

*Guided walking tour (GCOM)*

# Lake Como & Switzerland

*Beautiful villas, tranquil lake atmosphere,  
alpine scenery & the world's most amazing train rides*



## TRIP NOTES

© Genius Loci Travel. All rights reserved.



[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time the Italian lakes have inspired poets, artists and travellers with their majestic beauty. The tranquil lakes offered a relaxed pace where you could unwind and breathe in some mountain air. In the shadow of the towering Italian & Swiss Alps the Como Lake region is home to lavish villas surrounded by magnificent gardens – European nobility, seduced by its charm, have long flocked here for holidays. Adorning the banks of this glacially sculpted lake, these dazzling estates invite us for a visit. But the forested slopes and colourful villages also promise spectacular exploring, from alpine hikes to garden strolls. Hidden in the mountains that surround the lakes are some wonderfully secluded valleys, alpine meadows and woodland forests. Your journey provides you with opportunities to sample the best of both worlds. Lazy days cruising on the lake surrounded by the very mountains you'll be trekking through on alternate days.

Lake Como is close to Switzerland, and you will of course visit some of the highlights here: the amazing Mount Generoso, towering high above Lake Lugano and Lake Como, and St. Moritz, once (and perhaps still) the playground for the European elite, in whose surroundings you'll discover beautiful alpine lakes and the incredible glaciers coming down from the Bernina peaks. And you'll travel on what is perhaps the real highlight of the area: the red trains of the Bernina Express. You spend the nights in great hotels, which guarantee charm and a link to the area's opulent past.

You start the tour from the beautiful town of Como, on the southern shore of the lake, which is still very Mediterranean and a good start for your first explorations. Then you travel up into the mountains of Brunate for your first day walk. Next is a daytrip into Switzerland, where you travel up Monte Generoso on the world's oldest tourist train. From here you descend towards Lake Como again, now to discover the area around Menaggio on the western shore. Another day in Switzerland brings you to St. Moritz, in an amazingly beautiful landscape of Alpine lakes & glaciers. You hike along a well-marked path to the tongue of the Morteratsch glacier, before travelling down into Italy on the red trains of the Bernina Express, arguably the world's most beautiful train ride. You spend the last two days in Varenna, considered the most romantic town on the lake, where you discover some other highlights: beautiful Bellagio and some of the most spectacular villas in the area: Villa Balbianello, Carlotta and Villa Melzi. Your trip ends after your overnight stay in Varenna.

The premises where you'll be staying are all very special, full of historical interest. The standard of the tour is 3/4 stars.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, part of them waymarked. Average walking times: approx. 4-5 hours each day.



[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



## DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

### Day 0 – Arrival in (Milan) Como

Arrival in Como, either by train or bus, in case you arrive one day earlier. You are free to pay a quick visit to the very interesting and historical town centre already, and maybe stroll around the lake to soak up the tranquil old world atmosphere.

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

Como can easily be reached from one of the Milan airports. There are regular trains and buses. Several hotels can be booked for you in Como according to your wishes (either 'downtown' centrally located, or near the train station, ranging from 3- to 5-star).

Alternative: arrival in Milan. You are met by a taxi and brought to your hotel.

### Day 1 – Como: the Capital of the Lake

The starting point of your tour is the beautiful city of Como, known of course for its beautiful lake, but also for its silk products and its great architecture. You will meet your tour leader here at 3pm, and then make a short stroll towards the lakeshore. Here we have our 'aperitivo' and a short introduction on what lies ahead for the next week, followed by a relaxed afternoon walk through the old town. Como is renowned for its Romanesque churches, its wonderful Duomo and medieval town walls. But if that's not enough, there are also impressive villas, fine 'fin-de-siècle' hotels, and rationalist architecture along the lakeshore. Stroll through the alleys and around the lake to get the real feel of the city. You may then wish to spend some time here by the tranquil lake, have a drink, or relax in the park. In the evening we go out for dinner together in a nice restaurant which offers the typical regional cuisine.

**Accommodation: Como - Hotel \*\*\*\* - Meals included: 1 dinner.**

*Total walking time: 1,5 h.*

### Day 2 – Como: Brunate & the southern lakeshore

After a leisurely breakfast we make a short walk to the cable car, one of Europe's oldest, that links Como to Brunate. From Brunate we make a wonderful panoramic walk on a well-kept path along the ridge, high above the lake, with views to both sides. We can have a panoramic lunch in Brunate, but there are also many other panoramic spots for a good picnic lunch. Passing the ruins of a medieval castle you descend towards the lake again. Towards the end of the afternoon we reach the charming lakeshore village of Torno. After a drink here we take the boat back to Como. In the evening we can enjoy a nice meal in a good restaurant in the historic city centre.

