LAKE COMO
TOURIST GUIDE
LAKE COMO TOURIST SYSTEM
Regione Lombardia
This tourist guide introduces one of the most beautiful areas in the region called Lombardy and enthusiastically welcomes all visitors who are planning to have an enjoyable stay here. Seen from above, the blue of the lakes and the green of the woods are the two colours which exist in harmony in this spectacular landscape full of panoramas. The lakes are the main characteristic of Como and Lecco provinces, surrounded by a range of important mountains which open up to the hilly countryside of Brianza to the South, the home to entrepreneurship.

We had the idea of preparing a guide that was not only easy to use, but of high quality: therefore, you will find, alongside the usual cultural itineraries that inform you of our national heritage, practical information that can help you to easily discover our region and even the less known places.

Subdivided into geographical areas of lake, mountain and plain, the Guide describes the entire territory of Como and Lecco provinces; its history, architecture, art and natural beauty, starting from the “capoluoghi” (main towns) of the province and the lake basin. It then goes on describing the mountain area and cultural features, uncovering the towns and ancient villages, alongside the mountain shelters and peaks. It gives detailed information on walking excursions for all nature lovers, from trekking to all types of sport. The section that describes the plains moves down towards the gentle Brianza hills, travelling through villas and castles and working valleys crossed by the River Adda, as well as parks full of treasures and wonderful views. The many beautiful photographs of these places attract the reader’s attention and the descriptions offer you a clear guide. And of course, we cannot fail to mention and include in this travel itinerary, the gastronomic specialities and traditions of each geographic region.

The Tourist Guide achieves our aim of recommending our region as a unique destination, strengthening and promoting our identity. The commitment of the “Sistema Turistico Lago di Como” (the Lake Como Tourist System) is recognised and appreciated by the ‘Regione Lombardia’ (Lombardy Region).
LAKE COMO TOURIST GUIDE

LAKE COMO TOURIST SYSTEM

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Between the Alps and the Padana Plain, close to the Italian and Swiss border, the territory of Lake Como is distinguished by a variety of landscapes and settlements. The lake is certainly the most prominent asset in the area: 46 km long, 146 km surface area, 410 m at its deepest point, 4.3 km wide (between Cadenabbia and Fiumelatte) and 0.430 km (between Torriggia and Careno). The Breva and Tivano winds frequently blow over the lake. Around the area you see in succession steep mountains and gentle hills; narrow, solid valleys, while others wide and smooth; highly populated plains and untouched woods; small villages and cities; lake towns and mountain villages; wild currents and the River Adda. Today this territory, institutionally divided between the two Provinces of Como and Lecco, has always seen an intense flow of visitors due to its position connecting central Europe and the Mediterranean world. Thanks to its geographical position, the lake has developed a diverse and profound culture, which in every period has been capable of making the most of its people’s wisdom from contact with the most varied of populations, stimulating the creation of many fascinating works of art.

Lake Como, the old Lario of the Romans, pushes its North-most point into the Valchiavenna and Valtellina regions, towards the famous and snowy Passes of the Spluga, Maloja and the Stelvio, ancient routes for journeys and trade towards the Rhineland and the Tirol. The lake opens up a narrow course, forking at Bellagio into two arms: the eastern side is dotted with small towns of rare beauty where tourism, history, art and nature harmoniously come together, protected by the mild lake climate. Varenna is a very good example of this mild lake climate, which welcomes the wonderful villas that rise on its shores, almost as if it wished to sweeten the natural roughness of the landscape. The eastern arm appears to unwind like a fast-flowing canyon squeezed between steep mountains, the buttress of San Primo and Corni di Canzo on one side and those of Legnone and Grigne on the other: the latter’s calcareous peaks with spires and pinnacles, is extremely well-known and among the most frequented in Lombardy. The western arm is less rough; it has always been the destination for an “elite tourism” which started in the “belle époque” period. The discovery of these places, thanks to the presence of many important guests, has made towns like Menaggio, Bellagio, Tremezzo and Cadenabbia world-famous. There you can admire stunning villas with English gardens, some of which are enriched with tiny precious museums filled with works of art. The extraordinary neoclassic villas of Como, Cernobbio, Moltrasio, Blevio, Bellagio and Tremezzo, to mention only a few, have welcomed the most famous celebrities of music, and literature, Milanese and European nobility and today, the modern movie and fashion stars, proof of the endless charm of the Lake Como scene. The lake, together with a complex coastal network, maintains the lake has developed a diverse and profound culture, which in every period has been capable of making the most of its people’s wisdom from contact with the most varied of populations, stimulating the creation of many fascinating works of art.

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Between sky and water, terraces and view points.

The excitement of seeing unique landscapes is particularly intense if you reach some observation points around the territory; real grandstand views to admire on days of clear skies, both a man-made and natural view. Two natural terraces overlook the “capoluoghi” of Lecco and Como; Brunate looks down over Como and the Piani d’Enna overlook Lecco. There are numerous recommendations for charming viewpoints: Mount Bisbino (m 1325) above Cernobbio, the Pigra plateau (m 881) connected by cableway to Argegna, Sacro Monte of the Madonna del Soccorso, above Ossuccio, the little San Martino church, above Griante, opposite the spur of Bellagio, the views of the Alto Lago from Peglio(m 650) to lead into the Livo valley or towards Forclaz, above Sorico, the “suspended” Monte Piatto villages (m 610), Molina (m467), Lemna (m 533), and along the shore between Como and Bellagio, Palanzo (m 596); Vezio’s castle (m 596) above Varenna, an extraordinary viewpoint on the centre part of the lake, the Olgiacca promontory in Colico, the Valbrona road, which goes down from Asso towards the shore of Olive trees, the Grigne range, Mounts Legnone and Legnozmo, the Valcava pass platform for bungee-jumping enthusiasts, suspended between the San Martino Valley and the Bergamo Orobie mountains, the blue skies visible from Piani Resinelli Plains, Mount Barro, and towards the South in the middle of Brianza, the Rocchetta Shrine in Airuno and the hill of Montevecchia, a watchful sentinel over the Adda; and again the Belvedere and the peak of Mount Sighignola (m 1302), above Lanzo d’Intelvi, with a breath-taking view over Lake Lugano.
THE HISTORY

The territory where Como is located has been populated since the middle ages. The hills towards the South prove that this territory belonged to the Galasecca civilization thanks to Ca’ Morta’s archaeoological findings. The local populations united quite soon with other Celtic populations: the Insubri, between the VI and V century B.C. However, Como was only urbanised after the arrival of the Romans, in 196 B.C when the Counsellor Claudio Marcello led the Romans to victory against the Insubri and the whole area became part of the Imperial orbit. Between 59 and 49 B.C. Giulio Cesare (Julius Cesar) created the city of Como and surrounded it by mighty walls, the remains of which can still be seen today under the Tower door.

Located on an important trading route, the Via Regina, which united Milan with the nearby Rezia, Como became a flourishing centre for commercial trading and handicraft activity. After this period of relative peace and prosperity, followed chaotic years of barbaric invasions and wars, at the end of which the city of Como was under the Ostrogh and Longobard domination.

The queen Teodolinda was the one to re-activate the Via Regina, from that moment on called Via Regina. Another period of relative peace and economic development was when the Franks controlled the area, which became more complicated when the Feudal wars began.

In the second half of the XI century Como became a wealthy city and asserted its strategic geographical position which initiated a long period of wars with Milan, a war that ended with the devastation of the city. Only the alliance with Federico Barbarossa (Frederick Redbeard) saved its destiny. Como was rebuilt, newly walled; the Baradello castle was built and became the city’s bulwark, the economic situation also improved due to the introduction of wool manufacturing.

The following civil wars occurred because the Rusca and Vitani Families wanted the domain of Como, up until Como was passed to the Visconti domination when it became part of Milan sphere.

Como endured a long Spanish domination, which slowed down its development and economy. Famine and dramatic disease of the Manzonian era characterised this period and not even the introduction of silk manufacturing initiated by Boldoni was enough to pick up the fate of the city.

With the arrival of the Austrians in Lombardy (1714), Como’s situation slowly improved again with the development of the silk industry improving social and economic conditions.

Como once again became a protagonist during The “Risorgimento” with the 5 day war (18-22 March 1848) when Como tried to free itself from Austrian domination. The city was only freed, however, when Garibaldi arrived, with the famous S. Fermo battle of May 27th 1859.

After Italy’s Unification, even with a few difficulties, Como started to become one of the most prosperous cities in Italy, mainly due to the establishment of the silk and iron industries.

During World War II, Como became theatre to the end of fascism, when Benito Mussolini was captured by the partisans in Dongo, on the shores of Lake Como, and was executed in Giulino di Mezzegra.

Nowadays, the city operates a modest tourism market: there are many new hotels in the area and there are numerous cultural and artistic events, which has made Como become an international attraction.

HISTORICAL CENTRE: “DISCOVERING THE CITY”

Como’s historic centre, the so-called old city, is rich in monuments and artworks, located inside the antique medieval walls. In the principal square, the Piazza del Duomo (cathedral), the Broletto rises, an antique town hall built in 1200, in white, grey and pink marble with stones from the Lake Como quarries. In the same century, besides the elegant arcade the town’s bell-tower was built.

The Duomo was built between the end of 1300 and the mid 1700s, on top of a former church dedicated to Santa Maria Maggiore. The Duomo is a real gem which is a fusion of different architectural styles: starting from the late Gothic period with the structure up to the Renaissance style of the façade. The “Duomo’s Fabbrica” ended with the impressive baroque dome in 1744. Inside it is divided into a nave and two aisles separated by powerful pillars, from which precious, end of XVI century tapestries hang, originating from the Ferrara, Florence and Anversa workshops. The lateral naves have several altars, among which, the most precious is without a doubt S. Abbondio’s altar, from the early 1500’s; an extraordinary wooden “ancona” curved and gilded, which illustrates episodes from the Patron Saint of Como’s life.

The façade statues, principally designed by the Rodari Brothers, are astonishing. Especially astounding are the two podiums representing the two renowned Como citizens, Plinio the Young and Plinio the Old, who lived in the Roman era. Just a few steps separate the Duomo from the neoclassical ‘Teatro Sociale’ designed by the architect Cusi, which he built on the Torre Rotonda castle ruins in the 1800’s.

Behind the Duomo is the ex “Casa del Fascio”. Masterpiece of the rationalist architect Giuseppe Terragni, built between 1932 and 1936 the ex Casa del Fascismo is considered the symbol of modern architecture. Today it is used as the ‘Guardia di
Finanza’ (Financial Police) Headquarters. Continuing on into the historic city centre there is the medieval square of San Fedele, once the ancient Roman Forum and later the Piazza del Mercato del Grano. Overlooking the square is the namesake basilica, once dedicated to Saint Eufemia, built in the tenth century on a former Christian church. The purity of the Romanesque style stands out on the polygonal apse, overhung by an interesting open gallery, and also in the spired portal, decorated with individual bas-reliefs. Piazza San Fedele also hosts another two characteristic houses of the 1500’s, with a typical wooden structure.

At the edge of the old city is the Porta Torre, found in the centre of the powerful walls which Federico Barbarossa founded in the twelfth century to protect the city of Como. Again as a defensive initiative, it is likely the emperor also built the Baradello castle in a similar strong position, of which today only the tower and part of the fortification remain.

Outside the walls, along the ancient Via Regia dei Romani, now known as the Strada Regina is the gem of Como’s Romanesque period, the Sant’Abbondio church, Como’s former Cathedral. A masterpiece, the basilica was built by the Benedictine monks in 1013 around the even more ancient basilica of Santi Pietro and Paolo, the outline of which is still visible on the ground inside. The elegant façade is emphasised by pillars which divide the inside into 5 naves. The historical events of this large church led to several restoration works, such as the lowering of the vault and the destruction of a bell tower; however, accurate restoration brought back the antique splendour of the building. The sequence of frescoes which adorn the apse with episodes of The Life of Christ, is magnificent, a masterpiece of the 1300’s by an anonymous artist known as the “Sant’Abbondio Master”. Following along the slope of the hill, there is the ancient church of San Carpoforo, today part of a religious institute. This is one of the first examples of Romanesque Architecture, and has an unusual structure with a raised presbytery and crypt which contains San Felice’s bones.

Piazza Cavour is the starting point for this second itinerary. This modern space was the city’s commercial port in old times, filled-in in the nineteenth century following an urban initiative to re-claim the land of that area. Walking along the left side of the lake you see the public gardens. This area was drained relatively recently and therefore contains monuments from the modern-age. The Monument to the European Resistance (Colombo 1983) is formed by 3 unusual stairways and big metallic plates on the top of which there are engraved phrases by people deported to concentration camps. Slightly over, stands the statue in memory of Mafalda of Savoia and at the end of the pathway is the Voltiano Temple. This classical white building, built in 1927 for the centenary of Alessandro Volta’s death, preserves documents, letters and the instruments that the famous scientist used for his studies, including...
an example of the famous electric torch. Practically on the edge of the water we can find the Monument to the Caduti (those lost in war), built in 1933 by Giuseppe Terragni, using stones from the Carso, who followed a design by Antonio Sant’Elia. A little further over is the Sinigaglia Stadium, built as a cycle-track in 1927. At the crossing between the Sinigaglia and Vittorio Veneto streets there is Novocomum, a famous rationalist-style apartment block, again of Giuseppe Terragni’s work, affectionately named “il Transatlantico”. Walking along the lake there is the Como Aero Club, from where the famous hydroplanes fly, and where the walk towards Villa Olmo begins. Villa Olmo is overlooked by numerous villas: Villa la Rotonda designed by the architect Pollack which has a magnificent lounge with precious ornamental plaster work (now the headquarters of Como Province); Villa Gallia, which also belongs to the Province of Como, was built in 1600 and housed Paola Giovio’s five hundredth villa/museum; Villa Parravicini, characterised by a precious kettledrum; and Villa Mondolfo, made up of two buildings connected together by an elegant veranda. The walk ends at the gates of Como’s most famous neoclassical house, Villa Olmo. The great tree which gave the name to the house no longer exists, however, the Italian style garden and the park at the back are full of secular trees and long-trunked plants. The Villa was built at the end of the eighteenth century for the Odescalchi family, designed by the famous neoclassical architect, Simone Cantoni. After that the villa passed to the Raimondi family and lastly, the Viscount of Modrone’s family whose coat of arms adorns the elegant façade. Among the most important of Villa Olmo’s guests were Napoleon and Garibaldi. Inside it is full of frescoes and decorated with statues and the precious eighteenth century small theatre is particularly worthy of note. Since the beginning of the twentieth century Villa Olmo has become the property of the Como Council which uses it for conventions, and more recently, for prestigious art exhibitions, such as the ones dedicated to Mirò, Picasso and Magritte.
The golden thread story begins a long time ago. An exclusive secret of the Chinese Imperial Court for centuries, the silk manufacture industry was imported to Italy after the year one thousand, and spread to the south of Italy, especially Sicily.

Silk production began in the Como area around 1400, mainly thanks to Duke Ludovico Sforza who imposed mulberry tree cultivation to the farmers. This initiative gave him the title of Ludovico il Moro, which comes from the name of the mulberry plant, which in Latin is “bombix mori” and in Como’s dialect “murun”.

Even nowadays, the mulberry tree leaf is still the only food for the silkworm, which for thousands of years has completed its vital cycle becoming a precious cocoon from a minuscule egg.

From the beginning of the tenth century the farmers produced silk in springtime to improve their low incomes and women and children were in charge of gathering and cutting mulberry leaves to feed the tiny worms. Once the worm has stopped growing, it begins to produce a very thin thread in which it wraps itself, creating the cocoon in which it transforms into a butterfly. The last part of the process must be interrupted in order to unwind the cocoon and obtain a single thread of about 1500 meters that is then joined with other strings to achieve the right strength.

From this moment onwards begins the transformation of the silk into a fabric, and above all the creation of the design that makes each silk unique, and the reason why the city of Como is famous worldwide. Still today Como, with its silk district, is considered the world’s silk capital.

The raw silk thread, however, is imported from China and Brazil, and numerous weavers, printing offices and silk factories in Como transform it into scarves, ties, dresses and designer accessories for the most important designer-labels in the fashion world that come to Como to choose exclusive designs for their fashion houses.

The social and economic importance that silk has had in the Como area can be explained by visiting some interesting museums which tell the story of this precious product and its various phases of production:

**Silk Museum - Como**
The Silk Museum, opened in 1990, is an important part
of the silk history in Como. The museum is a tangible representation of the continuity between past and present of an industry that maintains a supremacy over the whole world. The museum, located in the same building as the textile school of silk, is approximately 900m sq in area. Moving through the various rooms in this building it is possible experience the journey of this precious material, from the silkworm to the final product. In the hall a factory entrance is reproduced, displaying precious timecard punchers.

The main room exhibits part of the silkworm culture and machinery used for the preparation of the material. A large spinning machine, historic handlooms and mechanical looms precede the dyeing works phase. Afterwards there is the measure and control room with a wide collection of machines used to measure the spun weight and strength. Following this there is the chemical lab perfectly reproduced thanks to the historical furniture and instruments from the period.

The printing office is also very interesting: the colours kitchen, a printing table with a collection of wide wooden and metal "planches", a hand printing table with squares, antique tracing papers and photoengraving gadgets. Cylinder printing is demonstrated by particular sampling machines and by finely engraved wooden and brass cylinders.

The last room is dedicated to the finishing stage of the fabric: there is a very interesting wooden machine which makes the moiré effect on the silk, a pleat making machine and an impressive Palmer from 1932.

**Museum of Fabric Study - (MuST) - Como (Antonio Ratti Foundation)**

This particular museum was officially founded in 1998, the result of a transformation process of the private antique fabrics collection, collected over a period of forty years, by Antonio Ratti. The MuST follows the double objective of preserving immense historical possessions and making them public thanks to research, exposure and study activities. With over 400,000 pieces, the collection is an immense historical documentation. It acts as a unique research facility within its field as it offers a particularly fast consultation process through its multimedia catalogue.

**Mulberry Silkworm Culture Centre**

Cassina Rizzardi

A few kilometres outside of Como is this special mulberry silkworm culture centre. The centre has a strong educational objective to teach the silkworm breeding process. For this reason many schools, of all levels, visit the centre during the spring period, to observe the silkworm’s important cycle, from birth until cocoon stage.

Furthermore, both in the city and throughout the region, it is possible to shop in many stores, today called "outlets" which sell fabrics and various silk articles at factory prices.
of the Romans in the Como area. Inside the walls of Palazzo Olginati is the Risorgimento Museum, with documents, weapons, uniforms and many other relics connected to Giuseppe Garibaldi and the Wars of Independence.

Open from Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am-12:30am and 2:00pm-5:00pm. Sunday 10:00am-1:00pm.
Prices: Single €3,00 - Seniors €1,30 - Groups €1,50 - Schools €1,00 - Free for children up to the age of 15 if accompanied.

**VOLPI PALACE’S CIVIC ART COLLECTIONS**

Via Diaz 84 - Phone No. +39 031 271343/269869 - Fax +39 031 268053/240303 - musei.civici@comune.como.it

The Civic Art Collections are located in the old art gallery, which houses territorial art evidence: from Romanesque and pre-Romanesque sculptures to frescoes coming from the lost convent of Santa Margherita. The section dedicated to Como’s tenth century is particularly interesting; it even contains artwork by Mario Radice and Carla Badiali.

Open from Tuesday to Saturday 9:30-12:30 and 14:00-17:00. Sunday 10:00am-1:00pm.
Prices: Single €3,00 - Seniors €1,30 - Groups €1,50 - Schools €1,00 – Free for children up to the age of 15 if accompanied.

**FABRIC STUDY MUSEUM - MuST**

(antonio Ratti Foundation)

Via Trento 9 - Phone No. +39 031 233111 - www.fondazioneratti.org - must@fondazioneratti.org

The Antonio Ratti Foundation Museum is a unique multimedia museum containing a precious textile collection of over 400,000 pieces from medieval fabrics, to velvets and silk brocades all of which are catalogued and viewed on computerised screens.

Open Monday to Friday 9:30am-1:00pm and 2:00am-5:30pm.
Multimedia Catalogue: Free assisted consultation, only on reservation.
Collection: Guided visit on payment, only on reservation.

**VOLTIANO TEMPLE**

Viale Marconi - Phone No. +39 031 271343/574705 - musei.civici@comune.como.it

This small neoclassical temple built in 1927, to house the great scientist Alessandro Volta’s relics contains interesting historical findings connected to the scientist’s personal and professional life, such as his instruments and inventions among which is the first version of the electric torch.

Open Tuesday to Sunday: morning 10:00-12:00; afternoon 14:00-16:00 (daylight hours), 15:00-18:00 (summer time).
Prices: single €3,00 - Seniors €1,30 - Groups €1,50 – Schools €1,00 - Children up to the age of 15 free if accompanied.

**SACRED TEMPLE OF NAUTICAL SPORTS**

Via per Brunate - Tel. +39 031 305958

Inside a modern sanctuary in a panoramic position along the street that leads towards Brunate, Como’s nautical sportsmen relics are exhibited. There is also a single collection of cribs made of marine material.

Bank holidays open from 14:30 to 18:00. Weekdays opens only with previous booking. Free entrance.
Alessandro Volta

Alessandro Volta was born in 1745 in Como and is without a doubt the most famous of Como’s illustrious citizens. He was an extremely famous scientist and in 1799 he invented the electric torch, ancestor to the modern battery. The electric torch invention was so important that Volta’s name was given to the electricity measurement, today known as the volt. For several years the Physics professorship in Pavia’s University was given to Alessandro Volta. There is much evidence around the city that celebrates the memory of this Scientist:

- The Voltiano Temple, small museum filled with original relics and instruments;
- Gattoni Tower, where Alessandro Volta began his scientific-experiment training;
- Liceo Alessandro Volta, a beautiful neoclassic building where Alessandro Volta was a teacher, even nowadays a very prestigious school;
- San Donnino church in via Diaz, where the scientist was christened the day after he was born;
- The house where he was born, marked by a memorial plaque at number 62 of Via Volta;
- The monument by Pompeo Marchesi, dedicated to Alessandro Volta in the same named piazza;
- Alessandro Volta’s tomb, found in the hamlet of Camnago Volta’s cemetery;
- The lighthouse in San Maurizio di Brunate, open for visiting, built in 1927 in the centenary year of Alessandro Volta’s death.

