

Self-Guided Lake Como Hiking Tour

Duration: 6 Days/5 Nights

charnes tours
hiking and cycling in italy

Romantic Lakeside Towns

Just one hour by train north of bustling Milan, Lake Como is an oasis of tranquillity. The lake is surrounded by mountains and hills and dotted with beautiful villas and resort villages. Popular since Roman times, Lake Como is a top romantic travel destination and a great spot for photography. On this tour you stay overnight in three spectacular lakeside towns; Varenna, Menaggio, and Como. You hike old trails that run along the lake. You explore unspoiled valleys rich in flora, fauna and antique rural settlements. Higher trails lead to breathtaking mountain and lake vistas. Along the way you tour a fairy tale castle and an opulent lakeside villa with lavish gardens. The hikes are exhilarating, offering dazzling lake views set against a stunning backdrop of the Swiss and Italian Alps. Lake Como is a vacation destination, but it is quieter and less frenetic than other parts of Italy. The Lake District simply doesn't have the ancient art and monuments so you won't find the mass tourism seen elsewhere in Italy. Instead, Lake Como is a place you go to unwind. It is a romantic getaway combining old world elegance with natural beauty.

Route Rating

Moderate to Challenging: 2-7 miles (3-11 km) per day of hiking with some steep ascents/descents.

Start / Finish

Varenna / Como

Highlights

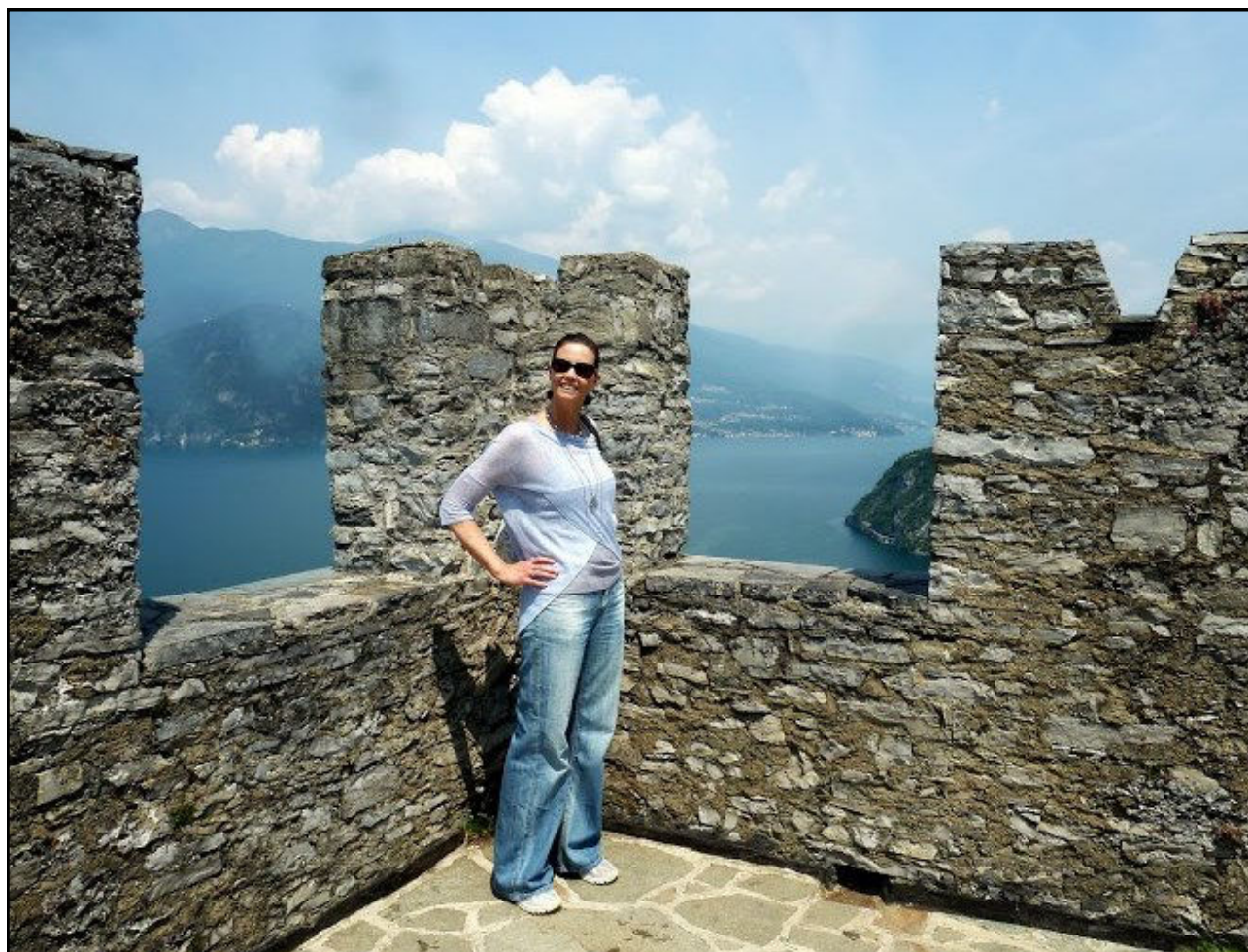
- Lake and mountain views
- Varenna castle
- Villa Carlotta and gardens
- Quiet scenic footpaths
- Romantic lakeside villages

