Road Trip: High into the Hills ..... 130
Argegno ..... 132
Ossuccio & Isola Comacina ..... 132
Lenno ..... 133
Tremezzo ..... 136
Menaggio & Val Menaggio ..... 137
Rezzonico ..... 137
Gravedona, Peglio & Domaso ..... 138
Lake Como East Bank ..... 138
Correno Plinio ..... 138
Varensina ..... 139
Valtellina ..... 141
Lake Lugano ..... 141
Lugano (Switzerland) ..... 142
Bellinzona ..... 147
BERGAMO, BRESCIA & CREMONA ..... 150
Bergamo ..... 151
Road Trip: Castle Circuit ..... 158
Bergamo’s Valleys ..... 161
Valle Brembana ..... 161
San Pellegrino Terme ..... 161
Valle Seriana ..... 162
Val Cavallina ..... 162
Lake Iseo & Around ..... 163
Monte Isola ..... 163
Iseo ..... 164
Lovere & Bossico ..... 165
Valle Camonica ..... 165
Franciacorta ..... 166
Brescia ..... 167
Cremona ..... 170
Lodi ..... 174
LAKE GARDA & AROUND ..... 176
Lake Garda South Bank ..... 177
Sirmione ..... 177
Lake Garda West Bank ..... 181
Valtenesi ..... 181
Lake Garda North Bank ..... 187
Riva del Garda ..... 187
Lake Garda East Bank ..... 190
Malcesine ..... 190
Bardolino ..... 193
Verona ..... 195
Verona’s Wine Country ..... 200
Valpolicella ..... 200
Road Trip: Valpolicella Wine Tour ..... 202
Soave ..... 204
Mantua ..... 205

The Italian Lakes Today ..... 212
History ..... 214
The Arts ..... 224
Villas & Gardens ..... 233
The Lakes Kitchen ..... 239
On the Wine Trail ..... 246
Fashion & Design ..... 248

Directory A–Z ..... 254
Transport ..... 260
Language ..... 266
Index ..... 273
Map Legend ..... 279
Squeeze the most out of a seven-day itinerary with this city-and-lake combo, which combines Milan’s best highlights with some chic lakeside living in Stresa, Como and Bellagio.

Modernist Milan gets this whirlwind tour off to a spectacular start with big-city treats like Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper, Michelin-starred dining at Seta and world-class art in the Pinacoteca di Brera. Give yourself at least two days to eat, shop and sight-see, and take in an opera at La Scala. Then head for belle époque Stresa and ferry-hop to the Borromean palaces on Isola Bella and Isola Madre. On your second day, swing up Monte Mottarone or launch off on a ferry to Verbania to visit the voluptuous gardens at Villa Taranto. From Stresa, continue to Como by car or train (via Milan). Here you can amble the flower-laden promenade to Villa Olmo, visit the frescoed Basilica di San Fedele and zip up to Brunate for pretty walks and panoramic views. Then press on to Bellagio, which sits in the centre of the lake, allowing you to ferry-hop to Tremezzo and Varenna. Back in Bellagio, round off the tour with a romantic sunset boat cruise.
This two-week tour takes you from tiny Lake Orta to the bustling southern shores of Lake Maggiore and up to the lake's wilder northern reaches before crossing the border to Locarno in Switzerland. From here, the drive south to Lake Lugano and Como cuts through the most spectacular mountain scenery.

Head straight from Malpensa Airport to the medieval town of Orta San Giulio on the thickly wooded shores of Lake Orta. Spend the following day meandering the medieval streets, visiting the 12th-century basilica on Isola di San Giulio and romancing over dinner. In the morning, depart for Stresa on the southern shore of Lake Maggiore. From here you can take the ferry to the Borromean Islands for a day trip to explore their extravagant palaces and gardens. After a day or two, move north up the eastern shore of the lake to Verbania. You can dip into the interesting Troubetzkoy sculpture collection at Museo del Paesaggio and wander through the vast gardens of Villa Taranto. Dine at charming Osteria Castello or romantic Ristorante Milano before moving on in the morning to Cannobio. This dreamy little cobbled town is one of the quietest on the lake and is a lovely place to spend a day or two lounging on the beach, sailing or exploring the Cannobino River valley. Start the second week by crossing the border to Locarno, where you can pack two days exploring the quaint old town, swimming at the lakeside lido, and visiting the Castello Visconteo, Isole di Brissago gardens and hilltop Santuario della Madonna del Sasso. In July and August, Locarno also hosts a fantastic film and music festival. The drive south from Locarno to bewitching Lago di Lugano offers spectacular mountain scenery. You’ll need two or three days here to explore the lakeside towns of Gandria, Meride and Morcote. At Meride you’ll find Mario Botta’s fascinating Museo dei Fossili, while at Gandria you can wander the 5km Sentiero di Gandria with its outstanding views over the lake. Base yourself in photogenic Morcote, which has been voted Switzerland’s most beautiful village. Finally, tear yourself away and head south to the silk town of Como, for a final taste of glamour and, perhaps, a swoop over the lakes with the Aero Club.
Top: Orta San Giulio (p108)
Bottom: Morcote (p146)
For an architectural and artistic tour of northern Italy's glittering medieval and Renaissance heydays, look no further than the elegant cities of the Po valley.