Giuseppe Terragni and Rationalism

Giuseppe Terragni, was born in Meda in 1904 and is universally considered one of the most distinguished representatives of modern architecture. He went to school in Como and afterwards enrolled at Milan’s Polytechnic, in the Superior School of Architecture. In 1926 he signed the first Italian rationalist document creating the foundation of modern architecture. The “Group 7” was born. Giuseppe Terragni’s architecture career began with the restructuring of Como’s Metropole Hotel and the construction of “Novocomum”. Between 1932 and 1936 he built “La Casa del Fascio”, a milestone in European rationalism, and then subsequently built the “Casa Pedraglio”, “Casa per un Floricoltore”, and the “Asilo Sant’Elia”, his happier and more liberal project, as he himself describes it. He then took part in World War II, an experience that profoundly affected him.

Giuseppe Terragni died in Como July 19th 1943.
Quickly expanding from the beginning of the XVIII century with the Industrial Revolution, and becoming one of Italy’s most industrial centres, Lecco is the administrative centre of a rich and busy province. Back in the eighteenth century the lake was already one of the favourite destinations for artists and writers, these people enchanted by the romantic essence of the scenery. This part of the lake winds between headlands and coves until it reaches the city of Lecco, overlooked by mount Resegone, with its large serrated profile. Lecco city has a unique and special position, located inside a serene valley and surrounded by a picturesque and powerful nature. Enclosed by rough mountains, the large water basin is surrounded by the spur formed by

Grigne, San Martino and the unique Resegone ridge, mountains very much loved by Manzoni, Stendhal and Stoppani; at this point the Adda picks up its course again, and widens out to Lake Garlate and finally runs down towards the plain, to form a natural border between the Milan area and Bergamo province.

Due to its strategic position, at the meeting point between a very old piedmont path and the traffic route, once represented by the lake and the River Adda, this area has always been densely inhabited, with a livelihood of artisan and commercial tradition, based on iron factories. Along the Gerenzone stream are a multitude of workshops which create an “outdoor museum” of industrial archaeology, together with unused or transformed spinning rooms and silk factories, these are proof of the ancient silk production tradition, particularly concentrated in the closest towns around Lecco such as: Garlate, Malgrate, Valmadrera and Abbadia Lariana.

The complex events of this city from medieval origin and then importantly under the Carolingian county which controlled large parts of Lombardy and Emilia, it became a Municipality and part of Milan’s sphere, firstly because of the Archbishop Torriani feudal rights and secondly because of the fights between Torriani of Valsassina and the Visconti family. There are many legends remaining from this history, and also tangible evidence, such as the bridge with its eleven arcades that goes over the River Adda, built by Azzzone Visconti between 1336 and 1338 to consolidate the domain of the city and its countryside.

Lecco is essentially considered a modern city; it has ancient monuments, such as the Visconti bridge and tower, and modern, such as Mino Fiocchi and Mario Cereghini’s buildings. Lecco is also famous because of the literary echoes of the “Promessi Sposi”, Alessandro Manzoni’s masterpiece that found the ideal setting for an immortal story, between the mountains and the shores of the lake. The traditional images created in Manzoni’s “Historia” (Story) are still alive in the city: the Pescarenico area is very characteristic, formed by groups of fishermen houses; the only area explicitly named in the novel, while the Caleotto villa’s existence is “concrete”, the beautiful house where Manzoni’s ancestors lived since 1615 and sold in 1818.
LECCO

The Valley of Iron
The tradition of iron is still alive in Lecco and is part of the big industrial network, even given that many iron and steel industries have been dismantled; many workshops still remain and create an archeological proof of the industry, together with disused or transformed spinning rooms and silk factories. The oldest and most typical artisan activity in the Lecco area is metal processing, along the Gerenzone stream, these productive activities have grown for more than a millennium. The valley of the “riioni”, which runs from Castello to San Giovanni, from Rancio to Laorca and to Malavedo defines itself as an outdoor “museum of work”. Disused factories, drawing tables and forges, tell a story of great ingenuity.

The Manzonian Itinerary welcomes the tourist to a city full of literary memories that recall Manzoni’s literary masterpiece.

It is advised to take a walk to visit these places as the sight act as a theatre of chapters to the “Promessi Sposi” (the Betrothed): the itinerary takes place in the southern part of Lecco, starting from the Pescarenico district, where little remains of Friar Cristoforo’s convent but where it is still possible to visit the church of the Santi Materno and Lucia, with its rare plastic creations made of wax and paper Mache from the seventh century, and the Cerano’s “Trinity”. In the Northern part, the itinerary continues into the Olate district, considered Lucia’s native quarter where Renzo and Lucia got married, then on to Acquate, another district which also claims to have the original “House of Lucia”. Above, on Zucco’s headland, Don Rodrigo’s palace would have possibly stood, nowadays a rationalist building. Following the itinerary there is a rural street leading to Germanedo, supposed to be the place of the famous “ambush”. In the Chiuso district there is also the place where the tailor who welcomed the liberated Lucia lived and where the Innominate’s famous conversion took place; his castle should be further south in Somasco, a hamlet outside of Vercurago. It is a must to visit Manzoni’s house, the property he sold reluctantly which is understood from reading the writer’s correspondence. In this building there is the “Manzonian Museum” where manuscripts, first editions and relics correlated to the writer’s life and works are exhibited.

Villa Manzoni
Villa Manzoni is the Manzonian place “par excellence” and is situated in a place called Caleotto, once an area mainly dedicated to agriculture, today this area is densely built. The Villa was the main residency and family home to the Manzoni family for almost two centuries and was just one of many properties owned by Manzoni in the Lecco area. It is possible to enter the museum from via Don Guanella, through one of the courtyards, on the right is the Assunta Chapel (finished in 1777) and the Museum’s entrance is accessed by walking through the Stable Room, a place that today houses temporary exhibitions from Lecco’s Civic Museums. In room One, on the ground floor of the former residence, in a big show case some costumes are exhibited, realising Manzoni’s history. These costumes were used by RAI television network for a Promessi Sposi television edition. On the opposite wall there is a portrait of the writer Giuseppe Moltelli and a brass statue representing Lucia by the sculptor Confalonieri.

The room also documents the relations between Alessandro Manzoni and the city of Lecco: there is a big plastic reproduction of the Manzoni Family estate and the nearby Peschereccio area in 1799; on the windows there are some rare documents relating to the history of the city. From here there is the entrance to room Three where engravings, lithographies and “acqueforti” (etchings) are preserved. These artworks represent the lake and Lecco’s landscapes in periods preceding 1840. In this room there are also Manzoni’s manuscripts, letters written to his cousins from Valtellina Guicciardi, and the rough-draft of the speech, given to the “Camera dei Deputati” (parliament) in honour of Vittorio Emanuele II. Room Four, which in Manzoni’s days was called “tinello”, marks the entrance to the main villa: here a collection of paintings are exhibited of Lecco’s landscapes and the Manzonian places. In room Five, the kitchen, there is a crystal reliquary on which the wicker cradle belonging to Manzoni is preserved; a panel available for viewing with the writer’s family tree; and on the wall, five seventeenth century paintings from the “Dodici Cesari” collection which adorned Pietro Manzoni’s office, the writer’s father.

Room Six, also called the “red room”, preserves a marble fire place on which Manzoni’s family coat of arms is mounted and is dedicated to the literary work of the writer: the four windows show manuscripts and first editions of his poetic work, the tragedies, the Novel and his essay writings [philosophy, history, linguistics].

Room Seven “Salone delle grisaglie” is the most important room in the villa and contains the original furniture and a precious lampshade in the centre bought by Giulia Beccaria. Room Eight was the dining room with a fireplace to diffuse hot air into the room, and a ceiling decorated with refined stucco works. Here there is a display case which contains a collection of “manzonian curiosities”. Room Nine is dedicated to the “editio princeps” first edition of the “Promessi Sposi”, the so-called Quarantana and to his editorial works.
Manzoni wanted this edition to be richly illustrated and he chose the images just like an ante litteram film (before printing). The last viewable rooms are the interesting cellars with a wonderful icebox and two original presses from the mid-1800’s.

On the first floor of the villa there is the Local Municipality Art Gallery where works by painters who have worked in the Lecco area from the 17th century up until the present day are exposed.

The Innominato Castle in Vercurago

5 km from Lecco is Vercurago where you can take a nice walk to the Innominato’s castle, ideal in sunny weather to complete the Manzoni itinerary. The clearing of the Innominato’s castle is located at 180 metres above the lake. Looking up from beneath the castle it is possible to understand the strategic position in which it is located. From here the view overlooks Lecco’s plateau and the Brianza hills. On the cliff there is what remains of the Castle, a small squared enclosure with a big tower, reduced in 1902 to a chapel in honour of San Girolamo Emiliani, founder of the Somaschi congregation. In the centre there is a big cross which replaces the cross laid in the Sixth century to honour the Saint. In the entrance there is a small church dedicated to the Virgin and Sant’Ambrogio; in the small square lay the first stones from the border-lay out determined in 1756, and many other boundary stones with crosses or dates cover the above slopes.

ITINERARY INTO THE HISTORIC CENTRE AND INTO THE VILLAGES

Lecco’s historic centre preserves the walls and the moat that surrounded the medieval village. There is also a bridge built in XIV century under the initiative of Azzone Visconti that, even without the original towers, is still a powerful and mighty construction. It is highly recommended to visit the religious buildings: the basilica dedicated to San Nicolò with its neoclassical structure, thanks to the expansion by the architect Giuseppe Bovara, is set in a very elevated position above the relics of the wall that surrounded the village from the 1200’s. The sheer walls are still visible and join together at the large, circular fifth century tower, on the base of which is the 96-metre neo-gothic bell tower erected in 1882 and finished in 1904. Inside there is furniture from the seventh century which belonged to the Fantoni from Nevetta, a baptismal ciborium from 1596, Romanesque pieces from the XII century and a chapel decorated with stories of Saint Antonio in Giottesque style (end of XIV century). A little further on there is the church of Santa Marta with baroque decorations and beautiful, natural moulding from the wind above the porch.

Beneath the Basilica opens up Piazza Cermenati, dedicated to the geologist and alpinist Mario Cermenati, in the middle of which stands a monument in his honour; in the corner adjoining Piazza XX Settembre stands the “Palazzo delle Paure”, a neo-gothic reconstruction by Dogana on the ruins of the medieval communal palace, on which the Visconti’s coat of arms can be found. You then meet the unusual Piazza XX Settembre which is long and winding and where it is possible to admire the elegant Bertarelli house by Bovara, and on another pre-nineteenth century house, a memorial stone indicating the birth place of Antonio Stoppani (1824-1891) geologist and naturalist but also a patriot and writer. The Visconti Tower raises above the square, the only part of the original Visconti fortification to survive the demolitions decided at the end of the XVIII century; the Visconti Tower is now used as a museum and hosts temporary exhibitions.

The central street of Via Cavour has a classical style and ends in the square dedicated to Garibaldi, where the “Teatro Sociale” designed by Bovara is located; the church of “Nostra Signora della Vittoria” where there are
frescoes of Friar Gerolamo Codega (XVI-XVII century) is also very interesting; it is located on the road that leads to the Azzone Visconti bridge.

From the historic centre it is quick and easy to reach Lecco’s districts, located around the mountain (Acquate and Germaneda) and towards the lake Garlate (Maggianico, Barco and Chiusso), as well as the hills at the foot of the Resegone. The Castello district is one of the oldest centres in the region, an elegant village where the Palazzo Belgiojoso is located, one of the few remaining traces from the antique settlement order, a precious building from the late eighteenth century and today a location for the Archaeological Museum, Natural Science Museum and the Planetarium. The new Archaeological Museum has eight rooms with relics from all over the Province, from the Medium Palaeolithic period (from 200,000 to 35,000 years ago) to the Middle Ages (V-X century A.C.). Of particular interest are the Celtic grave instruments from the First and Second Iron Ages (XI century A.C.) and the early medieval goldsmith works.

The Museum of Natural History is one of the most ancient and important in the Region, it has twelve rooms of zoological and paleolithic collections and you can find the extremely rare “Lariosaura”. Of particular interest there is also the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista with beautiful evidence of the Cremonese school from the Sixth century and the Church of San Giovanni Battista in the Laorca district with a rich stucco decoration from the XVIII century. Along the road towards Bergamo, is the region of Maggianico which in the nineteenth century was the meeting place for groups of intellectual writers and musicians involved in the Milan Scapigliatura movement: one of the protagonists was Antonio Ghislanzoni, poet, journalist and liberalist (he is author of the verses Aida and Don Carlos by Verdi). He was surrounded by musicians such as Amilcare Ponchielli and Carlo Gomes, both owners of beautiful villas in the area. In the district of Maggianico the parish church of Sant’Andrea is worth visiting, with precious works from the Sixth century by Bernardino Luino and Gaudenzio Ferrari. Chiuso is the last village in the Lecco catchment and was once on the border of the Bergamo territory; the church of Beato Serafino with frescoes attributed to Baschenis is also very interesting.

The Resegone

Behind the city a funicular takes us to Piani d’Erna to the foot of the Resegone, the mountain that inspired Manzoni and that offers a multitude of possibilities for trekking and in winter is home to a small ski resort. The Resegone mountains, which principally run North to South, are located at the extreme South-West of the Orobie Alps, separated by the Gruppo dei Campelli. The Piani d’Erna is a terrace at 1329 metres above the city of Lecco; located in a splendid valley it offers numerous walks through woodland and pastures, excursions along the easy panoramic paths and demanding climbs and traverses along well marked and serviced routes.

Information:
Società Impianti di risalita “Erna ’94”
Phone No. +39 0341 497337

TO BE SEEN

VILLA MANZONI

Via Guanella 7
Information at Museum headquarters:
Phone No. +39 0341 481247/481249 - Fax +39 0341369251 - www.museilecco.org - segreteria.museo@comune.lecco.it

• MANZONI MUSEUM

Set in the paternal house where Alessandro Manzoni spent his childhood and adolescence, the Museum exhibits first editions, paintings, manuscripts and curiosities from the life and works of the writer. In the first floor rooms you can still see some of the original furnishings from 1818 when Manzoni sold the villa.

Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 9:30am to 5:30pm. Admission: € 4,00 per person - € 2,50 reduced tickets (up to 18 and over 65, and for groups of over 8 persons) and free for the guide of groups with more than 15 persons. Admission is free for the disabled. Closed on Mondays (except Easter Monday) and on main holidays (New Year’s Eve, Easter, 1st May, 15th August, Christmas and Boxing Day). For the whole of 2007 on Sundays and some Bank holidays guided visits at Villa Manzoni will be possible (perfect for single visitors or small groups); at 10:30am and 3pm a professional tourist guide will be on hand at the Museum entrance. Cost € 3.00 (not including admission ticket). It will also be possible to buy an all-inclusive ticket for visits to Villa Manzoni and Villa Monastero at Varenna at the cost of € 4,00.
• LOCAL MUNICIPALITY ART GALLERY

On the second floor of Villa Manzoni there is a selection of artwork from the Civil Museums including 400 paintings and 2000 engravings.

BELGIOJOSO PALACE

Corso Matteotti, 32
Information: Direzione Musei; Phone No. +39 0341 481248 - www.museilecco.org - museo.scienze@comune.lecco.it

• NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The lay out of the Museum is the original one and represents a rare example of a natural history museum from the beginning of the last century. There are exhibits of zoological collections in the rooms, most of which were prepared by the founder of the museum.

• ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The exhibits, deriving from all over the province, are displayed in chronological order, from the Palaeolithic Era to the early Middle Ages. One room is dedicated to the metallurgical industry in the Lecco area.

• ROOM OF THE RESISTANCE – HISTORY MUSEUM

On the ground floor of the Palazzo Belgiojoso there are two rooms dedicated to Fascism and the Resistance movement in the Lecco territory. It is the first of the new History Museums of the city. The glass cases display original documents, letters, photographs, posters, newspapers of the era and military objects.

Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 9:30am to 2pm. Closed on Mondays (except Easter Monday) and on main holidays (New Year’s Eve, Easter, 1st May, 15th August, Christmas and Boxing Day). Admission free.

BELGIOJOSO PALACE – PLANETARIUM

Corso Matteotti, 32
Information: Gruppo Astrofili Deep Space; Phone No. +39 328 8985316 - www.deepspace.it

Open Saturdays and Sundays at 3pm (first showing) and at 4.30pm (second showing); periodically on Friday evenings there are conferences and special screenings at 9pm.
Open Mondays, Tuesdays and Saturdays if requested by schools at 9:30am (first showing) and at 11am (second showing). Admission: € 3,00 single - € 2,00 reduced tickets (up to 18, over 65; schools and associations, a free entry for every guide with groups of 15 persons) - € 4,00 school groups (entry + conference). Closed in August, at Christmas and Easter.

VISCONTI TOWER

Piazza XX Settembre
Information: Phone No. +39 0341 282396 - www.museilecco.org – segreteria.museo@comune.lecco.it

• THE MOUNTAINS MUSEUM

The museum is still being refurbished and extended and will document not only the characteristics of Lecco mountains, but also the events referring to local mountaineering from its origins to present day. Opened by CAI professionals if booked in advance: Phone No. +39 0341 363588 (Tuesdays and Fridays from 8pm to 10.30 pm).

• VISCONTI TOWER

The first floor of the tower opens during temporary art exhibitions.
With its 30 km of sudden and unexpected creeks, loops and gulfs, villas half-hidden or towering up above the water, picturesque villages that are set gently on the mounts crests, towers, bell towers and little waterfalls, the western shore of Lake Como always offers the visitor’s eyes a new and ever-changing landscape and prospective. It is possible to catch the magic of these places by taking a boat, departing from the pier in piazza Cavour in Como and docking in the main villages, all the way to the upper lake.
Arriving at the wonderful pier of Cernobbio, one of the few with a well-preserved liberty style, it is possible to see Villa Erba-Visconti di Modrone, nowadays a prestigious convention and fair centre. A little further down there is Villa d’Este, a luxuriant Grand Hotel with a stunning park overlooking the lake, well-known due to its clientele of famous people from show business, finance and politics.
After the terraces of Villa Pizzo, the attention is caught by the elegant façade of Villa Le Fontanelle, sumptuous residency of the Versace Family in the municipality of Moltrasio.
The characteristic landscape set gently on the lake shore, was famous in the past for its dark grey lime stone quarries; this stone has been utilized to build many churches in the area, such as the church of S. Fedele and S. Abbondio in Como.
The position of the eighteenth century Villa Passalacqua is impressive, and particularly elegant is the façade of Villa Erker Hocevar where the great musician Vincenzo Bellini stayed. The next town is Urio, characterized by the Romanesque bell tower of the Saints Quirico and Giulitta church that almost touches the water of the lake, by the mighty structure of the “castle”, a sumptuous villa from the end of the seventeenth century likely built on the remains of an ancient fortification.
After there is the village of Laglio with elegant villas inhabited today by show business and movie stars. Then there is Brieno with its two churches of Romanesque origin, strongly modified during the following centuries, that even nowadays preserves its charm of an ancient fishing village. Argegno with its characteristic bridge, lies gently on the western shore, 18 km from Como. Set between the lake and the mountains, is the entry way to the panoramic Val d’Intelvi and also marks the part of the lake which reaches the maximum depth of 410 metres.
The Argegno district deserves a visit even for a walk through the alleyways which make up its historic centre. It is possible to enjoy a wonderful panoramic view by taking the cableway that connects Argegno to Pigra, a stunning terrace at circa 900 metres above sea level. A little further on there is the Isola Comacina, surrounded by “Zoca de l’Oli”; this area has such mild weather that olive trees are able to grow here. The Isola Comacina is slightly longer then 600 metres, it is the island of Lake Como. It preserves the ruins of its illustrious past from when it used to be called “Crisopoli” which means city of Gold (or maybe “city of the Christ”). Five churches were built on this island, destroyed in the XII century after a violent battle with Como’s inhabitants. Today this island is uninhabited, but it is a destination for many tourists that go to the famous restaurant or take a walk along the footpaths which lead to the ancient ruins.
Opposite the island is a succession of fishing villages with houses painted in light colours and extremely romantic little docks, located in the villages of Sala Comacina and Ossuccio home to the stunning churches of San Giacomo and Santa Maria Maddalena. The island could not end anywhere...
THE WESTERN ARM

other than in the “Golfo di Venere”, in Lenno, boasting one of the most beautiful and famous villas of the lake, the Villa del Balbianello, and a small Romanesque baptistry from the end of the XI° century. It looks like an octagonal plant and has a special dome which is completed with a lantern. The outside walls are decorated with small arches and semi-columns.

Following on the via Regina there is Mezzegra, famous as it was here that the shooting and execution of Benito Mussolini and Claretta Petacci took place, in a location called Giulino.

The locanda (inn) that challenges destiny on the Comacina Island

The curse goes back to 1169 when the Isola Comacina was destroyed by Como’s inhabitants and Vidulfo, Bishop of Como at the time, threw his curse on this small enemy island, “The bells shall never ring again, shall never again build stone on stone, no one will ever again be host, the punishment shall be an atrocious death”. The island was abandoned over time and no innkeeper dared to contest the middle aged curse until the 50’s, when Lino Nessi – known as “Cotoletta” – decided to challenge destiny. Even though his two business partners died, he opened the Locanda dell’ Isola Comacina and listened to the suggestions of the English female writer Francis Dale who suggested an exorcism ritual to him against Vidulfo’s curse. Since then each meal, which has a unique menu with inspired by the vegetables of the season ends with “il rito del fuoco” (the fire ritual) and the preparation of a mix containing acquavite (Italian spirit), sugar and coffee which is offered to the guests accompanied by the ringing of the bell. This is a tradition that the host kept unchanged, a fun experience that continues to charm the many tourists that visit the lake.

