

NORTH
LAKE COMO

TRAVEL — GUIDE

North Lake Como



NORTH LAKE COMO



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North Lake Como

— Let yourself be inspired

A captivating territory overlooking the lake and surrounded by mountains, with a surprising touch of wilderness and authenticity: this is North Lake Como, the northernmost part of Lake Como.

An area made up of picturesque towns that are mirrored in crystal-clear waters and unique villages nestled in green valleys.

Located at the northernmost tip of the eastern shore is Colico, an important connecting point close to the Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve. It is followed by the villages of Sorico and Gera Lario, which are located directly in front of the imposing Monte Legnone. The villages of Montemezzo, Trezzone and Vercana dominate from above, and offer views of extraordinary beauty. Then there is Domaso, whose tranquil little harbour is reflected in the lake, and Gravedona ed Uniti, which is nestled in a wide inlet between the lake and mountains. The bell towers of Peglio, Livo and Dosso del Liro soar in the central part of the area, while Dongio peeps out just before the Sasso di Musso, with the villages of Garzeno and Stazzona behind it, settled in the folds of the mountain. Finally, Musso, Pianello del Lario and Cremia appear at the foot of Monte Bregagno, located across from the villages of Dorio and Dervio on the other side of the lake.

Alto Lario (North Lake Como) is an area steeped in history that you can discover by wandering through the narrow streets and squares of the villages, visiting the numerous churches, admiring the beautiful palazzos, and exploring the imposing fortifications and rich museums.

The beauty of the unspoilt nature, the stunning views and idyllic beaches will provide you with moments of complete relaxation and tranquillity. The simple yet delicious local cuisine and traditional products will tantalise your taste buds. The welcoming hospitality, both familiar and modern, includes a range of options, such as modern campsites, elegant residences, holiday homes, small B&Bs and farm stays that will make you feel at home.

However, North Lake Como is, above all, a sports paradise. With activities like sailing, surfing, canoeing, hiking, mountain biking, cycling, paragliding, climbing, swimming, horseback riding and many more, you'll have the chance to experience unforgettable emotions.

Cover

View of North Lake Como



Picture
Hiker on the Via dei Monti Lariani Route
Ph: Hotel Europa Sorico



Sports

— *Something for everyone*

Between the lake and mountains, Alto Lago di Como is a perfect destination for sports enthusiasts. From water sports to bike riding, from walking to trekking, from horseback riding to more adrenaline-fuelled sports...you'll have plenty of options to choose from.



Walking and Trekking

—There are trails suited for all levels of fitness and ability, ranging from easy walks to more challenging treks in the mountains

Hiking

With its peaks crowning the lake, the Alto Lario provides a wide range of hiking opportunities of varying difficulty levels, taking you through quiet forests, pastures, refreshing streams and awe-inspiring views. One of the classic hikes is the climb to Monte Berlinghera (1930 m), located on the border of Lake Como and the Valchiavenna. You can reach the summit with a pleasant and relatively easy walk from San Bartolomeo (about 2 hours to ascend), from where you can enjoy a breathtaking view.

Another well-known but more challenging hike is the climb to Lake Darenzo, an emerald-green alpine lake nestled between the mountains. You can reach the lake by crossing the untamed valley of the same name, filled with beautiful forests and waterfalls. The hike starts at Dangri, a small town known for the transparent waters of the Livo stream. The route is quite long, with an ascent of over a thousand metres, but the effort is well rewarded by stunning views of the landscape.

Monte Duria, on the other hand, provides a remarkable 360-degree panoramic view of the lake and surrounding valleys. Starting from the Bodone Huts (Peglio), it takes about three hours to reach its summit. The path is steep in certain parts and includes some stretches across rocky terrain.

Another noteworthy hiking destination is Monte Bregagno (2107 m), which can be reached by starting

from Menaggio (in the centre of Lake Como). The challenging climb is rewarded by the spectacular view of much of the Alpine arc and Lakes Como and Lugano, which can be enjoyed from its peak.

For skilled hikers, one of the most desired peaks in the region is Monte Legnone (2609 m), the imposing and rugged mountain that dominates the Alto Lario. The most popular and easiest ascent starts from the Roccoli Lorla Refuge in Valvarrone.

Trekking

The Alta Via del Lario is a multi-day high-altitude trekking route that winds through the rugged peaks of Alto Lario Occidentale (North Western Lake Como). Hikers must be well prepared physically and have the appropriate trekking gear. The path runs from San Bartolomeo to the Menaggio Refuge, passing through Sasso Canale, Pizzo Ledù, Lake Darenzo, Monte Cardinello, Passo Sant'Jorio and Pizzo di Gino. Over 50 km long, it is divided into three to four stages with overnight stays in bivouacs and mountain huts along the way (it's advisable to check availability before setting off).

Another multi-day trekking route is the Via dei Monti Lariani. This route follows the western shore of Lake Como (from Sorico to Cernobbio) and connects several mountain villages that were once used for seasonal grazing (the so-called *mùnt*). The route maintains an average elevation of 1,000 metres, offers magnificent natural scenery, and is also suitable for novice hikers.

Walks and hikes for everybody

The Alto Lario offers a variety of options for mountain lovers looking for shorter hikes that require less physical effort. A hike suitable for everyone is the ascent to Monte Legnoncino (1714 m), which offers a panoramic view near Monte Legnone and can be reached from the Roccoli Lorla Refuge. From the refuge, it is possible to walk through beautiful centuries-old larch woods toward Roccoli di Artesso, where a small lake and picnic area are located.

With its recognisable cross on the summit, Monte Crocetta towers over the town of Dongo and offers a



Below
Ledù Bivouac
on the Alta Via del Lario Route
Ph: Davide Giuseppe Colombo

captivating view of the northernmost part of the lake. As the altitude is not very high (952 m), the route can be hiked for most of the year and is moderately challenging.

Nature enthusiasts will enjoy the Valle Albano, as it preserves significant environmental features and wildlife and offers hiking routes suitable for all levels, including the historical path to the Passo Sant' Jorio (San Jorio Pass), between Italy and Switzerland.

Along ancient routes

Ancient mule tracks and millenary paths are scattered throughout the Alto Lario region, leading to the discovery of old rural centres, medieval villages, small churches lost in the woods, cultivated terraces and breathtaking natural landscapes. A truly unique atmosphere can be felt walking along these routes.

Among the ancient routes, two historical paths played a strategic role as connecting routes: the Via Regina and the Sentiero del Viandante (Wayfarer's Path).