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com





Day 1 Varenna

Varenna to Vezio Castle

1.7 mi (2.8 km), vertical climb 477 ft (176 mt)

On day 1 you travel on your own to Varenna. Direct trains make the trip from Milan to Varenna in just one hour. You check into your hotel and have lunch. Less crowded and more tranquil than the neighboring resorts, Varenna is one of the prettiest lakeside towns. Stroll along winding cobblestone lanes to Villa Monastero, a former monastery and noble's residence that today draws visitors to its lakeside gardens. Promenade beneath cypress and citrus trees through the beautiful waterfront loggia. Hike to the Vezio Castle, a medieval fortress with stunning views over Lake Como. Climb the castle tower, watch a falconry display, or saunter through their olive gardens.

Hotel

Hotel Du Lac

Varenna (2 nights)

The Hotel Du Lac is a romantic villa on the lakefront in the medieval center of Varenna. The building dates from 1823 and is quiet and comfortable. www.albergodulac.com

The Hike, Day 1

Veizio Castle Loop

1.7 miles (2.8 km)

Climbs 200 feet to the Vezio Castle. The castle is right out of a fairy tale with crenelated walls, a drawbridge, and a tower.

Day 2 Varenna

Bellano to Varenna

4.7 mi (7.6 km) vertical climb 761 ft (232 mt)

After a buffet breakfast in the hotel walk 15 minutes to the Varenna train station. You will be catching a train from Varenna to Bellano. The train ride takes just 4 minutes and there are trains every hour. The hike from Bellano back to Varenna is 2.8 miles (4.5 km). This walk rambles through woodlands and charming old hamlets. You pass mountain streams and an abandoned funicular. Around every corner is a stunning view of the sapphire blue lake below. You follow the Sentiero del Viandante, or “Wayfarers’ Route”, a historic mule track dating to Roman times. The hike ends with a steep descent into Varenna. To recharge your batteries head to the lakeside marina in the center of the old borgo where you will find inviting ice cream shops and cafes.

The Hike, Day 2

Bellano to Varenna

4.7 miles (7.6 km)

A 4-minute train ride takes you to Bellano. You then hike back to Menaggio. The hike has a steep climb out of Bellano and steep descent into Menaggio.

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com



Days 3 and 4 Menaggio

On Day 3 you take a ferry from Varenna to Menaggio, a lively resort with a lakeside promenade. The trip takes 15 minutes and there is a ferry every hour. Different hikes are available during your two-day stay. Hike a lot or hike a little, it is up to you.

Val di Sanagra Hike

7.1 mi (11.4 km), vertical climb 1,214 ft (370 mt)

Just behind Menaggio lies the Val Sanagra, a pristine Alpine valley. A trail follows the Sanagra stream through meadows and pastures. This route goes on a trip back in time between ancient mills, forges, silk factories, and a brick kiln. Streams have formed impressive gorges which can be admired from the trail. The walk passes through Barna, a lovely hamlet where time seems to have stood still, before returning to Menaggio.