Locanda Dell’Isola - Ossuccio
Phone No. +39 0344 55083/56755 - Fax 0344/57022 - www.locanda-isola-comacina.com

The Sacred Mount of Ossuccio

On the western shore of Lake Como, the clear monumental construction of the sacred Monte and of the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Soccorso in Ossuccio undoubtedly stands out. On the slopes of the hill which dominate the wonderful “Zoca de l’Oli” inlet, in front of the Isola Comacina, are 14 chapels dedicated to the Misteri del Rosario (Mysteries of the rosary), built between 1635 and 1714, along a winding pathway which leads to the Sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin. These precious small Baroque temples were decorated with stuccos and frescoes and completed by approximately 230 big statues made by the artists of the Scuola Intelvese. It is a spectacular path of faith that fits and integrates perfectly in the surrounding scenery among the centennial olive trees and the sweet terraces formed by the earth. Little more than a kilometre’s walk allows you to reach the height of 419 metres where the Sanctuary rises with its unique nave which preserves on the altar the 15th Mistero (Mystery), represented by the group of sculptures of the Incoronazione di Maria.
The historical and artistic importance of this complex attracted “UNESCO” in 2003 who declared it as a “Patrimonio dell’ Umanità” (Heritage of Humanity).

Santuario Beata Vergine del Soccorso - Ossuccio – Via al Santuario Phone No. +39 0344 55211
FROM COMO TO BELLAGIO

Following a short and panoramic journey from Como, you reach the small village of Blevio, a place rich in 19th century villas (like Cademartori, Villa Pasta, and Roccabruna). It was a refuge for artists during the 19th century and still hosts some famous show business and soccer personalities.

After a few smooth bends in the lake, the small village of Torno appears unexpectedly. Apart from its splendid position on the lake, it has some very interesting monuments such as the Romanesque church of San Giovanni, enriched by a beautiful Renaissance portal and inside preserves the remains of ancient frescoes and the relic of the “Sacred Nail”. There is also the mysterious Villa Pliniana that hosted renowned people such as Foscolo, Rossini and Stendhal. The name of the Villa comes from a special intermittent spring, still visible today, which caught Plinio’s interest.

You can make pleasant excursions in the surrounding mountains, such as the easy walk that leads to Monte Piatto, a small panoramic plateaued balcony on the first basin of the Lake.

Passing the Villa Pliniana you reach Faggeto Lario, a gracious village scattered on the lake edge with a small but well-serviced beach, and by other small mountain hamlets: Molina, with its interesting late romantic bell tower from the XI century; Lemna, with a beautiful church dedicated to S. Giorgio and starting point for exciting excursions towards mount Bolettone and Palanzo. It was once fortified in an enchanting position and is well patronized by people looking for tranquillity, relaxation and splendid panoramic views.

Pognana Lario is found close to some ancient quarries, one of which has been turned into a tourist resort. It has two beautiful churches: S. Miro, lower down, of ancient origins with interesting frescoes, and the panoramic S. Rocco that was rebuilt in the XV century.

Before reaching Nesso we come across the hamlet of Careno, known for its peculiar triangle shape with its top directed towards the lake. We must also give mention to the XII century Church of S. Martino. The village of Nesso has been an important town since medieval times, with an interesting castle of which today remain just a few traces of its walls. It is famous for its ravine that with water gorges and cliffs drives the waters of the Nosè stream into the lake.

From Nesso, after crossing the small but charming villages of Zelbio and Veleso, you reach the Pian del Tivano, a large level valley situated at an altitude of 1000 metres and equipped for winter sports.

Going back on the main road towards Bellagio there is Lezzeno, the longest village on the lake, composed by 17 different sub-villages. Among its monuments is the Church of SS. Quirico and Giulitta, from the XVI century, its frescoes and paintings by Quaglio are worthy of a visit. Lezzeno is one of the places on the lake with the most facilities for water skiing.
Along the eastern side of the lake runs the ancient military road towards the Stelvio, nowadays doubled by Highway 36. This side is rich in ancient and picturesque villages: it offers a fantastic itinerary on the East side of the Lario, ideal for people who wish to combine their holiday with relaxation, cultural visits and sporting activities. The seasons offer varied scenery, sometimes happy and lively, sometimes relaxing and romantic, something to suit everyone’s taste. The road that runs near the lake borders on the gardens of several wonderful villas, alternated with pleasant beaches and small villages where the tourist can enjoy the tranquility of an unforgettable stay and in a very favourable climate.

There is a number of opportunities to visit museums and parks which satisfies every interest: the museum of the Setificio in Abbadia Lariana (silk factory) is worthy of note, and a rare contribution to the industrial archaeology of Italy. Abbadia also preserves a trace of the medieval past with the remains of the Torraccia (XII-XIII century).

In the village of Mandello Lario a stop is recommended to visit two religious complexes: the sanctuary of the Madonna del Fiume and the Church of San Giorgio. The sanctuary of the Madonna del Fiume was built between 1624 and 1627 after the flooding of the river Meria and the destruction of the chapel of the Beata Vergine where, according to history, only the part of the wall with the painted image of the Virgin and the Child remained intact. The church of S. Giorgio is a small roman temple that hosts an astonishing series of early medieval frescoes dedicated to the culture of death: the series of frescoes aim at illustrating the salvation plan for mankind against the capital vices illustrated on the facing fresco of hell. As legend has it, a crusader founded the church, or even possibly a Templar monk returning from the holy land; also in Mandello is the museum of Moto Guzzi that tells the story of the motorbike from Lake Como. One of the most popular events, if not the most popular abroad, is undoubtedly the traditional “Raduno Moto Guzzi” (Moto Guzzi Rally). This international event unites “guzzisti” (Guzzi enthusiasts) from all over the world each year in the month of September.

The itinerary continues to Lierna with the small medieval hamlet of Castello whose fortified structure is built to protect the small peninsula overhanging the water. The ancient origins of this place are represented by the small church of San Maurizio, probably of Romanesque origin, that rises on the lake shore and whose ruins are integrated into some of the surrounding houses. During some excavations in the nearby hamlet of Villa, Roman houses were discovered. Due to these findings it is thought to have been a roman colonial village. Lierna, with its beaches, the “Riva Bianca” and the “Riva Nera”, is one of the most visited and popular summer holiday resorts on the whole lake.
THE EASTERN ARM

On the opposite shore of the lake there is the Costiera degli Olivi: right in front of the city of Lecco there is Malgrate, whose village centre introduces us to the shore which leads towards Bellagio before the headland of the Rocca. Malgrate welcomes the visitor with a romantic pier and a number of typical local bars. Of particular relevance is the restored silk factory Bovara Reina, the palace Agudio, which houses the town hall, and the pleasant skyline of nicely restored houses.

The road follows on to the tunnel beyond Parè di Valmadrera bay with the little docks for recreational crafts. Walking along the hidden street in the background, there are quiet corners and many beaches visited by bathers in summer time.

Onno, Vassena and Limonta are hamlets of Oliveto Lario, which takes its name from the cultivation of plants that produce tasty local green oil; here there are many pleasant surroundings for those on vacation. The Sanctuary of “Madonna del Moletto” in Limonta is very special and composed of two churches, one on top of the other, built in 1606 and 1640, with frescoes by Gian Paolo Recchi.

TO BE SEEN

SILK CIVIC MUSEUM - ABBADIA LARIANA

Via Nazionale 93
Information: Comune di Abbadia: Phone No. +39 0341 731241 - Biblioteca: Tel. +39 0341 700381
www.museoabbadia.it - info@museoabbadia.it

A factory for twisting silk thread, preserved as it was in the mid-nineteenth century, restored and enriched with contemporary objects from other spinning mills which have long since disappeared; it was transformed into a museum by the local Council in 1998.

Inside you can still see a large, old and striking circular twisting machine with its thousands of spindles on different levels. Open on Sundays and holidays from 10am to 12:00 and from 2pm to 6pm. On weekdays it is only open if booked in advance, by contacting the Municipality of Abbadia or the Library (open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 2:30pm to 6:30pm, and Thursdays from 9am to 1pm). Admission – including guided visit - € 3,00 adults; € 2,50 up to 14, over 65 and for schools and groups (min. 10 persons). Visits and educational workshops are possible from the month of April.

MOTO GUZZI MOTORBIKE MUSEUM - MANDELLO DEL LARIO

Via Parodi 63
Information: Phone No. +39 0341 709111 - Fax +39 0341 709346
www.motoguzzi.it - infomotoguzzi@motoguzzi.it

The museum is inside the factory that has produced these legendary motorbikes since 1921 and collects all the race motorbikes created up until 1957, when Motoguzzi stopped its race activity, after more than 3300 victories. There are also exposed many prototypes of bikes and motors.

Guided tours every afternoon from Monday to Friday, from 3:00pm to 4:00pm; guided tours on Saturdays should be booked in advance (minimum 10-15 people). Admission free.

From Monday to Friday, visits outside the regular opening hours shall be booked in advance (for groups of 15-20 people).

MUSEUM OF THE MAGGIANA TOWER - MANDELLO DEL LARIO

Bookings: Phone No. +39 0341 733715
www.cmlarioorientale.it

Rural art is exposed in this medieval Tower: the museum, created with care by the Amici di Maggiana, collects handmade objects of rural work and art on the different floors of the Tower, while on the upper floor every year there is a different themed monographic exhibition.

The tower opens only on booking and during the days of “La torre in festa”, in June.
THE CENTRAL LAKE AREA

This is certainly the most popular area of Lake Como, a must see since the XVIII century “Grand Tour d’Italie” which brought European nobles and literates. Among the most important monuments there is Villa Carlotta, located between the towns of Tremezzo and Cadenabbia, a special stop for a visit to its gardens which are exceptional during the spring flowering, and for its treasured artworks, including works by Canova, Hayez and Thorvaldsen, preserved inside the small but precious museum. The elegant towns of this area offer accomodation of an extremely high level and countless opportunities for amusement and culture.

Menaggio is a place of great interest that connects the Lake Como area to the nearby Switzerland. Menaggio is a city full of charm and also a destination for explorers and trekking lovers. Villa Vigoni is a must see with its immense park, embellished with exotic plants and statues. For the most refined tourist we suggest the demanding golf course located in Croce.

The centre area of the lake is also a starting point for interesting excursions in the panoramic mountains, and offers many opportunities to practise various sports such as sailing, aqua ski, horse riding, and many others. Easy walks lead to the mountains where it is possible to enjoy stunning views.

Opposite Menaggio it is possible to admire Bellagio, just a short boat-ride away. Also known as “the Pearl of Lake Como” Bellagio is situated on the peaked headland that divides the two arms of the lake. This enchanting position, the superb villas, the clusters of small houses, the lush vegetation and the mild climate made this place a destination privileged to visits from many distinguished men, from Plinio the Young to Stendhal, from Manzoni to Parini, from Liszt to Toscanini.

In the XIX century the economy of Bellagio saw a sharp rise in tourism, making it one of the most internationally known vacation destinations.

The town is divided into twenty-two hamlets that offer to the visitors varied landscapes. The most known is the hamlet of Borgo that develops around the landing place for boats. Here it is possible to go through stairways, small squares, shops and workshops in which the craftsmen show the visitors their art. Going up the street that moves away from the pier, it is possible to reach two very interesting points: the panoramic Punta Spartivento and the church of San Giacomo. The first is located on the northern side of the town and offers a view of all three arms of the lake, framed by the mountains.

The basilica of San Giacomo on the other hand is situated in the church square. It was built in the XI century and although extensively refurbished, it is a clear example of Lombardian Romanesque style. Behind the church’s apse is the starting point for the visit to the Villa Serbelloni gardens.

Going up “Via Garibaldi” we travel through the heart of Bellagio, at the end of which is the extremely famous Salita Serbelloni, with shops and ancient walls running either side.

On the shores of the lake there are the ancient villages of Pescallo, San Giovanni and Loppia, with their small harbours and gardens from the patrician villas, two of which are the Villa Serbelloni and Villa Melzi with their stunning gardens open to the public from March to October.

The other Bellagio hamlet rising above the lake at 1686 metres is the mount of San Primo where the view goes up to the Alps and the Pianura Padana.

In Bellagio there is a climate similar to the one of Riviera of Liguria. Laurel and olive trees grow here, the gardens have palms and tropical plants, and the flower nurseries flourish.

On the Eastern shore of the lake are the towns of Perledo and Varenna. Perledo preserves the parish church of “San Martino”, referenced from the XIII century and...
thought to have been founded in the seventh century by Queen Teodolinda, even though it was restored on several occasions in the following century. Most noticeable is the Romanesque bell tower with its small prehensile arches, considered a unique monument on the Lario Lake. It is highly recommended to visit the small town of Varenna which is located opposite to Bellagio’s peninsula and accessed by boats and ferries. The town is graciously woven into the mountain landscape and dominated by the ruins of the Vezio Castle “Castello di Vezio”, that is one of the most appreciated view points of the lake. During the course of the year the calendar is crammed with events such as art exhibitions, artisan expositions and festivals. The town must be admired from the lake with its steep colourful pyramid architecture, highlighted by the gradient of the wooded slope above. It has wonderful villas and it is possible to visit the stunning gardens of Villa Cipressi, Villa Monastero and the church of San Giorgio, with their cypress trees, rare Mediterranean essences, even tropical. The church of San Giorgio is an early fourteenth century construction, modified in the baroque era, which has big fresco on its facade and houses valuable artwork. Going along the lake front, it is possible to walk the panoramic and romantic “Passeggiata degli Innamorati” (lovers’ walk). This pathway connects the centre of Varenna to Olivedo, arrival and departure point for ferries, boats, and hydrofoils of the Navigazione Lago di Como (Lake Como Boat service), a pleasant and lively bathing area.

The centre of the lake continues to host many historic sailing regattas, swimming crossings, and also firework displays, frequently accompanied by feasts that offer the participants the most traditional flavours of the lake: the first Saturday of July is the festival in Varenna which is highly recommended. This festival is a historical commemoration of the landing on Varenna’s shores of a group of exiles escaped from the fire on Isola Comacina started by Barbarossa. Together with one of the most splendid firework displays in the centre of the lake, there is the feast of the “arborelle”, one of the better known lake fish, maybe only surpassed by the dried twaite shad, the so called “missoltini”.

**The climate**

The Lake Como landscape is characterized by lush vegetation and by the presence of numerous varieties of plants, shrubs and flowers that normally, grown in more southern regions, or even of sub-tropical origin. This rich and varied flora is directly linked to the favourable climate conditions of the region and the presence of numerous water basins in the Como area. It is well known that a water mass has the tendency to cool down and warm up more slowly compared to an air mass or an earth mass, giving off heat in the winter and cooling down the heat in the summer. Furthermore the evaporation of the lake indicates a higher humidity level compared to that of nearby regions. Like all pre-alpine lakes, Lake Como also has a regular breeze routine, blowing in the first hours of the morning from North to South (Tivano) and in the afternoon until late evening from South to North (Breva). These breezes help to ease the summer climate and continually change the air, maintaining a clear vapourless atmosphere that is free of fog. Thanks to all these elements Lake Como has a stable and mild climate, of which its healthy properties have been appreciated since ancient times by the shady woodland and elegant gardens of many noble family villas and big hotels that rise on its shores.
THE CENTRAL LAKE AREA

The villas of the lake

The central lake area is famous for the elegant villas and gardens open to the public. The most important are:

**Villa Carlotta**

The villa, the stairway and the landscaped garden were built for the Clerici family towards the end of 1600. Later it became property of Count Sommariva, who partially modified the style of it under neoclassical influence, and after that it passed to Princess Marianna of the Netherlands, who gave it to her daughter Carlotta as a wedding present. Inside there is a significant museum that collects statues, paintings and original neoclassical furniture, amongst valuable sculptures by Antonio Canova and canvases by Francesco Hayez. On the second floor there are eighteenth century decorations and rooms with period furnishings.

In the garden it is possible to admire trees and plants coming from every part of the globe: citrus arbours, mighty camelia hedges, austral arbored fern, palms, tropical plants, rare centennial conifers and bamboo collections. In springtime (April-May) it is possible to see an incredible azalea flowering of which there are circa 150 varieties at the villa. From the gardens and the terraces of the villa the view looks out to the centre of the lake, Bellagio, the Grigne and the Legnone.

Opening time: from April to September 9:00 - 18:00. March and October; Gardens 9:00 am – 4:30 pm, Villa 9:00 am - 11:30 am /2:00 pm - 4:30 pm. Prices: single € 7.50 - seniors (over 65) € 3.75 - students € 3.75 - groups (over 20 people) € 5.50 – senior groups € 3.40 - schools € 2.55 – free for children up to 6 years old.

Tremezzo - Via Regina 2b - Phone No. +39 0344 40405 - Fax +39 0344 43689 - www.villacarlotta.it

**Villa Serbelloni**

Built in 1605 and located in the high part of Bellagio this villa belongs to the Rockefeller Foundation that utilizes it for conferences and studies. The big park is accessible to the public and occupies a great part of the headland with pathways that last for almost 18 kilometres.

It is possible to see cypress and olive trees mainly, hedges that outline the terraces and the geometrically landscaped flowerbeds. The views overlook the two arms of the lake, with views of extraordinary beauty.

You can admire the gardens of Villa Serbelloni from April to November on guided visits which take place at 11.00am and at 4.00pm every day from Tuesday to Sunday. The visits are cancelled in case of bad weather and the groups have to book in advance.

Open: from Tuesday to Sunday 11.00am and 4pm (Closed on Mondays) – guided visits on booking. Prices: singles € 7.00 - groups (20 people) € 5.50 – schools and reduced entrances € 3.50 – Free for children up to the age of 7. Entrance to the gardens is from piazza Chiesa 14.

Phone No./Fax +39 031 951555/031 950204 - promobellagio@virgilio.it
**Villa Melzi d’Eril**

On the lakeshore in Bellagio, this villa was built for Duke Francesco Melzi d’Eril and today is still a private property. The project was given to the architect Giocondo Albertolli and the works were carried out between 1808 and 1810.

The spectacular garden is open to the public for visiting. It was achieved by adapting the ground with terraces and rises, adding tropical and exotic essences, valuable sculptures among which stands the famous group with Dante and Beatrice, a Moorish temple and a Japanese pond. Even the “orangery” is today transformed into a small museum and you can also visit the family chapel.

Opening time: from March to October 9:00am - 6:00pm
Prices: single tickets € 6,00 – groups € 5,00 – schools (20 people) € 4,00 – children under 6 free
Bellagio - Via Melzi d’Eril - Tel. +39 031 950204

**Villa Balbianello**

On the Lenno headland there is the breathtaking Villa of the Balbianello, built in 1700 on the orders of Cardinal Durini, incorporating an ancient monastery. Today it is property of the FAI. This is one of the most stunning corners of the lake. The wonderful panoramic lodge overlooks Bellagio and the Comacina island.

On the highest floor of the property there is a unique museum exhibiting the art collections and travel memoires of the former owner, explorer Guido Monzio, who was passionate about expeditions and a man of great knowledge. In his will the villa was left to the Fondo per l’Ambiente Italiano (Italian Environmental Foundation) as a testamentary legacy.

The garden is characterized by terraces and balustrades and accurately follows the shape of the rugged ground, formed by steep rocks in some points it is more and milder, more gentle slopes in others. On Thursdays and Fridays it is necessary to use the boat service, from the lake front at Lenno.

Opening time: from March 17 to November 11 from 10:00am to 6:00pm. Closed on Mondays and Wednesdays when not national holidays. Prices: Garden: free visit price € 5,00 – juniors aged 4-12 years old € 2,50 – Free for FAI associates.
Villa: please book for guided tours for groups of max 12 people. Tickets for Garden & Villa € 11,00 – FAI associates and residents € 3,00.
Località Balbianello - Phone No. +39 0344 56110 - www.fondoambiente.it

**Villa Monastero**

Villa Monastero in Varenna is built on the ruins of an ancient cistercian monastry, located in an extremely panoramic position in the centre of lake Como and framed by a garden of very dense design, rich in exotic plants, and often used for study and research activities, important conventions and congresses. These activities are promoted and managed by the Istituzione Villa Monastero, an instrumental body of the Lecco Province, as entrusted in 1995 by its actual owner, the C.N.R.

The villa hosted lessons by the Noble Prize Winner, Enrico Fermi, and today has become home to the museum institute of the CasaMuseo Villa Monastero. The origins of the Villa come from the presence of the cistercian monastery which existed from the end of the XII century, and was transformed during the sixteen hundreds to a holiday residency after it was purchased by the Mornico family from Valsassina. Nowadays the same furniture and collections left from the last two owners of the building are still there and give it an eclectic fell. The last owner was Marco De Marchi who left the whole property and all its contents to the public.
THE CENTRAL LAKE AREA

The gardens are open to the public from 31st March to 1st November 2007 from 9:00am to 7:00pm. Closed in wintertime. Admission: full price € 2,00; reduced and groups € 1,30; Gardens of Villa Monastero & Villa Cipressi: € 4,00, reduced € 3,50.

It is possible to visit the Casa Museo Villa Monastero, every Saturday from 1:00pm to 5:00pm and every Sunday and national holidays from 10:00am to 1:00pm and from 2:00pm to 6:00pm (price € 4,00 – reduced and groups € 3,00) during the periods when the gardens are open.

It is possible to book guided tours for groups to the Exhibition Rooms and educational visits for school groups.

