



The Italian Lakes



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Paula Hardy
Anthony Ham

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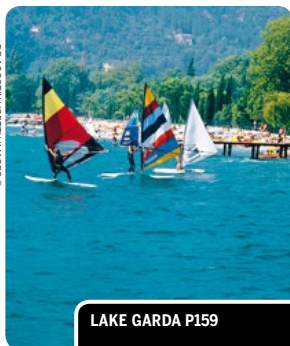
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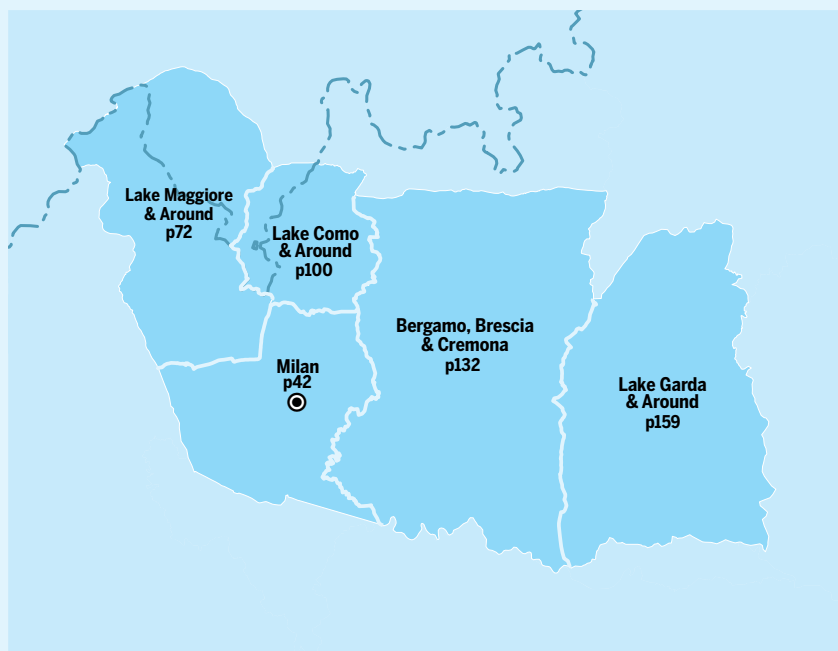
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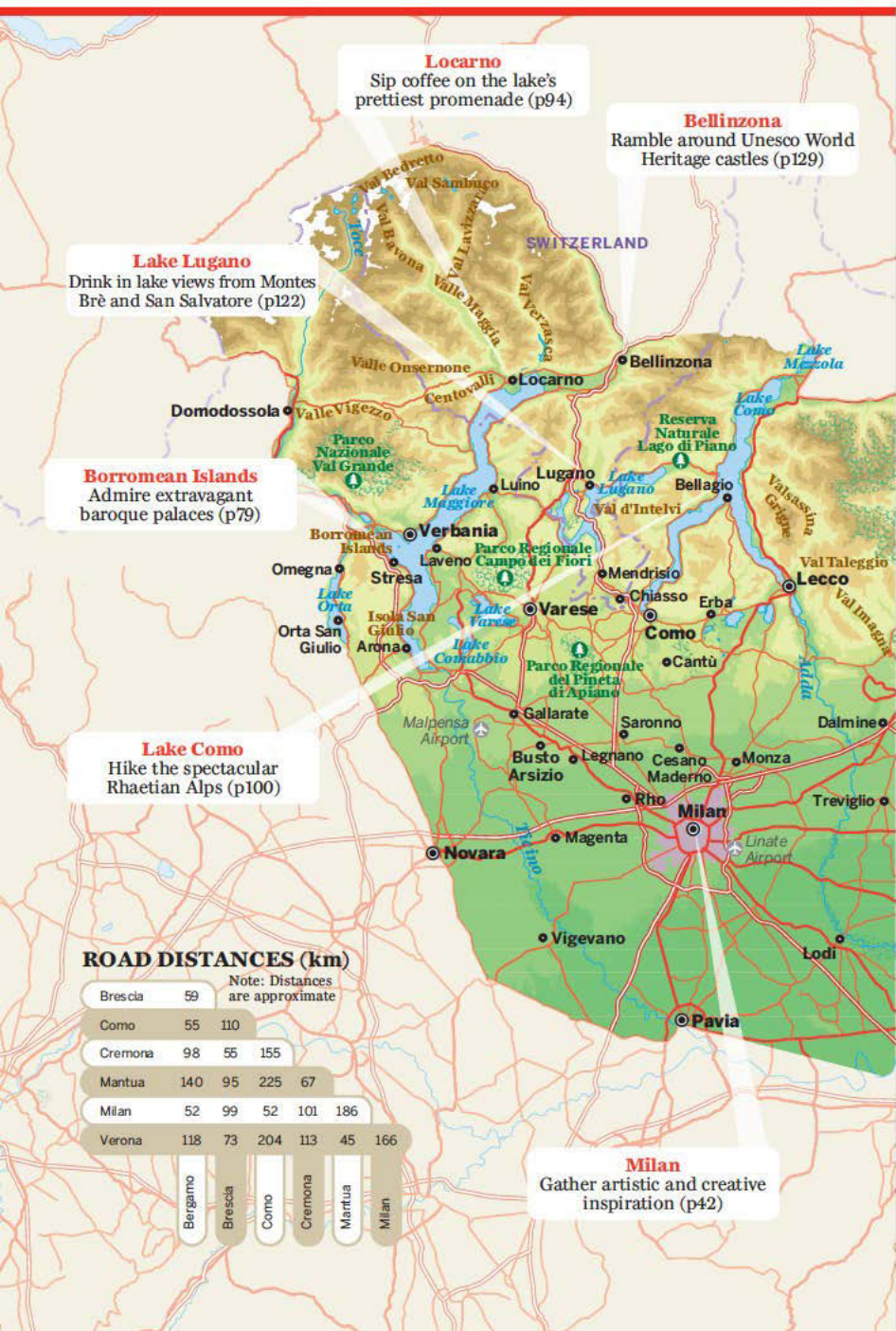
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On the Road



