

WALKING & HIKING ITINERARY
CASUAL INN TRIP

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Italian Lakes

THE CHARMS OF LAKE COMO

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



Important Facts
at a glance

6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

Click [here](#) for departure dates
and pricing details

ROUTE RATING

Levels 2–3

See [below](#) for details.

**IN BUSINESS FOR
29 YEARS,
BACKROADS IS
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
TOP 10 TRAVEL
COMPANIES BY
TRAVEL+LEISURE**

Experience the pleasures and surprises of the famous Italian Lakes region. Backroads invites you to discover the old-world charm and hearty cuisine of this stunning pocket of Italy, making sure you have time to explore Lake Como's better-known attractions. You'll travel by foot on *mulatterie* (old mule paths) and forested trails, and also have opportunities to relax and enjoy the views from high above the lakes in gondolas and chairlifts that take you to hidden villages in the Alps and pre-Alps. Venture off the beaten path to discover the small villages that dot the lakes and immerse yourself in local life. Spend your nights at intimate hotels with authentic and casual ambience—perfect places to kick back and relax after an invigorating day of hiking. Looking to get away from it all? The Italian Lakes are calling.

DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) at 11:45 a.m. Como's San Giovanni train station. (There's more than one train station in Como, so make sure you get off at the right one!). Please arrive dressed in your walking clothes with a daypack handy. See "Arriving & Departing" for additional logistics information.

CERNOBBIO HIKE 2.9 MILES (721-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

Benvenuti in Italia! After meeting in Como, we head to the shore of beautiful Lago di Como for a trademark Backroads picnic lunch. We then walk to the dock to catch a ferry to the neighboring town of Moltrasio, where we hike up to a shady footpath that curls into the hills along the western shore of the lake. The moderately strenuous hike begins with a climb up 1,000 stone steps and includes a few rugged stretches with loose stones and a short section where the trail is exposed to a steep drop-off—make sure to take your time and watch your footing. Outstanding views of the lake and colorful villas nestled on its shore make the hike well worth the extra effort. (Please keep in mind that the remoteness of the trail means Backroads can't offer shuttle support.) Our destination is the picturesque town of Cernobbio, with its lovely tree-lined, flower-bedecked waterfront. Once we arrive, there's time to stroll the old streets and piazzas, which are brimming with shops offering unique trinkets and gifts, or you're welcome to grab an espresso or cappuccino in a café and soak up the ambience.

Settle in at Hotel Asnigo before meeting the group for a reception on the terrace, followed by dinner. *Lodging: Hotel Asnigo*

DAY 2

COMO WALK 4.5 MILES

WALKING TOUR OF COMO 1 HOUR

FERRY TO BELLANO 1 HOUR

VARENNA ROUTE 4.4 MILES (754-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: REGOLO DI PERLEDO 2.9 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (590-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)



HOTEL ASNIGO

(1 night) Set atop a hillside overlooking Lake Como, this comfortable hotel offers rooms with wonderful views of the lakes and mountains, a swimming pool and La Terrazza restaurant.
Cernobbio, Italy
phone: 39-031-510-062
www.centrohotelslakecomo.com

HOTEL DU LAC

(2 nights) Step back in time at this lakeside hotel featuring marble columns, wrought iron balustrades, a flower-filled terrace and a welcoming atmosphere.
Varenna, Italy
phone: 39-034-183-0238
www.albergodulac.com

LA LOCANDA DEL NOTAIO

(2 nights) This cozy and elegant hotel conveniently located in the hills above Lakes Como and Lugano offers individually decorated rooms, an on-site restaurant, nearby golf course and great views of the surrounding mountains.
Pellio d'Intelvi, Italy
phone: 39-031-842-7016
www.lalocandadelnotaio.com

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

LONGER OPTION: FIUMELATTE AND VILLA MONASTERIO 5.3 MILES (754-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

This morning we return to Como on foot, setting out through the bustling center of Cernobbio along a paved sidewalk. Our walk passes through the grounds of Villa Olmo, a magnificent neoclassical structure surrounded by Italian gardens featuring a fountain with sculptures of cherubs and marine animals. Then a shoreline path leading past the aero club, the War Memorial and Alessandro Volta memorial bring us into Como, where we meet a local guide for a walking tour of the city.