You can also buy an all-inclusive ticket to visit Villa Monastero and Villa Manzoni in Lecco and for the visit to Villa Monastero and Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo, the Villa Melzi gardens and the Instruments Museum in tribute to the boat service of Bellagio.

For further information:
Provincia di Lecco Istituzione “Villa Monastero” - Phone No. +39 0341 295450 - Fax +39 0341 295441
www.villamonastero.it - villa.monastero@provincia.lecco.it

Villa Cipressi

Villa Cipressi is a complex of buildings and gardens rich in history, built predominantly between 1400 and 1800. It still has a wonderful botanic garden that lies on different levels and offers an enchanting landscape in the central lake.

Once the property of the noble family Serponti (1163), of the Baron Isimbaldi (at the end of the 1700s), of the family Andreossi who took great care of the Park, of Sir Astley and Sir Salton (at the beginning of the 1900’s) and of the last owner, the editor Accame.

In 1980 it was bought through a voluntary subscription by the inhabitants of Varenna and some lovers of this place for public use.

It now belongs to public corporations and serves is a hotel.

The gardens are open to the public from March to October from 9:00 am to 07:00 pm. Closed in winter.

Gardens entrance: € 2,50 single - € 1,80 reduced and group entrances.

Entrance to the gardens of Villa Cipressi + Villa Monastero: € 4,00 single - € 3,50 reduced or groups of more than 10 people.

Per informazioni: Phone No. +39 0341 830113 - www.hotelvillacipressi.it - info@hotelvillacipressi.it

TO BE SEEN

MUSEUM OF NAVIGATIONAL INSTRUMENTS - BELLAGIO

P.zza Don Miotti - loc. S. Giovanni
Phone No. +39 031 950309 - www.bellagiomuseo.com - info@bellagiomuseo.com

In an ancient tower building you can see over two hundred precious objects which in passed centuries have
The Castle of Vezio

This ancient manor-house from the XI century, although refurbished several times, can be found in Vezio, a hamlet of Perledo, a medieval village which also has a sixteenth-century oratory dedicated to Sant’Antonio. Today the castle of Vezio appears as a square-based fortification with tall walls and a central tower accessible from a functioning drawbridge. Over one thousand olive trees surround the construction. The level underground was probably built in World War One and has been open to the public since 1999. Unique to the castle is the presence of trained birds of prey devoted to their falconer, who entertain the public with spectacular demonstrations. The castle of Vezio was part of the fortification network that often visually connected the castles and watching over the ancient communication routes that ran along the lake and allowed access to the valleys. Worthy of mention is the fortress of Malgrate and the castles of Menaggio, that of Rezzonico and the impenetrable fortress of Musso.

From April to October it is open everyday from 10:00am to sunset.
Opens Saturday and Sunday from February to the end of March, November and December from 10:00am to sunset.
Closed in January. The castle could remain closed in the event of bad weather.
Every day there is a falconer in the gardens of the castle who allow the visitors of the castle to assist in training sessions and breeding of the birds of prey from 10:00am to 6:00pm.
Entrance to the tower and the underground levels: € 4,00 per person - € 3,00 groups - € 2.00 children.

Information:
Tourist Association Vezio Castle
Phone No. and Fax +39 0341 814011 - Mobile +39 348 8242504 - Mobile +39 335 465186
www.castellodivezio.it - info@castellodivezio.it

ITALO-GERMAN CENTRE VILLA VIGONI - MENAGGIO

Menaggio - V. G. Vigoni 1 - loc. Loveno
Phone No. +39 0344 36111 - www.villavigoni.it - segreteria@villavigoni.it

Head office of the Italo-German cultural centre and boasting scenic parks full of exotic essences and neoclassical statues.
Thursday guided visits by previous booking. Price € 10,00.

ORNITHOLOGIST AND NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUM “SCANAGATTA”- VARENNA

Via IV Novembre
An interesting museum with ornithologist collections from the Lake Como territory.
Information: Tourist office Pro Varenna - Phone No. +39 0341 830367
Comune di Varenna - Phone No. +39 0341 830119
Opening in 2007.

The Castle of Vezio

Helped man find his way at sea.
THE UPPER LAKE

Characterized by a strong cultural unity, based on an ancient historical connection, the high part of Lake Como is one of the most charming areas of the region, most of all for the close connection between nature and man’s work. For this, there are endless excursion itineraries of different difficulty around the lake and mountains and the untouched valleys. There are also many villages worth visiting; the municipality of San Siro, for example, which includes the villages of S. Abbondio and Rezzonico; the latter dominated by the massive structure of the fourteenth century castle built by the Della Torre; or Pianello del Lario with its parish church of S. Martino, which still preserves precious frescoes by Isidoro Bianchi in the presbytery and is the sixteenth century reconstruction of a previous medieval building. The area also has several monuments that deserve a visit and surprising hidden corners such as the Giardini del Merlo in Musso, accessed by perseverance along the mountain side, where there is a collection of numerous exotic plants species. The area north of Dongo is particularly beautiful following the flow of the Albano stream, where you can still find old rural centres like Stazzona, for example, located on the ancient route that crossed the S. Iorio pass and connected Lake Como to nearby Switzerland, that today it is still famous for the presence of numerous “crotti” (restaurants in cave-like surroundings) where you can try all the local specialities.

The upper part of the lake offers many opportunities to tourists to enjoy its clean waters for bathing, nautical sports and amusement. Thanks to the presence of its constant wind this is a real heaven for lovers of windsurfing and sail in general. Well-equipped centres for every kind of nautical sport are situated in Domaso, Gravedona, Sorico, Dongo, Dervio, Bellano and Colico.

In the IV and V centuries Dongo, Gravedona and Sorico were the centre of spreading Christianity in the upper part of the lake. These places created the domain of the Tre Pievi, and had the privilege of their own magistrates and a mint. In 1500 the whole area was under the control of Gian Giacomo Medici, he was known as the feared Medeghino and the clever Sir who lived in the famous Musso castle.

The religious importance of this area is enforced by the presence of many churches: the extraordinary Romanesque church of Santa Maria del Tiglio at Gravedona, a unique example of its genre, incorporating a bell tower in its façade and built in the XII century, preserves precious frescoes and a priceless wooden crucifix inside; the small but precious San Fedelino oratory built on Lake Mezzola in the place where San Fedele supposedly became a martyr; and further still, Gothic-Renaissance churches with precious frescoes by Sigismondo de Magistris, for example, the splendid church of San Vincenzo in Gera Lario.

Water sports

The whole lake is a big gym. And there are many opportunities to make some unusual experiences! For water sports lovers it is possible to spend entire days sailing or kayaking, windsurfing and motor boating, water skiing and canoeing, wakeboarding and kitesurfing. In Como there is also a hydroplane piloting school. The Northern part of the lake is particularly suited to sailing disciplines because of the constant wind that blows there. Especially in Dervio where there are three sailing centres, windsurfing school and an area for kitesurfing which organises international competitions. Lezzeno (located in the province of Como) is renowned for its water ski schools, where world famous champions have trained, while the first lake basin hosts prestigious international motorboat races, among which there was even a Formula 1 world championship race.
also worth visiting the fifteenth century Palazzo Gallio in Gravedona, founded on the site of an ancient castle as we are reminded by its four angular towers, and also the Castle of Rezzonico.

Three kilometres on from Gravedona, along a tortuous but scenic pathway, there is Peglio where you can find the interesting complex of S.Eusebio, made up by a church, archway, ossuary, rectory and cemetery. The church is of late gothic style and was refurbished in the VII century. It contains wonderful frescoes by Giovan Mauro della Rovere, called the Fiammenghino.

Continuing up there is the town called Livo, where among the chestnut woods we find the S.Giacomo church, rebuilt in the XV century on the remains of an already existent structure. It has a beautiful apse with frescoes painted between the XV and the XVI century. On the western banks of the lake there is Bellano, famous for its ravine made by the River Pioverna which begins in Valsassina. Ravine is a big jump of water of the lake that runs into the valley through rocks and gorges, crossed by stairways and foot-bridges for visitors. In Bellano is the ex cotton factory Cantoni, originating from the 1800’s, built on top of a pre-existing factory and the XIV century church of Saints Nazzaro and Celso, built by the Maestri Campionesi in elegant gothic shapes with a monumental façade and majolica rosette, that preserves a splendid cross from the late gothic period.

In the same square is the church of Santa Marta: the two churches rise on the two lower sides of the Bellano square, in the middle of the historical centre, between the lake and the ancient pedestrian streets on the hillside.

The nearby sanctuary of the Madonna di Lezzeno is a pilgrimage destination.

There are many points of attraction in the high part of the lake, along the vast shores of the Varrone stream: Dervio’s most peaceful area overlooks the lake. In this small village medieval houses and the church of Santi Pietro and Paolo stand beside the Romanesque bell tower. Going up the main road, you can reach the village of Villa, where the church of S. Quirico stands, consecrated in 1628, but later refined by a small Romanesque bell tower covered in spires and stone. Attractively backed onto a rocky spur which juts into the lake is the built up area of Corenno Plinio in the municipality of Dervio, with the beautiful 14th century castle of the Andreani, a circle of walls reinforced by two towers with the funeral arches of the Andreani counts, feudal lord of the area, near to San Tommaso Canterbury parish, which has medieval and renaissance frescoes.

The town is very characteristic and preserves its medieval style, with tiny streets that back onto a small harbour with a beach on the lake. Laurel bushes, olive trees and grapevines grow abundantly on the Dorio terraces where the ancient
parish once stood, formed by small villages with important names like Torchiedo, Panico and Mondonico. Beautiful, rustic outlines, all but abandoned on a small hill, link up with the common but delicate style of the frescoes in San Giorgio church.

The Piona Abbey stands in a wonderful position at the end of the Olgiasca peninsula, overlooking the lake with the same name: this is one of the most famous monuments on the lake for its historical, architectural and also environmental value. The history of Piona begins in 610 A.C., when an oratory was founded on the peninsula, dedicated to Santa Giustina (the apse is still preserved outside the cloister of the actual abbey). In 1138 it was consecrated next to the ruins of another Romanesque building, of which only the apse remained. In the XVI century began an unstoppable decline and deterioration of the abbey. In the XVIII century it became private property and was used as a farmstead. The restoration began in the XX century: it was bought by the Rocca Family and was given in 1937 to the Benedictine Cistercian congregation of Casamari and little by little the building began to return to its original splendor.

In the Sixties it became an Abbey. The nave has marble lions and frescoes dating from the XII century. We enter the Abbey through the stunning cloister at the side built in 1275 in a combination of the Romanesque and Gothic style, surrounded by refined columns and decorated with paintings from different periods. The complex is entrusted to the Cistercian monks who distil excellent liqueurs and herbs infusions.

The ancient Via Regina

The Via Regina is a long route, running along the entire western shore of Lake Como. The extremely ancient pathways of pre-historic origin, signposted halfway along the coast, were unified and rebuilt by the Romans who gave this new route the name, Via Regia, which means mainroad, afterwards changed to Via Regina, after the passage of the Longobard Queen Teodolinda. For centuries the Via Regia has been the connecting route between North and South of the Alps, between Como and Milan and the transalpine regions, across the Spluga and Maloja Pass; a travel and business route, where armies and travellers passed on a route that became an intense place of cultural exchange. With time the Strada Regina has witnessed the flourishing of many village, bit by bit enriched with artistic heritage. Today, the majority of the ancient road is still walkable on foot and runs parallel to the state road 340, which is still named Strada Regina, still maintaining some of its past characteristics. Walkers appreciate the pathway on the northern part of the lake, especially the part where Nobiallo meets S. Maria Rezzonico.
**THE UPPER LAKE**

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**La Pesa Vegia a Bellano**

During the year some events have taken on the impression of festivals and fixed dates, to such an extent that they are another incentive for tourists to come during these periods. Among the historical and religious commemorations, an extremely successful secular and sacred revival, the “Pesa Vegia”, takes place every year in Bellano the day before Epiphany. The fancy dress ceremony takes us back to the period of Spanish domination and more precisely to one incident connected to the introduction of a new system of measuring weight which, the Bellano inhabitants manage to avoid, keeping their own measurement “la pesa vegia”. As well as the re-enactments you can see, in a unique and popular way, a live procession of the three kings and bonfires on the shores of the lake.

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**TO BE SEEN**

- **PIONA ABBEY - COLICO - PIONA**
  
  Information: Tel. e Fax +39 0341 940331/931995
  Open every day from 9:00am to 12:00pm and from 2:30pm to 5:00pm. Groups are required to contact the Abbey directly.

- **ORRIDO (RAVINE) - BELLANO**
  
  Piazza San Giorgio
  For information Comune di Bellano:
  Phone No. +39 0341 821124 - Gestore +39 338 5246716 - www.comune.bellano.lc.it - info@comune.bellano.lc.it
  
  The Ravine is a natural canyon created by the river Pioverna, where giant bowls and incredible caves have been carved out by the water over the centuries. A cement footbridge allows visitors to admire this beauty from an extremely unique location.

  Open all year long. From 1st April to 30th September every day from 10:00am to 1:00pm and from 2:30pm to 7:00pm. Open evenings in July and August from 8:45pm to 10:00pm. From October the 1st to March the 31st open Saturday, Sunday and public holidays from 10:00am to midnight and from 2:30pm to 5:00pm. Opened everyday for pre-arranged group bookings. January the 5th open from 10:00pm to midnight to celebrate the Pesa Vegia.
  
  Entrance: € 2,50 full price - € 2,00 reduced and groups (from 15 to 40 people) - € 1,50 for groups over 40 people.

- **MADONNA DELLE LACRIME SHRINE - BELLANO - LEZZENO**
  
  For information: Parish church Phone No. +39 0341 821163 - www.comune.bellano.lc.it - info@comune.bellano.lc.it
  
  This is a baroque style sanctuary from the XVIII century, built following the miracle of the Madonna who cried tears of blood on 6th August 1688.

- **COMO RESISTANCE MUSEUM - DONGO**
  
  c/o Comune - piazza Baracchini - Phone No. +39 0344 82572
  
  This museum is located in the municipal palace and collects pictures, documentations and items from the fascist era. The “Antifascismo e Resistenza nella Provincia di Como” exhibition is permanently on show.

  Open from Monday to Saturday 10:00am to 12:00pm. Sundays, public holidays and outside of hours on request. Please book for schools and guided group visits. Disabled access. Please make a donation at the entrance.
To the northern extremity of Lake Como we find a particularly interesting area for landscape and nature. This is the protected oasis Pian di Spagna, located beyond the towns of Sorico, between the mouths of Mera and Adda Rivers. This swampy area is an important nesting place for several species of birds which find their natural habitat amongst the silence of the reeds. In ancient times this area was considered to be very important for its strategic position; the marsh was drained by the Romans and was occupied by Spanish encampments for the entire XVI century from which is how it became named the Piano di Spagna (The Spanish Plain). The Spanish defensive mainstay was the fortress of Fuentes, located on the long isolated headland that rises from the plain, and controlled the last section of the river Adda. Built in the early XVII century by Count Fuentes of Milan, the Fortress was demolished by Napoleone during the first Campagna d’Italia (Italian Campaign). The ruins are all what remains. Over a century later in 1912, the high commander of the Italian Royal army, before the Grande Guerra (The Great War), initiated the building of another fortress on the Montecchio hill, along the short piece of coast between Colico and the mouth of River Adda. The fortress was completed at the end of 1914 and represents the most technological Italian innovation of World War One. Its four cannons are still there today and are the biggest in the whole Italy; the cannons still function perfectly and can fire at a very long range, with great precision.

TO BE SEEN

**FORTE FUENTES**

For information: Ufficio Informazioni Turistiche Provincia di Lecco - Phone No. +39 0341 295720

**FORTE MONTECCHIO**

For information: LARIUS Coop.: Phone No. +39 0341 941688 - Biblioteca: Phone No. +39 0341 934788 - coop.larius@virgilio.it

Open all year long. From April to the end of July, September and October Saturdays from 2:00pm to 5:00pm and Sundays from 10:00am to 6:00pm. Open every day in August: from Monday to Saturday from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. Sunday from 10:00am to 6:00pm, visits every hour. Easter, 25th April, 2nd June and 1st November from 10:00am to 6:00pm. From November to March by previous booking only. Admission: € 5.00 adults - € 3.00 children (6-14 years of age), over 65’s and residents; for groups, free entrance for the guides of groups over 25 people. The visit lasts approximately 40 minutes.
As you go along the shore of the lake from Menaggio the landscape changes and the horizons widen up, dominated on one side by the Grigne and on the other by the Grona, surrounded by multicoloured reflections.

Going up tight bends in the valley that lead towards the Lugano Lake, we pass the wonderful coast of Piano Lake, a natural oasis with guided nature tours to observe the flora and the fauna. From here there is a panoramic road that goes up to the Val Cavargna, with the picturesque towns of San Bartolomeo, San Nazzaro and Carvagna, the highest town in the Como Province, at 1071 metres. At the San Lucio pass, connecting the Val Cavargna to the Val Colla (in nearby Switzerland), stands an enchanting and particularly admired sanctuary, built in the XIV century in honour of S.Lucio, the patron of herdsmen and cheese producers.

Following the state road, you come to Porlezza, a charming town on Lake Lugano, also known as Ceresio, this water basin is half Italian and half Swiss and is serviced by boats that offer many interesting excursions. The city is the most important tourist resort in the valley, thanks to an interesting variety of hotels, campsites, restaurants and other leisure facilities. It is also rich in artistic heritage: we highly recommend S. Vittore Parish Church, with the attached oratory of S. Giovanni, and the Santa Maria and S. Maurizio Church, a small Romanesque church from the XI century on the slopes of Monte Galbiga. The hamlet of Cima is particularly suggestive and preserves the characteristics of an ancient village, curiously surrounded by terraced olive groves.

The village of Cressogno introduces us to Valsolda, a picturesque area protected by steep mountains of dolomite origins, where many inhabited towns lie. These are the “Fogazzariani” places, the “Piccolo mondo antico” (the ambience described in the novel “Tides of Change”) that even years later, preserve all their charm, with villages, streets, houses described in the novel. San Mamete is the main town, this is a small village that still maintains a medieval style, running tightly around a small square with arcades overlooking the lake. In Cressogno, on a natural balcony that occupies the lake, stands the great Santuario di Nostra Signora della Caravina, an XVII century work with valuable frescoes by Isidoro Bianchi. From here there is a road that travels up the valley to meet Puria, the Pellegrino Tibaldi home town, where you find the wonderful Santa Maria Parish Church. Once we pass Albogasio and its elegant XVII century palaces, you meet Castello, probably the most special place in the valley that is named in memory of the medieval fortress that overhung on a rocky spur. The castle was demolished in the XVI century. Today some ruins and S.Martino Church remain. The last town of the Valsolda is Oria which divides the Italian-Swiss border.

This entire area is an interesting base for walks along the “Sentiero delle Quattro Valli”, an itinerary made for hikers, that with a tough walk links the Ceresio area to the Lake Como area.

The landscapes of Antonio Fogazzaro

Antonio Fogazzaro (1842 – 1911) was born in Vicenza but sought refuge with his family in Oria in Valsolda during the war of 1859. The writer was charmed by the many attractions of this area and also by the people so he returned several times seeking inspiration and describing the unique surroundings and the life in many of his works.

There are many Lake Como landscape-themes that come out in Fogazzaro’s work: the road that goes to the Valley Intelvi from Argegno is described in the novel Mistero del Poeta, written in Lanzo; in Malombra, even if for narrative necessity transferred to other places, he talks about Villa Pliniana and of the Ravine of Osteno that “collects (...) among the enormous caves where two opposing mountains descend and meet, runs for a brief stretch over flat ground out into the open, then spills out below the village from one rapid to the next, from one waterfall to the next until it reaches the valley floor to die shamefully in the lake”.

Lake Lugano
CAMPIONE D’ITALIA

An Italian island that measures less than a square kilometre and situated in the Swiss territory, half way between the Como and Lugano borders: the small enclave named Campione d’Italia is surely worth a visit as for the beauty of its landscape on the shores of the Ceresio, as well as for its ancient artistic tradition that has left traces of great significance.

It was donated in the VIII century to the abbots of Sant’Ambrogio from Milan and for about ten centuries it was land belonging to the church. Since then Campione is definitely an Italian enclave in a foreign land. In this charming frame, art and history go together with the refined worldliness and nightlife of the Casinò Municipale. The Casino attracts an international clientele, not only for gambling but also for its shows and prestigious galas.

Among the artistic works we have to mention the Sanctuary of the Madonna dei Ghirli, created by the Maestri Campionesi, set in an enchanting position directly on the lake and preceded by a splendid stairway. The church is rich in valuable frescoes, the majority of the works by the Campionesi maestro, Isidoro Bianchi.

