

SHERPA: ITALY - LAKE COMO RAMBLING

8-days/ 7-nights self-guided walking holidays (JCO - Revised: October 09)

This new tour has all the necessary hallmarks to become a classic - Alpine Italy in a beautiful Lakeland setting. Lake Como is a gorgeous blue watery ribbon carved - between spectacular mountains, for over 46km - during the last ice age by powerful glaciers. It has an average depth of 154m but at its deepest dives to 410m. It branches into two at a junction between the lovely villages of Bellagio, Varenna and Menaggio on opposing lakeshores. At the end of the western limb of the lake is the attractive city of Como, which is the starting point of this tour.

The area was no secret to the Romans who once built villas along its length, and many of the wealthy came to retire by the lake. Many of these villas have admirable gardens which benefit from the mild climate induced by the stabilising presence of 22.5 km³ of lake water and are able to include tropical as well as temperate plants. With the advent of resort type tourism from Victorian times, hotels were built for wealthy European and American tourists who promenaded around the lakeshore and into the surrounding hills to take the air.



You too can discover the attractions and beauty of the area with the selection of walks, ferry crossings and the variety of hotel locations.

Departs: Daily from February - November (excluding 14 - 19 April, 4 - 7 May, 10 - 12 September because of special events locally where accommodation is difficult to confirm).

Arrival: The tour starts in the little historical village of Brunate just above the city of Como. A pickup service with private taxi from Milan or the airport can be arranged on request at extra cost

During the tour: The itinerary requires the use of ferry services to travel between hotels. The cost of these is not included in the holiday cost as it is not practical to supply tickets. These are easily purchased at the waterside before boarding the boats. The cost of the two transfers is 10 – 15 Euros per person; the faster ferries are the more expensive option. On these two journeys between hotels you are required to travel with your luggage. We recommend a bag on wheels, backpack or other easily carried bag. The taxi transfer from the ferry terminal at Menaggio to the hotel in Breglia and return is included in the trip price. In addition a number of cable cars, taxis, buses and boats are required to complete the walking itinerary. These are not included in the holiday price and will total around 30 – 35 Euros per person

End of tour: The tour ends after breakfast on day 8 in Varenna. The return is easily made by boat to Como, then by train to Milan, or by bus directly to the airport.

Extra nights: It is possible to add extra nights at any of the towns en route when making a booking.

Level of difficulty: This walk is graded 'moderate' and most of the trails are well maintained. Some of these walks have shorter versions, which include only the sections on easy, mostly paved paths, clearly visible and easy to follow. Longer options are available for some of the walks (e.g. days 2, 4, 5 and 6), with some steeper climbs and descents on rougher surfaces.

Fitness: Clients should have a reasonable level of fitness and should be able to walk for up to 4½ hours during a day for easier options and longer for moderate grade walks. Snow may be encountered especially early in the season and up to late June at the highest levels.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

Waymarking: only some of the routes are marked with red/white signs or with signs. Elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided, together with the maps.

On self-guided walks we provide: Route notes, maps at 1:25.000 scale.

Hotel single room supplements: these are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

Baths: it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main expect showers.

Breakfasts: in countries such as Italy usually consist of coffee and croissant; sometimes, bread rolls, yogurts, ham and cheese as well. If you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Language: Note that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different bring a phrase book, try to learn a bit of Italian!

Accommodation & Meals: Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 2-star and 3-star hotels. 2 evening meals are included. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

You are free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price. Materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you stay. Also it is possible on all walking days to have lunch in the villages, or mountain hamlets that you pass through.

Nights 1 & 2: These are spent at Brunate. Our 3-star hotel is situated on the hillside at 712m and it overlooks the city of Como. Use the cablecar to take you up and down to Como (7 minutes each way).

Nights 3 & 4: These nights are spent in a comfortable 2-star hotel (although we feel it should have a higher star rating) in the small hamlet of Breglia, high above the lake, in the mountains above Menaggio.

Nights 5, 6 & 7: These last nights are spent in a very good 3-star hotel in the wonderful little village of Varenna, the 'most romantic village of Italy', located in the central part of the Lake.

Suggested Itinerary:

Note that distances and timings stated below, refer to the main walks plus additional suggestions, which are added to the main walk distance.

Day 1: Arrival in Como, either by train or bus. Take the cablecar (@ Euro 3.40 per person) up to your hotel at Brunate. Depending on your arrival time if you have spare time you can pay a short visit to the very interesting historic town centre (Como) and maybe stroll along the lake to soak up the tranquil old world atmosphere.

Day 2: A wonderful panoramic walk along a well kept path along the ridge, high above the lake, with views to both sides. It is possible to have a panoramic lunch in Brunate, but there are also many great viewpoint spots for a good picnic. At the ruins of a medieval castle we descend towards the lake again. Those who want to can continue their walk down to the lakeshore village, of Torno, and take the boat back. Otherwise return through the forest to Brunate and your hotel.