After the tour, we journey by hydrofoil to Bellano, enjoying the stunning views of Lake Como and the spectacular lakefront villas, including Villa D'Este, Villa Balbianello and yes, George Clooney's home, Villa Oleandra. After arriving in Bellano, enjoy lunch on your own before setting off on a winding uphill hike past villas, gardens and vineyards to the ruins of Castello Vezio, which has its own falconer. After exploring the castle, continue down a steep *mulatterie* to Varenna and the Hotel du Lac. The longer option takes you to the foaming Fiumelatte, "river of milk," which is Italy's shortest river at less than a quarter of a mile long. Continue along the river to the 13th-century Villa Monastero, a former convent that became known in 1566 as "House of Loving Maids" when some of its pious Cistercian nuns became a little too friendly with the monks at Villa Balbianello. News of the nuns' behavior soon reached the archbishop in Milan, who promptly obtained a decree of closure from the pope. The building's ownership exchanged hands many times through the years, until it was entrusted to the management of the Province of Lecco in 1996.

Our hike ends in Varenna at Hotel du Lac. This evening we gather for dinner at a nearby restaurant. *Lodging: Hotel du Lac*

DAY 3

BAITA BELVEDERE ROUTE 3.7 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,378-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: MULINI DEL PERLO 2.4 MILES (570-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: BELLAGIO LOOP 6.6 MILES (1,378-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

We begin the day with a short ferry ride to the town of Bellagio, where we hike along the waterfront to one of Lago di Como's grand estates, Villa Melzi, built in 1808. Its namesake, Francesco Melzi d'Eril, was a notable Italian politician and a friend of Napoléon Bonaparte, and his palatial home and grounds with lovely English-style gardens reflect his social status. After making our way through the botanical gardens, we continue our hike up to an old mill, Mulini del Perlo, on small stone roads and hiking paths, passing farmhouses and enjoying terrific view of Lakes Como and Bellagio. At Mulini del Perlo, feel free to shuttle the rest of the way up to the village of Chevrivio or continue on foot. Here we stop at a local farm for lunch and a tasting of locally made cheeses, creams, milk and yogurt.

If you simply can't walk another step after lunch, you can take the ferry back to the hotel or shuttle to Bellagio to explore its maze of cobblestone streets, brightly painted houses adorned with flower-filled balconies and bustling waterfront. But if you feel the need to expend some of those delicious calories, begin the descent back to Bellagio, following forested hillside trails before connecting to the road for a short stretch. You'll pick up stone pathways weaving through the outskirts of town that will take you to the center of town. Feel free to linger in Bellagio into the evening and dine on your own, or ferry back to Varenna for dinner. *Lodging: Hotel du Lac*



Top Reasons Why
you should take this trip

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You don't have to sweat the details! Backroads takes care of everything--from making sure your luggage is waiting for you in your room to appearing with a cool drink or a lift when you need it the most--allowing you to enjoy a carefree vacation full of fun and relaxation.

Traveling with Backroads is about making connections: with places and people, history and culture, fellow travelers--perhaps you'll even discover something new about yourself!

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE**

DAY 4

FERRY TO TREMEZZO 30 MINUTES

LA LOCANDA DEL NOTAIO 7.5 MILES (1,902-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: SAN FEDELE 3.6 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (590-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: LA LOCANDA DEL NOTAIO 8.7 MILES (2,887-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

By now you've become intimately acquainted with the joys of ferry travel, so sit back and enjoy this morning's scenic ferry ride to Tremezzo. We meet our local guide for a tour of 17th-century Villa Carlotta, filled with impressive works of art and original furnishings, and surrounded by lush botanical gardens. Afterward, we shuttle to Argegno and take a short gondola ride up 1,935 feet to Pigra, a typical mountain town with only 300 residents. From this vantage point, you have incredible views of both the Swiss Alps and Lake Como. Forested trails lead to the small village of San Fedele d'Intelvi, where you can stop for a bite to eat and get a real taste of local life.

After lunch, shuttle to La Locanda del Notaio and relax after the day's challenging hike with a massage, or maybe you'll find a quiet spot to catch up on some reading. If you decide to continue on foot, walk back to the hotel via a shady trail that emerges onto alpine meadows surrounded by mountains. This afternoon you can choose from several activities, including a round of golf at a course near La Locando del Notaio, tennis or horseback riding. (If you're interested in golf or horseback riding and don't mind forgoing part of the day's hike, please check with your leaders about making arrangements. Note that massages, golf and horseback riding fees are not included in the trip price.) Tonight we enjoy an excellent dinner at a nearby restaurant. *Lodging: La Locando del Notaio*

DAY 5

MONTE GENEROSO LOOP 8 MILES (1,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

