

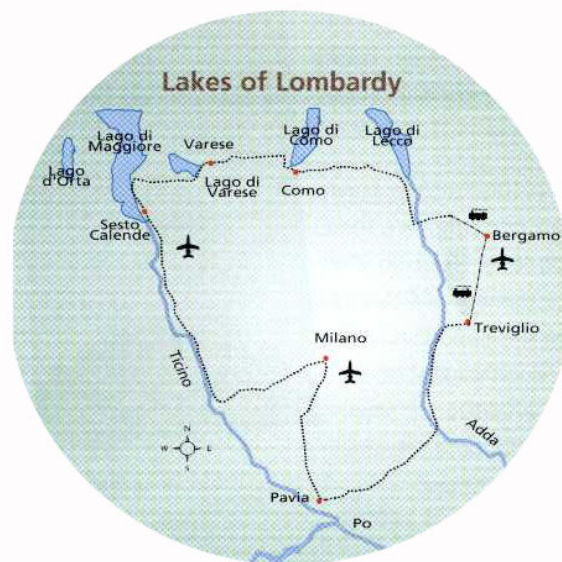
Italy: Lakes Of Lombardy

Tour code: CLL

Revised: Jan 08

This beautiful ride passes through Lombardy one of the wealthiest and most industrious regions of Italy, an area that retains a strong natural beauty and cultural identity. Traveling by bicycle is a good way to discover the history and heritage that Lombardy offers, while you pedal along beside the area's fascinating lakes and rivers. It is a region of water and mountains: The melt-water runs from the mountains into the deep postglacial lakes such as Lecco, Como, Varese and Maggiore. The water then flows more slowly through wonderful scenic valleys heading south to the flatter lands of the Po Valley.

There are some hilly sections, but the itinerary is mostly in the lowlands with a few short climbs, on surfaced cycle paths or secondary roads with little traffic. You will be on lake and canal side trails rather than crossing the mountains, so although some distances may seem quite long, they can be covered without too much difficulty. En route you will pass through three 'Natural Parks,' and you will also visit a mixture of cities, historic towns and villages. Highlights include Bergamo with its mediaeval buildings; the views to the Alps from the bell tower of San Maria Maggiore; the rides through the Parco dell'Adda; the city of Como with its ferries, viewpoints and lake promenade; The atmosphere of the old town of Varese; The Ticino Valley Natural Park; and sightseeing in Milan which has one of the largest and most famous gothic cathedrals in the World and of course some world famous shopping opportunities if you have brought several credit cards with you!



Season

Saturdays from April 12th to July 12th, August 30th to September 13th and October 4th to October 18th.

Level of Difficulty

Moderate. A high standard of fitness is not necessary but cyclists should be able to bike for up to a maximum of 72 km/45 miles across undulating terrain. Most days can be shortened by using the train, (fares not included). Trains with facilities to carry bicycles link the main cities on the tour, so if the weather is bad or you choose to take a day off from cycling you can normally reach the next destination by train.

The Bikes

We provide hybrid (city) bikes, available in various sizes in men's, women's or unisex models, with 24 or 27-gear Shimano gears (Deore or Alivio).

Bike Features and accessories:

Aluminum frame and mudguards, rack, comfortable gel saddle, 7-function cycle computer, waterproof rear pannier (12-20 lt.), a handlebar bag or A4 format map holder or basket, a water

bottle (0.75 l), a repair kit (inner tube, glue, patch, pump), anti-puncture Schwalbe Marathon 700 x 35 tyres and a combination lock.

Helmet: Italian law does not require cyclists to wear a helmet but we consider it important to wear one for safer cycling. Please bring your own and make sure that it fits you properly.

Clothing: During the tour you will have the chance to visit various religious institutions, such as churches and convents, where you must be appropriately dressed (covered shoulders, shoes or sandals, etc...) so you should pack some lightweight long clothing in your pannier if you wish to visit these places. Also remember to bring a first aid kit with you!

Your own bikes

If you want to do the tour with your own bike, before departure you need to make sure it is in good working order and recently serviced. Make sure you have front and rear lights, bell and odometer – computer (which is very important in order to follow the route notes). We also highly recommend you bring a repair kit and basic tools with you because the emergency number for breakdowns cannot be used if you are using your own bike. Don't forget to bring a lock and always lock your bike.

Baggage Transfers

Luggage labels for attaching to each piece of baggage will be given to you on the first day when you arrive at the hotel. Luggage (a maximum of two pieces per person) is to be taken down to the hotel reception every morning before 9.30 and grouped according to the receptionist's instructions. It will arrive at the next hotel by 17.30. We also ask you not to put glass bottles containing liquids or any fragile objects into your bags, which may damage not only your clothing but also other peoples luggage.

Trains with bicycle transport

In Italy there is a good train service offering bicycle transport. This low-cost option will allow you to reach the next city in the case of rain or bad weather, or if you prefer to visit a city for a day instead of cycling. Trains with bicycle compartments are all regional trains and are indicated with a bicycle symbol on the carriage and also on the timetables on display in the station.

The cost of the ticket for a passenger varies according to the distance covered, whereas for the bike it is always E3.50 (valid for 24 hours on the entire Italian network). Tickets can be bought directly at the railway station or at a "Tabacchi" shop, asking for a "fascia chilometrica" (per kilometre) ticket, plus a ticket for the bike.

For further information on timetables and prices you can consult www.trenitalia.com

Maps & Route Notes

We provide specially written route descriptions for each day's cycling in our Lombardy route notes. There are also Lombardy bike maps; information on the cities, towns and villages passed on the tour; a guide to Lombardy and a hotel list.