The ancient Strada Regina was constructed during the Roman era on the western shores of the lake, stretching from Como to Dascio (Sorico). For centuries, it was a vital route, together with the Via Francisca and Via Spluga, linking Italy to the regions of Central Europe. Nowadays, some well-preserved stretches of this ancient route can still be traversed, which partly wind halfway along the shore and partly near the shoreline. The path offers a chance to admire historical and artistic landmarks and beautiful scenery. The most striking sections are those from Gera Lario to Domaso passing through Trezzone and Vercana, and from Dongo to Santa Maria Rezzonico (municipality of San Siro).

The Sentiero del Viandante is an ancient path that runs halfway along the Lario shoreline, from Lecco to Colico. Originating from a network of paths that connected the coastal villages to mountain hamlets, this path served as a significant communication passage between Milan and the Valtellina. It is one of the most captivating itineraries in the region, passing through small villages and offering panoramic vistas of the lake. It is about 45 km long and can be completed in 3 or 4 stages. The stretch from Dervio

to Colico is especially enchanting, with extraordinary views.

Walks along the lake

Easy and relaxing walks just a few metres from the water. The lakeside promenade on the western shore, spanning from Cremia to Sorico (a significant portion of which can be cycled), and the walk from Dorio to Corenno Plinio on the eastern shore offers a leisurely pace for tourists to explore the charming corners and picturesque vistas of the surrounding mountains. The paths, which are almost completely flat, are ideal for families and joggers alike. Benches and picnic tables are available in certain areas, allowing for a refreshing break with a scenic view of the lake.





Tour cycling and MTB riding

— *North Lake Como is
bike-friendly*

Pedalling gently

On the western shore of Alto Lario, it is possible to pedal along the water's edge on the bike paths that run along the lake, ideal for an easy bike ride with the whole family. The distance between Cremona to Sorico is roughly 20 km long and the terrain is predominately flat. The route mostly follows the

shoreline, except for a few brief mixed stretches (state road or secondary roads), requiring extra caution. The itinerary is made even more captivating by the sequence of creeks, relaxing beaches, historical and artistic landmarks and stunning views. In Sorico, after crossing the Mera River on a bike-pedestrian bridge adjacent to the Ponte del Passo bridge, you can continue exploring the enchanting Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve by bike. This reserve is a wetland of considerable natural interest that merges with the Sentiero Valtellina and the Valchiavenna bike path.

Sentiero Valtellina and Ciclabile Valchiavenna

The Sentiero Valtellina and Ciclabile Valchiavenna are two biking and walking paths that allow you to experience the natural beauty and admire the scenic



Left

Mountain biking in Fordecchia

and historical charm of the region up close. Both routes are asphalted and mostly flat or with slight inclines and, therefore, are suitable for families with children. They both begin in Colico located in Alto Lago di Como. The Sentiero Valtellina spans 114 kilometres and gently climbs up the valley floor along the Adda River and ends in Bormio, in Alta Valtellina. The 42-km long Ciclabile Valchiavenna traverses the Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve before climbing the Valchiavenna to reach Chiavenna and then Val Bregaglia, which is on the Swiss border. Numerous equipped rest areas are situated along both routes, providing a perfect spot for a picnic. Due to the proximity of these routes to the railway line, it is possible to cycle a section and return by train, taking your bike with you.

Cross-country MTB and enduro MTB

The rugged mountains of the Alto Lario offer beautiful scenery and exhilarating experiences on your bike. There is a wide variety of cross-country itineraries to choose from. An easy route departs from Gravedona ed Uniti towards Dangri, then descends along the ancient mule track that links Livo to Domaso.

While the circular route that circumnavigates the Sasso di Musso and leads to the Church of San Bernardo before descending from the Albano Valley to Dongo provides breathtaking views.

For more challenging and exciting options, you can opt for a cross-country route that traverses the valleys along a section of the Via di Monti Lariani: the route that runs halfway up the mountain, starting from Monti di Vercana and passing through the villages of Tabbiadello, Montalto and Fordecchia. Though there are some short, challenging uphill stretches, the fun descent on the first path that passes through Sensone and reaches Bugiallo, as well as the second path that leads to Montemezzo, more than compensates for the effort. The itinerary from the Colico landing stage to Alpe Rossa is best suited for experienced and well-trained cyclists. The route winds the foot of Monte Legnone and passes through the ancient village of Fontanedo.

Enduro enthusiasts will find the single track that

commences in Pescedo particularly enjoyable. The uphill climb from Gera Lario to San Bartolomeo is entirely asphalted, transitioning to a dirt road when reaching Pescedo. While the downhill path through the woods to Fordecchia is the most exhilarating route in Alto Lago di Como.

For more experienced cyclists, the nearby Valtellina area can be a valid option. It starts from Morbegno and its surroundings, and offers a wide variety of technical and rocky trails, as well as plenty of leisurely and enjoyable routes. Downhill enthusiasts who crave an adrenaline rush will definitely find their fix at the Bike Park of Madesimo in the Valchiavenna.

Road cycling

Dervio is a great starting point for those who love road cycling. From here, you can explore the Valvarrone, Valsassina and Val Muggiasca, by taking loops and enjoying the breathtaking natural beauty of the area.

Not far from Alto Lario, you can try your hand at the famous ascents that have made the history of the 'Giro d'Italia': the legendary climbs of the Valtellina and the classic ascent of Ghisallo in the Triangolo Lariano (Larian Triangle), where there is also a museum dedicated to Cycling.

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Water activities

— *To the sound of water
and wind*

Sailing

Alto Lario is a great location for sailing due to the Brega and Tivano thermal winds that generate waves on the lake. In fact, the area hosts many national and international regattas each year. There are specialised schools that offer courses for both adults and children, making it an excellent place for beginners to start learning or for experienced sailors to improve their skills.

Windsurfing

In Alto Lago di Como, it is easy to observe the many vibrant sails on the water that flutter in the wind. For novice windsurfers, the morning is the best time to take advantage of the Tivano wind that blows from the north, while more experienced windsurfers can make use of the stronger Brega wind that blows from the south during the early afternoon, allowing them to execute various jumps and stunts. There are several recognised schools on the beaches that provide classes for both adults and children.

Kite surfing

With its constant sunshine and winds, the northern part of Lake Como is an ideal location for kite flying, attracting enthusiasts from all over Europe. Colico, Gera Lario, Dervio and Dongo are some of the most



Left

Kitesurfing in Colico
Ph: Enrico Minotti

Right

Sailing race
Ph: Kwadzo Klokpah

popular spots for kitesurfers to have fun and perform exhilarating stunts. Many specialised centres are available for those seeking to learn the basics or rent equipment and use the lift service.

Water skiing and wakeboarding

In the calm hours of the morning or evening, water skiing or wakeboarding can be enjoyed by those who want to experience the thrill of gliding on the water with skis or a board on their feet.