SHORTER OPTION: 5 MILES (500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

Today we tackle Monte Generoso, a former island that rose up from the middle of an extensive sea of ice during the last ice age. The mountain supports a variety of flora and fauna, which include 800 plant species and a colony of chamois, hooved goat-like animals that were introduced in the 1960s. Monte Generoso, at a height of 5,590 feet, stands on the border of Italy of Switzerland. The hike is challenging, but at the top you'll be rewarded with a 360-degree panorama of the entire Italian Lakes region: Lugano, Como, Varese and Maggiore. On a clear day, views stretch to the Po Valley, the Apennines and the Alps, from Gran Paradiso to the Matterhorn and the Jungfrau.

This evening, we celebrate our adventure among the Italian Lakes with a farewell dinner at the hotel. *Lodging: La Locando del Notaio*

DAY 6

PELLIO LOOP 3 MILES

SHUTTLE TO COMO 1 HOUR

After breakfast at the hotel, you may want to take one last opportunity to savor the sights and sounds of this stunning region on a morning walk in Pello. Later, we shuttle to the train station in Como where our trip ends. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.



Route Rating to map your activity level

Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site

—www.backroads.com—

and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

LEVEL 2

5-7 miles/day
2-4 hours/day

LEVEL 3

7-9 miles/day
3-5 hours/day

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.**

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, we meet at 11:45 a.m. at Como's **San Giovanni** train station. Our meeting time coincides with a train arriving from Milan, but please note that train schedules are subject to change. **(There's more than one train station in Como, so make sure you get off at the right one!)** Look for your Trip Leaders, wearing Backroads T-shirts, in front of the station. From here, we walk to the ferry dock to catch a private boat to Bellano. **Please arrive dressed in your walking clothes and with a daypack containing whatever you'll need for the day's activities.**

TRIP CONCLUSION

On the last day of the trip, we travel by coach back to Como's **San Giovanni** train station, arriving at approximately 11:30 a.m. From Como, you can take the train to Milan's Central station or travel by bus to Malpensa Airport. The train trip to Milan's Central station takes 40–55 minutes. If you take the bus from Como's bus station in Matteotti Square, you'll arrive at Malpensa Airport in about an hour. (See www.sptcomo.it/malpensa.php for more information on bus travel.)

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

We recommend flying into Milan's Malpensa Airport (airport code: MXP; www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it). Due to the morning meeting time, it's best to arrive in Milan the night before the trip begins. If you must fly in on the morning of the trip, we ask that you kindly inform your Trip Consultant so she or he can let your Trip Leaders know when to expect you.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

TRANSPORTATION TO COMO

From Milan:

By train: We recommend taking the Malpensa Express train from the airport to central Milan, which will cost about \$13. Trains depart the airport every 30 minutes from Terminal 1; travel time is about 40 minutes. (For more details, visit [/www.malpensaexpress.it](http://www.malpensaexpress.it).) From Milan's Centrale train station, you will board an intercity or regional train for Como, making sure to get off at the San Giovanni station; travel time is 40–55 minutes.

By bus: You can also travel between Malpensa Airport and Piazza Cavour in downtown Como via the Autolinea bus line - C250 Como - Malpensa Airport. At the airport, look for



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

ORGANIZE A BACKROADS PRIVATE TRIP FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES FOR THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Hotel Room Rate Guide (U.S. dollars per night)

Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

SPT Como (www.sptcomo.it/malpensa.php) in front of Terminal 1, Stop 13; you can purchase a one-way ticket for approximately \$21 inside the terminal; travel time is about 1 hour. At Piazza Cavour, you can take a 5-minute cab ride to San Giovanni train station. (For details on bus transportation from the airport to central Milan, visit www.airpullman.com and www.malpensashuttle.it.)

Taxi: If you plan to travel by taxi between the airport and Como, expect to pay \$140–\$150 and make sure to confirm the fare with the driver before departing. Travel time is 40–60 minutes, depending on traffic.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere.

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but hotel rates are always subject to change.

Rooms on the street tend to be noisy, so you might want to request a room overlooking the hotel's garden or courtyard. Make your reservations early during the busy season, as rooms are booked well in advance.