The Italian Lakes





0 50 km
0 25 miles

ELEVATION



Franciacorta

Track down
Italy's finest fizz (p148)

Lake Garda

Chase white-capped
waves on a windsurf (p161)

Verona

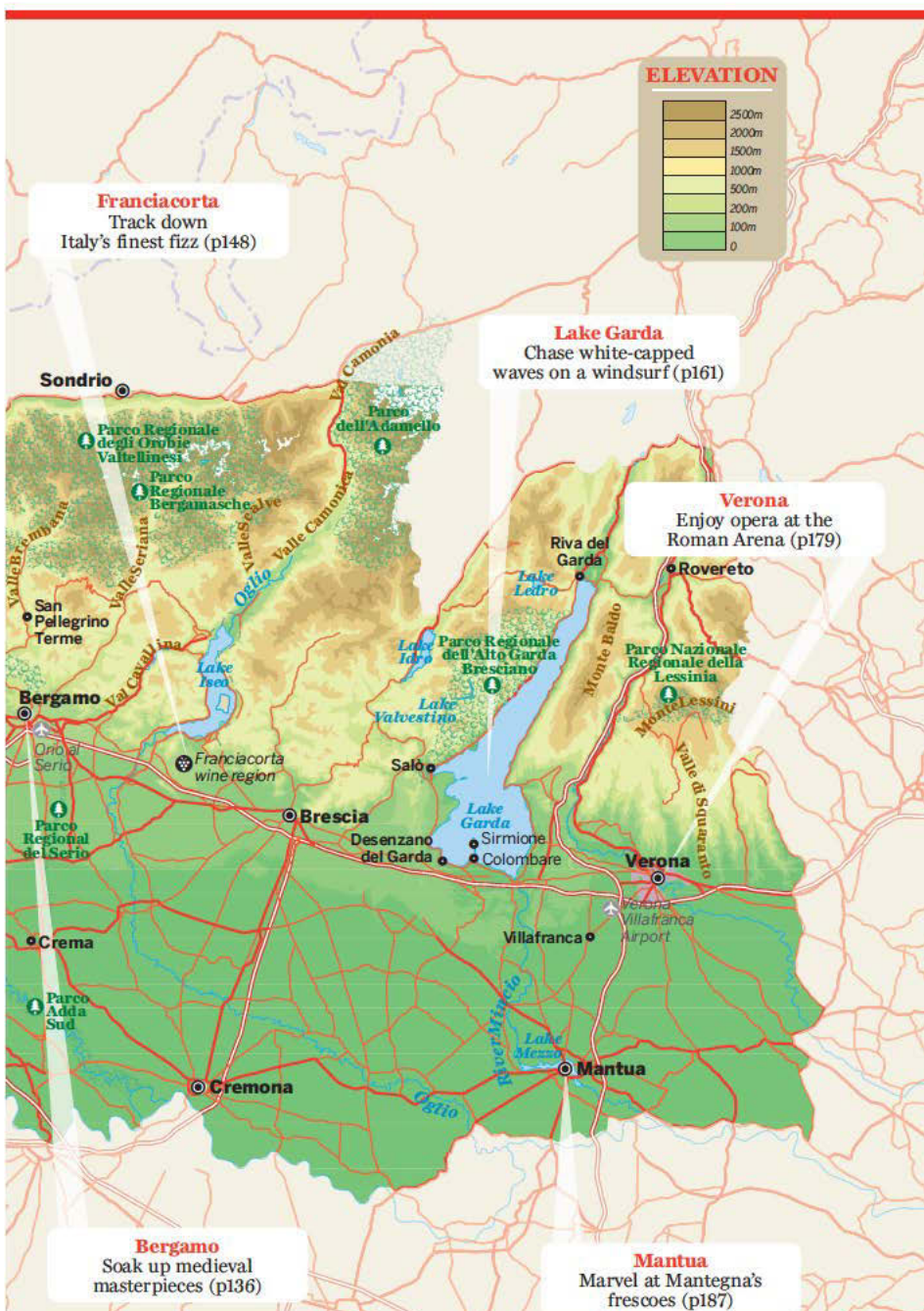
Enjoy opera at the
Roman Arena (p179)

Bergamo

Soak up medieval
masterpieces (p136)

Mantua

Marvel at Mantegna's
frescoes (p187)





OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Paula Hardy

Coordinating Author, Milan, Lake Garda & Around Paula has been contributing to Lonely Planet's Italian guides for over a decade. She has worked on six editions of the *Italy* guide, wrote the first editions of *Pocket Milan* and *Puglia & Basilicata*, and has written several editions of *Sicily* and *Sardinia*. Slowly working her way up Lo Stivalo (The Boot), Paula's first experience of Milan and the lakes was Furniture Fair madness and a suitcase full of impractical shoes. These days she knows better and focuses on the dynamic modern-art scene, ferreting out those hard-to-find heritage designers, and Heidi-like mountain walking. An erstwhile editor and producer, she also contributes to and edits a variety of websites and travel publications. You can find her tweeting @paula6hardy. Paula also wrote the Planning section, Accommodation chapter and the Understand features.



Anthony Ham

Lake Maggiore & Around; Lake Como & Around; and Bergamo, Brescia & Cremona Anthony has been writing for Lonely Planet for more than a decade, particularly covering regions in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. His love for Italy began as a teenager when his family travelled through Switzerland and the lakes of northern Italy. He has returned many times since, each time deepening his love for, and connection with, one of Europe's most beautiful corners. When