**Accommodation: Como - Hotel \*\*\*\* - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch.**

*Total walking distance: 9,5 km. Total walking time: 4,5 h.*

### Day 3 – Into Switzerland, high above the Lake of Lugano

Today we travel into Switzerland. A short drive by private minibus brings us from Como to Capolago, on the southern, 'Mediterranean' shore of Lake Lugano. From here we travel up by Europe's first 'tourist train' to the amazing Mt. Generoso, overlooking both Lake Lugano and Lake Como. Here we make a beautiful roundwalk, with great views stretching from Switzerland to Italy. We will then walk all the way down into the beautiful Val d'Intelvi. Here our minibus picks us up and we travel on to the next base, Menaggio, on the western shore of Lake Como.

**Accommodation: Menaggio - Hotel \*\*\*\* - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

*Total walking time: around 4-5 h. Total driving time: about 1 h.*



#GeniusItaly

[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



### Day 4 – Mountains of Menaggio (or 'Via Regina')

Depending on the weather conditions and your interests, today you either take a great walk up to the mountain hut above Menaggio, situated on the southern slope of Mount Grona, or a leisurely and pleasant walk around the lake on the ancient cobbled road, 'Via Regina', from Colonno to Lenno. The first walk is challenging in sections but the visual rewards are spectacular, with unrivalled views of Lake Como and the surrounding mountains. The first section of the walk goes through forest and pastoral land, before we trek up to the *rifugio* itself. This is a great scenic setting to enjoy our picnic lunch. Ten minutes from the *rifugio* there is a viewpoint called Pizzo Coppa, where we have a view not only of Lake Como, but also of the entire region, with Lake Piano and Lake Lugano straddling the Italian-Swiss border. After lunch we have time for a rest before descending to the lake again. Depending on our energy levels there are a number of different return routes back down to Breglia, and from there to Menaggio, and there is also the possibility of catching the bus in several places. If we opt for the more relaxed day along the 'Via Regina', we take our time to discover ancient villages, villas and gardens, Roman findings, wonderful examples of architecture and charming natural views. We start our walk in the historic centre of Colonno, continue towards Sala Comacina and Ossuccio, and finally arrive at the pier of Lenno. We will be crossing terraces and small olive groves, with generous views of the lake and Comacina Island. In Lenno we can enjoy our lunch in a great location on the lakeshore in a local restaurant, or just grab a sandwich. After lunch we go and visit Villa Balbianello, which stands on a romantic promontory overlooking Lake Como and is considered one of the most striking villas in the world. In the late afternoon we travel back to Menaggio by boat. There we have free time to wander around through the village centre and have a drink and some relaxation by the lakeshore, before returning to our hotel. In the evening you are free to choose your own dinner options.

**Accommodation: Menaggio - Hotel \*\*\*\* - Meals included: 1 breakfast.**

*Total walking time: about 4-5 h. Total driving time: about 30 min.*

### Day 5 – St. Moritz, glaciers & Bernina Express

After an early breakfast this morning, we travel by private minibus to the northern edge of Lake Como. We can do some shopping and have a drink in the last Italian town, Chiavenna, before entering Switzerland through amazing mountain scenery. We are driven to Passo Maloja along a wonderful panoramic road, and then arrive in the famous St. Moritz area with its beautiful lakes. Close to here, we make a spectacular - but easy - excursion to the glacier of Morteratsch. After your walk here, we enjoy a nice lunch with local specialties. We return to Italy on the Bernina Express, a small local train, from Morteratsch. This amazing train ride, over mountain peaks and glacial lakes, descending steeply towards the valley, is among the most spectacular in the world. Our bus waits for us down in Tirano. From here – after a short break for an aperitivo – we return to Lake Como. Our next base is a beautiful hotel in Varenna, on the eastern shore of the lake. We stay in the old town centre, with its colourful painted houses. After this long day, we enjoy a nice dinner in the restaurant next to our hotel.

