all attractions listed in the itinerary
- ❖ Expert, local guides at key attractions

WEATHER

Early summer is a lovely time to visit the Italian Lakes with some warmer days but still pleasant weather for travelling. Most days should be in the mid to high 20s, with low rainfall.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

We don't place any age limits on clients and welcome anyone with good 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.

BOOKING

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

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