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Itineraries



14
DAYS

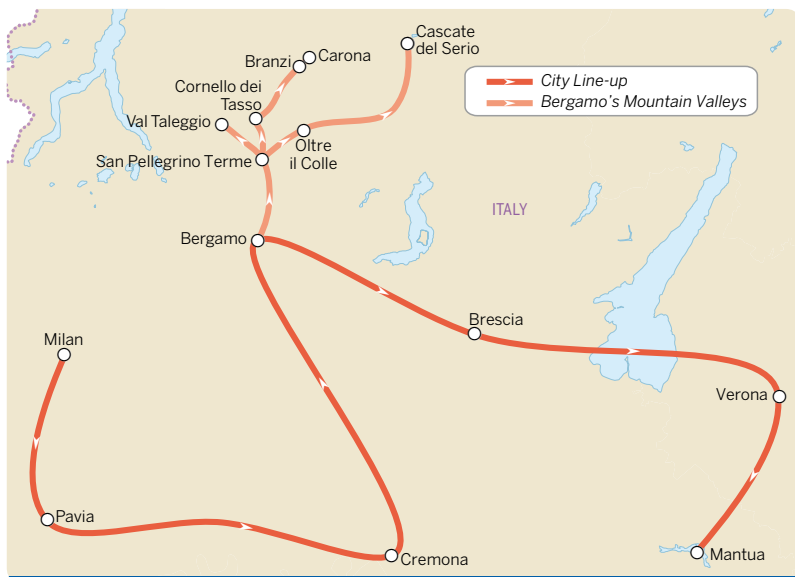
Milan, Lake Maggiore & Lake Como

Modernist **Milan** gets this whirlwind tour off to a spectacular start with big city treats like Leonardo da Vinci's *Il Cenacolo*, a tour of La Scala's costume department and world-class art collections in the Pinacoteca di Brera, the Museo Poldi Pezzoli and Museo del Novecento. Give yourself at least three days to eat, drink, shop and sight-see, and possibly take in a concert or opera. Then head for belle époque **Stresa**. Base yourself here or on Isola Superiore and ferry-hop to the extravagant Borromean palaces, the pleasure playground of Monte Mottarone and the voluptuous gardens of Villa Taranto. On day six, take a day trip to **Lake Orta**, before heading north by ferry or train to **Locarno**, where you should spend another few days soaking up this swanky Swiss town. Make your way back via quiet **Cannobio**. Then skip across the lake to Luino on the eastern shore and onto **Como**, via Varese. Amble the flower-laden lakeside to impressive Villa Olmo before taking a fast boat to **Bellagio**. Return to Milan, via **Bergamo**, and catch the extraordinary Carrara art collection amid some of the finest Lombard Renaissance architecture in the region.


**16
DAYS**

Verona & Lake Garda

Combine culture and the great outdoors by flying into **Verona**, then striking out for the wine country and touring Garda's activity laden shoreline. Spend three or four days in Verona, visiting its museums and frescoed churches, playing tag with Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers, drinking coffee and *spritz* in its magnificent piazze and enjoying theatre and opera in its Roman Arena and hillside amphitheatre. Then pick up a car from the train station and head out for the nearby hills of **Valpolicella**. You could whiz around two or three wineries in a day, but instead take things slow and hunker down in Agriturismo San Mattia and get to know your Amarones from your Reciotos. Then push on through the hills of **Bardolino** at week's end and treat yourself to a day at the plush Aqualux Hotel Spa or at night the romantic Locanda San Vigilio. Then, in the morning, head to **Riva del Garda** for three days of nonstop activity. Plan ahead for sailing, windsurfing or climbing classes, or get down to the waterfront early to hire some gear. Spend at least half a day hiking the old Ponale Road and another half day cycling up the Sarco river to Drò. For families, a trip to the Varone waterfall will be a hit, or ferry-hop to Malcesine and take the funicular up Monte Baldo. Alternatively, it's easy to while away the hours playing, swimming or cycling along the landscaped lakefront. On day 12 begin the drive south – a thrilling highlight in itself through mountain-blasted tunnels along a twisting road that overhangs the lake. Take the high road over the **Tremosine plateau**, before spending a night or two in idyllic **Gargnano** and heading on to patrician **Salò**. Base yourself here or just back from the lakeside in the vineyards of the **Valtenesi** and spend a further three days day-tripping to the extraordinary house-museum, Il Vittoriale, the private island of Isola del Garda and cruising vineyards and olive groves for tastings. Make sure you spend a full day hiking in the natural reserve of **Rocca di Manerba** and take a late boat to **Sirmione** to watch the sunset from lakeside thermal pools once the crowds have dispersed.