Casinò di Campione d’Italia
Piazzale Milano 1 - Phone No. 004191 6401111 - Fax 004191 6401112 – www.casinocampione.it
The navigation on Lake Como officially began on 18th July 1826, when the “Società Lombarda” launched the steamboat “Lario” and, at the end of the same year the steamboat “Plinio”. Since 1861 the maritime transport has flourished thanks to the opening of the passes of the Stelvio and Spluga, this indirectly brings the Lake closer to Switzerland and Germany. In 1885 the two navigation companies, Lariana and Milanese, came together; this was the first sign of attention to the users needs and wishes by the boat transport industry. Since then the boat service company on the lake has been affectionately known as “Lariana” by the people of Como. From 1900 to 1918 the fleet grew from 12 to 22 boats but with the war came crisis and the fleet was reduced to only 11 boats. Right after the war customer demand increased: important noble families arrived for vacations in the big hotels or in the patrician villas overlooking the lake. The crisis of the boat system peaked during world war two. In this period many steamboats were hit, after which, they made the decision to reduce the journeys to twice a week. “Società Lariana” was destroyed by this experience and did not find the strength to react, until August 21st 1952, when the Ministry of Transport took the transport service under “Government Management”. The refurbishment of the fleet was arduous and expensive and had many ambitious targets: to modernize the crafts, increase space and passenger loading capacity, create new attractions for the passengers and to build new ferries. To encourage tourist trade on the boat service, the ferries lounges were enlarged to offer a better view of the landscape. In 1964 the first hydrofoil was launched that was capable of reaching 60 kilometres per hour. With the introduction of the car-ferries was created a constant connection between the two shores of the lake and Bellagio. During the seventies the company ethos addressed two objectives: fast and comfortable connections. They also decided to refurbish the old steamboats “Patricia” and “Concordia”, taking them back to their original splendour and allowing passengers to admire the old steamboats in their original beauty and classic, elegant style. During the eighties and nineties much more effort was made towards tourism and there was an obvious increase in travellers each year. The new millennium opened with the introduction of a modern and versatile catamaran service.
The connoisseur will find at least three local types of cuisine in the Como area; three distinctive food cultures, different according to the geographical area from where they derive: the lake, mountain or plain. The first, most important and probably the most well-known of these cuisines uses the fish, as its principal ingredient. Risotto with perch fillets is Lake Como’s “national dish”, but also other specialities retain the simple and popular gastronomic tradition. The “missultitt”, now Italianized missoltini, this fish is the ‘agoni’ fish, caught between May and June, sun dried and pressed with salt in the so-called wooden “missolte”. And also: the ‘carpione’, fried and marinated fish in water and vinegar, aromatized with “segrigiola” herb; fried ‘alborelle’, smoked trouts in oil, whitefish (lavarello) cooked in white wine and the Tremezzina fish soup with pike, small trout, “cavedano” fish, “bottatrice” fish and perch.

To the principal fish, which feature in the most famous dishes offered by restaurants on Lake Como (whitefish, twaite shad, perch, trout) are added less well-known fish (carp, “cavedano”, eel, pike, bleek), and then complimented by regional methods of preparation. Polenta is frequently served with many of lake Como’s dishes.

Lake Como not only has fish but also a top quality vegetable and olive tree cultivation which produces a rare and precious DOP (of protected origin) oil. On the lake an extremely high quality olive oil produced in Lenno is often used as well as quality vegetables, such as asparagus, from Rogaro. Among the desserts, the Resta of Como is worth mentioning, made with dried and candied fruit and a small olive twig in its mix, which brings peace and good fortune.

All restaurants in the province have some typical or traditional dishes on the menu, often adapting rustic specialities to more sophisticated interpretations by the chef. The surrounding landscape enhances the typical dishes of the lake. There is a rich and wide variety of restaurants: in this traditionally tourist area, the restaurants offer local products and regional recipes as well as a wider variety of options to satisfy international customer.
The valleys that we have described above are among the most beautiful in the Pre-Alps area, with lush vegetation, populated by marmot and ungulates, it is a homogenous territory from where many excursions depart along the ancient military roads and pathways up towards mountains pastures and refuges. The charm of these peaks is maximised by the beautiful summer sunsets, the warm autumn light that covers the surroundings, the unbroken winter whiteness, as well as the fresh spring shades. To penetrate into these tranquil valleys, we advise in the warm season to leave the car where possible and continue by foot or bike, stumbling across pastures, tracks and beeches, and in the winter with skis, discovering never-ending panoramic views on the high plateaus.

The mountain and valley region includes the entire territory that surrounds the lake, with hills and mountains which rise from the plains, covered in rural land, villages, ranges and woodland: Valsassina, Valvarrone, Valle San Martino and Val d’Esino, Val d’Intelvi, Val Menaggio, Val Cavargna, Valsolda and Valli dell’Alto Lario Occidentale. These villages are attractive in themselves, and are located in a territory of important and valued natural beauty: here is evidence of the beauty of nature interacting with man’s work and it is pleasant to take the walking itineraries of the faith or visit the nature museums. Each season of the year offers many different sporting activities: alpine and cross-country ski, walking excursions, climbing, paragliding, horse riding and mountain biking. Those who love the mountains, the snow and all its various sports are sure to be attracted by these valleys, where it is easy to turn a simple vacation of healthy competitive spirit, into a chance to learn about the culture. This is not only an ideal place for walkers, but also home to a variety of traditions, cultures and flavours, still relatively unknown.

The sport facilities are located near areas of natural and environmental interest and offer the chance to integrate sport with tradition, places of cultural interest and leisure areas. The numerous refuges on the mountains are located in strategic points offering facilities and refreshment to travellers who are passing through, or for those reaching their final destination. These refuges represent the hospitality that has remained unchanged over the years, the tradition of environmental conservation and the attempt to make the most of our resources without ruining or modifying them. More specifically, they give visitors their unique welcome and offer them the opportunity to share their experiences with other travellers while trying the traditional local dishes such as the alpine cheeses.
The valley has been inhabited since prehistoric and Roman times. During the middle ages it saw the growth of various villages under the administration of the Como Council. For centuries the territory was ruled by the Visconti family and later by the Rusca family. However, the valley’s fame remains tied to the works of the Intelvi masters who specialized in building, stone sculptures and stucco work, frescoes and stone decorations, enriching the art treasures not only in Italy but also in the rest of Europe: from Spain to Austria to Russia. Leaving Argegno, we pass through the villages of Dizzasco, Castiglione Intelvi and San Fedele, until we reach Lanzo and then the peak of Sighignola with its view from the “Balcone d’Italia” (the balcony of Italy) over the Alps and Lake Lugano below: it is an itinerary that continues to capture your attention with its ancient villages, villas, churches and monuments that even today safeguard valuable works of art.

The Intelvi valley is one of the most populated valleys in the Como Province and amongst its numerous villages we recommend San Fedele Intelvi, an important tourist and commercial centre located in a strategic position. Within its territory are various itineraries that take you in the direction of Pigra, a panoramic spot that acts as a balcony over Lake Como and is connected to Argegno by a regular funicular service; and also in the direction of Casasco, Pella and Lanzo, or down towards Claino with Osteno, on the Italian shores of Lake Lugano, where you can visit the “ravine” and the Rescia caves.

Lanzo Intelvi, at 907 m. above sea level, is the most renowned tourist resort in the valley. It boasts not only a rich welcoming structure but also a variety of well organized sport facilities including horse riding centres, golf courses, ski lifts to the Sighignola peak and well organized footpaths for trekking. Not far from San Fedele you can find Scaria, where it is possible to visit the churches of Santi Nazzaro and Celso and of Santa Maria, the latter full of frescoes and stucco works by the Carloni brothers. Another pretty spot is Laino, located in a panoramic location on the side of the valley that overlooks Lake Ceresio. It is the birthplace of numerous artists: Barberini, Caprani, Quaglio etc.

The wonderful position of RAMPONIO Verna, a balcony overlooking Lake Ceresio, makes this spot an oasis of tranquility, but where it is also possible to admire monuments like the S. Pancrazio Oratory which was built using stone ashlars blocks between 1025-1050. The bell tower and the ancient apse can still be
THE INTELVI VALLEY

The carnival of Schignano

Schignano, a small village in the Val d’Intelvi, hosts a very special carnival parade each year which has very ancient origins. The parade takes place on Saturday and Mardi Gras and is traditionally opened by the “Sapeur”. These solemn and theatrical people have their faces painted in black and long moustaches, they wear sheepskin clothes and they have special water-bottles made from pumpkins. After them follow the “Mascarun”, that hide their faces behind big wooden engraved masks; they have bright coloured clothes and big bellies evidence of their prosperity. They are also called the “Bei” (the beautiful) that contrast the last characters of the parade the “Brutt” (the ugly). The latter close the parade wearing rags and showing their hunchbacks full of dried leaves. They hold a broom in one hand and a flask of wine in the other to compensate for their bad fate. The parade of the “Bei” and the “Brutt” tours all the “frazioni” (hamlets) of the village dancing with the public in a very lively atmosphere. At the end of the carnival a dummy called “Carliep” is burnt in the village square and this ceremony signals the beginning of Lent.

THE MUSEUMS

The small museums of the Valle Intelvi are a precious means for those who wish to discover the rich cultural, artistic and historical depth of these places. These museums are located in the various villages and offer a complete portrait of these rural areas that gave birth to the Maestri Intelvesi and that witnessed interesting smuggling attempts due to their location so close to the Swiss border.

MUSEUM OF THE RURAL CIVILIZATION - CASASCO INTELVI

P. V. Veneto - Phone No. +39 031 817812 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Please book to visit.
A rural building which exhibits objects depicting the daily life and ancient instruments of craftsmen and artisan workshops that no longer exist.

MUSEUM OF THE RURAL CIVILIZATION “TRAVERSA G.” AND MUSEUM OF THE ALPS - PONNA INTELVI

Via V. Veneto - Phone No. +39 031 267494 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Please book to visit - Admission free
The museum tells the traditions and working techniques that have characterized agriculture in the Lombardy Mountains, particularly in the Val d’Intelvi.
THE INTELVI VALLEY

MUSEUM OF THE STUCCO AND SCAGLIOLE INTELVESE - CERANO

Via Garibaldi 1 - Phone No. 026458772 - Mobile +39 348 7930214 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Open for groups, please book.– Admission free

The small museum shows the evolution of the “scagliola” technique that achieved a unique and matchless style in the churches of the Valle d’Intelvi.

SACRED ARTS MUSEUM - SCARIA DI LANZO

Piazza Carloni 1 - Phone No. +39 031 840132 (Municipio-Town hall) - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Open in July and August from 3 pm to 7 pm. Please book for other months. Please make a donation.

The museum preserves objects and furniture from the various Parishes in the area, generally donated by wealthy families from this region.

MUSEUM OF THE FOSSILS OF THE INTELVESE MOUNTAINS - SCARIA DI LANZO

Piazza Carloni 1 - Phone No. +39 031 840132 (Municipio-Town hall) - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Open in July and August from 3 pm to 7 pm. Please book for other months. Please make a donation.

The museum was created to document the flora and fauna that survived in this area over a large period stretching from 310 million years ago to 12 thousand years ago.

SMALL MUSEUM OF THE FINANCE POLICE AND SMUGGLING - SAN FEDele INTELVI

Hamlet Erbonne (km 10 da S. Fedele)
Phone No. +39 031 830741 - Mobile +39 333 2384179 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale
Visible from the outside through a window.

It has a collection of objects and evidence from the world of smuggling, especially from the Val d’Intelvi.
On the Lake Ceresio there are two valleys with sharp profiles but with magnificent landscapes: the Val Cavargna, crossed by the river Cuccio, and the Val Rezzo, are united by a high road that offers enchanting excursions. The orography of this territory with its fertile and smooth mountain sides, allowed the development of an agriculture and stock rearing based economy. The opportunity for inhabitants of the valleys to find employment easily near to the Swiss border, has transformed the local economy. To visit the two valleys it is possible to begin from Grandola, an old village made up of several hamlets; among which we have to mention Codogna where the town council has its offices and Naggio whose church has valuable frescoes from the end of the XIV century. Leaving the road to head to Porlezza, the path goes up towards Val Cavargna. The village of Carlazzo appears first, an ancient fortified village with an interesting church dedicated to SS. Fedele and Giacomo, built during the 1600’s and richly decorated inside. Up again on the valley there are the villages of Cusino and S. Bartolomeo Val Cavargna; here the little Church of San Rocco and the oratory are worth a visit. After San Nazzaro, placed in a panoramic position over the valley, we reach Cavargna. The main town (capoluogo) of the valley is a small town located at 1071 metres above sea level, with a neat look and surrounded by the splendid green of the mountains that look like a crown on its head. The tourist that visits there has the chance to admire its modern church and, most of all, the Museum of the Valley that collects memories of the traditions and of the work of the people of this area. A destination that is worth seeing, following a spectacular walk, is the passage of San Lucio, on the Swiss border, where it is possibile to visit the XVI century oratory after the same name, dedicated to the Patron, Saint of the dairymen and mountain dwellers, who was a humble person praised for his generous charity. From Cavargna the road goes down towards Val Rezzo. The tight and tortuous road leading to Lake Ceresio is rich in spectacular landscapes and unspoilt places, with beech trees and grasslands, like Buggiolo from where beautiful walks depart, running along the Swiss-Italian border. Corrido is a small village built on a rock plateau with a beautiful church dedicated to S. Martino, inside of which there are frescoes and “paliotti” works of the neighbouring Maestri Intelvesi; from the churchyard there is a beautiful view over lakes Ceresio and Piano and far away it is possible to see the obvious profile of Grigna.

THE VALLEY MUSEUM - CAVARGNA

Via Chiesa 12/14 – Phone No. +39 0344 63162 (Weekdays 8.30-12.30) / +39 0344 66456
www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale - www.valcavargna.com - ornella.pozzi@tin.it

It preserves documents relating to the traditions, history and old arts and crafts of these valleys, such as the “Iron-smith”.

Opening hours: Sunday from 2pm to 5pm. Other days on request. Admission free.
THE VALLEYS CAVARGNA AND REZZO

PRINTING MUSEUM - CARLAZZO
Via degli Artigiani - Phone No. +39 0344 32055 - Fax +39 0344 30350
www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale - info@sampietrografiche.com

The museum explains the evolution of the art of printing from ancient times to the modern day.

Open: from Monday to Friday 9am-12.00/2pm-4pm. Saturdays 9am-11:30. There is a fee for guided visits which can be booked in advance.

MILK ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM - CARLAZZO
c/o Centro Civico - Via Val Cavargna 32 - Phone No. +39 0344 70123 (Town Hall) - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale

The museum is in the old Carlazzo Dairy Company where you can find a collection of tools used for collecting, preserving and processing milk in the traditional manner.

Open: Tuesdays and Fridays 4pm-5pm. Admission free.

GUIDO ABBATE NAUTICAL MUSEUM - GRANDOLA
Via Italia - Phone No. +39 0344 31581 - Fax +39 0344 31035 - www.primatist.it - primatist@primatist.it

Some of the most prestigious crafts from the Abbate shipyard are exhibited in a newly designed architectural space.

Open: from Monday to Friday 8:30am-12:00/1:30pm-6pm. Saturdays 8:30am-12:00. Admission free.

SANAGRA VALLEYS’ ETHNOGRAPHIC AND NATURE MUSEUM - GRANDOLA
c/o Villa Camozzi - Piazza Camozzi 2 - Phone No. +39 0344 37115 - Fax +39 0344 30247
www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale - comune.grandola@tin.it

It stores documents of the history and typical, past traditions of these valleys.

Opening times: telephone to book a visit. Admission free.
The Four Valleys Path is a wonderful walking excursion of about 50km leading from Breglia above Lake Como, to Dasio on Lake Lugano, travelling through the four valleys of Sanagra, Cavargna, Rezzo and Valsolda. It has an average altitude of 1100 metres, reaching a maximum of 1400 m at the Colonè Alps in the Cavargna Valley.

The path is divided into three parts. They can be done one by one, as day trips, or walked in one go over three days, stopping to sleep in one of the shelters that can be found at the end of each section. The best time of year to do this walk is from May to the end of October.

THE IRONSMITHS

Tin men, braziers, copper-smiths and iron-smiths, are the various names for all the travelling workers, often emigrant, seasonal workers who worked with copper, repairing household pots by coating the internal surfaces with a thin layer of tin.

It is no surprise that the craft of the iron-smith appears in areas where in previous centuries iron was mined. In the Carvagna Valley, the craft of the iron-smith was widespread up to a few decades ago in the villages of S. Nazzaro and Cavargna.

The iron-smiths used to leave the valleys and go to the villages in the Bergamo, Brianza and Lodigiano areas and even further a field. The tools they took with them were often kept in a “trida”, a wooden box with a shoulder strap attached. This ancient craft, which has now disappeared, has, however, left significant marks all over the territory.

Magnani Tools

Val Cavargna
THE VALLEYS OF THE "UPPER LAKE"

The mountains of the "Alto Lago" can be distinguished by the presence of five valleys running parallel to each other: the great valleys of Albano, Liro and Livo as well as the minor valleys of San Vincenzo and the Sorico Valley, formed by rushing waterways, like torrents, which flow into Lake Como. All of them are crossed by footpaths and marked at various altitudes, touching on ancient inhabited spots, mostly used as alpine pastures by the locals in the past.

The Albano Valley opens up behind Dongo, an ancient village full of history and tradition. The valley has been known since ancient times as a thoroughfare towards northern Europe and leads to the Mesolcina Valley by crossing the S. Jorio Pass at 2014 metres above sea level. The plain to the north of the Albano torrent saw the birth of the first iron industries during the nineteenth century, and subsequently important steel industries. This territory also boasts areas of rare, natural beauty which can be uncovered easily, even today, following a remarkable excursion called "La Via dei Monti Lariani" (The Larian Mountains Route). This long footpath, which actually begins at the southern end of Lake Como in Cernobbio, stretches 46 kilometres along the upper Lake, from the Albano Valley to Sorico. Crossing charming, unspoilt, rural areas, it winds along mountain ridges and waterways, and from its wild surroundings descends to the S. Jorio Valley. It then goes through the woods and pastures of the Dosso Valley before finally reaching the area of Dosso del Liro.

The Liro and Livo Valleys take their names from two streams with the same name. They can be reached by turning off the state road at Gravedona and going up the mountain through clusters of ancient houses, full of precious artistic treasures; such as the group of monuments of St. Eusebio at Peglio, with a wonderful panoramic view, or the S. Giacomo Church at Livo with its high bell tower.

The valley furthest to the north, the Sorico Valley, is like a deep cut in the landscape and is overshadowed by the famous Berlinghera Mountain, at nearly two thousand metres, it is one of the most panoramic points of the High Lario. From here you can gaze upon Lakes Como and Mezzola, the peaks of the Orobie Alps and the Masino Valley. In the valley beneath there are numerous interesting places to stop at or farmhouses and typical restaurants where you can find refreshments.

The pretty village of Sorico that lies almost on the banks of the Mera River, a natural connection with Lake Mezzola, was the headquarter for the collection of tolls to and from Valtellina and Valchiavenna in the past. A steep mule track-stairway allows you to reach the famous S. Miro oratory, built during the fifteenth century in honour of the hermit saint especially revered in the upper lake area.
The Larian Triangle

It is called the Larian Triangle because it includes the territory between Como, Lecco and Bellagio. Two roads run through it which can be of interest to tourists, one is the “Lariana”, the coastal road which goes from Como to Bellagio, the other is the “Valassina” which goes right through the middle of the triangle, and leads to Bellagio from the Briantei lakes. Along the “Lariana” you can find ancient, silent villages some of which are spread out over the mountain slopes and others which go down towards the lake, with their beautiful lanes and glimpses of breathtaking views. Each one of these villages looks over precious jewels like the late Gothic church of “San Giovanni” at Torno, the panoramic church square of “San Miro” at Pognana, the steep lanes paved with stone at Careno with its “San Martino” church or the Nesso ravine where the Nosè stream plunges into the lake from a spectacular height.

Even in Valassina there are places of great interest, as far as panoramas are concerned, such as Asso, whose origins are uncertain, possibly Celtic, but it definitely already existed in Roman times as can be proved by the discovery of a consular road which today is the entry to

The Lead Hole

“Il Buco del Piombo” is a striking Jurassic cave which stretches under the calcareous rock of the Karst era group of the Turati Alps. The entrance is enormous and spectacular, comparable in size to Milan’s Cathedral at about 45 metres high and 38 wide. The cave spreads out for more than 400 metres and has not been completely explored yet. Various remains of palaeontologist interest have been found, such as the Ursus Spelaeus, as well as flints and utensils left behind by nomadic hunters from as long ago as the Palaeolithic era. The walls that rise up at its entrance seem to date back to the sixteenth century: in fact the fortified cave was used as a shelter during invasions and periods of war.

The legend goes that in 1160 the inhabitants of Erba sheltered there after having won the Battle of Carcano against Frederick Redbeard, “Barbarossa”, and that in 1316 the noble cavalier Guelfo Parravicini retired there to draw up his last will and testament. The cave has attracted scholars and tourists since the nineteenth century; one frequent visitor in particular was Queen Margaret of Savoy.

Open from 2nd April to 29th October. Saturdays from 2pm-6pm; Sundays 10am-6pm. In August every day from 2pm to 6pm.

Admission: adults € 5.00 - children € 4.00.

For Information:
Museo Buco del Piombo - Località Alpe Turati
Phone No. +39 031 629599
Mobile +39 338 3053323
www.museobucodelpiombo.it
the splendid Valassina. Among the monuments worth visiting are: the Parish church of S. Giovanni Battista. Built on the site of a more ancient church, the most interesting aspects are the baroque altar, the Annunciation by G.C. Campi, an altar piece from the 18th century by Nuvolone; as well as Casa Citterio, with noteworthy frescoes that are now exhibited in the Museum of the Sforzesco Castle, Villa Bertieri of the XIX century, the former Palazzo Scipio (end of sixteenth century) and the Castle of which you can only see one of the original Roman towers.

But the most famous resort is Canzo, at the foot of the famous Corni with their striking rocky peaks. Anyone who reaches their summit can see a picturesque panorama of the Brianza hills and the smaller Lecco lakes, as well as the areas of “Pian del Tivano”, “Pian Rancio” and “Mount San Primo”; they are all ski resorts at a medium altitude, also visited in summer to get away from the summer heat. Along the provincial road, going towards Bellagio, you come across the delightful little church of “Sant’Alessandro” at Lasnigo, with its Romanesque tower and precious frescoes by Andrea de Passeri.

We really should mention the small village of Barni, which among its monuments still preserves the Romanesque style church of Santi Pietro and Paolo which is considered to be one of the most ancient churches in Valassina. It was extended around a Roman centre and still has the apse and bell tower intact, as well as the Medieval castle (900 – 1000), with its surrounding walls and tower which is slowly being hidden from sight by the growing vegetation.