**Accommodation: Varenna - Hotel \*\*\* - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner**

*Total walking time: about 3 h. Total driving time: about 2 h.*



[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



### Day 6 – Boating on Lake Como – Varenna, Villa Carlotta, Bellagio & Villa Melzi

Today is an easy day, with a few relaxed sightseeing walks. By boat – the most beautiful way to travel! –we will discover the central section of Lake Como. Our first stop is the postcard - perfect town of Bellagio, "the pearl of the lake", situated at Punta Spartivento ("Point that splits the Wind"), where the two arms of Lake Como meet. Incredibly scenic – with inspiring views of the lake and the distant mountains, brightly painted houses adorned with flower-filled balconies, a bustling waterfront and a maze of meandering cobblestone streets, Bellagio is a delightful place to explore. We make a short walk through the delightful countryside and have a panino to enjoy en route, on the beach or just by the lakeshore. Or perhaps you'll want to just relax and eat in a trattoria somewhere in the village. In the afternoon we travel to the lakeside village of Tremezzo, where we visit the splendid Villa Carlotta, with its beautiful gardens overlooking the lake. We continue by boat, and cross the lake back to the eastern shore, where we now take our time to discover the charming town of Varenna. Considered by some to be the most romantic town in all of Italy, it is certainly worth a visit. Nearby is the Fiumelatte, the curious "river of milk," which flows only six months a year and is Italy's shortest river (800 feet long). Not even Leonardo da Vinci, who explored the cavern where the river emerges, could discover its source or the reason why it flows for only half the year. There is time for a drink in Varenna, before returning to your hotel.

**Accommodation: Varenna - Hotel \*\*\* - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner**

*Total walking time: about 3 h. Total boating time: about 1,5 h.*

### Day 7 – Varenna (Bergamo/Milano)

This morning after breakfast, our journey ends. You can opt to spend some more time at Lake Como, or travel down to Milan or Bergamo, which can both be easily reached by train. You can also opt to travel back to Como by boat. A taxi transfer to any destination can be arranged at any time.



## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic hotels, mostly historical buildings (generally 4-star or 3-star superior; 5-star on special departure dates – possible on request). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Accommodation is mainly on a **B&B** basis. Some evening meals are included, for which we have selected the best available restaurants. On two nights you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your guide can give you good tips for these evening dinners.



[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



Some (picnic) lunches are included in the tour price. On other days you are free to have your own lunch. Here you have the option of having your lunch in a nice restaurant, or purchasing supplies for a picnic lunch.

**Nights 1 & 2:** The first two nights are spent at Como, the capital of the lake. Your base is a beautiful and comfortable 4-star hotel in the heart of the historic centre, at walking distance from all the main monuments of the medieval town centre and the lakeshore.

**Nights 3 & 4:** These nights are spent in a beautiful and comfortable 4-star hotel at Menaggio.

**Nights 5 & 6:** The last two nights are spent in a very good 3-star hotel in the wonderful little town of Varenna, the 'most romantic town in Italy', located near the central part of the lake.

## INCLUDED

- Private English-speaking tour leader for 7 days
- Accommodation: 2 nights Como, 2 nights Menaggio, 2 nights Varenna, all in good \*\*\*S/\*\*\*\* hotels
- Meals: all breakfasts, 4 dinners (good restaurants!), two lunches
- All private & public transfers as indicated throughout the entire itinerary
- Entrance fees of all sites along the itinerary
- All special activities as outlined in the day-by-day itinerary
- 24/24 assistance
- Luggage transport
- All gratuities for baggage, porters & hotel service

## NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**Moderately easy** (2/3): Mostly moderately easy walks, along well-maintained footpaths, with rough surfaces nonetheless. On some days some stretches are more difficult but on these days alternative options are available. Extensions or shortcuts are also possible on most days.

**Fitness:** High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE



#GeniusItaly

[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*



**Arrival:** The tour starts in COMO, a city well connected with Milan by a frequent train service. From the Milan Malpensa international airport there are regular shuttle buses to Como.

**Departure:** The tour ends after breakfast in VARENNA on day 7. A short transfer brings you to the train station (included), from where you travel back to either Milan or Bergamo. Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

## TOUR VARIATIONS

It is possible to include extra nights at the beginning or the end of the tour.

The tour can easily be combined with our Lago Maggiore tour or our Lake Garda tour! Another good idea could be to add a few days in Milan or Bellagio. Several good accommodations are available.

## BESPOKE ADVENTURES

Many of these tours can be turned into Private 'Bespoke Adventures' to accommodate private group travel.

We can organize both "off the shelf" itineraries, as well as create custom itineraries to meet your special needs. Book the dates you want, with the family or friends you wish to bring along!

Longer and shorter versions of this tour are also available. Prices on request.

© *Genius Loci Travel. All rights reserved.*



[booking@genius-loci.it](mailto:booking@genius-loci.it) | [www.genius-loci.it](http://www.genius-loci.it)

\*\*\*GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy\*\*\*