Antica Strada Regina Hike

6.3 mi (10.2 km), vertical climb 984 ft (300 mt)

Built by the Romans, the Antica Strada Regina was an important road between Como and the Alpine passes. This ancient road was in use until the end of the 18th century when the current lake road was built. Today you can still follow the Roman path. The Antica Strada Regina goes along the lake at an average height of 1,000 feet (300 mt). The trail leads to Rezzonico, passing splendid panoramic points with fine lake views. Along the way you traverse wonderful hamlets which maintain the old architectural styles. Be sure to leave time to relax at Rezzonico's secluded pebble beach.

The Hikes, Days 3 and 4

Val di Sanagra

7.1 miles (11.4 km)

A more challenging hike with 1,200 ft (370 mt) of climbing. The Sanagra valley is beautiful and leads to a gorgeous gorge.

Antica Strada Regina

6.3 mi (10.2 km)

This hike has just one steep ascent. Mostly the trail stays about 984 ft (300 mt) above the lake. Public bus back to Menaggio.

Croce to Griante

5.5 mi (8.8 km)

You take a bus or taxi to the start of the hike in Croce (400 mt above the lake). Climbing higher you get to high Alpine pastures with spectacular views. Optional visit at the Villa Carlotta, Como's most spectacular property.



Days 3 and 4 Menaggio

Croce to Griante Hike

5.5 mi (8.8 km) vertical climb 1,804 ft (550 mt)

This hike takes you high above Lake Como. The trail starts in a town called Croce, 2 km from Menaggio. Croce is 1,300 feet (400 mt) above Menaggio and can easily be reached by public bus or taxi. The trail leads to Monti di Nava, an area of alpine pastures at the foot of Monte Crocione. In the summer months you will find cows and goats lazily grazing in the high alpine fields. A steep downhill leads to the lakeshore town of Griante. From Griante you can take public transport back to Menaggio. Along the shore you will pass the Villa Carlotta, a former marquis's mansion dating from the late 17th century. The grand villa houses artworks including sculptures by Antonio Canova. Most captivating are the romantic Italian gardens surrounding the villa where 20 acres bloom with camellias, azaleas, roses and citrus trees. Naturally the villa can be visited without doing the Croce to Griante Hike.



Hotel

Hotel Du Lac

Menaggio (2 nights)

The Hotel du Lac is located lakeside on the town's main square.

www.hoteldulacmenaggio.it

Sites of Interest

Villa Carlotta

Tremezzina

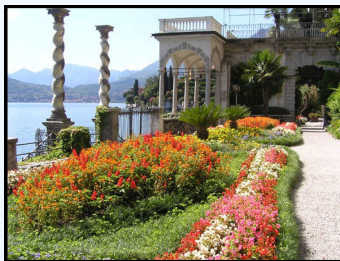
The best of Como's famous villas, Villa Carlotta is a magnificent museum and botanical garden.



Villa Monastero

Varenna

The gardens of Villa Monastero are spectacular. Magnolias, camellias and yucca trees are among its floral wonders.



Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com



Days 5 Como

Brunate to Torno Hike

3.6 mi (5.8 km), vertical climb 900 ft (270 mt)

After two nights in Menaggio you travel by ferry or bus to Como. Travel time is approximately 1 hour. In Como you board a funicular that ascends the mountain to Brunate, a small town perched 1,600 feet (500 mt) above the lake. After admiring the views you begin the descent to Torno. A quiet hike through woods leads to delightful mountain hamlets and splendid lake views. You pass ice age stone formations and ancient tombs carved from granite boulders. Descending steeply you arrive in Torno, a small lakeside village with an enchanting little port. Explore the car-free medieval streets of Torno before returning to Como by ferry or bus.

Day 6 Hiking Tour End

After breakfast in the hotel check out and continue your travels. We will be happy to assist you with your travel plans.

DEPARTURE ON LAST DAY OF TOUR

From the Como train station there are trains every hour for Milan. The train trip takes approximately 1 hr.

Hotel

Albergo Del Duca

Como (1 night)

This small family-run hotel is conveniently located just a few blocks from the lake. The remodeled hotel has A/C, WIFI, and just nine rooms.

www.albergodelduca.it

The Hike, Day 5

Brunate to Torno

3.6 miles (5.8 km)

To reach the start of the hike you take a funicular 900 ft (270 mt) up a mountain. The hike is then mostly downhill finishing in a gorgeous lakeside town.

Other Questions?

Toll free 1 888 421 2418

info@charnestours.com