

Ultimate Guide: Top Things to Do in Lake Como, Italy

Embraced by verdant hills and a crystalline lake, **Lake Como** offers an escape that combines natural splendor with refined luxury. Known for its breathtaking beauty and romantic landscapes, this cherished Italian retreat invites you on a journey through picturesque towns and opulent villas. As Italy's third-largest lake, Lake Como's serenity is shaped by its unmistakable inverted-Y silhouette, a geological masterpiece carved by glacial activity and the Adda river's perpetual flow.

Your adventure in Lake Como, from land to water, invites you to experience a spectrum of activities. Marvel at the architectural magnificence of Como Cathedral, indulge in the enchanting vistas from the Funicular Railway, or unwind on boat tours showcasing the lake's tranquil charm. As you embark on unveiling the top things to do in Lake Como, **Italy**, relish in the allure of destinations like Bellagio and Villa Carlotta, where each moment becomes a cherished memory.

Exploring Como's Historic Charm

As you meander through the cobbled streets of Como's Centro Storico, your senses are awakened by the rich tapestry of history that envelops this enchanting city. Here, the past and present merge seamlessly, offering a plethora of historic sites that beckon exploration:

Como Cathedral (Duomo): Stand in awe before the Gothic splendor of Como Cathedral, where the sculptures adorning its facade whisper stories from the past. Construction of this symmetrical masterpiece spanned nearly four centuries, beginning in 1396 and culminating in 1770, a testament to the enduring artistry of the ages.

Villa Olmo: Wander through the lush gardens of Villa Olmo, where the beauty of nature meets the grandeur of history. The villa, with its classical lines, offers a stunning vista of Lake Como, inviting you to pause and reflect on the tranquil waters that have inspired poets and painters alike.

Historical Churches:

Basilica di Sant'Abbondio: Step back in time within the hallowed walls of the Basilica di Sant'Abbondio. This Lombard Romanesque church, dating back to 1120, boasts an impressive apse and floor plaques that mark the final resting places of souls from bygone eras.

Basilica di San Fedele: In the heart of Como, the Basilica di San Fedele stands as a beacon of Lombard Romanesque architecture. Once a bustling corn market, the church now serves as a serene sanctuary dedicated to the martyr Saint Fidelis.

Cultural Landmarks:

Broletto: Adjacent to the towering Duomo, the medieval Broletto exudes a sense of historical gravitas. This former town hall's architecture is a silent witness to the governance and social life of Como's illustrious past.

Teatro Sociale: Experience the opulence of Italian theater at Teatro Sociale. As the curtain rises, the beautiful interior comes alive with operas and shows that continue the rich tradition of Italian performing arts.



Monuments and Museums:

Tempio Voltiano: Honor the legacy of Como's favorite son, Alessandro Volta, at the Tempio Voltiano. This exquisite building, nestled by the lake, commemorates the inventor whose genius illuminates the world to this day.

Monument of Alessandro Volta: Pay homage to the great inventor at the Monument of Alessandro Volta, a tribute to one of Como's most illustrious historical figures.

Panoramic Views:

Castello Baradello: Ascend to the historic Castello Baradello, perched on a hill overlooking Como. The panoramic views from atop will leave you breathless, as the tapestry of the city and lake unfolds beneath you.

Faro Voltiano: Climb to the Faro Voltiano, a lighthouse dedicated to Alessandro Volta. Inside, a small museum sheds light on the life and works of the man who sparked a revolution in science.

Nature and Adventure:

Spina Verde Park: Embrace the call of the wild at Spina Verde Park. Here, the ruins of a protohistoric settlement from the Golasecca culture beckon adventurers and history buffs alike to uncover the secrets of the past.

Sacro Monte di Ossuccio: Journey to the Sacro Monte di Ossuccio, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The 14 baroque chapels, adorned with colorful frescoes and statues, offer not just a spiritual pilgrimage but also stunning views of the lake and mountains.

As night falls, Piazza Cavour becomes a lively hub of activity. Take a moment to indulge in the simple pleasure of a coffee or aperitif at one of the nearby restaurants, as you soak in the serene lake views and the vibrant atmosphere of Como after dusk.

In Como, every step is a discovery, every corner a revelation. The city's rich history is not just etched in stone but also alive in the experiences it offers. From water sports to hiking and mountain biking, the opportunities to immerse yourself in Como's culture and history are as vast as the lake itself.