Canoeing and Kayaking

Canoeing is a great option for outdoor sports enthusiasts who also seek peace and quiet. With a canoe or kayak, it is possible to explore the area's most hidden and authentic corners from a different perspective, such as Lake Mezzola with its steep cliffs and small secluded beaches, or the picturesque Bay of Piona. There are numerous centres where you can rent the necessary equipment.

Stand Up Paddling

In recent years, Stand Up Paddling has gained popularity as it offers individuals an opportunity to be in close proximity with the water and the surrounding scenery. Balancing on a board while paddling requires effort, but this is rewarded by the stunning views of the lake and its surroundings, creating a sense of peace and well-being. The ideal time for Stand Up Paddling is in the morning or towards the evening when the lake waters are calmer.

Other water activities

Those who want to enjoy the lake and its surroundings in a more relaxed manner can choose to rent a boat from the various boating centres that offer motorboats, dinghies and sailboats. Those who prefer to stay on the shore can relax on the many beaches in Alto Lario, or take a swim in the lake. Scuba diving enthusiasts can explore the historical wrecks and diverse ecosystems that exist in the waters of Lake Como. Finally, for those who enjoy trying new activities, Flyboard, Water Bike, Wing Foil and other water sports are also available.





Left
Lake Como Adventure Park

Right
Paragliding from
the Montemazzo Mountains
Ph: Hotel Europa Sorico

Adrenaline

— *Strong emotions to be experienced*

Paragliding and hang-gliding

In the enchanting setting of Lake Como and the mountains, it is possible to experience the thrill of soaring through the air on a paraglider or handglider. Accompanied by qualified and experienced pilots, tandem flights offer awe-inspiring views of the world from above. The Montemazzo mountains are the ideal take-off point for tandem paragliding flights, while hang-gliding flights are launched from San Bartolomeo, a mountain hamlet of Sorico (1200 m).

Mountain climbing

Climbing enthusiasts can experience unique and thrilling moments in the wild mountains surrounding Lake Como. The peaks of these mountains offer many itineraries of varying difficulty and breathtaking views, including paths suspended between the lake and the sky.

The go-to destination for climbers in search of rock climbing routes is the Gruppo delle Grigne, near Lecco. It has numerous rock walls to climb, and many important pages of mountaineering history have been written there. Instead, Alto Lago di Como offers several crags dedicated to sport climbing, such as the panoramic Sass Negher in Baia di Piona, the small Falesia del Mago in Colico, the fun Falesia Maliga in Dervio, or the challenging Sasso Pelo in Naro above Gravedona ed Uniti.

The most popular climbing destination for visitors of Lake Como is the Menaggio crag, which offers around 70 pitches ranging from 4a to 8a+, including both single and 2-3 pitch routes. This crag is easily accessible and directly faces the lake.

For via ferrata enthusiasts, just above Menaggio, more precisely at Monti di Breglia, there is an approach path that leads to the base of the Ferrata del Centenario. Suitable only for experienced hikers, the ferrata ascends to the summit of Monte Grona, offering stunning views of the surrounding area.



Adventure Parks

Adventure parks are the ideal destination for spending a fun day with the whole family surrounded by nature. Lake Como Adventure Park in Sant'Anna di Germasino (Gravedona ed Uniti) offers multiple paths from 1 to 18 metres above the ground. Visitors can cross Tibetan bridges and suspended points in the trees or even propel themselves into the void with pulleys, in total safety. They can also try tree climbing, reaching a height of 15 metres. Another attraction is found in Albaredo per San Marco (Valtellina), which is less than an hour's drive from Alto Lario. The Fly Emotion Aerofune is a zip-line that allows you to experience the thrill of flying over a mountain valley. Either solo or paired, the experience includes two sections with varying slopes and lengths.

Canyoning

An exciting and adventurous activity amidst sculpted rocks and crystal-clear waters, following the path that the stream has traced for centuries. Canyoning allows you to explore unspoilt natural environments by walking through watercourses and taking on challenges such as natural water slides, diving and descents using ropes. The Boggia torrent is located in Val Bodengo, which is a truly breathtaking and exciting canyon with several routes of varying difficulty not far from Alto Lago. To take part in all the canyoning activities, you must be accompanied by experienced mountain guides who will provide all the necessary gear and equipment.



Left

Shad fishing in Dervio
Ph: Carlo Borlenghi

Other activities

— *There are so many to try*

Horse riding

In North Lake Como, it is possible to go on wonderful, relaxing horseback rides while enjoying the beautiful countryside. The stables are located in Colico on the banks of the Adda River, and offer courses and tours. From here, you can set off for the unspoilt Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve, ride up the surrounding valleys or take leisurely walks along the beach.

Golf

There are seven golf courses around Lake Como where you can spend a few relaxing hours surrounded by nature in elegant and exclusive clubs. The closest course is the Menaggio & Cadenabbia Golf Club, featuring an 18-hole course and more than 100 years of history, with a classic English atmosphere.

Fishing

The Lario and its surrounding area offer numerous picturesque spots for those who enjoy fishing in complete tranquillity. In fact, it is possible to fish in the waters of the lake, surrounded by breathtaking views, or in the clear streams and alpine lakes of the pristine side valleys. Among the species that can be caught, following the rules, are the Whitefish (Lavarello), Shad (Agone), Perch, and Trout. In order to fish, it is necessary to have a valid fishing licence and to follow all the instructions and rules in force.

Go-karting

Motor and speed lovers can go racing at the go-kart track located in Colico. The Lario Motorsport is a modern multi-storey facility with both indoor and outdoor tracks that offer an exhilarating experience.



Right
Ski mountaineering on Corvegia
Ph: Hiking Como Lake

Winter sports

— *When the snow calls*

Ski mountaineering

Ski mountaineering on the peaks surrounding Lake Como means exploring a pristine and untouched environment with stunning panoramic views and tranquil surroundings. The most popular peak on the western shore is undoubtedly Monte Bregagno, with four different routes leading to the summit, three of which are relatively easy (from Monti di Musso, from Monti di Pianello and from Monti di San Siro) and one from the Valle Albano, which requires skiers to have good experience in fresh snow. Another popular peak on the west coast is Corvegia, located above the Monti di Montemezzo, which offers views beyond the horizons.

However, the real paradise for ski mountaineering is found a short distance away from the lake in the Valtellina, Valchiavenna and Engadine (Switzerland), which offer hundreds of itineraries for ski mountaineers, ranging from easy routes near the ski slopes to challenging climbs on the highest mountains, which are accessible throughout the winter season.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoes allow hiking on the snow in close contact with nature. Snowshoeing during the winter season is a must, especially during the day or under the moonlight.

The Valsassina and Val Varrone offer many snowshoe itineraries such as the routes to Cimone di Margno, Alpe Giumello and the longer route in Alta Val Varrone leading up to the refuge of Casera Vecchia di Varrone.