In the municipality of Magreglio, about 30 km from Como, there is the characteristic Shrine of the “Madonna del Ghisallo”, patron saint of cyclists. The church was built in the XVII century and within its walls it safeguards important trophies and souvenirs donated by the greatest champions on two wheels. A picture, which shows the “Virgin breastfeeding”, is greatly revered. Initially it was a fresco, but it was transferred to canvas during the last century. Outside the Shrine there is a monument commemorating Fausto Coppi. From Belvedere there is a splendid view of the Lecco arm of the lake which links up with the Grigne in the background and all of the upper Lake area.

Next to the Shrine, the Cycling Museum has recently been inaugurated with a rich historical archive, a video library and a computer programme to simulate the routes of the races and cycling paths.

The panoramic road continues down to Bellagio with short panoramic views of rare beauty.
Groups of erratic rocks and Rezzago mushrooms

As proof of the Quaternary glaciation there are several erratic rocks of remarkable size in the Larian Triangle. The biggest is the “Pietra Lentina” (Lentina rock) which can be reached by following the mule track which starts from Civenna. Some of these rocks were used in past centuries as burial stones and later as drinking troughs or water collection tanks. Many can be found on Mount Piatto di Torno. Another sight to be seen is the “Sass Nègher” at Valsesia, and the “Sasso di Preguda” (“sharp stone”) on Mount Moregallo, to which the Abbot Stoppani dedicated his nature studies and a poem. Another interesting geological phenomena is the so-called “mushrooms”, natural pyramids of earth overhung by enormous masses of rock. They can be reached by crossing a large wood of chestnut trees in the area of Rezzago.

Excursions in the Larian Triangle

The Larian Triangle is certainly a perfect area for outings and walking excursions of low or medium difficulty. Some of the footpaths that we recommend are: the “Strada Regia” that goes from Como to Bellagio, currently open between Torno and Lezzeno, or the more well-known and traditional walk, the Larian Triangle Ridge (Brunate-Bellagio), a fascinating route of medium difficulty that can even be done on mountain bike. From the Gajum springs of Canzo starts a leisurely and interesting Geological Path that gives you the possibility of observing and encountering erratic rocks and other erosion phenomena. This path ends at “Terzo Alpe”, the starting point for the climb up to the Corni di Canzo. The maps and descriptions of these footpaths are published and distributed by the Mountain Community of the Larian Triangle which has its headquarters in Canzo.

Brunate is a delightful holiday resort at an altitude of 715 metres, found on the first prealpine spur that surrounds the right-hand side of the town. It can be reached by funicular and has a lot to offer, from footpaths to panoramic terraces to alpine refuges. There are also many liberty style villas built at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries by the new industrial bourgeoisie who radically transformed the bleak Brunate region into a luxurious holiday resort. Symbols of this transformation are the two ex. Grand Hotels: the Grand Hotel Brunate which stands strikingly against the backdrop of the mountain. Just above it, you can easily spot the ex Grand Hotel Milan, built in 1910 with decorations and wrought ironworks that reflect the liberty style of the time. Along the mountain ridge, those fascinated by the Rationalism movement, will be interested in Villa Elisi, one of the very first projects by Antonio Sant’Elia whose concept was to build a rural villa, with futuristic architectural and decorative elements. The secrets and gardens of these villas are open to the public in the summer when they host Musical Events and exhibitions by international artists as well as young, new talent.

In the hamlet of San Maurizio, you can find the famous lighthouse built in 1927 in honour of Alessandro Volta, at the top of which is an invaluable view of the lake’s first basin, the city of Como and the Alps. Along the way there is no lack of restaurants, especially “polenterie” (polenta specialty restaurants). After the CAO Square, the furthest point to be reached along the tarmac road, with the smallest shrine in Europe, dedicated to “Santa Rita”, is a comfortable cart way leads off for various kilometres. It takes 8 hours to reach Bellagio, but along this route you can find numerous other footpaths that lead back to the lake and from where it is possible to get back to Como using public transport.
Valvareone encircles the village of Premana, a town well known for its production of scissors and knives. The villages of the Valley, dominated by the powerful Mount Legnone, the highest peak in the province at 2610 metres, are all on the northern slope and are connected by a winding road which has recently been made easier to drive along. These areas with an old-fashioned style that have maintained ancient traditions alongside their well-known industrial activity.

Vestreno, with its ancient stone buildings and castle, is an easily reachable holiday resort. The route that leads to Madonna di Bondo, important for its sanctuary which started in 1672, also reaches Roccol d'Artesio (1239 m) at the foot of Legnone and then continues onto Sueglio which still has some baroque buildings, a castle and the Square of S. Bernardino church which still contains a wooden altar from the sixteenth century.

From Introzzo, a town with an old-fashioned style, you go down the valley touching on Tremenico and Pagnona; from Tremenico the road forks and reaches the foot of the most ancient spur of Mount Legnone and the more modest ones of Mount Legnone (1714 m), on whose peak you can find the small church dedicated to S. Sifio.

Premana has a vibrant appearance with houses along the slope, it hosts the interesting Ethnographic Museum, one of the most valid initiatives achieved in the area of the Lombardy Prealps, and contains plenty of material from agricultural and pre-artisan activities, supplying documentary evidence of local uses, habits, traditions and culture. The production of iron was typical of the area and they were, and still are, specialised in the making of scissors, a thriving and internationally known activity.

The areas of Margno and Casargo are a link between the Prealps, and contains plenty of material from agricultural and pre-artisan activities, supplying documentary evidence of local uses, habits, traditions and culture. The production of iron was typical of the area and they were, and still are, specialised in the making of scissors, a thriving and internationally known activity.

The areas of Margno and Casargo are a link between the Valvareone and the Vallassina valleys.

The Margno settlement dates back to ancient times, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age (XVI B.C.); the parish of San Bartolomeo del Ribera, the sixteenth century cycle of frescoes in the presbytery, an important polyptych traditionally compared to Bergognone, engravings and an organ which was restored by Bernacconi (1858), as well as the majestic 1666 tower bell and, last but not least, the frescoes by Cristoforo Baschenis (1562) in the Oratory next door, all of which make this building the symbol of the valley.

In the hamlet of Somadino di Casargo is the rustic Roman church, Santa Margherita, with its stone-structure crowned with its decorated arches preceeded by an atrium: there are some noteworthy XI century frescoes in Somadino, where you will find the churches of S. Stefano and of Addolorata. Following a windsroad you can reach the Alpe Paglio, an area renowned for excursions and walks. On the same mountainside as Cimone di Margno, the Pian delle Betulle (1480 m) is connected to Margno by a modern cable car, and is a pleasant refreshment point or sport’s destination, with facilities for winter skiing and a special church of the Alpine Troops in the rationalist style by Mario Cereghini (1962).

The municipality of Vendrogno, which includes the Muggiasca area, spreads out over vineyards and meadows and is home to the fifteenth century church of S. Sebastiano, decorated with frescoes from the mid XVI century and which can be compared to the gothic architecture of the old groups of buildings.

From here you can then reach the municipality of Taceno which is a medieval settlement: don’t miss the eighteenth century copper foundry which still houses a copperplate engraving on a mallet. On the other face, above the flat plain, S. Antonio of Parlasco shines white with its paintings extending from XVI century amongst others, thought to be by the artist Aragonio from Brescia (1593). There, you can also see ruins of the Marmoro stronghold, believed to be the fortress of del Lasco, a bandit made famous by a historical novel by Antonio Balbiano. From Parlasco it is possible to reach Eisino Lario by going up a splendid surfaced road. You can then go on to Tartavalle where thermal waters were discovered in 1839.

TO BE SEEN

ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM - PREMANA

Via Roma 18
For information and bookings: Phone No. and Fax +39 0341 818085 - Chairman +39 0341 890103
www.museo.premana.lc.it - museo.premana@libero.it

The museum was founded in 1974, while in 1995 the association “Friends of the Premana Museum” was set up, committed to making the most of the museum’s patrimony from the Premana region. It has a rich collection of objects from the agro-rural background and economic life of the community. It is on two floors and has various exhibition rooms. The “Iron room” goes over the historical stages of the working of iron in the territory, from the pre-roman period to the current production of scissors and knives.

Open from April to October, Saturdays from 4pm to 7pm and Sundays from 10am to 12pm and from 4pm to 7pm. In August every day from 10am to 12pm and from 4pm to 7pm. Groups and school groups can book guided tours all year round. Entrance fee: € 3.00 adults - € 2.00 reduced ticket over 65 years old and groups of 15 persons minimum - € 1,50 schools.
Taking the road from Varenna, the Val d’Esino goes up from the shores along the stream with the same name. Going past Perledo, which has numerous picturesque hamlets, and continuing along the panoramic road, you end up in front of the impressive range of mountains of the northern Grigna. Esino Lario is a pleasant holiday resort situated in an excellent climatic position and rich in historical, naturalistic and geological points worthy of a visit. Its ancient origins are proved by several archaeological finds, discovered in the excavations on the boundaries of the two old centres which make up the village; Esino Superiore (Upper Esino) – Crès, of Celtic origins, and Esino Inferiore (Lower Esino) – Psciàc, of Roman origins. The two villages were united in 1927 under the name of Esino Lario. The peak of the Northern Grigna which dominates it, is the final destination of many excursions, such as the excursion to the Ghiacciaia del Moncodeno, a ravine with permanent ice conformations. It was even visited by Leonardo da Vinci who was enchanted by this landscape and by the characteristics of the Grigna. The Cainallo Pass, with facilities for skiing, the Agueglio Pass and the Ortanella plains, an ancient access to Valsassina and the lake, are today the destination for pleasant walking excursions and wonderful points from where you can admire the panoramas which dominate the Orobie Alps to the North, and Lake Como to the South.

In the village you can still find the parish church of San Vittore, traced back to the XIII century and built on the ruins of a Roman “castrum”. It contains beautiful, wooden marquetry from the XVI century, fine tapestries – products of the tapestry school, established in the village at the beginning of twentieth century – and a noteworthy bronze door by the sculptor Bonalberti. The beautiful surrounding of the church is completed by the “Viale della Croce”, a monumental work of art by the sculptor Michele Vedani from Milan. The boulevard leading from the Memorial Chapel of the Fallen to the parish church of San Vittore Martire, is skirted by sixteen chapels with bronze high-reliefs which represent the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. It is worth noting in the two historical centres the XVI century Churches dedicated to Sant’Antonio and San Giovanni; in the Ortanella area, the Romanesque chapel of San Pietro, recently rebuilt and positioned on the ancient “Strada o Sentiero del Viandante” (the wayfarer’s trail) which connects Lecco to Colico and Valchiavenna, and several chapels with frescoes spread throughout the region which illustrate the devotion of the local people. Another beautiful building in the hamlet of Cresi is the ‘torre’ (tower) of late medieval origins which dominates the village and was certainly part of a lookout system which spread from Switzerland and reached as far as Milan.

TO BE SEEN

GRIGNE MUSEUM - ESINO LARIO

Piazza Ing. Pietro Pensa
For information: Associazione Amici del Museo delle Grigne (Friends of the Grigne Museum Association)
Phone No. +39 0341 860275

It contains important collections which show how the territory and the people developed throughout time: fossils from the Mid-Triassic Era, studied by Stoppani, a frequent visitor to the area; minerals from the prealpine and alpine area; natural settings; the first evidence of the presence of man in the area [a neolithic, flint arrow]; objects, jewels and weapons found in Celtic and Roman tombs; the home from more recent times.

Open July and August, Wednesdays from 6pm to 7pm, Fridays from 8.30pm to 10pm, Sundays from 10.30am to 12.00. Other times of the year visits can be booked.
Valsassina stretches between the prealpine mountain ranges, touching on the famous dolomites of the Grigne, whose peaks seem very similar to the backgrounds in the works of Leonardo, who came here to admire the Baeido fortress, the rare flowers, the forges for the iron, copper and silver.

On the other slope impressive massifs spread out into the Bergamo valleys and rise up to the "Pizzo dei Tre Signori" (The Three Lords Peak, where for centuries three powers bordered each other: la Lega dei Grigioni (the Grigioni League), la Repubblica Veneta (the Venetian Republic) and il Ducato di Milan (the Duchy of Milan). Various events and sports facilities make the most of this spectacular natural environment: cable cars, ski lifts, cross country tracks and rock climbing schools. It is also an ideal place for walks, mountain biking, climbing, skiing and alpine skiing. Not only do the mountains attract a more specific type of tourist but also those who can explore the small, pretty towns of the Valsassina with their rich architectural monuments, churches and buildings, within the spectacular setting of the austere mountains. As well as holiday resorts, there are also many headquarters of small industries and artisan craftsmanship: Ballabio, Pasturo, Barzio, Crememo, Introbio, Moggio.

Ballabio, divided into two centres, maintains its rural style in the upper part of the town, with traces of ancient fortifications.

You then go onto Crememo, whose parish church of "San Giorgio" at the top of a long stairway, represents an important contribution to the severe baroque style (1657 – 1692); the church is rich in artwork, from sculptures by Gaggini to the stucco-work by Aliprandi, from the altar by Albinoia (1793) to the carved cabinets (1690) and the magnificent polypych commissioned by Sigismondo de Magistris and Ambrogio Arcimboldi. Stefano da Pianelle, however, is the creator of the altarpiece in S. Rocco dated from 1523. You then continue towards Moggio, a pretty centre surrounded by the powerful embrace of the peaks of Zuccone Campelli, Zucco di Maesino, Corona Grande and the Grigne massif. From Moggio the old prealpine road forks off and leads to the Culmine di San Pietro in the municipality of Cassina, where it is possible to admire the small church of Santi Pietro and Paolo, built in the sixteenth century, but restored several times since.

The prealpine road goes down to Vedeseta in the Val Taleggio, offering the tourist a route which is rich not only in natural beauty, but also in history: in fact it follows the ancient paths that for centuries have connected the Bergamo valleys to Valsassina.

The valley, crossed by an arm of the River Pioverna, can be crossed over by the daring Ponte della Vittoria (1926) at a height of 96 m. The Maggio valley, a pleasant resort with many sports facilites, still preserves some characteristic areas with wooden and stone buildings which remind us of its charm from ancient times. Pasturo maintains its ancient soul through its reminiscent homes with their porticos and the Shrine to the "Madonna della Cintura" (Madonna of the Belt), dated back to the fifteenth century, and restored in the seventeenth. Inside the Shrine you can find sixteenth century frescoes and paintings by Luigi Reali.

Barzio, the largest holiday resort in the valley, still has a seventeenth century palace in its historical centre, belonging to the Manzioni family who originated from this town. In the former oratory of San Giovanni Battista (Saint John the Baptist), a private museum with the works of sculptor, Medardo Rosso (1858-1928), has been established following the wishes of his heirs.

The main Garibaldì Square has recently been renovated and has a monument dedicated to the soldiers of the First World War. The monument has a lion on it, the symbol of Valsassina. From the square numerous roads lead off and they allow us to visit the historical centre where you can still see well-preserved period villas and houses. Just past Vimogno, the Troggia waterfall tumbles into the River Pioverna, one of the most beautiful of its kind in the

**Valsassina**

**Morterone**

Shortly before arriving in the lower part of Ballabio, you will find a winding road on the right heading to Boazzlo valley, which passes through silent alpine countryside and reaches the shadow of the Resegone massif and the village of Morterone (1070m, 33 inhabitants), which holds the honour of being the smallest municipality in Italy.

The eastern side of Mount Resegone, with its luxuriant and unsullied natural basin, surrounded by valleys, frames the village which is made up of various hamlets spread over the territory, dating back to 1100. Morterone is a starting point for walking the whole Resegone ring which can be completed in 5-6 hours (grade of difficulty: demanding), at an almost constant altitude, touching on many interesting, natural, historical and ethnographic points. All of this area is relatively unknown, but this does not make it less important: it is an extremely interesting karst area with numerous caves, dolines, springs and ravines. During the months of May and June it is possible to go canyoning along a route that starts in the Carigone area and continues towards Vedeseta, reaching the bed of the torrent where it joins up with the tributary of the left bank and from here skirts the river until it reaches its first jump of 30 m.
VALSASSINA

Alps and also described in the works of Leonardo; the waters are broken by the large Norda plant. The stream rises up again followed by a route which can be partly driven along towards the Biandino valley in the centre of which can be seen the “Madonna della Neve”, built in 1664 and rebuilt after the tragic German invasions in 1944. From here you can go on to Lake Sasso, through the stony grounds of the Pizzo dei Tre Signori (2554 m), so-called because it is the point bordering the areas of Switzerland, the Duchy of Milan and the Republic of Venice. Introbio, considered the main town of Valsassina, has extremely ancient origins. In the centre there is a medieval tower, surrounded by houses decorated with frescoes and coats of arms. The parish church of S. Antonio (1891) brings together works from the previous church which was later transformed into the rectory: on one wall of the square, which was once part of the bell tower, you can see a Roman are dedicated to Hercules; the first parish church of S. Michele is outside the village where important frescoes from the XV and XVI have been discovered. From the church an avenue with stations of the Way of the Cross lead to S. Caterina founded in 1539 which is decorated in seventeenth century stucco-work.

In these areas, many dairy farms season their cheeses in the surrounding caves and have become well-known for the Valsassina produce among gourmets: in these caves the air currents maintain constant temperatures and have an ideal humidity for the seasoning of local cheeses such as “taleggio”, “robiola” and “caprino”.

Around 15th August Valsassina hosts a series of events that attract numerous participants, especially from the Milanese and Lombardy areas: “Sagra delle Sagre” (the Feast of all Feasts) which highlights local traditions, folklore and the history of Lecco and Valsassina areas. We also remind you of Primaluna, an ancient religious and military centre of Valsassina, where the oldest part is the Roman bell tower of the prevostry; the local museum in the church is quite interesting, and you can see various ethnographic and anthropological collections. On the western bank of the river Pioverna, Cortenova encloses within its houses the memory of a feudal court. As well as the Parish Church, which has some baroque elements and frescoes from the XVI century, there is the oratory of S. Fermo, built in 1594, with Counter-reformation furnishings, wooden altarpieces and large statues, a carved chancel and many other reminders of S. Carlo Borromeo.

TO BE SEEN

MEDARDO ROSSO MUSEUM - BARZIO

Via Baruffaldi 4
For Information: Fax +39 02 33103485 - www.medardorosso.org - museo@medardorosso.org

Openings and guided visits only on request.
VALSASSINA

The word snow immediately conjures up magical atmospheres, alpine huts with open fires and white embroidery on the leafy branches of trees, but above all, snow sports and activities. The villages which stand one after the other along the main road can all be considered possible destinations for anyone seeking outdoor activities, even during the winter months. As far as alpine skiing is concerned, the Valsassina offers various options to choose from, such as the ski resort between the valleys of Piani di Bobbio and Valtorta.

The Piani di Bobbio (m 1660) can be reached from two different sides; either from Barzio in a comfortable cable car or from Valtorta on the Bergamo side, in a chairlift: the plateau offers ‘rifugi’ (shelters) and restaurants, and from here various slopes and cross country tracks wind and spread out throughout the valley, part of which is covered by artificial snow at certain times of the year.

Information: Società impianti di risalita ITB
(cable cars, ski lifts etc)
Phone No. +39 0341 996101
www.pianidibobbio.com

There are other smaller winter resorts, which have their own charm and that are fascinating to discover and ideal for beginner skiers or for families with children. Going up the valley you reach the village of Margno, where there is a cablecar that takes you up to “Piani delle Betulle” (1456 m), where amongst peaceful woodland, you can find lifts on a slope offering fantastic views of Lakes Como and Lugano, as well as the Italian and Swiss Alps. At the Pian delle Betulle from May to October, an Adventure Park “Jungle Raider Park” has been opened, ideal for adventure lovers. Info: www.jungleraiderpark.com – www.comune.margno.lc.it

Information: Società di Impianti di risalita ITA
Phone No. +39 0341 840020
www.piandellebetulle.it
www.comunemargno.lc.it

The Alpe Giumello ski lift network (1600m), at the foot of Mount Muggio (1800m), is a magnificent natural balcony overlooking the Alps, Lake Como and the ski resort of Cainello. Found in a spectacular position, at the top of Val d’Esino, it has two small and welcoming ski areas that can be reached by car and are ideal destinations for children’s skiing or for beginner skiers.

Information: Società di Impianti di risalita (lifts etc)
Associazione Alpe Giumello
Phone No. +39 0341 840164
Impianti di risalita Esino 2000
Tel. +39 0341 860050

You can also ski directly “above” Lecco at Piani d’Erna: behind the city a cableway takes you up to Piani d’Erna on the slopes of Mount Resegone, an area which inspired Manzoni and which offers various possibilities for trekking as well as a breathtaking views, and during the winter, a versatile area of ski slopes.

Information: Società Impianti di risalita “Erna ’94”
Phone No. +39 0341 497337

For walkers, the Lecco Mountains are a very interesting area, well known all over the world for the numerous possibilities for climbers of all abilities. The Piani di Artavaggio (1609m), which can be reached by cableway from Moggio (Information: Società Impianti di risalita ITB – tel. 0341996101 Ticket office – tel. 0341918152), and the Alpe di Paglio, which can be reached from Casargo, have been rediscovered by alpine skiing enthusiasts, heading backcountry, looking for untouched snow and unspoiled environments. They offer the tourist itineraries that plunge you into a magical atmosphere, allowing you to fully appreciate the mountain environment in the silence that only snow can make unique.

