

Welcome to the Italian Lakes

Formed at the end of the last ice age, and a popular holiday spot since Roman times, the Italian Lakes have an enduring, beguiling beauty.

Artful Landscapes

Travellers traversing the Alps wind down from snowcapped mountains to be greeted by a Mediterranean burst of colour: gardens filled with rose-red camellias, hot-pink oleanders, lemon trees and palms surrounding cerulean blue lakes. It's impossible not to be seduced. Fishing boats bob in tiny harbours, palaces float in the Borromean Gulf and grand belle époque hotels line the waterfronts in towns such as Stresa, Como, Bellagio and Salò. No wonder European aristocrats, Arab princes and Hollywood celebrities choose to call this home.

A Modern Legacy

Since Leonardo da Vinci broke all the rules in his stunning *Last Supper*, the indefatigably inventive Lombards seem to have skipped straight from the Renaissance to the 21st century. Not only is Milan a treasure trove of modern and contemporary art, but art deco and rationalist architecture abound. Around the lakes, Michelin-starred restaurants push the boundaries of traditionalism, and vintners, oil producers and textile houses experiment with sustainable technologies and techniques. Even now, jackhammers are hard at work on Milan's futuristic new skyline modelled by star architects Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Arata Isozaki and César Pelli.

Living by Design

Though Italian design is distributed globally, seeing it in its home context offers a fresh appreciation. From Como's silk weavers to Brianza's furniture makers and the violin artisans of Cremona, this region has an outstanding craft heritage. Today Milan is home to all the major design showrooms and an endless round of trade fairs. But it's not just insiders who have all the fun. Northern Italian design houses have branched out into spas, bars, galleries and restaurants. So why not join them for a touch of *la vita moda* (the stylish life).

The Lake Lifestyle

Home to many of Italy's foremost musical talents, writers and artists, Milan and Verona are on the tour circuit of the best international music acts, dance troupes, opera and theatre. In summer, film, music and art festivals abound in city theatres, lakeside gardens and historic villas, while at weekends, urbanites escape to the mountains and lakes for morning markets, sailing, hiking and long afternoon lunches. The key to it all is an unswerving dedication to life's fine print.



Why I Love the Italian Lakes

By Paula Hardy, Writer

From cutting-edge textiles to high-tech olive presses and a sidewalk scene that makes Fashion Week seem entirely redundant, Milan and the lakes are both thrilling and fun. Everyone here is fizzing with ideas, ambition and energy, and it's catching. Unlike nonna's Italy further south, Lombards, like New Yorkers, are refreshing modernists and natural entrepreneurs. A surprising number of people here care deeply about marrying the region's craft heritage with modern, sustainable technology. As such, they're pioneering an exciting and beautiful vision of the future that inspires me.

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