For safety purposes, it is recommended to seek assistance from mountain guides or to participate in one of the many organised tours.





Picture
Pian di Spagna and Lake Mezzola Nature Reserve
Ph: Mauro Sghèiz



Nature

— *Immersed in an authentic natural setting*

A territory in perfect harmony with nature where the clear waters of the lake converge with the green slopes of the mountains. It is a tranquil and peaceful haven that provides a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. A landscape where the various seasons imbue the woods, parks and beaches with a kaleidoscope of hues and illuminations. Alto Lago di Como is the perfect place for those in search of natural attractions and uncontaminated corners.



Natural places to discover

—In close contact with nature

Pian di Spagna and Lake Mezzola Nature Reserve

A place where water and land meet to create a unique ecosystem with diverse animal and plant species. The Pian di Spagna is an alluvial plain located at the foot of the Alps, between Lake Como, the Valtellina, Valchiavenna and Lake Mezzola. Once marshy, today it is made up of reed beds, meadows, agricultural

areas and watercourses that provide a suitable environment for many species of migratory and resident birds. The Nature Reserve was established in 1985 to protect and preserve the extraordinary natural and landscape characteristics of this area. The reserve is home to a vast array of bird life, including nesting and migratory species. Many species of water birds have also been recorded, such as grebes, herons, cormorants, ducks and swans, as well as other animals such as birds of prey, fish, amphibians like frogs and toads, reptiles and mammals like hares, deer and foxes. The reserve also offers beautiful and easy walking and biking paths suitable for the whole family, as well as excellent opportunities for birdwatching. Visitors can admire an incredible view of the reserve, Lake Mezzola and the Mera River from the scenic balcony of Sasso di Dascio, which is an easy

**Left**

Valle Albano Park
Ph: Istituto Oikos

15-minute walk from the centre of Dascio.

Valle Albano Park

The Valle Albano Park is a protected nature reserve that is home to numerous typical Alpine flora and fauna species. Valle Albano is formed by the stream of the same name, which runs along the western shore of the lake and connects Italy to Switzerland via the San Jorio Pass. The protected area occupies the head of the valley and is an extremely important environment for protecting the biodiversity and mountain terrain. In fact, visitors to the park can encounter various animals such as deer, roe deer, foxes and birds of prey such as buzzards, kestrels and sparrowhawks. Thanks to the presence of numerous trails and several refuges, the area is a popular destination for trekking and mountain biking enthusiasts, who can explore a still unspoilt environment.

Giardino del Merlo (Blackbird Garden)

A wild garden overlooking the lake where the Mediterranean vegetation alternates with exotic alpine vegetation. The Giardino del Merlo is located on the steep slope of the Sasso di Musso, between Dongo and Musso, at the foot of the ruins of the castle of Medeghino, the notorious pirate of Lake Como. The garden was established in the second half of the 19th century as a botanical garden at the behest of the nobleman Giovanni Manzi, and is now open to the public. Visitors can stroll along the path that winds through palm trees, prickly pears, small bridges, caves and the Church of Sant'Eufemia, all while enjoying a breathtaking view of the lake.

Beaches

Clear waters, sun and a cool breeze: for those who love sunbathing and taking it easy, Alto Lago di Como is the ideal destination to spend peaceful days lounging on the beach. The area boasts numerous free beaches where you can soak up the sun in complete tranquillity, take a refreshing dip in the lake on hot days, or try one of the many water activities offered. Every lakeside town has at least one beach, whether large, small, or secluded. Colico has the highest number of beaches, including the extensive

Below

L'Ontano Beach (Colico)
Ph: Viva Colico

beach of L'Ontano, the Brevia, the Selvaggia beach and the beaches located in the beautiful Baia di Piona. There are so many to choose from. The long beach of Domaso is popular among families with children due to its wide-open spaces, beach kiosks, numerous benches, and shaded areas. At the mouth of the Liro stream is the Serenella, a beautiful and wide pebble beach in Gravedona ed Uniti. Still on the western shore, Dongo offers numerous grassy and pebbly beaches, while Cremia is home to the charming beach of San Vito. Over on the other side of the lake, the wide beaches of Dervio are a popular choice for families and sailing enthusiasts alike, especially the grassy expanse near the port of S. Cecilia or the pebbly La Foppa beach, which slopes gently down to the lake.





Picture
Abbey of Piona
Ph: Foto Hobby



Art and culture

— *Treasures to be discovered*

A place where the beauty of nature blends with history and culture. A heritage of captivating churches, stunning palazzos and gardens, impressive fortifications, picturesque villages that seem suspended in time and fascinating museums. Alto Lago di Como is a treasure trove of historical and artistic testimonies just waiting to be discovered.



Religious Art

—*Spiritual Places*

Abbey of Piona

The abbey is situated on the Olgiasca peninsula in Colico, surrounded by an uncontaminated environment with a stunning panorama. It is a masterpiece of Lombard Romanesque architecture and has been inhabited by Cistercian monks since 1938, who still observe the Benedictine “ora et labora” rule and produce homemade products for the community, such as liqueurs and herbal teas made from aromatic herbs.

The church is dedicated to San Nicola and has a single rectangular nave with a square bell tower located on the

right of the frescoed apse. The quadrangular cloister is particularly striking, enclosed by arches decorated with finely sculpted capitals representing various figures and allegories; it represents the heart of the entire monastic complex, connecting the different rooms.

Church of Santa Maria del Tiglio

A rare and valuable example of Romanesque architecture in Como, the church stands in the so-called Area Sacra di Gravedona ed Uniti (Sacred Area of Gravedona ed Uniti), which also includes the nearby parish church of San Vincenzo, near the lake shore. The church was built in the second half of the 12th century over an ancient Baptistery dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Its unique dichromatic appearance comes from the alternating use of white Musso marble and grey stone blocks. The bell tower, built in several stages, stands above the entrance



Left

Sacred Area
of Gravedona ed Uniti
Ph: Oliver Wagner

Right

Frescoes in the ancient Church
of St. Giacomo in Livo

in the centre of the striking façade. Inside, there remains of 14th-century and 15th-century frescoes, including a Last Judgement on the counter façade and an Adoration of the Magi above the right apsidiole. There is also a 12th-century wooden crucifix and a buried baptismal font from the early-Christian baptistery.

Other churches

Also worth noting are the Church of S. Maria delle Grazie, built next to the former convent and completely decorated with splendid frescoes from the Larian Renaissance, and the nearby Church of SS. Gusmeo e Matteo, dating back to the Romanesque era, housing works by Giovanni Mauro della Rovere, also known as Fiammenghino

In Crema, the evocative Church of S. Vito, one of the oldest churches on the western side of Lake Como, is located a short distance from the lake. It is characterised by two bell towers. On the opposite shore, in the charming medieval village of Corenno Plinio, stands the Church of S. Tommaso di Canterbury. It is distinguished by the three sepulchral arches of the Andreani Counts, feudal lords of the village, in the churchyard, and the cycle of frescoes from the Como Gothic school preserved inside.

