

ITALY - LAKE COMO RAMBLING

8-days / 7-nights **SELF-GUIDED** walking holiday in scenic Alpine Italy



Surrounded by mountains the spectacular and popular *Lago di Como* is a gorgeous blue ribbon of postglacial freshwater lake stretching nearly 50 kilometres. The southern end forks into two long sections, with the picturesque town of Bellagio situated on the promontory between them. Visitors have been coming to the area for thousands of years for the glorious and accessible alpine beauty, and the best way to experience the region is on foot and by boat. This self-guided walking holiday allows you the freedom and flexibility to combine walking the trails and using ferries to access many of the charming villages.

Lake Como was popular with the Romans who built villas along its length. Many villas have wonderful gardens with both temperate and tropical plants which benefit from the mild climate induced by the huge body of water. With the advent of resort-style tourism in late 1800s, hotels were built for wealthy European and American tourists who promenaded around the lakeshore and hiked into the surrounding hills to take the air.

Cost from: \$2075 per person twin-share.

Single room supplement from \$575, solo traveller supplement from \$615

Departs: Daily from April to November

Starts: Como **Ends:** Varenna

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation at 2- and 3-star hotels with breakfast daily, 2 dinners, return taxi transfer Menaggio - Breglia, route notes and maps (1 set per room), emergency assistance.

Not included: Lunches, 5 dinners, drinks, snacks, luggage transfers, entrance fees, ferry / cable car / gondola tickets, transfers other than those listed, personal expenses, travel insurance, travel to the start and end point of the tour, city hotel tax (approx €2-4 per person per day, paid locally).

On this tour you use ferry services to travel between hotels. Ferry tickets are not included in the tour cost; you can purchase tickets at the waterside before boarding the boats. The cost of the two transfers is about €10-15 per person; the faster ferries are more expensive. On these two journeys between hotels you will take your luggage with you so we recommend you take an easily carried bag like a backpack or wheeled bag. In addition you may need to take cable cars, taxis, buses and boats to complete the suggested walks. These are not included in the holiday price and will cost around €30-35 per person.

Grading: Moderate. Daily stages are up to 20km (4-5 hours) over mostly well-maintained trails. There are shorter and longer, more challenging versions of most daily walks. You may encounter snow especially early and late in the season and up to late June at the highest levels. Only some of the routes are marked with signs. Elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided, together with the maps.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations

Accommodation and Meals: Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 2-star and 3-star hotels, rooms have en-suite facilities. Two dinners are included, in Breglia. The hotels described are our usual accommodation; if not available then alternatives are used (possibly with a supplement) and you will be informed at the time of booking. Ask about **extra nights** in the towns en route when making your booking.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive Como

Arrive in Como with its tranquil old world atmosphere. Spend two nights here in a centrally located 3-star hotel.

Day 2: Como

walking @ 10km to 13km

Take the cable car to Brunate for a panoramic walk along the ridge high above the lake. Passing the ruins of a medieval castle in the afternoon descend towards the lake again. Or continue the walk to the lakeside village of Torno, take the ferry back to Como, or return through the forest to Brunate and by cable car to your hotel.

Options for an extra day in Como: Around Como there are many villas and estates to visit, notably Villa Olmo and Villa d'Este. You may also enjoy travelling by boat to some other lakeside villages in this southern part of the lake. Cernobbio, for example, surrounded by beautiful villas, has a wonderful relaxed atmosphere.

Day 3: Breglia

walking @ 5km to 9km

This morning explore the old town of Como: Romanesque churches and Duomo, medieval town walls, impressive villas, fine *fin-de-siècle* hotels and rationalist architecture along the lake shore. From Como travel by boat to Menaggio (taking your luggage with you) where a taxi meets you and takes you along a road with panoramic views to the charming village of Breglia, high above the lake. Take an afternoon stroll to Madonna di Breglia and San Domenico. You stay 2 nights in Breglia at a comfortable 2-star hotel, with dinner included.

Day 4: Breglia

walking @ 11km to 13km

A relatively easy circular walk to a mountain hut above Menaggio, offering unforgettable views of the lake from a number of viewpoints. First walk through the old part of the village, then beautiful forests. A last steep section brings you to the mountain hut. There is an optional short walk to the saddle of *Pizza Coppa* from where you can admire the whole region, from Lake Como to Lake Lugano (Switzerland), and there is an optional detour on a challenging path to the top of Monte Grona (1736m). Gradually descend, still with spectacular views, back to Breglia.

Day 5: Varenna

walking @ 6km to 10km

Taxi transfer to Menaggio and ferry taking your luggage with you to charming Varenna, deemed '*Italy's most romantic village*'. Stay three nights here in a 3-star hotel. Varenna is a delightful place to explore, with inspiring views, brightly painted houses with flower-filled balconies, and meandering cobblestoned streets. Walk one of the historical pathways of the area, the *Sentiero del Viandante*, to the curious 'Fiumelatte', Italy's shortest river.

Day 6: Varenna

walking up to @ 20km

Walk the northern stretch of the 'Sentiero del Viandante', with several options for shorter or longer walks. First walk to Bellano, which has an optional short gorge section (entrance fee), and from there on to Dervio with its small medieval quarter. Either return by train to Varenna, or take a short walk through a pretty terraced landscape to the romantic medieval village of Corenno Plinio, with its castle and tiny harbour. Views over the water from this path are marvellous. The walk, usually 20km, can be increased by visiting the abbey of Piona or reduced by returning to Varenna from Bellano by train.

Day 7: Varenna

walking up to @ 11km

Today we suggest you visit the central section of the Lago di Como by boat (you can buy an all-day ferry pass for about €15 per person) to see the splendid Villa Carlotta, with its beautiful gardens, charming Menaggio and Bellagio, '*the Pearl of the Lake*'. From Bellagio there is a scenic walk through the fishing village of Pescallo up to the hamlet of Visgnola. Walk back along the wonderful gardens of Villa Melzi. Then there is time to explore the local villages by boat, or relax with a drink at a lakeshore café before returning to the hotel.

Day 8: Tour ends after breakfast in Varenna. Return by boat to Como, then by train to Milan.

Outdoor Travel walking holidays include guided in small groups or self-guided inn-to-inn in many parts of Europe including **Provence** or **Dordogne** in France, **Tuscany**, the **Amalfi** or **Cinque Terre** coast in Italy. Pilgrimage walks the **Way of St James** in France and Spain and the **Via Francigena** in Italy are available.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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