Related [The Best Places to Visit on Lake Como](#)

Villa Adventures around Lake Como

As your journey through Lake Como continues, the allure of its villas beckons with promises of beauty, history, and cinematic fame. Here are some of the villa adventures that await:

Villa Balbianello in Lenno: This breathtaking villa, gracing the screens in films like Star Wars and James Bond, stands as a testament to Lake Como's fusion of natural beauty and architectural elegance. To visit, you may choose between a scenic walk or a charming boat ride, each offering a unique approach to this iconic destination.

Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo: The grandeur of Villa Carlotta is matched only by its stunning botanic garden, a lush oasis that invites you to wander and wonder. Open from mid-March to the end of November, the villa and garden welcome visitors to explore at the cost of €24 for adults and €15 for kids, with garden-only tickets at a reduced rate.

Villa Melzi in Bellagio: The gardens of Villa Melzi unfold in Bellagio, providing a tranquil retreat open from the end of March to the end of October. With an entrance fee of €8 and free admission for children under 12, it's a serene escape that enriches both the mind and spirit.

To enhance your villa experience, consider these curated activities:

Private and Group Boat Tours: Embark on a journey across the lake with a variety of boat tours. Opt for a luxury Riva boat tour, a group excursion, or a private Vaporina tour, each offering a unique vantage point of Lake Como's splendor.

Guided Villa Tours: Delve into the history and beauty of Lake Como's villas with guided tours. These experiences often include visits to multiple villas, such as a 4-hour tour to Villa Balbianello or a 5-hour boat tour with visits to three villas, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the region's heritage.

Culinary Adventures: Engage your senses with food tours and cooking classes that celebrate the region's gastronomic delights. A tour to Bellagio & Villa Melzi from Como with lunch included is just one of the many options that combine the pleasures of sightseeing with the joys of tasting local cuisine.

For those seeking to extend their villa adventure, a variety of accommodations are available:

Hotels and Resorts: From luxury hotels to cozy resorts, find the perfect stay in locations like Bellagio, Como city, and Varenna. Each offers a unique perspective on the lake's beauty and a restful haven after a day of exploration.

Homes & Villas for Rent: Embrace the local lifestyle by renting a home or villa. Many of these properties are nestled in nature, offering privacy and direct access to the gardens and landscapes that make Lake Como a paradise for families and travelers alike.

Keep in mind, while some villas like Villa Balbianello and Villa Carlotta are open to the public, others such as private estates in Cernobbio are accessible only to paying guests or during special events. Always check the opening times and ticket prices before planning your visit, as they can vary throughout the season and ensure that your Lake Como villa adventure is as seamless as it is unforgettable, our vacation planners will be happy to assist you with arranging all your visits during your stay in Lake Como.



Charming Towns Worth Visiting

As you continue your exploration of Lake Como, you'll find that each town has its own unique charm and array of experiences to offer. Here are some enchanting towns that are a must-visit:

Bellagio, the 'Pearl of the Lake':

Revered for its historic center and cobblestone streets, Bellagio captivates with its elegant villas and vibrant flower gardens.

Poised at the junction of Lake Como's three branches, Bellagio offers panoramic views and an array of water activities to immerse yourself in.

Don't miss the Bellagio Festival del Lago, where music, fireworks, and performances light up the town with cultural splendor.

Varenna, a Picturesque Gem:

Often hailed as Lake Como's most charming town, Varenna's stunning landscape and quaint old town are simply breathtaking.

Accessibility is a breeze, with convenient connections by train, car, or boat.

For a truly unique experience, visit Castello di Vezio, a 12th-century castle offering majestic views and a fascinating falconry center.

Wine lovers will delight in Enoteca Principessa, Angolo DiVino, and In Vinis Veritas, where an excellent selection of local and regional wines awaits.

Savor the local flavors at Amy's Cucina, where the emphasis on local and seasonal ingredients promises a memorable dining experience.

Menaggio, a Lakeside Haven:

This resort town is known for its lively lakeside promenade and historic center, perfect for an evening stroll.

Embrace the lake life with a variety of water sports available to add some adrenaline to your serene getaway. Additionally, Isola Comacina, Lake Como's largest island, is a historical treasure trove. With ancient church ruins dotting its landscape, the island offers a tranquil setting for reflection and stunning vistas of the lake and mountains.

In Lake Como, accommodations cater to every taste and preference, from the intimacy of bed & breakfasts in serene villages to the opulence of five-star hotels perched with awe-inspiring views of the lake and mountains. Whether you seek the comfort of a luxury suite or the charm of a lakeside villa, Lake Como's towns offer an idyllic backdrop for your Italian escapade.