The beautiful hillside churches are also worth visiting. Among them is the Church of SS. Eusebio and Vittore located in Peglio, which preserves frescoes from the Fiammenghini workshop and offers a breathtaking view of the lake from its portico. Also, the ancient Church of S. Giacomo in Livo, with a frescoed pronaos depicting Stories from the Genesis and many devotional frescoes from the 16th century inside. Lastly, the Church of S. Miro above the village of Sorico, which was a pilgrimage site already in the 14th century to visit the tomb of the Saint with whom many legends are associated.





Left

Forte Montecchio Nord

Ph: Museo della Guerra Bianca

Fortresses

—Strategic strongholds

Forte Montecchio Nord

The fort was built between 1911 and 1914 on Montecchio Nord, one of the hills bordering the territory of Colico towards the lake. It is one of the most impressive fortified structures of the “Northern Frontier” defence system, the so-called Cadorna Line. Its main function was to control the roads of Spluga, Maloja, and Stelvio from a possible attack by the Central Powers. Built into the rock, it is the only Italian fort from World War I that has remained intact with its original weapons, making it one of the most well-preserved forts in Europe. In fact, visitors can explore the various areas of the fort, including underground walkways, the original electrical and ventilation system, the explosives magazine, and four mighty cannons.

Forte di Fuentes

The older of the two forts is located on Montecchio Est, the hill that overlooks the Pian di Spagna Nature Reserve. It was built in 1603 by the Count of Fuentes, who was then the Spanish Governor of Milan, to stop the expansion of the Grisons towards Alto Lago di Como. The fort was then used on several occasions during the numerous occupations suffered by Lombardy, until Napoleon’s troops destroyed it at the end of the 18th century. During World War I, eight gun emplacements were built on the ruins of the fort to defend against a possible attack. Although only the remains of the walls and buildings are visible, the fort is one of the few surviving examples of Spanish rule.



Below
Corenno Plinio
Ph: Carlo Borlenghi

Towers and Castles

—Defence of the territory

Fontanedo tower

The remains of a fortified complex are still visible near the ancient village of Fontanedo (a hamlet of Colico), on a hillock at the foot of Mount Legnone. The Fontanedo Tower was built in 1357 at the request of Bernabò Visconti on top of an earlier defensive structure. The function of the fortification was to control and protect Alto Lario and the ancient Scalottola, the road that connected the Valtellina to Valsassina, today known as the Sentiero del Viandante (Wayfarer's Path). Over the centuries, the tower remained a crucial defensive stronghold for the territory, especially when it was expanded and incorporated into the defence system of the Fuentes Fort. The square tower was built with large stone blocks and can be visited internally during specific times of the year.

Tower of the Orezia Castle

The castle was built in the 15th century to protect the road that links the Valvarrone to Valsassina, and is situated on a cliff overlooking Dervio. The first mention of the presence of a fortification, however, dates back to 1039, when the Tre Pievi Lariane (Three Larian Parishes) laid a long siege on the town. All that remains today of the medieval construction is the square-shaped tower, which is topped with a statue of the Madonna that was installed in 1954. The tower is flanked by the remains of ancient houses, which form the picturesque hamlet of Castello.

Castle of Corenno Plinio

The imposing castle stands on the main piazza of the medieval village, next to the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury. It was built between 1360 and 1370 atop the ruins of an ancient Roman fortress at the behest of the Andreani family, the feudal lords of Corenno. The castle represents a typical example of a walled fortress,

in which local inhabitants sought refuge with their most valuable possessions in the event of an enemy attack. The castle has an almost square-shaped layout with two towers: a square one to the north-east that served as a lookout and defended the mule track that climbed up to Valvarrone; and another sail-type tower to the south-west that kept an eye on attacks from the lake and monitored the territory. With the passing of the centuries, the castle lost its defensive function, so much so that in the 18th century part of the brick wall was demolished to make room for a vineyard.

Visitors must purchase a ticket to enter Corenno Plinio, which can also be purchased online. Strolling through the narrow streets, you can learn about the history and interesting facts of the village by using your smartphone to scan the QR codes placed at various points of interest.





Below

Entrance of Villa Camilla
Ph: Oliver Wagner

Right

Palazzo Gallio
Ph: Hotel Europa Sorico

Historical palazzos

—*Manifestations of noble power*

Villa Camilla

The Villa was built at the beginning of the 17th century as the residence for the noble Ghezzi family. It is now the current seat of the Domaso Town Hall. Accessible through the grand 18th-century gate on the Statale Regina (main road), the villa was built in a neoclassical style, and has a rectangular plan developed on two floors. The ground floor features a large atrium and some rooms, while the



upper floor consists of rooms arranged around a central hall. The villa's park is particularly beautiful, and covers an area of approximately 8000 square metres. It has artificial grottos in tuff and numerous plant species, including camellias, larches, sequoias and palm trees.

Palazzo Gallio

Built in 1568 as the residence of Tolomeo Gallio, the cardinal and count of the Tre Pievi, the palazzo stands on a rocky promontory overlooking the lake, above the ruins of the ancient castle of Gravedona. The residence has a square plan with four mighty corner towers and elegant open loggias on two sides, giving it an imposing presence over the bay. From the garden, which comprises several floors and was once enriched with pools and aviaries, you can reach the entrance stairs that lead to the loggia. From there, it is possible to access the main hall on the noble floor and the magnificent terrace that overlooks the lake.

Having changed hands several times over the centuries, the palazzo is now home to the "Comunità Montana Valli del Lario e del Ceresio" (the Mountain Community of the Lario and Ceresio Valleys) and its halls host concerts, performances and exhibitions.

Palazzo Manzi

Built in the early 19th century by Pietro Gilardoni as a home for the noble Polti-Petazzi brothers, the palazzo later came into possession of the Manzi family, from whom it takes its name. The building has a simple neoclassical façade and a U-shaped floor plan. It has four floors and is an extraordinary testimony to the Napoleonic era in Lake Como. The first floor of the palazzo contains an ancient library, a Chapel with pictorial decorations depicting the Immaculate Conception, and most importantly, the Golden Hall, the ancient hall of honour adorned with sumptuous gilded decorations, which still retains its original Empire-style forms and period furnishings. Today the palazzo is the seat of Dongo's Town Hall and houses the Museum of the End of the War.