For cross country skiing Valsassina offers sun, snow, the colours and sounds of the mountains, the best slopes and the traditional hospitality of the locals: the skier is left to enjoy the pure environment, in direct contact with nature, doing a fascinating sport which continually develops. There are tracks and crosscountry areas in many areas in this region, suitable for skiers of all abilities: at Cortabbio in Primaluna, the Grigne Slope is accredited for international competitions as well as the circuit on the Piani di Bobbio. Less well-known, but without a doubt still worthy of note, are the ski resorts on the Como side. In the area of the Larian Triangle you can easily reach the network of Mount San Primo, situated at 1170 m where there are slopes for both adults and children. Nearby, Pian del Tivano, (1000 m) between the municipalities of Zelbio and Sormano, is equipped for crosscountry skiing,
thanks to a really panoramic circuit, full of natural charm. In Val d’Intelvi, on the other hand, you can find the ski resorts of Mount Procione and Lanzo d’Intelvi. The latter is the main town of the valley, situated at the top of a tabletop behind Mount Sighignola and surrounded by woods, it is equipped with lifts and a panoramic circuit for cross country skiing that also winds through a golf course. Recently an innovation has been introduced that comes directly from the United States: Snow-Tubing. It is a suitable and fun alternative for anyone who does not ski; riding robust rubber dinghies, you can try all sorts of daredevil runs without any athletic preparation. You are sure to enjoy yourself.

Information: Monte San Primo
Albergo La Genzianella
Phone No. +39 031 964734/964694
Pian del Tivano - Phone No. +39 031 667058
Monte Crocione - Phone No. +39 031 830345
Lanzo Intelvi - Phone No. +39 339 7078255
Pista di fondo - Phone No. +39 031 841369

THE GRIGNE

The Grigne Range are calcareous, dolomite rocks, which rise at the eastern end of the Orobie Alps. The main range is made up of three smaller ranges: Coltignone – San Martino (1474 m) which overshadows Lecco, the northern Grigna (or Grignone 2409m) and southern Grigna (also called Grignetta 2177 m) with a more spectacular outline and with originally named spires such as il Sigaro (the Cigar), la Mongolfiera (the Balloon), il Fungo (the Mushroom) la Lancia (the Spear); 2177). The unmistakable landscape belonging to the southeastern slope of the Grignetta is outlined with ridges and gullies and then rises to pinnacles and towers, creating the impression of a continual vertical. The Grigne also have an excellent natural heritage with a significant number of plants and animal species, especially invertebrates, and unique fossils such as the “lariosaur”, an incredible marine reptile found in the black limestone of Varenna and Perledo.

The “Piani Resinelli” is a vast, flat table-land at a height of 1200 to 1300m that can be reached from Lecco in about half an hour by car. This charming and extremely green area lies at the feet of Grignetta and is made up of a stretch of meadows with woodlands of beech trees, birches and conifers, gently rolling down towards Abbadia and Mandello. The Piani Resinelli are today one of the most important alpine centres in Italy, with a wide range of sports facilities: both leisurely and challenging cross country tracks and climbs, as well as countless rock climbs of varying difficulty, making it one of the most

Managing body:
Comunità Montana Valsassina, Valvarrone, Val d’Esino e Riviera
Via Fornace Merlo 2 - 23816 Barzio LC
Phone No. +39 0341 910144 - Fax +39 0341 910154
beautiful and frequented rock climbing schools. Of course you can also walk through the woods in wintertime, made even more picturesque by the snow, as well as breathing in the pure and mild air.

Worthy of note is also the Grigne Natural Museum, found in a beautiful and ancient construction with an interesting collection of all the views and natural aspects of the Grigne Range as well as a room equipped for film projections.

On the Piani Resinelli there is a complex network of mines which continue to surprise us with its most recent discoveries of new shafts, tracks and trolleys still in excellent condition. Two mines, Anna and Cavallo, that operated until after the Second World War, still have emerging traces of minerals and have been recently restructured and adapted for guided visits.

The Lecco Orobie Ridge (DOL)
A long range of peaks act as a watershed between Lake Como and the Bergamo valleys, slopes that in the past centuries have been thoroughly exploited by mining and an agricultural-pastoral tradition. The DOL is a long, well-equipped, walking itinerary that takes you along this ridge starting from Posallo at Colico, at the foot of Mount Legnone, and going as far South as Passata, a pass between the valleys Imagna and San Martino.

The route has many cultural elements which are highlighted by the themes given to each part: the historical Paths, the iron Paths and the milk Paths. The DOL is not particularly difficult, but it requires some training beforehand and some good equipment; the total height difference that confronts the climber is almost 6000 m, while the total distance covered is 80 km.

The “Ragni di Lecco” Group
The “Ragni di Lecco”, a group of daring peak climbers from all over the world, was born in 1946, even if, this passion of the Lecco inhabitants goes back much further. The first climbs had already taken place in the early nineteenth century, after 1873, when the first section of the national, alpine CAI association was founded in Milan, headed by the abbot from Lecco, Antonio Stoppani. Italian alpinism founded its natural school in these mountains. Crossings were inaugurated and shelters were built and the 1930s became the romantic era for mountain climbing, featuring legendary figures like Riccardo Cassin. A new generation of climbers that appeared immediately after the war gave life to the association. All the achievements of the Ragni, in half a century of activity, all over the world, have been achieved through following the original spirit of the group. Today, apart from the great expeditions, their main activity is to protect the environment and promote the terrain and culture of the area.

TO BE SEEN

THE GRIGNE MUSEUM - PIANI RESINELLI
PERMANENT PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION OF ASTRONOMY AND VALENTINO PARK MUSEUM

For information:
Eastern Lario Mountain Community
Phone No. +39 0341 240724 - www.cmlarioorientale.it - info@cmlarioorientale.it – larioest@tin.it

Open in August every Sunday from 9am to 12.00pm and from 2pm to 5pm. Possibility of other openings on booking.

MININO PARK - PIANI RESINELLI

For information:
Eastern Lario Mountain Community - Phone No. +39 0341 240724
www.cmlarioorientale.it - info@cmlarioorientale.it - larioest@tin.it

Open: from March to October on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, all other days must be booked. July and August every afternoon and Saturdays, Sundays and holidays all day. From November to February group bookings only. Opening times: from 10 am to 12.30pm and from 2pm to 5pm.

Admission fee: € 7,00 adults - € 4,00 concessions (7->12, over 65, school groups and young people) € 5,50 adult groups (min. 15 persons).
The San Martino Valley, part of the history of the Bergamo territory, was assigned to the Province of Lecco in 1992 and is a slope that rises from the left bank of the River Adda, up to the hills and down to the watershed of the Imagna Valley. On the border, Bergamo influences both the dialect and the traditions, but it still retains some of the lake characteristics: it is an evocative and well-preserved natural environment which merges with valuable and artistic history, making this area a micro-region which should be enhanced as much as possible.

From Caloziocorte you travel towards the hamlets half way up the mountain-side: Rossino, Moioli, Lorentino and Sopracornola. Once a flourishing agricultural area, it is now meadowland, criss-crossed by roads and dotted with villages and home to ancient churches that offer various representations of different architectural styles. At Rossino, worthy of note is the restored ancient tower of a manor house that possibly belonged to the Benaglio Family and the San Lorenzo church where you can still see the presbytery and the beautiful fifteenth century frescoes along the arches. The small, inhabited areas have narrow, picturesque streets, interspersed with stairways, porticos and votive pictures. Lorentino is remembered in documents dating from 1036, but the discovery of the cover of a Roman sarcophagus has confirmed that all these places have ancient origins. Don’t miss visiting the Santa Brigida Church, a rare example of a bell tower church which occupies the façade without being built into it and with only one shared wall. This tower has been the main entrance to the church, dedicated to Santa Brigida, since the XVI century. The wonderful terraces of San Martino Valley rise up towards Mounts Resegone and Tesoro where you can discover villages that seem to emerge from ancient times. A steep road leads up to the town of Erve, a small place on the slopes of Mount Resegone, where the valley narrows into a sheer gorge: here the Galavesa stream is surrounded by rural buildings and preserves the parish of Assunta: in existence since 1455, but dismembered in 1506 by the Rossino parish and since then extended and decorated. Worth noting is the altarpiece of the Rosario by Procaccini and that of San Carlo by Picenardi. The rural architecture is characteristic of this area, in particular the ‘frazione’ (hamlet) of Nesolio, which is thought to have been part of the main town of Val d’Erve, an urban town, which is no longer, inhabited, but is connected to the settlement in Erve by an agricultural route. The buildings nestle...
THE SAN MARTINO VALLEY

along the paved mule track and around the square featuring stairways, small doors and walls covered in cherry tree branches.

Carenno, at 640 metres, on a large plateau, is a compact village divided into sections which has attracted tourists for decades thanks to its clear air, and the mild climate produced by its position behind Mount Ocone. It is surrounded by woodland, broken up by old farmhouses and there are sports facilities for lovers of crazy golf, horse riding and mountain biking. The historical centre is made up of characteristic alleys and small roads and includes a small church, cited since the XIII, dedicated to Santi Pietro and Biagio which went under restoration from 1447 until the mid nineteenth century. Inside there are some important works of art including eighteenth century paintings which have been dated and signed. The church of San Domenico with its intriguing “Chapel of the Dead” is a must-see. The church is of rare beauty and rich in history and in one area you can also see wall paintings described as “macabre” which represent strength and justice.

A short, windy road leads to the mountain area of Valcava, once a well-known holiday resort and now a wonderful, peaceful area at 1200 metres, from which there is a fantastic aerial view of the valleys below, often frequented by paragliding enthusiasts.

Just below the ridge that separates the communities of Torre de’ Busi and Monte Marenzo is the Romanesque church of Santa Margherita, where an important series of fifteenth century frescoes dedicated to this saint has been restored. Through the newly discovered colours, the story comes alive and represents one of the most amazing pictorial testimonies of the region. Thanks to recent excavation processes, a fortified structure has been found on the mountain, though to be the castrum of Cantagudo and Neolithic presences.

Also in the territory of Torre de’ Busi is the church of San Michele, one of the oldest in the Valle San Martino, dedicated to San Michele Arcangelo. It stands on a rocky spur and today can only be reached on foot by two mule tracks. Its present appearance is a result of restorations carried out in 1837, although it still retains the original fifteenth century apse. Inside there are works from XVII and XVIII century. It is also worth mentioning the Santo Stefano oratory, part of a group of buildings which in later transformations took on a Romanesque style; inside there are some beautiful frescoes which can be dated back to various periods of the XV century. The Church is under restoration.

SHRINES

A religious thread links the bordering towns of Vercurago and Calolziocorte, situated along the River Adda, that vigilantly watch over two important places of faith: the Shrine of San Gerolamo, the father of orphans who chose Somasca as his headquarters, and the Shrine of Lavello.

The Shrine of Santa Maria del Lavello and the Cloister Route

The abbey and church of Lavello have represented, since the early Middle Ages, a reference point for the territory. Through its properties once attached to the monastery and with the organisational role of the
Serviti friars during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, this complex has determined the running of this area. The church, in its simplicity, features highly valued pieces, dating from the Renaissance to the XVIII century. The site where the monastery was built had an important role in ancient times because of its strategic position between Lake Como, the San Martino Valley and the River Adda, a border of various areas under different control. The place-name Lavello could derive from the Latin labellum (water collection tank), or more likely, from the settling in this area of the “de Lavello” family, already powerful in Milan and owners of a fortress at the beginning of the 13th century that was destroyed in 1373 by Bernabò Visconti. The small mono-apse church, which we hear about at the end of the thirteenth century, probably belonged to this family, dedicated to the Virgin, and almost certainly part of the castle. There is an old legend that dates back to 1480 when a hermit Jacopino, sheltering in the ruins of the small church, discovered a tomb with clear water gushing out of it. Following other extraordinary events, the church became a destination for pilgrims. Around 1486, due to the large number of pilgrims, the friars of the Order of the Servants of Mary were allowed to take office in the church and to use its land. In 1510 the friars rebuilt the convent. In 1566 the construction of the main cloister began and this continued until at least 1597. Between 1582 and 1585, the church was extended further and some of the very interesting frescoes in the left hand chapel, dedicated to San Filippo, could date back to this very period. The wealth of the convent is clearly visible in the artistic arrangement of its buildings from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries: the two cloisters, both the large one and the small one, are splendid. The whole building has been completely restored. Today the group of buildings is the centre of a cultural route called the Cloister Route, a cultural circuit which focuses on the local architectural history, along with the two other northern European geographical areas, Leisnig (Germany) and Güssing (Austria).

The Shrine of San Gerolamo of Somasca
In 1533, at the Somasca Fortress, San Gerolamo cleared a path today known as the “Scala Santa” (Holy Stairway). It was then later developed with houses and chapels by his followers, to such an extent, that they are considered today as two different towns. One is in the heart of Somasca, a well-known sanctuary, built in 1500, which houses the tomb of the Saint as well as important paintings. The other is in the Valletta area, where a small church catches your attention, the destination of pilgrims, known also as the place where San Gerolamo had chosen to rest at night.
THE SAN MARTINO VALLEY ECOMUSEUM

For information
Comunità Montana Valle San Martino
Phone No. +39 0341 601020
www.martinet.lc.it
cmvsm.segreteria@martinet.lc.it

The Ecomuseum preserves and makes the most of the cultural patrimony of the Valley. It is found in several local places, in six municipalities in the province of Lecco and in three in the province of Bergamo. It includes several areas and buildings of remarkable historical, artistic, natural, environmental and ethnographic value.

Among the places we recommend you visit:

- **GASPARE DE PONTI BOTANICAL GARDENS - CALOLZIOCORTE**

  via Galli
  A private park which came about at the beginning of the century (1935) and nowadays, having been developed by the Mountain Community, it is a botanical collection of autochthonous flora of the Valleys, set in a peaceful and refreshing atmosphere.
  Open: Mondays and Fridays from 9am to 12pm; Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 12pm and from 2pm to 5pm. In the summer period it is also open on Saturdays and Sundays.

  Guided visits for groups can be booked by contacting Coop.Eco 86, Phone no. +39 0341 365798.

- **“DON CARLO VILLA” PARISH MUSEUM AND THE S. LORENZO VECCHIO CHURCH – ROSSINO - CALOLZIOCORTE**

  It houses ceremonial furniture and ecclesiastic furnishings from the XVII to the XIX centuries, together with documents referring to the life of the Parish. It is also interesting to visit the church next door, San Lorenzo Vecchio, a very important religious building from an artistic point of view.

  For visits contact the Parish Priest, Phone no. +39 0341 643259

- **THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF “CATERINA CITTADINI” - SOMASCA DI VERCURAGO**

  c/o Istituto Suore Orsoline, Via S. Gerolamo 42
  A collection dedicated to the two Cittadini sisters, founders of the Istituto Suore Orsoline di San Girolamo in Somasca, is found in a splendid building with a nineteenth century entrance and which has parts dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Open on booking only. Admission free.

  Information: Phone No. +39 0341 420373/035 250240 info@orsolinesomasca.it – www.orsolinesomasca.it
In the valley and mountain areas the cuisine is humble, based essentially on maize flour “polenta”, “taragna” (buckwheat polenta) or “vuncia” (with a slight taste of garlic) which accompanies tasty plates of game or two different types of local dairy cheeses, either full fat or medium fat. Polenta, game, mushrooms and chestnuts are the main ingredients of these ancient flavours, dishes that are so traditional that they do not even have an Italian translation, such as “polenta uncia” with cheese, butter and garlic; or “balota”, small balls of polenta with a cheese filling; “tocc”, polenta made using different types of flour with butter and cheese; “urgiada”, pearl barley cooked on an open smoky fire; “furmentada”, a wheat soup from Val d’Intelvi with pig skins; “mataochi”, a dessert with dried and candied fruits; “miascia”, made with stale bread, butter, milk, eggs, sugar and red wine; “ragell”, a digestive liquor made with red wine, sugar, cloves, cinnamon, pieces of apple and brandy, and then flambéed in the “tocc” pan.

Without forgetting all the dairy products, from pastureland butter to cheeses with the strangest of names: caprini, casorette, zincarlin, semude, piazzavachera, caprinotti, perfect either on their own or to finish off a meal. Fat cheese is a typical product of the mountain dairies. It is produced from full-fat cow’s milk and as it is not skimmed, it maintains all its organoleptic properties. Even nowadays cooking is done in copper cauldrons over wood fires and the cheese is left to season in natural caves or cellars for at least three months. Valsassina, in fact, excels in the production of dairy goods thanks to its pastures and caves, which retain constant temperatures and humidity all year round and are perfect for the natural seasoning of cheeses. The most well-known product is “Taleggio” cheese, but we should not forget “caprini”, both delicate and spicy, “formaggelle”, “ricotta”, rustic salamis and excellent butter.

It is also famous for the production of different types of honey, for example chestnut honey with a strong, sharp taste or the much lighter, acacia honey. It is also possible to discover a “humble” but genuine cuisine in the towns of the San Martino Valley which is based again on maize polenta, home range chickens and game, but with the addition of lots of delicious mushrooms. The inheritance of the Bergamo gastronomic tradition still prevails and one speciality is toasted polenta with salami, “mortadella di fegato” (another type of salami) or “salamella” (a type of sausage), with wild birds or “osei scappati” (small pieces of meat on spits). Various soups can be an alternative or the most famous of all “casoncei” (a local ravioli) as well as risottos with vegetables.
THE HILLS AND THE PLAINS

If the lake and the mountains are the elements which best identify the provinces of Como and Lecco, just as interesting is the plain and hilly area to the South which is a natural border between the provinces of Milan, Varese and Bergamo. The “green Brianza”, once mostly an agricultural area, makes up a large part of this region, which is today characterised by a thick web of industrial estates and craftwork centres. However, it is still possible to find large areas of unspoilt countryside which wind down from the hills to the banks of the River Adda, protected by spacious natural parks and small Brianza lakes. There are various monuments worthy of visiting: small medieval buildings, popular shrines (the most famous at Montevecchia, Imbersago and Inverigo) and extravagant seventeenth century villas (for example at Casatenovo, Merate and Cremnago). The architecture is characterised by villas and holiday homes of old noble families from Milan, such as the neoclassic villa La Rotonda and Villa Crivelli at Inverigo and the silk centres, such as the Ville Comunali at Erba.

There are old districts dominated by towers and castles: those of Casiglio and Pomerio at Erba and the one at Carimate are excellent examples. There is an extensive route focusing on Romanesque style monuments to be followed that goes from the Galliano monuments in Cantù to the San Pietro al Monte monuments in Civate. The River Adda also touches on the group of hills that were the centre of Milanese domination: today it is an area of woodland, vineyards, fields, farmhouses and hamlets, dotted with small, charming lakes.

In the working world of Brianza, known for its small and medium-sized companies, there is still space for a relaxing landscape among the rolling hills, colourful meadows, woodland, golf courses, farmhouse resorts and a sail-flying school at Verzago, which is famous throughout Europe.
At the point where the River Adda narrows, separating the Lecco arm of the Lario from Lake Garlate is a bridge connecting Olginate to the San Martino Valley. Here, in the past, stood an impressive Roman bridge, the base of which you can still see when the River Adda is low. The Silk Museum in Garlate is very interesting and is proof of how the development of the town was dependent on the silk industry. The collection is linked to the silk industry which was one of the primary factors for the economic development of the Lecco area; in the exhibition you can see artisan and industrial machinery, as well as instruments and tools connected to the various phases of the silkworm breeding, thread spinning and twisting for the production used to make the fabric.

Also, in Garlate, recent works on the floor of the Santo Stefano Church have brought to light a complex of historical stratification of the area. Traces of a Roman villa have been covered by a V century chapel as well as two Roman apses with fragments of thirteenth century frescoes; various precious objects have been found, such as some silver paleochristian reliquaries and a longobard fibula. In Villa Testori-Gadda there is a sequence of frescoes of Prometheus by Cornenti (1856). The vast Lake Garlate (6.64 km2) has many beaches and various sports facilities.

A route uncovering old industrial structures starts at Ello in the direction of Galbiate, among which is the Zero centre, with an exceptional spinning mill, dam and water ducts connecting other factories, the main one being “Torre”. These plants, re-organized in the second half of the nineteenth century, belonged to the De Vecchi family, who also had a spinning mill at Vergano; at Ello the Dell’Oro family exhibits old machinery which still operates today. In the Galbiate valley you can see mills, sawmills and spinning mills. Of the many silk buildings that previously existed in Galbiate in the seventeenth century, the neoclassic Ronchetti silk mill is the only one still in existence and is partly used as a spinning mill. Continuing along the “silk” itinerary, we come across a series of buildings near Valmadrera which have been partly restructured and are proof of the town’s industrious past. In the area of Parè you can still see a factory structure made up of a silk mill and spinning mill within the Bovara Firm, which employed many workers. The architectural development of one of Italy’s most important bourgeois silk factories, can be found in the central part of the Gavazzi factory, with its manor house built around 1820. It is known as the “Filandone” (big spinning mill) because of its size and the hundreds of workers who were employed there.
Also worthy of note in Valmadrera is the strong popular devotion which inspired the Shrine, dedicated to the Madonna of San Martino, an ancient parish church in a panoramic position.

The itinerary which follows River Adda, starts from Olginate and continues to Airuno, which had its own castle that belonged to Alcherio in 960, founder of the Capitanei Family from Vimercate. The Shrine to the Madonna, a destination for many pilgrims, stands on the sforzesco stronghold, a bastion against the Venetian expansion.

The most important structure however can be found in Brivio, on River Adda, just below Beverate, which is considered to be the homeland of Simpliciano, the successor to S. Ambrogio. The powerful towers of the castle, which houses Romanesque altars and the remains of a medieval church, are mirrored in the river which, at one time, widened into a lake full of fish. Worthy of note is the oratory of S. Leonardo, remarkable for its double porched façade, inside of which, you can admire a Leonardo Virgin. A path along the lake leads to Molini, passing in front of a

In Malgrate the Bovara Reina spinning mill is interesting to visit, a raised building now restored as a residence, which has retained little of the gabled façade.
Leonardo da Vinci stayed in these areas on various occasions between 1483 and 1498. He visited the Brianza area, observed the “Fiumelatte” phenomenon and entered Valsassina to see the mines and iron and copper workshops. While staying with the Melzi family at Vaprio, he studied the navigation of the River Adda and the connection between Lecco and Milan. His precious designs of river engineering were used and the works were accomplished in the eighteenth century. This stay was an inspiration period for the great genius, as can be deduced by the reminiscent, wild landscapes to be found in the background of his paintings, the Mona Lisa, the Madonna and St Anne, the Virgin of the Rocks.