COMO AND BELLAGIO

ALBERGO TERMINUS

Restored to preserve its original Liberty style, this hotel is now one of the most desirable accommodations in Como. Highlights here include traditional Italian décor, outstanding views of Lake Como and proximity to the city square and cathedral. For a special treat, request the guest room in the hotel's tower. Lungo Lario Trieste 14; Phone: 39-031-329-111; www.hotelterminus-como.it; 40 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL FIRENZE

A recently renovated building in the heart of historic Como houses the intimate and friendly Hotel Firenze. Guest rooms are decorated in a fresh and modern style, and most offer views of either the Piazza Volta or the courtyard. Shopping, museums and restaurants are all within walking distance. Hotel Piazza Volta, 16; Phone: 39-031-300-333; www.centrohotelslakecomo.com; 44 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

BEST WESTERN HOTEL CONTINENTAL

Located within walking distance of the railway station, city center and lake, the Hotel Continental gives you easy access to all of Como's attractions. Comfortable compact rooms are well appointed and have air conditioning. Other features include an on-site restaurant, laundry facilities and complimentary full breakfast. Viale Innocenzo XI, 15; Phone: 39-031-260-485; www.bestwestern.com; 65 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL FLORENCE

A *Karen Brown's Guides* favorite, Hotel Florence is situated in the heart of Bellagio and boasts superb views of Lake Como. Family-run for more than 100 years, the hotel is warm and inviting with beamed ceilings set against white stucco walls, a large fireplace, distinctive antique furnishings and a wisteria-covered terrace overlooking the lake. Request a front room with French doors that lead to your own private balcony. Piazza Mazzini 42; Bellagio; Phone: 39-031-950-342; www.hotelflorencebellagio.it; 36 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

PALACE HOTEL

Sitting in an immense lakeside park in Como, this renovated villa is adorned with Venetian stucco, colorful marble and fine regional antiques. If you have a sweet tooth, you won't want to miss the traditional Ceccato ice-cream shop located lakeside next to the hotel. Lungo Lario Trieste 16; Phone: 39-031-23391; www.palacehotel.it; 100 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

MILAN

HOTEL ARISTON

Situated near the Duomo, the three-star Hotel Ariston offers a casual atmosphere. Its "bio-architectural" construction features natural materials and ionized air circulation throughout the building. The breakfast buffet includes organic food; free Internet service is available in the lobby. Largo Carrobbio 2; Phone: 39-02-72-000556; <http://aristonhotel.com>; 52 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

FIRST HOTEL MALPENSA AIRPORT

Make catching that early flight from Malpensa Airport hassle-free! Conveniently located between Terminals 1 and 2, this contemporary hotel offers all of the amenities, including a lobby bar and restaurant. Rooms are comfortably furnished and soundproofed. A free shuttle is available for travel between the hotel and both terminals. Via Baracca 34; Phone: 39-0331-717-045; www.firsthotel.it; 60 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

ANTICA LOCANDA LEONARDO

This family-run boutique hotel sits on the exclusive Corso Magenta in Milan's old quarter. Just a short walk away is the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, home to da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. Individually decorated rooms with polished wood floors overlook a peaceful courtyard. Corso Magenta 78; Phone: 39-02-48014197; www.anticolocandaleonardo.com; 20 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

BEST WESTERN HOTEL GALLES

This four-star hotel is located in a restored 19th-century building near Milan's Corso Buenos Aires shopping area. It offers all the amenities you would expect to find at a member of the Best Western group, including air conditioning, hairdryers, radios, satellite TV with the latest movies, telephones, Internet modem connections, a restaurant and bar. Piazza Lima 2; Phone: 800-780-7234 or 39-02-204841; www.bestwestern.com; 150 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL PRINCIPE DI SAVOIA

Evoking the decadence of the Belle Époque period, this opulent hotel has earned a coveted spot on *Conde Nast Traveler's* Gold List. Built in 1927, all of the rooms have been redone in a 19th-century Lombard style and lavished with plush damask fabrics, gilt and

neoclassical antiques. Forty-eight new rooms were unveiled in 2006. You'll appreciate the hotel's central location on the Piazza della Repubblica as well as the warm hospitality of the staff. Piazza della Repubblica 17; Phone: 39-02-62301; www.hotelprincipedisavoia.com; 401 rooms and suites. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

HOTEL SPADARI AL DUOMO

Hip and whimsical, this modern boutique hotel offers a contrast to the grande dames with its sleek furnishings and contemporary Milanese art. If you appreciate playful design and staying at the hottest spot in town, you'll love the Hotel Spadari al Duomo. You can request a room overlooking the Duomo or the lemon tree-filled courtyard. Via Spadari 11; Phone: 39-02-72-002371; www.spadarihotel.com; 40 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.