Museums

—*Custodians of Memory*

Museo della Fine della Guerra

The Museo della Fine della Guerra (End of the War Museum) is housed inside Palazzo Manzi, the Town Hall of Dongo. The museum tells the story of one of the most significant periods of the 20th century: the Partisan Resistance and the events that led to the end of the twenty years of Fascism. On 27 April 1945, between Musso and Dongo, Mussolini and the fascist hierarchies were captured as they tried to escape to Switzerland. The museum preserves the legacy of its predecessor, the Museum of the

Comasca Resistance, which exhibited relics, photos and educational panels. The museum employs modern multimedia and interactive technologies to take visitors on a first-hand journey of the war of Resistance on Lake Como and the events surrounding the capture and execution of Mussolini and his hierarchies.

Museo Barca Lariana

Established by Gian Alberto Zanoletti, a great boating enthusiast, the Museo Barca Lariana (Lake Como International Museum of Vintage Boats) is housed in a historic 19th-century spinning mill located in Pianello del Lario. The museum contains and safeguards a remarkable and unique collection of approximately 400 historical hulls including rowing boats, gondolas, fishing, hunting and



Left

Museo Barca Lariana
Ph: Carlo Borlenghi

smuggling boats, inboard and outboard motorboats, passenger steamers, sailing boats, and ancient work barges, as well as more than 300 engines and thousands of objects, recordings and photographs related to the boating world. Some of the most notable exhibits include two of the oldest gondolas in the world, one of which is perfectly preserved and has ferns, the Laura I Abbate, the first boat to break the 200 km/h barrier, and the Freccia dei Gerani hydrofoil, a technological masterpiece from the 1970s.

Museo Civico Storico di Musso

The Museo Civico Storico di Musso (Musso Civic Museum of History) is located in the heart of Musso and is dedicated to the traditions and customs that have characterised the history of the village. It displays artefacts and testimonies illustrating the main events and local industries, in particular, silkworm breeding and silk production (there were as many as eight spinning mills in Musso), the marble quarries, the Medeghino castle, and emigration to the Americas and Europe.

Museo della Cultura Contadina di Colico

The Museo della Cultura Contadina di Colico (Colico Museum of Peasant Culture) is located in Villatico, a hamlet of Colico. It houses a faithful reconstruction of a peasant's house from the late 19th to early 20th centuries, as well as a vast collection of objects donated by the inhabitants of Colico, which testify to the various local activities (such as agro-silvo-pastoral activities, handicrafts, women's activities, trade). The museum aims to preserve the values of the ancient rural civilisation, while also protecting the immense intangible heritage of the area.

Make Gravedona Exhibition Space

The new exhibition space was opened in 2023 and is housed in the historical premises of the former Workers' Society of Gravedona. The space allows visitors to learn about the history and traditions of local entrepreneurial activities using multimedia

Below

Museo della Fine della Guerra, at Palazzo Manzi

content and virtual reality devices. The exhibition begins with an in-depth snapshot of the historical, artistic and cultural context of Gravedona ed Uniti, followed by an exploration of the entrepreneurial history of companies such as the Salice eyewear company and the Gramatica company, as well as several former production companies such as the Fossati textile company and the paper mills. The itinerary is enriched by thought-provoking videos and interactive and immersive experiences, such as the simulation of a sailing trip on a real hull using augmented reality visors.





Picture
Lunch based
on local specialities
Ph: Pier Gurini



Taste

—*Unique flavours of the lake and mountains*

The food and wine heritage of the area is centred around the flavours and aromas of the lake and the mountains, where the skilful use of raw materials gives life to a cuisine that is both simple and delicious. From lake fish to cheese, from honey to chestnuts, from wine to oil, there are many local food specialities. The area also has many restaurants, farm restaurants and “crotti” (traditional cellars dug into the rock) where visitors can savour traditional dishes and local products.



Local food and wine excellences

—Specialities to discover and enjoy

Lake fish

Fish has always played a primary role in the local culinary tradition. The lake is home to a wide variety of fish species that are used to prepare many local dishes. The freshwater shad, known as Agoni, is a fish that has been used in local cuisine for centuries. It is salted and dried to make Missoltino (Missultin in local dialect), the emblem of the local cuisine. The agoni are first salted and then left to dry in the sun on special racks. Once dried, they are preserved in a tin or wooden container with bay leaves. Agoni are also the main ingredient in other recipes; in fact, they can be made "in carpione" (fried and marinated in water and vinegar), in green sauce or fried.

Another common and popular fish is the lavarello (whitefish), which is often cooked with butter and sage. Perch is also delicious and its fillets are used in the preparation of the famous perch rice or risotto, as well as trout, char and zander.

Cheese

The art of cheese-making has been a long-standing tradition around Lake Como, particularly in the valleys, where it is the most important and widespread agricultural activity. Today, as in the past, the mountain pastures produce butter, ricotta and a wide variety of cheeses, with cow's and/or goat's milk, both fresh and aged versions.

Semuda (Semüda in the local dialect) is the typical cheese of North Western Lake Como. Made from raw skimmed cow's milk, rennet and salt, this soft cheese is aged for up to six months in natural caves or cellars.

Another local delicacy in Alto Lario is Zincarlin, a ricotta cheese flavoured with salt and pepper, made

from cow's whey combined with goat's and/or cow's milk, with a tasty and appetising flavour.

The lake also offers a range of fat or semi-fat alpine cheeses, formaggelle and caprini, which can be either mild or spicy depending on their ageing period.

The Lecco side of the Valsassina is known as the valley of the cheeses. The most widely produced cheeses in this area are Taleggio, Gorgonzola, Fiorone, Robiola, stracchino and caprini. Another cheese exclusive to the alpine pastures of Val Varrone is Bitto, the high-fat cheese only produced during the summer months.

I.G.T. Wine Terre Lariane

The beautiful terraced vineyards of Alto Lago di Como, particularly in Domaso and Colico, are known for producing exceptional wines. Although viticulture was already present in Roman times, it was abandoned in the 19th century. In recent decades, the practice has been revived thanks to the commitment, passion and technological investments of some local producers. Wine production in this area is still considered niche, and it includes white, red and rose wines. The white wines have received the most awards to date; the high temperature ranges, which are mitigated by the lake, give them an elegant, fresh and flavourful taste. In 2008, the wines of Lake Como were awarded the IGT (Indicazione Geografica Tipica - Typical Geographical Indication) Terre Lariane appellation, which confirms their excellent quality.

D.O.P. Oil of Lario

Despite being located at a high altitude and outside the Mediterranean habitat, the Lario boasts a very ancient olive-growing tradition dating back to Roman times. This area is suitable for producing high-quality extra virgin olive oil due to the microclimate of the lake that mitigates the harsh winter temperatures and to the fertile morainic soil. Characterised by a fruity bouquet accompanied by the scent of bitter almonds and freshly mown grass, the oil is cold-pressed and has a very low level



of acidity. In 1997, the “Laghi Lombardi (Lombard Lakes) under the sub-denomination “Lario” was granted Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status by the European Union. Although most of the olive trees are located in the central part of the lake, olive oil is also produced in Alto Lario.