7
DAYS

City Line-Up

For an architectural and artistic tour of northern Italy's glittering medieval and Renaissance heyday, look no further than the elegant cities of the Po valley. **Milan**, with its huge crenellated castle and glittering Duomo, was the medieval muscle in the west. Just check out the collection in Castello Sforzesco and the rich legacy of art in its four basilicas. But Milan didn't have the medieval monopoly on culture. A half-day trip to nearby **Pavia** will give you time to enjoy Giangaleazzo's enormous Certosa monastery, and you'll need another day to browse the violin shops in **Cremona**, where Stradivarius started a musical tradition that resonates around the world even today. Then head onto **Bergamo** for Lombardy's finest Renaissance architecture and to **Brescia** and **Verona** for Roman ruins and fine dining. Finally, finish up in lake-bound **Mantua**, with Mantegna's frescoes, a Renaissance pleasure palace and some fine Renaissance-style dining at Il Cigno.

4
DAYS

Bergamo's Mountain Valleys

Join the proud and prosperous Bergamaschi in **Bergamo's** Città Alta (Upper Town) for a sedate *passeggiata* around its elegant Renaissance piazze, admiring its medieval towers and the magnificent Lombard Romanesque mausoleum of mercenary commander Bartolomeo Colleoni. Take in Renaissance masters at the Palazzo Ragione, stroll the ramparts of La Rocca and eat in as many of the town's excellent restaurants as you can manage. Then head north through art nouveau **San Pellegrino Terme** to the **Val Taleggio**, where you can stock up on one of Lombardy's signature cheeses from local farmers and cooperatives. Afterwards, return to the SS470 and head north through the medieval hamlet of **Cornello dei Tasso** to the Valle Brembana in the foothills of the Orobie Alps. Hikers will want to push deep into the mountains for trails at **Branzi** and **Carona**, which lead to glassy glacial lakes. But for those touring the country by a car, double-back south through **Oltre il Colle** into the Valle Seriana, for more fabulous forest vistas and Europe's tallest waterfall, the **Cascate del Serio**.

6
DAYS

Into Switzerland

Start in **Lugano**, an elegant lakeside town on the Swiss side of the border that's worth a busy day of your time. Spend a morning in its old town and museums, and the afternoon whizzing up the funiculars of Monte Brè and Monte San Salvatore. Also use Lugano as a base for visiting lakeside towns, among them charming **Morcote** and museums devoted to Herman Hesse in **Montagnola** and some extraordinary fossils in **Meride**. Then head northwest to **Bellinzona** and tour its three Unesco World Heritage Site-listed castles. As you head further west, detour into wonderfully quiet and pretty Val Verdasca and Valle Maggia en route to **Locarno** with its picturesque waterfront and engaging old town. With just a day or two left, and to make the most of your time, take the Lake Maggiore Express that includes the gorgeous Centovalli train from Locarno to Domodossola and another train down to **Stresa**. Then return to Locarno aboard a ferry that traces the lake shore back with the best of Maggiore lake views along the way.

5
DAYS

A Wine Meander

Kick off this whirlwind wine tour with a day in **Como** before taking the fast boat to Albergo Silvio in **Bellagio**, where you're booked for lunch on the terrace. Then hop across to pretty **Varenna** and tour the botanical gardens of the Villa Monastero before heading north up the east bank to the wine valley of the **Valtellina**. Tour some of the sunny hillside wineries and stock up on rare regional varietals such as the punchy Sforzato. On day three, emerge from the valley at Edolo and turn southwards down the **Valle Camonica**, lined with Bronze Age rock carvings, which you can tour in the 30-hectare **Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri** near Capo di Ponte. Then head for pretty **Sarnico** at the southern end of Lake Iseo and enjoy a laid-back day wandering its medieval lanes. You'll then want another two days: one to dine in style at Gualtiero Marchesi's extraordinary restaurant at the five-star, rust-red hotel L'Albereta in **Erbusco** and another to cycle off the indulgence with a tailor-made tour of in the vineyards of the **Franciacorta wine region**.

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