Distance: 10km - 16 km. Approx. 4½ - 7 hours walking.

Options for an extra day in Brunate: Around Como there are many villa's and estates to visit. Go and see Villa Olmo, and try to see Villa D'Este as well. Travelling by boat to some other lake side villages in this southern part of the lake is also a worthwhile experience. Cernobbio, for example, surrounded by beautiful villa's, has a wonderful relaxed atmosphere.

Day 3: The first part of the day is dedicated to the old town of Como, renowned for its Romanesque churches, its wonderful Duomo, medieval town walls and silk products. But also for its impressive villas, its fine 'fin-de-siècle' hotels and its rationalist architecture along the lake shore. Stroll through the alleys and along the lake to get the real feel of the city. From Como you travel taking your luggage with you by boat to Menaggio, admiring all the charming villages from the lake. In Menaggio your taxi meets you and takes you up to the charming

village of Breglia, along a panoramic road. Here take a first stroll to Madonna di Breglia, a 'church with a view', and San Domenico. Along the Roman excavations you return to your hotel to relax on the terrace and breathe in the fresh mountain air.

Distance: 4,5 – 8,5 km. Approx. 2 – 3½ hours walking

Day 4: Directly from your hotel in Breglia you take a circular walk, which brings you up to a mountain hut above Menaggio. The walk is relatively easy, but nonetheless offers unforgettable views of the lake! First you walk through the old part of the village, then beautiful forests and of course you come across a number of spectacular viewpoints over Lake Como. A last steep section brings you up to the mountain hut where it is possible to have lunch. A short extra walk brings you to the saddle of 'Pizza Coppa' from where you can admire the whole region, from Lake Como to Lake Lugano (Switzerland). An optional detour takes you to the top of Monte Grona (alt. 1736m.). Taking a gradually descending path, with still spectacular views on Lake Como and the surrounding mountains, you return to Breglia.

Distance: 9 -12 km. Approx. 4½ -5½ hours walking

Day 5: A car takes you down to Menaggio, from where you take the boat (taking your luggage with you) to the charming village of Varenna, (taking your luggage with you) deemed 'Italy's most romantic village', and then settle into your hotel. Varenna has inspiring views of the lake and the distant mountains and brightly painted houses adorned with flower-filled balconies, a bustling waterfront and a maze of meandering cobblestoned streets. It is a delightful place to explore. Take a walk on one of the historical pathways of the area, the so-called 'Sentiero del Viandante', which brings you to the curious 'Fiumelatte', Italy's shortest river, this was researched by Leonardo de Vinci. In the afternoon you can opt to visit the small village of Bellano, where you can make a short, but very interesting promenade into the canyon of the river Pioverna. Or perhaps you'll just want to relax and eat in a trattoria somewhere in the village.

Distance: 7 - 9 km. Approx. 3 - 4 hours walking

Day 6: Today you walk the northern stretch of the 'Sentiero del Viandante'. There are several options: you can either walk a shorter or longer stretch. From Varenna you travel by boat or bus to Dervio or Bellano, and from there you walk along this relatively easy coastal path back to Varenna. Views over the lake from this path are marvellous and you move through a pretty terraced landscape. Those who wish can combine the walk with a visit to the abbey of Piona, one of the most intriguing places by Lake Como.

Distance: 8-17 km. Approx. 3 - 6 hours walking

Day 7: Today you can visit the whole central section of the Lago di Como by boat. According to your interests there are a several spots where you just 'must' go such as: the splendid Villa Carlotta, with its beautiful gardens overlooking the lake, charming Menaggio and of course Bellagio, "The Pearl of the Lake", situated on Punta Spartivento, where the two arms of Lake Como meet. Here you can take an incredibly scenic walk through delightful countryside, and the charming fishing village of Pescallo and up to the scenic hamlet of Visgnola. Down at the lake you walk back along the wonderful gardens of Villa Melzi. Then there is time to explore any number of the local villages by boat, or relax with a drink somewhere on the lake shore, before returning to the hotel.

Distance: 8 - 11 km. Approx. 3 – 4½ hours walking

Day 8: End of trip. Depart after breakfast

Other walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers & meals are available in many parts of Italy including Tuscany, Umbria, the Cinque Terra or Amalfi coasts & the Dolomites. **Outdoor Travel** cover most European destinations including the Swiss Alps & the many scenic areas of France including literary walking routes such as Stephenson's Footsteps or trails in the footsteps of famous painters such as Van Gogh's Provence. We also offer the Way of St James from Le Puy to Santiago; the pilgrims trail along the River Yonne to Veزالay in Burgundy & St Cuthbert's Way from Scotland into England.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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