



The Italian Lakes



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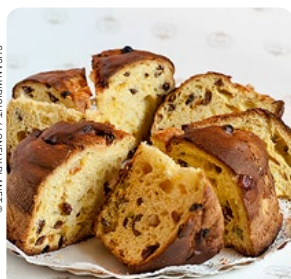
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Itineraries



Greatest Hits

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.


**14
DAYS**

Into Switzerland

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**, where 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)



BORIS-B / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

7
DAYS

A Wine Meander

Lombardy produces some of Italy's finest wines and the area around Verona and Lake Garda are prime grape-growing territory. This tour combines the cultural highlights of Verona with the heady flavours of Soave, Valpolicella, Franciacorta and the Valtenesi.

Fly into **Verona** and enjoy two days of sightseeing in the city's frescoed churches and grand castle museum. On the third day, day trip to **Soave**, where you can sample the lemony Soave Classico at the Azienda Agricola Coffele in the old town. The following day, set off for **Valpolicella** to sample the full bodied Amarone and Recioto reds. Prebook for tastings at wineries. A leisurely lunch at Enoteca della Valpolicella is also a must. Then continue on through the vine-covered hills to **Bardolino** on the shores of Lake Garda. This tiny town is surrounded by 70 wineries, one of which, Zeni, houses a wine museum. You can also sample wines here. The next day loop round the bottom of the lake into the **Valtènesi**. Base yourself in **Salò** and strike out for innovative wineries like Comincioli. Round up this wine-fuelled feast with lunch at Michelin-starred Due Colombe in **Franciacorta**, where you'll get to sample some of Italy's finest fizz.

10
DAYS

Art Cities

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.



7 DAYS

Action-Packed Adventure

The northern reaches of Lake Garda are hemmed in by high mountains, making this perfect hiking, biking and climbing territory. Regular winds also draw water-sports enthusiasts to this outdoor paradise.

Hire a car in **Verona** and head straight for the lakeside town of **Garda**, where you can overnight and take your first dip in the lake at the beautiful Parco Baia delle Sirene beach. The next day, drive to **Malcesine** and ascend massive Monte Baldo in the cable car. Cyclists can hire bikes at Xtreme Malcesine and take them on board, walkers can access panoramic mountain-top trails and paragliders can launch off the mountain and soar over the lake. On day three, arrive at **Riva del Garda** at the northern tip of the lake. Base yourself here for the next three or four days in order to pack in the wind- and kitesurfing, sailing, swimming, hiking, canyoning and rock climbing. Finish with a spot of R&R at B&B Peter Pan above the village of **Gargnano**, from where you can enjoy off-the-beaten-track walking trails in the Parco dell'Alto Garda Bresciano or flop on the beach at Parco la Fontanella.



7 DAYS

Lake Garda's Southern Shore

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 cobble 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

SWITZERLAND

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)

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)