Lake Como from the Water

Exploring Lake Como from its shimmering waters offers a perspective of unparalleled beauty, inviting you to partake in a variety of aquatic experiences that promise both serenity and adventure. Here's how you can immerse yourself in the lake's splendor:

Boat Tours:

Public vs. Private: Choose from the convenience of public ferry services provided by Navigazione Laghi, available all year round, or indulge in the luxury of a private boat tour, customizable to your desires.

Tour Options: Select from a range of tours, such as a 2-hour private wooden boat tour with Venetian Limousine, a 3-hour group boat tour with snacks, or a 4-hour excursion visiting three iconic villas, with prices varying from €130 to €1500.

Booking: For public tours, purchase tickets online for regular service trips, while private tours can often be arranged with the operator directly. Remember, travelers with disabilities can always buy tickets on board without extra charge

Water Activities:

Diverse Choices: Lake Como caters to water enthusiasts with activities like swimming, kayaking, paddleboarding, and windsurfing, offering equipment rentals at various points around the lake.

Rental Costs: Prices start from around €20 for a two-hour kayak rental, ensuring an affordable entry into the world of water sports. For those seeking a challenge, a two-hour windsurfing group lesson can be around €80.

Unique Experiences: For an unforgettable underwater adventure, scuba diving in Lake Como reveals sights such as wrecked gondolas and wartime bombs, while the Water Experience Center in Faggeto Lario offers exhilarating activities like jetskiing and wakeboarding.

Boat Rental Services:

Self-Guided Exploration: Rent a boat from services like Bellagio Rent a Boat, and navigate the lake's waters at your own pace, with a variety of boats available to suit your preference.

Pricing Overview: Whether you choose a simple rowboat or a luxury water limousine, rental prices can range from €110 to €770 per group, providing options for different budgets.

Traveler Reviews: Many who have taken to the waters of Lake Como praise the beauty of the lake, the professionalism of the guides, and the overall enriching experience. As you set sail on Lake Como, each ripple in the water tells a story, each wave a melody of Italy's heart-stirring beauty. Let the lake's gentle currents guide you through a mosaic of experiences, from tranquil paddles in a kayak to the grandeur of a sunset cruise, crafting memories that echo with the essence of La Dolce Vita

Hidden Gems: Museums and Lesser-Known Spots

Venture beyond the well-trodden paths and you'll uncover Lake Como's hidden treasures, each with its own story to tell. Here's a curated list of lesser-known spots and museums that promise to enrich your Lake Como experience:

Historical Hideaways:

Forte Montecchio Nord: In Colico, explore the military past at Forte Montecchio Nord, a fortress with a museum that stands as a silent sentinel of history.

Castello di Corenno Plinio: Step into the medieval era at Castello di Corenno Plinio in Dongio, where a well-preserved castle houses a museum that whispers tales of yesteryears.

Museo della fine della Guerra: Delve into the narratives of World War II at Museo della fine della Guerra in Musso, a war museum dedicated to the region's military history.

Natural Wonders:

Orrido di Bellano: Be awed by the power of nature at Orrido di Bellano, a gorge with a waterfall that carves through the landscape, accessible for a nominal fee of around 2 Euros.

Orrido di Nesso: Discover the photogenic Orrido di Nesso, where water cascades down a ravine, overlooked by the arched stone bridge known as the Ponte della Civera.

Spiaggia di Onno: Take a refreshing dip in the crystal-clear waters of the lesser-known Spiaggia di Onno, a tranquil beach away from the bustling crowds.

Cultural Corners:

Abbazia di Piona: In Colico, find solace at the tranquil Abbazia di Piona, a monastery with a church and guesthouse that offers a spiritual retreat.

Museum Moto Guzzi: Rev up your cultural engine at Museum Moto Guzzi in Mandello del Lario, showcasing the evolution of the iconic Italian motorcycle brand.

Paul DEMARIA – The Open Lake & Landscape Studio d'Arte: Immerse yourself in the artistry of landscape paintings at this unique studio in Colico, where creativity meets the serene backdrop of Lake Como.

Serenity Spots:

Santuario Della Madonna delle Grazie di San Martino: Seek out the Santuario Della Madonna delle Grazie di San Martino in Griante, where stunning views of Lake Como accompany a moment of peace.

Il Giardino della Valle: Stroll through the botanical beauty of Il Giardino della Valle in Cernobbio, a hidden gem that offers a peaceful escape amidst a variety of flora.

Chiesa di S. Lorenzo: In Menaggio, the Chiesa di S. Lorenzo offers not only a quiet place for contemplation but also breathtaking vistas of the lake.

Local Life:

Micromercato Moltrasio: Experience the local vibe at Micromercato Moltrasio, where you can sample fresh produce and engage with the warm-hearted locals.