Honey

Thanks to the climate that supports a great variety of botanical species, the woods and meadows surrounding Lake Como are home to many beekeepers who produce high-quality honey with unique characteristics. The most highly appreciated types of honey are chestnut honey, which is dark in colour and has an intense flavour; acacia honey, which is clear and has a sweet and delicate taste;

linden honey, which has a fresh and balsamic aroma; and Millefiori honey, which is amber-coloured and produced from several types of flowers.

Chestnuts

A typical mountain fruit, chestnuts ripen between September and November in the numerous chestnut groves of Alto Lario. Chestnuts are used to prepare a variety of dishes, such as soups and minestrone, gnocchi, polenta, jams, sweets and even beer. One speciality worth trying are caldaroste, which are delicious chestnuts roasted over a fire.

Above
Local cheeses and I.G.T. Wine Terre Lariane
Ph: Agriturismo Cà del Lago



5 dishes to try

1) Missoltino

Sun-dried agoni fish, known as Missoltini, are undoubtedly the signature culinary speciality of Lake Como. Traditionally served with a slice of toasted polenta, they are cooked on the grill to perfection.

2) Risotto with perch fillets

Another classic dish of Larian cuisine is risotto or rice with perch, where the fried perch fillets are arranged on top of the rice in a petal-like fashion.

3) Fish in carpione

A delicious starter, it is made by preparing a marinade consisting of onion, white vinegar, white wine and wild thyme, which is then poured over the fried fish.

4) Polenta

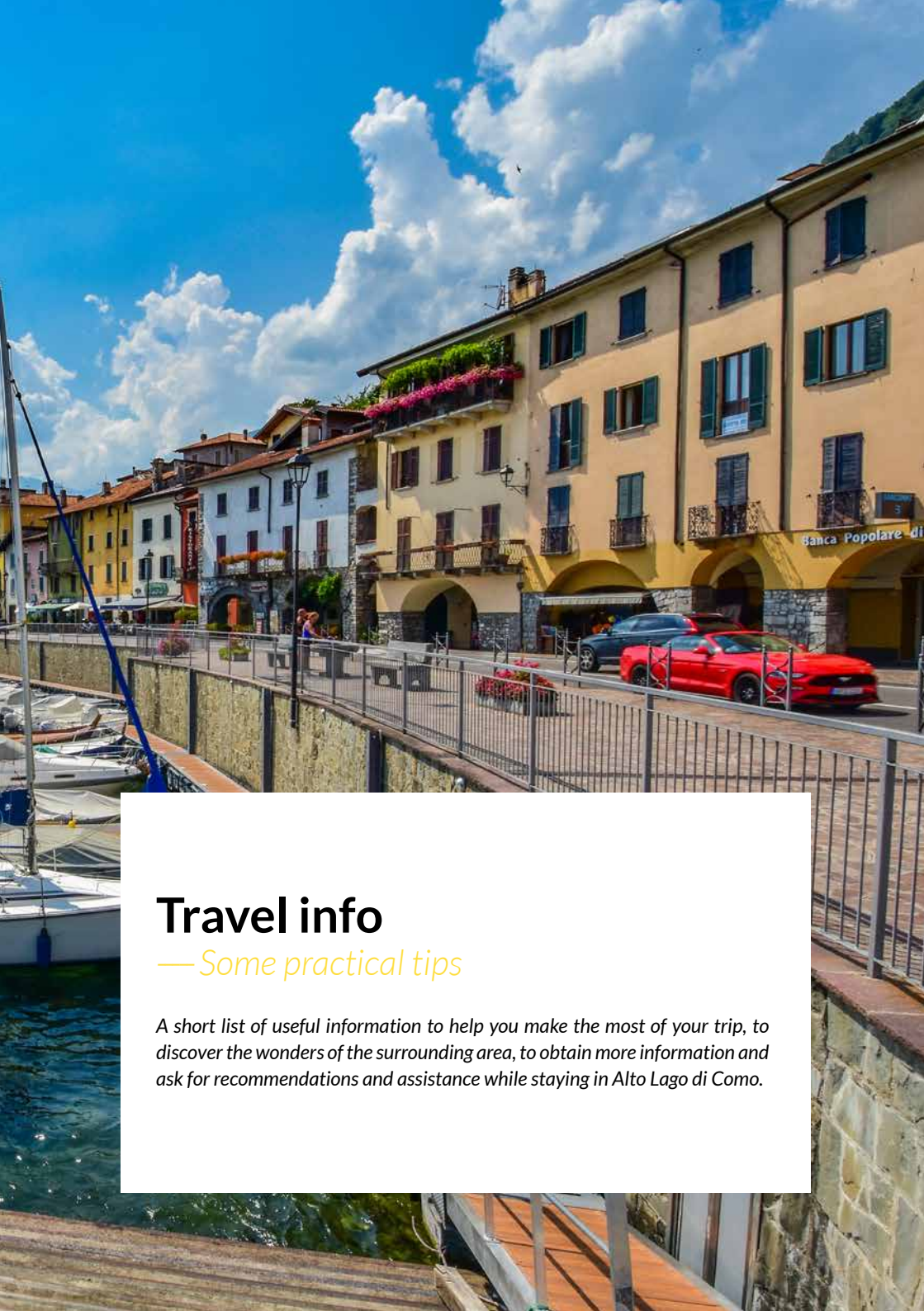
A staple in the cuisine of the valleys, it is often served in its Uncia or Taragna versions, using butter and local fatty cheeses. Polenta also accompanies game dishes and braised meats.

5) Braschino

A very humble yet delicious dessert originating in Garzeno, it is a kind of sugary focaccia made with flour, water, yeast, eggs, butter, nuts and raisins.



Picture
Small port and Regina Main road in Domaso
Ph: Paolo Bosca



Travel info

— *Some practical tips*

A short list of useful information to help you make the most of your trip, to discover the wonders of the surrounding area, to obtain more information and ask for recommendations and assistance while staying in Alto Lago di Como.



Mobility

—How to arrive and get around

Arriving by car

Alto Lago di Como can be easily reached by car. From Milan, take the SS36 State Road of Lake Como and Spluga towards Lecco and then Chiavenna, exiting at the Fuentes crossroads. You can also take the A9 motorway from Milan to Como (Lake Como exit) and then continue on the SS340 towards Menaggio.