PARCO NAZIONALE DELLA VAL GRANDE

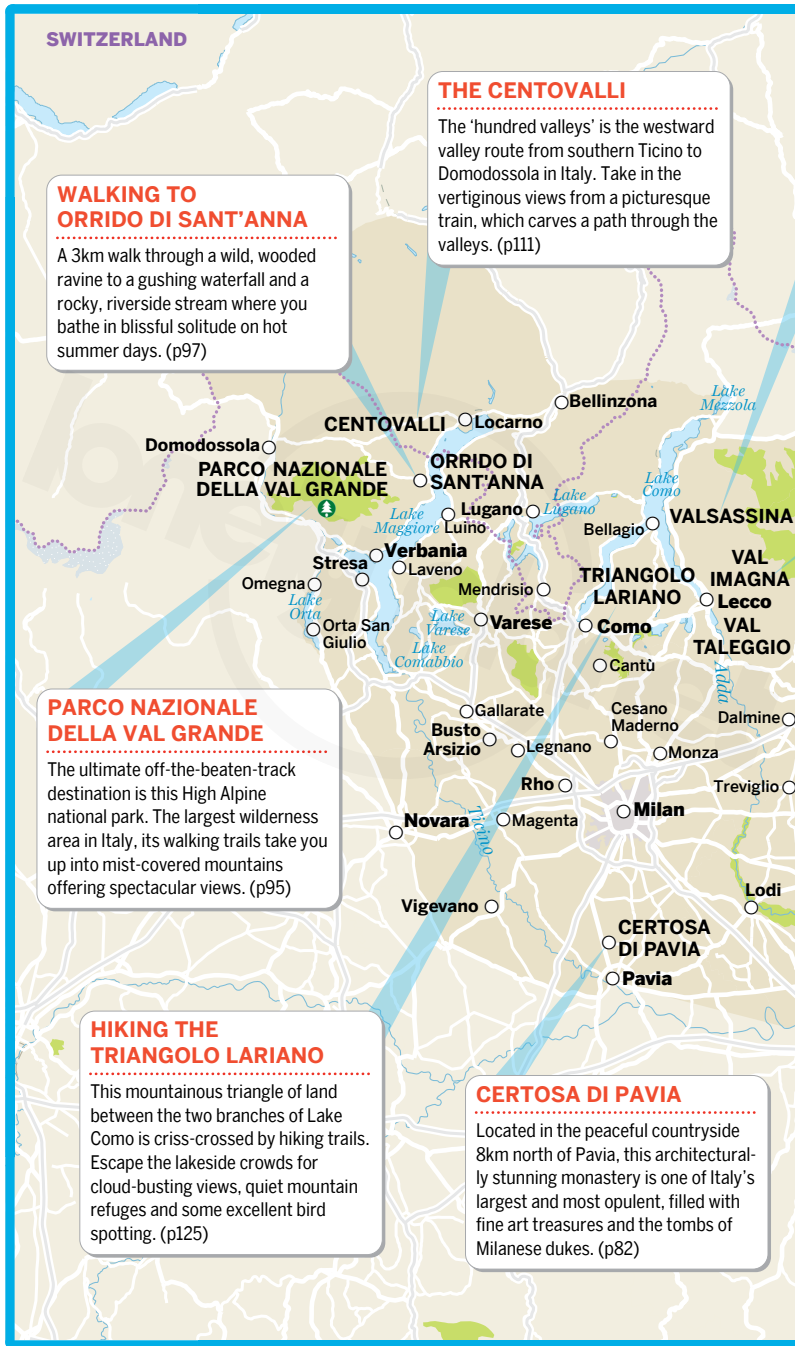
The ultimate off-the-beaten-track destination is this High Alpine national park. The largest wilderness area in Italy, its walking trails take you up into mist-covered mountains offering spectacular views. (p95)

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)

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)



VALSASSINA

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)

VAL IMAGNA & VAL TALEGGIO

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)

HORSE TREKKING ON MONTE BALDO

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)