Start this tour in Milan, one of medieval Italy's most important city-states. Spend four days here exploring the Castello Sforzesco, the collection of old masters in the Pinacoteca di Brera and Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper. Make day trips to Monza and Pavia to see the Villa Reale and the Certosa di Pavia. Journey to Bergamo on your fifth day to find some of Lombardy's finest Renaissance architecture in the Upper Town. Dedicate a morning to the collection in the Accademia Carrara, one of the most impressive galleries in Italy. From Bergamo it's a short hop to Brescia, a city which hides a fascinating historic core in its ugly suburban sprawl, including two preserved Roman houses with floor mosaics. The Roman theme continues in Verona, your next stop. Verona's Roman Arena hosts the world's largest open-air opera festival. With three final days here, you'll have time to wander; drink some of the region's fine wines and maybe even day trip to Mantua to see Mantegna's frescoes in the Palazzo Ducale.
The southern shore of Lake Garda with its mild Mediterranean climate has been attracting travellers since Roman times. Hence the tumbledown Roman ruins, patrician villas, elegant lakeside towns and vine- and olive-covered hinterland. This itinerary encompasses them all.

From Verona drive straight to Sirmione, the southernmost town on Lake Garda. It sits on a peninsula that juts out into the lake and is surrounded on all sides by water. Spend the night wandering the cobbled lanes, soaking in the thermal springs and, in the morning, explore the Grotte di Catullo, a ruined Roman villa set in two pretty hectares. Then drive to Salò, via Desenzano del Garda, where you can visit another Roman villa. Base yourself in Salò for four days. It was once Garda's capital and is full of lovely Liberty-style buildings. From here, you can visit the aristocratic residence on the Isola del Garda, as well as Valtenesi wineries, olive farms and the archaeological park of Rocca di Manerba. Finally, head on to Gardone Riviera for the last two nights to take in André Heller’s beautiful botanical garden and the extraordinary Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, the estate of poet and Fascist Gabriele d'Annunzio.
Off the Beaten Track: The Italian Lakes

**CERTOSA DI PAVIA**
Located in the peaceful countryside 8km north of Pavia, this architecturally stunning monastery is one of Italy's largest and most opulent, filled with fine art treasures and the tombs of Milanese dukes. (p82)

**PARCO NAZIONALE DELLA VAL GRANDE**
The ultimate off-the-beaten-track destination is this High Alpine national park. The largest wilderness area in Italy, its walking trails take you up into mist-covered mountains offering spectacular views. (p95)

**WALKING TO ORRIDO DI SANT'ANNA**
A 3km walk through a wild, wooded ravine to a gushing waterfall and a rocky, riverside stream where you bathe in blissful solitude on hot summer days. (p97)

**HIKING THE TRIANGOLO LARIANO**
This mountainous triangle of land between the two branches of Lake Como is criss-crossed by hiking trails. Escape the lakeside crowds for cloud-busting views, quiet mountain refuges and some excellent bird spotting. (p125)

**THE CENTOVALLI**
The 'hundred valleys' is the westward valley route from southern Ticino to Domodossola in Italy. Take in the vertiginous views from a picturesque train, which carves a path through the valleys. (p111)

**PLAN YOUR TRIP OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**
Drive off-grid into Bergamo’s most remote valleys and enjoy wild landscapes, gushing waterfalls and hearty regional cuisine showcasing award-winning local cheese Taleggio. (p160)

Saddle-up Western-style on Argentinian ponies at Ranch Barlot and head out for single- or multi-day horse treks in the Alpine meadows high above Lake Garda on Monte Baldo. (p192)

Opt for a few days of slow travel in the Valpolicella wine region, checking in at various wineries and restaurants to sample some of northern Italy’s most august red wines. (p201)

Get off the well-worn lakeside road and head into the Orobie Alps where farmers still tend their dairy herds in the old walls and produce the world-famous cheeses. (p140)

Make a detour to this perfectly preserved medieval town encircled by rampart walls and explore its ancient historic centre before sitting down to a real rural eating experience at an old dairy farm. (p174)
## Map Legend

### Sights
- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

### Activities, Courses & Tours
- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

### Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

### Eating
- Eating

### Drinking & Nightlife
- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

### Entertainment
- Entertainment

### Shopping
- Shopping

### Information
- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
  - Other Information

### Geographic
- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

### Population
- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

### Transport
- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
  - Other Transport

### Routes
- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

### Boundaries
- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

### Hydrography
- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

### Areas
- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

*Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book*
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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony’s belief that ‘a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse’.

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