The Greenway del Lago di Como: Traverse the 10-kilometer Greenway del Lago di Como, connecting charming villages and passing through stunning gardens and historic sites.

Elevated Experiences:

Monte Generoso: For a panoramic feast, take the cog railway to Monte Generoso's summit, where you can dine with a view of Lake Como and the Swiss Alps and explore nature trails.

Castello di Lierna: Overlooking Lake Como from Castello di Lierna in Lierna, a little-known castle that provides a window into the region's historic past. These sites, each with their own unique charm, invite you to Deep in the canvas of Lake Como, where each hidden around the corner promises discovery And each experience is one step closer to the heart of this Italian paradise.

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Experiencing Nature and Outdoor Adventures

To fully immerse yourself in the splendor of Lake Como's natural landscape, set aside at least four to five days. This allows ample time to soak in the panoramic views and engage in the outdoor activities that make this region a haven for nature lovers. Here's how you can dive into the adventure:

Hiking Trails:

Sentiero del Viandante: Traverse this 45 km trail along the eastern shore, where each step rewards you with breathtaking vistas and intimate encounters with the area's flora and fauna.

Monte Grona: Challenge yourself with a hike to the summit of Monte Grona for a panoramic spectacle of the lake and its dramatic backdrop.

Villa Carlotta Trail: A moderate 3-hour hike that takes you up 250 meters in elevation, offering a different perspective of the lake's grandeur.

Cycling Routes:

Green Way dei Patriarchi: Cycle or stroll along this 12 km path from Colico to Gera Lario, where the beauty of Lake Como unfolds at a leisurely pace.

Bellagio-Menaggio Bike Path: Pedal this popular route, which promises scenic views and a fresh breeze off the lake, suitable for all experience levels.

Bike Rentals: Conveniently available in most lakeside towns, with daily rates to suit your budget, ranging from €15 to €30.

Water Sports:

Kitesurfing: Take to the waves with lessons from Sports Paradise in Dervio, where the breva wind creates ideal conditions for both beginners and seasoned enthusiasts, particularly in the summer months.

Aerial Adventures:

Funivia Argegno-Pigra: Soar above the landscape in a cable car and witness the awe-inspiring views of Lake Como and its mountainous embrace, with tickets starting at \$11.

Fly Emotion: Experience the thrill of ziplining with the Aerofune and Railzip routes, offering a bird's-eye view of the lush surroundings.

Nature Parks and Trails:

Parco Regionale della Spina Verde: Explore a myriad of trails in this regional park, where the serenity of nature melds with historical pathways and a fascinating wetland area.

Montepiatto Adventure: Embark on a hike to discover an unusual rock formation and the 16th-century church of Santa Elisabetta, with its commanding views over the lake and mountains. Remember, as you set out on these adventures, to respect the natural environment and the cultural heritage of Lake Como, preserving its beauty for future generations to cherish.



Gastronomy and Dining in Lake Como

As your senses are already entwined with the picturesque landscapes of Lake Como, it's time to indulge in the gastronomic delights that this region has to offer. The culinary journey here is as diverse as the vistas, with each restaurant presenting a unique blend of traditional flavors and innovative twists.

Contemporary Flavors at Feel:

Indulge in modern dishes that pay homage to local ingredients at Feel, where you can savor the likes of risotto with rosehip berries, rabbit with juniper, and eel with a tangy lemon sauce [18].

The seasonal Forest Greens salad is a testament to the restaurant's commitment to fresh, locally-sourced produce.

Global Meets Local at Materia:

Materia takes you on a global culinary adventure with a local twist. Delight in their linguine with butter, enriched with lake shad garum and amchoor for an unexpected flavor fusion.

For the more adventurous palate, try the sea urchin with calf brain mousse and caper powder, or the intriguing bone marrow gelato with saffron foam.

Alpine Cuisine at Crotto Isidoro:

Nestled above Dongo on Lake Como's upper western shore, Crotto Isidoro specializes in hearty Alpine hinterland cuisine. Here, polenta is served with an array of meats, alongside local staples like grilled meat, salami, cheese, and the traditional miascia, a bread and fruit cake.

Lombard Fare at Trattoria San Biagio:

In Orsenigo, Trattoria San Biagio is your destination for authentic Lombard fare. Start with cichéti such as taleggio cheese and anchovies, followed by satisfying piatti like polentina and Milanese-style tripe.

Fresh Catches at Il Beccaccino:

Il Beccaccino, located in the Pian di Spagna protected reserve in Sorico, offers a menu that features fish varieties straight from the chef's daily catch, ensuring the freshest seafood experience.