Coming from Switzerland (A2 and A13 motorways), head towards Lugano, take the road to Gandria (customs), and then follow the SS340 towards Menaggio. Coming from the Canton of Graubunden, follow the signs for the Maloja Pass and then for Chiavenna, where you take the SS36 of Lake Como and Spluga. During the summer period, you can also pass through the Spluga Pass, and continue along the SS36 through the Valchiavenna.

Arriving by air

The most convenient airports to reach Alto Lario and in general Lake Como are Milan Bergamo Airport (about 85 km), Milan Linate Airport (about 109 km) and Milan Malpensa Airport (about 126 km). From the airports, you can take a taxi or rent a car, or head to the nearest railway station to get to your destination.

Arriving by train

The main train station of Alto Lago di Como is Colico, on the Milano Centrale-Tirano line and the terminus of the Colico-Chiavenna line. Also on the eastern shore, Dervio and Dorio are two other local train stops on the Lecco-Sondrio line. Visitors coming from Milan can also reach the city of Como by arriving at the stations of Como San Giovanni or Como Nord Lago. Those arriving by train from Switzerland can get off at Lugano train station, about 50 kilometres from the Alto Lario.

Getting around by bus

The entire western shore of the lake is served by the C10 bus line, which connects Como with Colico via Menaggio and runs on an hourly basis; bus stops are located along the main roads of the lakeside towns. The Palm Express Lugano-Menaggio-St. Moritz Line, operated by AutoPostale, covers part of the western shore. This line is closed year-round and requires prior booking.

Buses are available for those who wish to visit villages located halfway up the coast: the C17 line connects Dongo to Garzeno, while the C18 line connects Dongo to Livo via Gravedona ed Uniti and Peglio.

Finally, an urban line service in Colico allows you to travel between the various hamlets.

Getting around by boat

The best way to admire and explore the lake and its picturesque villages is on board a boat. The scheduled navigation lines include both ferries, ideal for those who want to enjoy the view at a relaxed pace, and fast services like hydrofoils and catamarans. Colico, Domaso, Gravedona ed Uniti and Dongo are the main stops on the Como-Colico line in Alto Lario. On select routes and during certain times of the year, it is possible to embark from other locations such as Piona, Dervio, Musso, and Pianello del Lario.

A ferry service for cars, motorbikes and camper vans is also available in the central area of the lake (Bellagio-Cadenabbia-Menaggio-Varenna).

Getting around with private services

Those who prefer to travel by private transport can make use of various operators that offer private transfer services by car, minivan or motorboat.



Useful numbers

— *In case of need*

Emergency Number: 112

Moriggia Pelascini Hospital:

Via Pelascini n. 3, Gravedona ed Uniti
+39 0344 92111
www.ospedaledigravedona.it

Doctor on call

Regional number: 116117
Mondays-Fridays: 8 p.m. – 8 a.m.
Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays: 24 hours

Police station in Colico:

Via Parravicini, 2
+39 0341 940106

Police station in Gravedona ed Uniti:

Via Molo Vecchio, 52
+39 0344 85293

Police station in Dongo:

Via Iginio Gentile, 4
+39 0344 81236

Markets in North Lake Como

— *Weekly markets*

Tuesday

- >**Dervio:** every Tuesday: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- >**Domaso:** 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- >**Sorico:** 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Wednesday

- >**Gravedona ed Uniti:** 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Thursday

- >**Dongo:** 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month (every Thursday from mid-June to the end of August): 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Friday

- >**Colico:** every Friday: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sunday

- >**Colico (centre):** only in July: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

5 Day trips in the surrounding area

1) Bellagio

Commonly known as the “Pearl of Lake Como,” Bellagio is distinguished by its charming historic centre consisting of narrow streets, and stairways lined with shops, bars and restaurants. Located on the central promontory of the lake, it can be easily reached by ferry or fast boat service from the main piers of Alto Lario.

2) Villas in the centre of the lake

For those who want to spend a day surrounded by art and beauty, the exquisite villas and their luxurious gardens are just a short distance away. Villa Carlotta, Villa Balbianello, Villa Monastero, and the Gardens of Villa Melzi, for example, can be easily reached by using the “Centro Lago Shuttle.” This boat service regularly connects the different stops in the centre of the lake, from Lenno to Varenna.

3) Como

Capital of the province, this beautiful city with its medieval heart is located about 50 kilometres from Alto Lario. It can be accessed by car, bus or boat (ferry or hydrofoil). You can stroll through the historic centre and admire views of the Duomo, Piazza San Fedele and the rationalist architecture, and then continue along the lakefront to the Voltiano Temple. The view from Brunate, which can be reached via the famous funicular railway, is truly breathtaking.

4) Milan

For those who want to visit the capital of fashion and design and the most cosmopolitan city in Italy, Milan is about 90 kilometres away from Alto Lago di Como. You can get there by car or take a comfortable train ride from Colico station, which is a stop along the Milan-Tirano line. Once you arrive at Milano Centrale station, you can take the metro to reach the city centre and the main tourist attractions.

5) Sankt Moritz

St. Moritz is a famous Swiss mountain resort and a favourite destination of the international elite, and is just over 70 kilometres away from Alto Lario. Well-known for its beautiful ski slopes, landscape, glamorous lifestyle and high-end shopping, it is also the departure point for the Bernina Express, the highest railway route in the Alps which passes through breath-taking and unspoilt landscapes and connects the resort to Tirano, in Valtellina.



Picture
Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo (Tremezzina)
Ph: Villa Carlotta

Tourist Infopoints

—The Tourist offices in North Lake Como

Infopoint Gravedona ed Uniti

Piazza Trieste – GRAVEDONA ED UNITI (CO)
 infopoint.gravedona@northlakecomo.net
 +39 0344 85005

Infopoint Domaso

Via Garibaldi – DOMASO (CO)
 infopoint.domaso@northlakecomo.net
 +39 375 5236912

Infopoint Dongo

c/o Museo della Fine della Guerra
 Piazza Paracchini – DONGO (CO)
 infopoint.dongo@northlakecomo.net
 +39 0344 82572

Infopoint Colico

Via Pontile, 7 – COLICO (LC)
 infopoint.colico@northlakecomo.net
 +39 0341 930930

Infopoint Dervio

Parco Boldona, Via degli Alpini – DERVIO (LC)
 ufficioturistico.dervio@gmail.com
 +39 0341 804450

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 Alto Lago di Como
 Via Regina Levante, 2
 22015 Gravedona ed Uniti (CO)

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Travel Guide

—North Lake Como

“Be inspired by North Lake Como, the northernmost part of Lake Como. Immerse yourself in a land where a rich history blends harmoniously with the unspoiled natural surroundings, creating a captivating landscape dotted with charming villages and idyllic hillside hamlets. An ideal destination for sports enthusiasts, boasting a variety of activities such as sailing, surfing, mountain biking, and hiking. Come explore this remarkable area and be astonished by its wonders.”

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