General Information

Breakfast: in countries such as Italy, are usually coffee and toast/croissant, occasionally fruit, yoghurts and cheeses make an appearance. 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.

Single Supplements: are payable on most of our tours. **1)** 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. **2)** You are not just paying a supplement on the room but the luggage transfer costs are being paid in full. The cost of moving 1 bag or 2 bags etc remains the same. On some of our trips it is possible to reduce the cost of the single supplement if you happen to be a 3rd person travelling.

Language: When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different so carry an Italian phrase book with you.

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you at reception for you to take up to your room.

Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is in a variety of 2 & 3 star hotels on a bed and breakfast basis. Dinners and picnic lunches are not included, but there are plenty of places to eat along the route and materials for picnics can be purchased in each of the towns and villages where you stay.

The first and last nights are spent in Bergamo, and one night is spent in each of Como, Varese, Sesto Calende, Milan and Pavia. There are two possible hotels used in each location and which is booked depends upon the room availability. There will be at least 3 nights in 3 star accommodation and the others in 2 star hotels. All hotels have comfortable rooms with private facilities and they are close to the town centers, places of interest and restaurants.

Note: It is generally normal practice when staying in hotels that you check-in on or after 2pm and checkout by 10am the following morning. Individual hotel times may vary.

Arrival in Bergamo

By Air.

From **Bergamo Orio Al Serio Airport**, (BGY): A bus departs every 30 minutes from 05.52 to 24.00 from the airport for Bergamo Central railway station. The transfer takes about 15 minutes. The ticket costs E 2.00. 'www.atb.bergamo.it'

From **Milan Malpensa Airport** (MXP): A shuttle bus linking the airport to Milan Central railway station departs every 20 minutes. The transfer takes about 50 minutes and the ticket costs E 6.00. (www.malpensashuttle.it).

From **Milano Linate Airport** (LIN): A "Starfly Shuttle" bus linking the airport to Milan Central railway station departs every 30 minutes. The transfer takes about 30 minutes and the ticket costs E 4.00. (www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it).

From **Verona Villafranca Catullo Airport** (VRN): A bus departs from 06.30 to 23.35 from the airport to Verona Porta Nuova railway station every 20 minutes. The transfer takes about 30 minutes and the ticket costs E4.50. (www.aeroportooverona.it).

By Train

Note that on Sundays and Bank Holidays there are fewer services than on weekdays.

From **Milan Central to Bergamo:** about 1h15. Twenty-eight trains depart from 6.10 to 23.37.

From **Verona Porta Nuova to Bergamo:** about 2h00. Fourteen trains depart from 6.50 to 21.19.

For further information on timetables and prices, you can consult the following websites: www.trenitalia.it and www.bahn.de.

By Car

Bergamo is well-connected to the A4 Milan-Venice motorway. Create your route itinerary on www.mappy.com or www.viamichelin.com.

Itinerary Guide

Day 1: Bergamo.

Individual arrival. If you haven't received your Information Pack by mail, it will be given to you at your first hotel where the bicycles will also be available. Just ask reception what you have to do to pick them up. All the bicycles bear a label with your name, so it will be easy to identify yours. At the reception of your first hotel on the tour you will also find an envelope with: luggage labels; hotel vouchers: to give to the various hotel receptions on arrival.

Day 2: Bergamo–Como (15 km by train + 66 km by bike).

From Bergamo you take the train to Ambivere (15 km, ticket not included). From there you cycle along the River Adda, crossing the Parco dell'Adda Nord. At Villa sull'Adda you cross the river on board a ferry (ticket not included), one of Leonardo Da Vinci's inventions, which will take you across to the opposite shore only using only the power of the current. Cycling past the lakes of Olginate and Garlate you reach Como: a walk on the lakeside promenade is a must.

Day 3: Como–Varese (36 km).

Today there is attractive and hilly cycling giving you good views in places. It is also a day where there can be some traffic, but it is not so far to your destination! You will eventually reach Varese, a lovely town situated between mountains and lakes, famous for its villas and gardens.

Day 4: Varese–Sesto Calende (40 km).

A very pleasant route that is partly on the cycle path along Lake Varese. Shortly before the end of the stage you will pass two other charming lakes: Comabbio and Monate. Sesto Calende is situated on the Lombard shore of Lake Maggiore.

Day 5: Sesto Calende–Milano (72 km).

A beautiful route along the River Ticino, then along the Naviglio Grande Canal, a spectacular work of hydraulic engineering. Continue past numerous barrages which regulate the flow of water into Lake Maggiore, as well as many artificial canals, as far as the monumental Pamperduto Dam. Shortly afterwards, you leave the canal and proceed to Milan.

Day 6: Milano–Pavia (48 km).

A route along the beautiful Naviglio Pavese Canal, away from traffic and noise. On the way, you will come to the famous charterhouse of Pavia, built in 1396.

Day 7: Pavia–Bergamo (45 km + 20 km by train).

Today you cycle along quiet roads through fertile countryside crossed by the Rivers Olona, Lambro and the Muzza Canal as far as Lodi (worth a visit). Proceed along the course of the River Adda in the Parco Regionale dell'Adda. After a break in Cassano d'Adda, famous for its exclusive villas (Villa Brambilla and Villa Borromeo), go on to Treviglio where you will catch the train to Bergamo. (Ticket not included).

Day 8: Bergamo.

Depart after breakfast.

Extend your stay

Extra nights on the cycling tour can also be booked, this will normally entail a small supplementary cycle hire charge as well as the room charge.