Communal Dining at Polentoteca Chalet Gabriele:

Embrace the local dining culture at Polentoteca Chalet Gabriele in Piano Rancio, Bellagio. Participate in the communal eating ritual of toc, sharing polenta with missoltini lake shads, homegrown hens, and salami.

Traditional Tastes at Crotto Valdurino:

Crotto Valdurino in Vergonzano, Moltrasio, serves up traditional cuisine with dishes like risotto adorned with perch, whitefish butter and sage, and the local delicacy of missoltini.

Specialized Dishes at Trattoria del Porto:

Head to Careno's Trattoria del Porto for their specialty perch risotto, various fish pâtés, and the sweet miascia fruit and bread pie, a regional favorite.

Innovative Creations at Il Gatto Nero:

Il Gatto Nero in Cernobbio tantalizes with inventive dishes such as maltagliati short pasta with a rich rabbit ragout sauce and perfectly roasted octopus.



Culinary Art at I Tigli in Theoria:

For a sophisticated dining experience, I Tigli in Theoria in Como presents exquisite creations like wood-free range Hen Egg accompanied by asparagus, tamarind, and coconut milk.

Modern Twists at Crotto del Misto:

Crotto del Misto in Frazione Crotto, Lezzeno, offers a contemporary take on traditional cuisine, with dishes like handmade fettuccine pasta complemented by a delicate fish ragout.

Lombard Fusion at Il Sereno al Lago:

Il Sereno al Lago in Torno features an array of Lombard recipes, vegan options, and modern dishes such as spaghetti elevated with cashew butter.

Homestyle Cooking at La Fattoria:

La Fattoria in Gravedona ed Uniti delivers a family-run dining experience with simple, handmade local recipes like sciatt, pizzoccheri pasta, and gnocchetti chiavennaschi.

Specialty Seafood at Imperialino:

Imperialino in Moltrasio specializes in dishes like tagliatelle with cured salmon trout and poached sturgeon bathed in a prosecco sauce, showcasing the region's rich seafood tradition.

Seasonal Delights at La Costa:

La Costa in La Valletta Brianza offers a bucolic atmosphere with a seasonal menu that includes enticing dishes like risotto with nettle and succulent roasted goat.

Lake Fish at Crotto dei Pescatori:

At Crotto dei Pescatori in Lezzeno, savor fresh lake fish dishes and an assortment of fish risottos, each dish a reflection of the lake's bountiful resources. Each of these culinary destinations weaves the rich tapestry of Lake Como's dining scene, offering you a chance to taste the essence of the region through every bite. Whether you're seeking a traditional meal or an avant-garde dish, you'll find that the gastronomy of Lake Como is as captivating as its landscapes.

Our journey across the serene landscapes and historic grandeur of Lake Como comes to an end, leaving us with a tapestry of splendid memories and a longing to return. From the Gothic beauty of Como Cathedral to the botanical brilliance of Villa Carlotta, we've explored the very best this Italian paradise has to offer. The wondrous experiences across the charming towns, majestic villas, and the lake's aquatic playground showcase the region's ability to blend natural splendor with cultural richness seamlessly.

As life and history ripple the placid waters of Lake Como, the invitation to return is constant, promising new adventures and undiscovered gems. Should you wish to delve deeper into the allure of this idyllic destination, consider planning your next visit and immerse yourself in the wonderment that awaits in every corner of Lake Como's enchanting realm [contact us](#) today to start planning your vacation in Lake Como.

FAQs

What is the recommended amount of time to visit Lake Como?

Lake Como is a versatile destination that can be enjoyed in a single day or over an extended stay of a week. However, it is advisable to allocate at least three days to properly experience the charm and beauty of Italy's most esteemed lake.

Where can I find the most picturesque location in Lake Como?

The village of Bellagio, often referred to as the Pearl of Lake Como, is renowned for its stunning beauty. Situated on a cape where the three branches of the lake converge, Bellagio boasts beautifully colored houses, quaint streets, and charming squares that make it a visual delight.

Which area offers the best views of Lake Como?

Varenna, positioned on the eastern shore of Lake Como, provides spectacular vistas of the lake and the town itself. The vibrant houses along the waterfront, the

historic Vezio castle, and the verdant Villa Monastero gardens all contribute to the breathtaking scenery.

Where do celebrities typically stay when they visit Lake Como?

Celebrities who visit Lake Como may not always own a residence there, but they have access to some of the world's most luxurious hotels. Notable accommodations include the enchanting Grand Hotel Tremezzo with its unique floating pool, and Villa d'Este, a lavish Neoclassical villa known for hosting an array of distinguished guests or in one of Haute Retreats [Luxury Villa Rentals in Lake Como](#).