

Classic Lake Como

Hotel-to-hotel   independent walking

- Historic Pescallo, postcard-pretty Varenna and chic Bellagio, "Pearl of Como"
- Ancient castles, medieval piazze, sun-soaked villas
- Crystal blue Como, cascading waterfalls, snow-capped mountains rolling down to the lake
- Challenging high level walking: smugglers' paths, pilgrims' trails, stepped terraces of olives, cherries and almonds
- Optional extra nights in Milan, home of high fashion, fine dining, culture and La Scala Opera



Picture perfect Lake Como – one of the deepest in Europe - is set in the foothills of the Italian Alps. Its glitzy Hollywood reputation precedes it, but few people realize the striking contrasts a visit here can offer. Beyond exquisite villas, terracotta villages and landscaped gardens gracing the shore, walkers can find secret castles, remote C12 abbeys and breathtaking viewpoints linked by centuries old pilgrim trails and smugglers' paths. Stone built mountain villages are set high in wild terraced valleys, with stunning views of sky-scraping Swiss Alpine peaks like La Grigne (2400m), usually snow-capped well into Spring. The walking is challenging and intensely rewarding, with some extraordinary panoramas and grandeur that only vistas of high mountain ranges can deliver.

This holiday captures both the glamour and natural beauty of Lake Como perfectly. Beginning in Torno, where your lake-view balcony room of our superbly positioned family hotel will be home for the first three nights, you then spend two nights in Bellagio in the heart of the lake, before sailing on to Varenna on the eastern shore for two nights. From each place it is easy to use the frequent ferries (pay locally) and transfers (included) to access walks showcasing the wild side of Lake Como.

Picnics on all walking days are included, as are all meals apart from two dinners in Bellagio, whose alleyways buzz with al fresco dining options and tempting trattorie.



CLASSIC LAKE COMO | DAY BY DAY

Day 1 Arrive in Torno

We meet you at Milan airport and transfer you to the Caminada family hotel in Torno (80 mins) for a welcome drink. Time to explore the C15 church before dinner in the panoramic lake view restaurant.

Day 2 In Torno: Monte Piatto Walk 10km/6mi/5hr

A steady ascent through Torno's twisting alleys leads to a mule track offering increasingly lovely lake views as you follow it up past peach terraces, waterfalls and stone-carved tombs. A stepped trail up a shaded mossy valley finds you in Monte Piatto village, perched 450m above the water, with a breathtaking picnic spot by the church. Drink in the view before a steep descent under wild cherry trees leads down to Torno, then relax on your balcony at sunset, as faraway lights begin to twinkle around the lake.

Day 3 In Torno: Como and Strada Regia Walk 8km/5mi/3.5hr

The ferry from Torno takes just 20 minutes to historic Como. Explore the old city and cathedral before a near vertical funicular ride up to Brunate 700m above the town – you can see all the way to Milan! An ancient royal trail, the 'Strada Regia' leads north, traversing hillsides of oak forest and tumbling streams. Flower-decked stone cottages bask in sunny clearings of olives and almonds, and you skirt giant granite boulder erratics left by retreating glaciers before descending to Torno again.

Day 4 Torno to Bellagio 9km/5.5mi/5hr

After a transfer (1hr) up to 1000m on Monte San Primo, a path leads up the mountain to a 1400m high saddle and a phenomenal 270 degree vista, as La Grigne (2400m) soars above you. Descend via shady gullies dotted with orchids to Ghisallo village 750m below. The walk ends here at a local bar that clings to a sheer cliff-top by a great suntrap terrace. We transfer you (15 mins) to your waterfront hotel in Bellagio where you can select one of the local trattoria for dinner tonight.

Day 5 In Bellagio: Bellagio Circular Walk 10km/6mi/5hr

A little used trail from Bellagio's picturesque promenade leads up a series of stepped trails to the high hill villages of Brogno and Chevrio, where Alpine chalet-style farms with great views into Switzerland sell homemade cheese and honey to passersby. After descending, loop through market gardens via Pescallo's enticing waterfront restaurants – ideal for a post walk drink - then follow the maze of twisting alleys back into Bellagio.