Sondrio

San
Pellegrino
Terme

Bergamo

Crema

PIZZIGHETTONE

Cremona

Brescia

Desenzano
del Garda

Salò

VALPOLICELLA

Verona

Villafranca

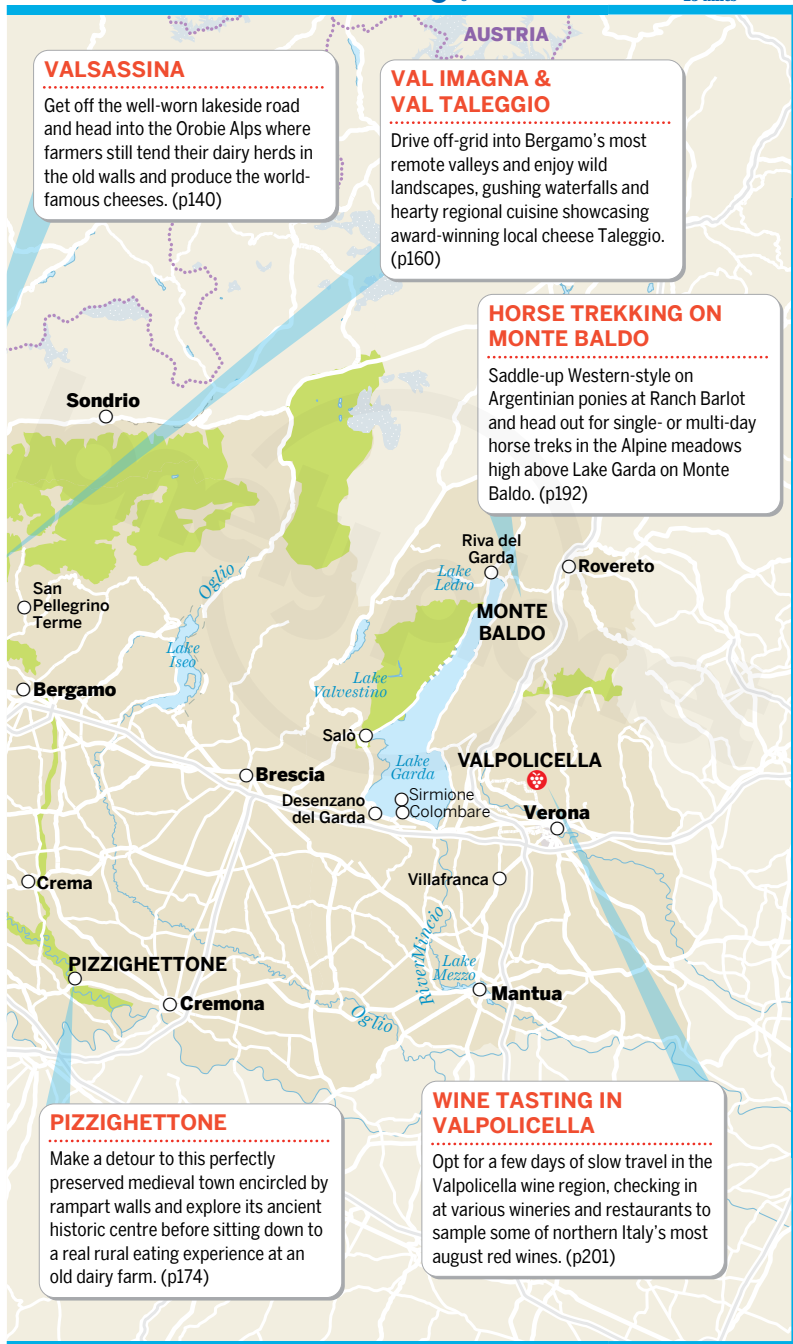
Mantua

PIZZIGHETTONE

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)

WINE TASTING IN VALPOLICELLA

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)



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'.

OUR WRITERS



Paula Hardy

Paula Hardy is an independent travel writer and editorial consultant, whose work for Lonely Planet and other flagship publications has taken her from nomadic camps in the Danakil Depression to Seychellois beach huts and the jewel-like bar at the Gritti Palace on the Grand Canal. Over two decades, she has authored more than 30 Lonely Planet guidebooks and spent five years as commissioning editor of Lonely Planet's bestselling Italian list. These days you'll find her hunting

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A travel author for the last decade, Marc has worked for Lonely Planet in Siberia, Slovakia, Bavaria, England, Ukraine, Austria, Poland, Croatia, Portugal, Madeira and on the Trans-Siberian Railway, as well as writing and updating tens of other guides for other publishers. When not on the road, Marc lives between Sandwich, Kent and Mariánské Lázně in the Czech Republic with his wife and two sons.



Regis St Louis

Regis grew up in a small town in the American Midwest – the kind of place that fuels big dreams of travel—and he developed an early fascination with foreign dialects and world cultures. He spent his formative years learning Russian and a handful of Romance languages, which served him well on journeys across much of the globe. Regis has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet titles, covering destinations across six continents. His travels have taken him from the mountains of Kamchatka to remote island villages in Melanesia, and to many grand urban landscapes. When not on the road, he lives in New Orleans. Follow him on www.instagram.com/regisstlouis.

Published by Lonely Planet Global Limited

CRN 554153

3rd edition – Jan 2018

ISBN 978 1 78657 251 6

© Lonely Planet 2018 Photographs © as indicated 2018

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Printed in China

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