Day 6 Bellagio to Varenna 7km/4mi/3hr

After catching the ferry (10 mins) to Varenna and Laura Colombo's exquisite art deco hotel, join a pilgrimage route that zig-zags steeply up to Varenna Castle – an excellent lookout point. The path dips and rises through terraces of olives along the eastern shore to meet the lake in central Bellano, once famous for silk. Explore the 'orrido' – a savage gorge that cleaves the town in two, then take the train one stop back to Varenna. Enjoy the atmosphere in the lively central square before dinner.

Day 7 In Varenna 10km/6mi/4.5hr

Take the ferry (40 minutes) to Lenno today - a historic pilgrim path hairpins uphill above the town, passing 15 chapels full of carved effigies of Christ to reach the UNESCO Santuario Soccorso. From here, a C12 mountain path leads up to the remote Abbey of San Benedetto, perched high above in the Perlana valley. Few people come here, and it is a tranquil picnic spot amid the pines. A steady downhill past isolated farms loops back into Lenno from where you sail to Varenna for dinner.

Day 8 Depart



Dates and Prices

Departs selected Sundays	Tour Only
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2012 departures

May 6, 13, 20, Sept 30	\$2,866
Oct 7, 14	\$2,866
May 27, Jun 10, Sep 16, 23	\$2,899
Jun 3, 17, 24, Sep 2, 9	\$2,923
Jul 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	\$2,992
Aug 5, 12, 19, 26	\$2,992

Singles: Add \$60 per night (2 nights will be in a single room, 5 nights will be sole occupancy of a double room).

Child: This holiday is unsuitable for children under 12.

Holiday type: Independent walking, hotel-to-hotel, no minimum group size, however luggage and airport/station transfers are subject to at least 2 people (in total) booked on each departure.

Departs: Selected Sundays from May 6 to Oct 14.

Duration: 8 days (7 nights).

Meals: Buffet breakfast, 6 picnic lunches and 5 evening meals.

Other details: All road and rail transfers up to day 7 for this itinerary are included, along with a funicular train ticket for day 3. All ferries must be paid for locally (allow approx 25 euro/\$35 per person for the week). On day 6 you take your luggage 40m from the Bellagio hotel onto the ferry and from Varenna dock to your hotel (20m).

For "What your holiday price includes," see "Holiday Planning" section pp 48-51.

Tailor-made travel choices

Nearest Arrival Airport: Milan Malpensa Airport. Flights can be arranged from most US/CANADA airports, with connecting transfers as required, prices and details on request.

The above prices include our standard transfers: Milan Malpensa pick up at 10:45, (transfer to hotel, 80 mins, provided). **Return:** Rail from Varenna to Milan Malpensa 07:37/08:38.

Second Class Italian Rail: \$36 per person, one way from Varenna to Milan.

First Class Italian Rail: \$69 per person, one way.

Tour only: Transfers included from Milan Malpensa airport at 10:45, and back to Varenna train station at 07:25.

CLASSIC LAKE COMO | WALKING DETAILS



Hotel Glavic

★★★★

Torno

Days 1+2+3



Hotel Excelsior Splendide

★★★★

Bellagio

Days 4+5



Albergo Olivado

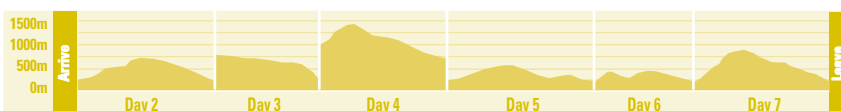
★★★★

Varenna

Days 6+7

City add-ons can be arranged in Milan.

CLASSIC LAKE COMO | WALKING DETAILS



Walks are on mountain paths and lakeside tracks. All walks involve steep ascents and/or descents, and traverse steep hillsides. Walkers should be confident and relatively fit. Vertigo sufferers should not book this holiday. Walking boots are essential, walking poles recommended.



Average daytime temperature (°C):

24 MAY 27 JUN 28 JUL 27 AUG 25 SEP 22 OCT



Average monthly rainfall (mm):

128 MAY 134 JUN 98 JUL 97 AUG 105 SEP 121 OCT

W07CO