Carrying on you cross the river at the Paderno Bridge, a splendid example of industrial archaeology, made of iron (1887-89) and used by both trains and cars, thanks to a parabolic arch of about 350 metres. Other important works can be seen along the river as far as Trezzo and Vaprio d’Adda, areas developed during the industrialization period in the nineteenth century: an example is the Bertini power station belonging to Edison, built in 1898, and the first plant in the world for transporting electric energy.

On the traces of Leonardo

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TO BE SEEN

**ABEGG CIVIC MUSEUM OF SILK - GARLATE**

Via Statale 490  
The Museum is temporarily closed due to restoration work.  
For information: Phone No. and Fax +39 0341 650488 - museoabegg@virgilio.it

**THE COUNTRY LIFE MUSEUM AT S. TOMASO - VALMADRERA**

For information:  
Comunità Montana del Lario Orientale - Phone No. +39 0341 240724 - www.santomaso.it - www.cmlarioorientale.it  
The museum explains the different agricultural jobs and tools used during the various seasons. The three rooms of the museum are full of utensils and machinery, some of which were used in the nineteenth century. All are labelled and catalogued.  
The Museum can be reached on foot, along a dirt track and takes about 40 minutes from Valmadrera.  
Open from March to November the first and third Sunday of the month from 10 am to 12:00 and from 1.30pm to 5pm. In other periods and for group visits bookings are necessary.  
Admission: € 1,00 adults - children up to 6 free.

**MUSEUM OF CESARE CANTÙ’S NATIVE HOUSE - BRIVIO**

Via Cesare Cantù  
For information:  
Centro Studi Cesare Cantù - Phone No. +39 348 4417128 - www.cesarecantu.it - info@cesarecantu.it  
Comune di Brivio - Phone No. +39 039 5320114  
The museum exhibits the writer and historian’s works and memories.  
Open every last Sunday of the month and other dates on request; there is also the option of organising monothematic visits.

**LEONARDO’S ADDA ECOMUSEUM - RIVER ADDA**

For Information:  
www.addadileonardo.it  
info@addadileonardo.it  
Parco Adda Nord  
Via Padre Calvi 3  
22056 Trezzo sull’Adda (Mi)  
Phone No. +39 02 9091229  
Fax +39 02 9090096  
www.parcoaddanord.it  
The Leonardo’s Adda Ecomuseum displays centuries’ worth of evidence of collaboration between the generous waters and the industrious population. It is an open-air museum where you can learn about historical, artistic, archaeological and natural discoveries of the region. It is divided into 14 stages along the River Adda and includes 47 significant socio-cultural stops.
The territories of Missaglia and Montevecchia encapsulate the natural and environmental individuality of Brianza, which was so treasured by the English and German travellers, as well as the old city aristocrats. Here you can find a regional park, which covers ten towns and 1600 hectares of beautiful lands, rising up to the hills of Travecchia and Lissolo (555 m), considered “the roof of Brianza”. Thick chestnut, oak and birch woods spread across Sirtori, along a panoramic, unsurfaced road that follows the ridge of the hill as far as Montevecchia, between the two gorges of Curone to the East and Santa Croce to the West. From this side, the hillside goes down steeply towards the green Missaglia territory where you can find many textile and mechanical companies, as well as some nurseries which do not deter from the agricultural plants, as underlined by the robinia woods. Missaglia has the gothic church of Misericordia, founded around 1489: this is where the frescoes in the Missaglia Town Hall come from, of which fragments are attributed to the cultural climate of Foppa and Morazzone and the Carità, a precious work by Pietro Maggi (1726). The picturesque Missaglia square is crowned in the background by the S. Vittore church, with its late sixteenth century tower and a neoclassic exterior. The feudal palace of the Sorniani counts still exists in the village, along with its “prisons” and the annexed S. Maria in Villa which was rebuilt in the eighteenth century, but actually is much older as can be seen by the Romanesque apse. The flow of the Molgorella stream begins above the farmhouses of Santa Croce, where there is an oratory certainly already in existance since 1338, and then extended in 1835, with a small Romanesque apse which houses a rare iconography of Saint Helen dated from 1474. Within the churchyard a column was found with inscriptions in Etruscan letters.

The delightful centre of Montevecchia is surrounded by 2400 hectares of woods with chestnut trees, oaks and birch trees that form the Montevecchia and Curone Valley Regional Park. There has been terracing works since medieval times to take as much agricultural land from the steep hills as possible. In fact, this is an area where vineyards have flourished since the nineteenth century. The windy road leads up from Montevecchia, entering the hilly romantic area where vineyards and prestigious homes break up the harmonious views. At the top, the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of Carmelo, in baroque style with interesting frescoes, is a traditional destination for the faithful: it can be reached along an extremely long stairway, criss-crossed by a pathway that encircles the peak of the hill, covered in trees, that leads to the stations of the seventeenth century Way of the Cross.

Some restaurants and farmhouse restaurants serve traditional salamis and cheeses such as “robiolini”, as well as local white and red wines. The grape harvest in autumn is ideal for enjoying the beauties of the region, stimulating your gastronomic tastes, or going for walks or mountainbike rides along the numerous paths, treasuring the multicoloured panorama.
THE CURONE VALLEY

TO BE SEEN

RURAL TRADITIONS AND WINE MUSEUM IN BRIANZA - MONTEVECCHIA

Parco di Montevecchia - Località Cascina Casarigo
For Information: Phone and fax no. +39 039 993065 - www.agriturismovalcurone.it email@agriturismovalcurone.it

The small, private museum area contains a collection of agricultural tools and a series of instruments and machines used in the production of wine. It was set up after a long and careful research which brought about the recovery of tools used in the wine cellars, working and every day life.

Open on Sundays from 2.30pm to 6pm; other days only on request. Groups need to book in advance. It is also possible to organize guided visits and educational visits for school groups if booked. Closed in the month of January.

MONTEVECCHIA AND CURONE VALLEY PARK - MONTEVECCHIA

Loc. Butto 1
For information: Consorzio di Gestione Parco Regionale di Montevecchia e Valle del Curone
Phone No. +39 039 39930384 – Fax +39 039 9930619 - www.parcocurone.it info@parcocurone.it

The Park has a surface area of about 2350 hectares and its territory includes almost all or some of 10 different towns: Cernusco Lombardone, Lomagna, Missaglia, Montevecchia, Olgiate Molgora, Osnago, Perego, Rovagnate, Sirtori and Viganò.

The park is not a cohesive reserve, but a diversified area in which you can find urban towns, industrial estates, agricultural areas, breeding farms and architectural monuments of great artistic and cultural value.

Park offices are open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9am to 12:30; Saturdays from 9am to 12:00.

CASCINA CA’ SOLDATO PARK CENTRE

Loc. Cà Soldato
For information: Phone No. +39 039 3111275/039 9930384 - Fax +39 039 9930619
www.parcocurone.it – info@parcocurone.it

It has a small museum open on Sundays where the visitor can observe the park wildlife and several types of environment.
MONTE BARRO PARK

Monte Barro is a hill that does not rise above 1000 metres, but is nonetheless a very important reserve which is now a regional Park. Deposits of considerable interest can be found on the mountain, erratic masses and morainal materials. The most interesting source of natural interest is the great variety of flora, which includes over a 1000 different species. The Park has been involved for several years in archaeological digs that have brought to light a large inhabited centre and an impressive defense system, dating back to the Goth era (V and VI centuries A.D.). A route has been organized so that visitors can see the archaeological remains that have been discovered up until now.

TO BE SEEN

MONTE BARRO PARK - GALBIALE (HAMLET OF CAMPORESO)

Via Bertarelli, at Villa Bertarelli
For information: Phone No. +39 0341 542266 - www.parcobarro.it - info@parcomontebarro.191.it

• ARCHAELOGICAL PARK AND ANTIQUARIUM - MONTE BARRO (Phone No. +39 0341 240215)

An outdoor archaeological Park in the Piani di Barra, open to visitors and admission is free. The Antiquarium, a museum of archaeological findings, is open at the hermitage on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (from 1pm to 5pm), Thursdays (from 9am to 12pm), Saturdays and Sundays (from 9am to 12pm and from 1pm to 5pm).

• HIGH BRIANZA ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM - CAMPORESO (Phone No. +39 0341 240193)

The museum has a collection of items, oral testimonies, pictures and documents, essential in the study and understanding of the customs, knowledge, social relations and attitudes of men and women in the historical region of Brianza. Open all year except for Bank holidays: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9am to 12:30; Saturdays and Sundays from 9am to 12:30 and from 2pm to 6pm; closed on Mondays and Thursdays. Admission: adults € 2,00 - children € 1,00.

• ORNITHOLOGICAL OBSERVATORY - CAMPORESO (Phone No. +39 0341 542598)

The headquarters of scientific and educational activities, concentrating on migration. Open to school visits on appointment. Bookings have to be made at the park. There are also scheduled spring and autumn openings to the public.

• NATIVE FLORA CENTRE - GALBIALE

At the prestigious Villa Bertarelli at Galbiate, Via Bertarelli, 11.
For information: Phone No. +39 0341 242828 - Fax 0341 240216 - centroflora@parcobarro.it
A centre of experiments, promoted by the Lombardy Region, whose main aim is to promote activities that will guarantee the supply of native plants.

• CENTRES FOR RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL USES OF THE PARK

- The Park Centre for environmental education
- “Baita Pescate” with a visitors Centre and educational opportunities, open Wednesdays and every bank holiday and Sundays, during which it also acts as a refreshment point.
- “Baita di Pian Sciresa” open on Thursdays and Sundays for refreshments
- “Baita Alpina” in the upper Barra area. Open as a restaurant on bank holidays and Sundays between Easter Monday until the end of September.
The Romanesque influence in the province of Lecco can be seen over a period of time that is longer than the normal and recognized period, due to the peripheral position of the region. The intense construction of religious buildings, especially during the XVI and XIX Centuries, has often erased or contort Romanesque works, of which we can see today only parts of the original plants, such as the bell tower of San Giorgio in Annone Brianza. Among the most significant remains of the Romanesque style is the remarkable basilica of San Pietro al Monte and the oratory of San Benedetto in Civate. It is one of the greatest Romanesque architectural monuments in Lombardy and can only be reached after an hour’s walk along the mule track that starts from Civate at the San Calocero monastery. Further downhill, the Church of San Calocero dates back to the IX century when the body of San Calocero was transferred here from Albenga. Today it has been completely restructured, even though it maintains its raised presbytery, the Romanesque crypt and the frescoes from the XI century.

The present building of the basilica of San Pietro consists of two separate parts: the actual church and a small oratory dedicated to San Benedetto. In San Pietro visitors can admire splendid stucco-work and XII century frescoes, in particular the large fresco of the Apocalypse and the stucco-work in the crypt, as well as the evocative ciborium that stands out over the altar. They represent a priceless testimony of Lombard art during those centuries. The origins have been lost over the years: the first documents concerning this community date back to the VIII century and the basis of their traditions date back to the Longobard period. The church of San Pietro, perhaps originating from a previous church from the IX century, dates back to the mid XI century and can be reached by steps, built in a later period to the original structure. The rectangular plan of the basilica has two apses opposite each other on the shorter sides. In the eastern apse there is an entrance, preceded by a semi-circular gallery on two floors, decorated with double-arched and single-arched windows, under which there is a crypt. Over the entrance portal there is a fresco depicting Jesus giving the book to Saint Peter and the keys to Saint Paul. Inside the church there are sculptures, paintings and stucco-works, which can be traced back to the end of the XI century and the first quarter of the XII century. They show the advent of the Apocalypse and the Day of Judgement. The ciborium also depicts apocalyptic figures in stucco-works and paintings. Over the eastern apse a fresco of the return of Christ at the end of time stands out, as well as the defeat of the dragon of the Apocalypse. To the sides of the nave two symmetrical stairways lead to the crypt where you can find representations in stucco-work of the life of Christ and Mary. Almost opposite San Pietro there is the oratory of San Benedetto, thought to be built in the same period as the Basilica. Inside there is a rare example of frescoed altar on three sides, the work of local artists (XXII sec).
Parish church of Santa Eufemia and the
baptistry of San Giovanni Battista in Oggiono

The church with only one nave was founded in the XI century and completely rebuilt in the XVII century. It preserves precious examples of paintings from different periods: a fresco by Andrea Appiani and a ten panelled polyptych, a work that is considered among the most precious of the Brianza territory, by Marco D’Oggiono, an important artist of the Leonardo school. It remained untouched during the work carried out on the nearby baptistry, one of the most important Lombard Romanesque monuments of its kind, as well as one of the best preserved. The building has an octagonal plan and is covered by an extraordinary dome. Inside the circular perimeter is the original baptismal font with the original tank for collecting water beneath it. Three arched windows illuminate the wide apse. Recent restorations have brought to light frescoes along the walls of the hall which date back to the XV and XVI centuries, along with fragments of ancient frescoes in the XIII century presbytery.

For information:

Associazione Archeologica Oggiono
grigna52@yahoo.it

Parish of Santa Eufemia
Phone No. +39 0341 576145

Amministrazione Comunale
Phone No. +39 0341 266411

Biblioteca Civica
Phone No. +39 0341 576671

Open the first Sunday of the month from 10:00am to 12:00pm and from 3pm to 5:30pm. Opened on request for groups.
Merate has a well-preserved historical centre with eighteenth century buildings, in particular the Prinetti Palace with its cylindrical tower that rises up from the powerful quadrilateral. Not far from the Subaglio villa, with its French park on the San Rocco hills, is the Merate Astronomic Observatory, founded in 1927. It consists of various buildings used as library and laboratories and two large domes that contain modern reflectors and refractors, among the biggest in Europe. From Villa Montebello which once belonged to the eighteenth century Orsini Counts and has a large Italian style garden and works by Velasquez and Murillo, you enter the boundaries of Merate, an area chosen by the Milanese aristocracy to build their magnificent villas. Among these, one of the best examples of a Lombard Villa is the Belgioioso. The villas usually worked closely with the surrounding environment, the park and the countryside. The care taken to look after these buildings is also reflected in the care dedicated to the park, which compliments the magnificence of the villa externally.

A jump through the centuries: rationalism and spirituality

On the Sabbioncello hills, near Merate, is the convent of Santa Maria Nascente, originally built according to late Gothic style and then restructured during the sixteenth century. In the Sartriana Reserve, a natural oasis of great environmental importance, is the church of San Pietro Apostolo. The church was built by the Swiss architect Mario Botta, a project that started in 1978 and was inaugurated in 1995, one of the best representations of rationalism applied to architecture with a square plan, inserted with a circle, which has a wide church square and is built using red bricks, while the floor is made of slabs of stone between fillets of black marble. The territory’s architectural jewel illustrates an innovative concept as a place of prayer, modernising with time and caring for the needs of the spirit.
May we draw your attention to: Villa Floriani, Villa De Capitani and above all, the splendid English garden of Villa Arese Lucini. The area around the centre of Casatenovo is striking to visitors due to the many eclectic residences such as Villa Lurani Cernuschi, Casati Facchi, Villa Greppi, Villa Vismara and Villa d’Adda Mariani. Casatenovo is of considerable artistic importance, in particular the oratory of Santa Margherita (XII century) with its fifteenth century frescoes and the Parish Church of San Giorgio, one of the most impressive neoclassic constructions in the Brianza area. Also worthy of note is the XV century Oratory of Santa Giustina, its bell tower with spires and frescoes from the early sixteenth century. At Monticello Villa Greppi-Arrigoni stands out, with its eighteenth century origins, later modified in the neoclassic style, and Villa Nava-Radice also in a neoclassic style based on a project by Canonico with its terraced park and lemon groves. The region also has many green areas; La Valletta is remarkable, going up to a height of 300 metres and offering an unspoilt impression of the typical Lombardy plain, joining up to the morainal hills of high Brianza. A cycling and walking path of about 16 km introduces you to the interesting natural characteristics of La Valletta, a mostly agricultural area.

Villas in Brianza

Villa Belgioioso - Merate

It is one of the most remarkable examples of a villa developed by 18th century Milanese society. The appearance that it has today comes from an uninterrupted series of works undertaken on a group of sixteenth century houses. The present form dates back to the eighteenth century with the construction of a new entrance, the addition of an avenue of cypress trees and an Italian style garden, later substituted by the current romantically inspired English garden. The façade is striking to visitors due to its different styles of windowframes; sombre and almost neoclassic on the ground floor in contrast with linear simple frames on the upper floors.

Villa Greppi - Monticello

A grandiose, neoclassical building formerly belonging to the Casati nobles, whose last descendant, the Marquis Francesco Casati stayed here during the winter months until his death in 1837. It subsequently passed to the Greppi family, the Ponti family and then became part of the National Heritage. The name of the designer is not known but it is thought it was built at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The residence has a monumental and austere entrance, found at the end of an avenue, with three arches in neoclassic style. The internal courtyard of honour is defined by the noble residence which stands on the side opposite to the entrance.

Villa Sommi Picenardi - Olgiate Molgora

It is one of the most prestigious residences in the Brianza area. Its original construction dates back to the Middle Ages and after various restructuring, it was restored in the XVII century. In 1702 the small church was built. The villa is framed by the magnificent Italian garden (known as the “secret garden” because it cannot be seen from the main gate), a long drive lined with poplar trees and two columns found at its entrance. It has lawns with box bushes shaped into spheres and ponds with water jets. Under one of the stairways is a small cave, inside of which you can find a nymph. Scattered about are various amphorae and baroque statues representing fauna and mythological creatures. The romantic park dates back to the end of the 1800s with prestigious plants in the forefront. There is an oriental plane tree of about 190 years old which is considered a “living monument”. The Sommi Picenardi family bought the villa in 1920, maintaining it with great care, and opening it to the public on request.
THE HISTORICAL HEART OF BRIANZA

In the centre of the Brianza region, where the two roads that have always connected Milan and Como cross, is the Shrine of Santa Maria Nascente in Barzago, one of the most important centres for devotees to the Virgin Mary, with its elegant baroque façade.

Next to the shrine, is a tabernacle to the Immaculate Conception called the Madonna d’Imbevera, taken from the ancient name of the torrent that flows here – it was known to have miraculous powers and was therefore greatly venerated by the inhabitants of the area. In the hamlet of Verdègò is the church of Santi Giovanni and Paolo with a precious altarpiece and a Crucifix from the first half of the eighteenth century. Outside is a burial mound, dating back to III to IV century A.D. As with the Shrine of the Madonna del Carmine in Bulciago, it reveals the pre-existence of pagan rites, tied to the worship of the dead, as well as the stone tombs which can be found near the church. The stones were used in roman times as sepulchrous sarcophaguses and then for centuries in an ancient rite of devotion that involved washing with the rainwater collected there, as it was considered to have miraculous powers.

On the southern borders of the province, a gentle area of rolling hills stretches out and is populated by grandioso, aristocratic villas with luxuriant parks. However, this area also has interesting urban centres such as Cassago Brianza, which has a type of “archaeological park” with two stone sarcophaguses and the fountain of Sant’Agostino, perhaps from a roman villa. At Bulciaghetto, a hamlet of Bulciago, there is the oratory of Santo Stefano (VIII-IX centuries), with a single hall and no apse, an excellent example of the Carolingian period in Europe. At Barzanò there is an important Romanesque Lombard basilica, the parsonage of San Salvatore, a building which was developed on a worshiping area from Roman times and perfected during the Middle Ages. Inside you can find an octagonal baptismal font as well as walls and frescoes that are currently under restoration. The above-mentioned villa is part of F.A.I. in neoclassical style with an Italian-style botanical garden. The abovementioned villa is part of F.A.I. also at Barzanò we must mention the Mausoleum of the patriot Luciano Manara.

Going up the high hills, above the Ravagnate valleys, which reach 877 metres at Monte Crocione, you enter the Monte di Brianza, dotted with farmhouses and villages of startling beauty. Higher up at Villa Vergano, the rural centre of Figina is striking and preserves traces of one of the first cluniac priors, S. Nicola, founded in 1107 from a legacy in which the Brianza name was first mentioned. This name, which was later extended to the whole region, originally belongs to these hills and reveals its Celtic origins, as if it were the “mountain” par excellence.

Perego, for anyone arriving from Milan, is situated to the North on the first Brianza hills along the Brianza state road. The area is in “Monte di Brianza, that hilly part south-east of the upper Martesana”. Little is known about the historic events of the village, even though the central part is characterized by the presence of an old fortification, a fifteenth century cloister and a church which could be from the XIII century. Take note of the tower in Perego, a medieval structure on the completely green hill, home to Leone, Archbishop of Milan (1241 – 1257), who fought for the noblemen and criticised the heretical movements. In the village you can admire the castle, the ancient church dedicated to San Giovanni Evangelista and the magnificent cloister next to the new parish church. The three sides of the cloister make up a solid building, dating back to the first half of the sixteenth century, as indicated by the date 1553 engraved on a granite lintel over the entrance to the large cellar. However, the building probably has older parts. For this reason it could be considered one of the oldest homes in the Brianza area. The fresco with examples of a noble coat of arms, are testimony to the fact that it could have belonged to the knight Gianluca, captain to Medeghino, whose affairs bloodied Brianza between 1527 – 1531.
The shore looks towards the Bevera stream and the small lakes and has a series of views overlooking old settlements belonging to the municipalities of Castello and Colle Brianza. The municipality of Castello di Brianza is made up of many hamlets, among which is Brianzola, where the ruins of a castle can be found in the cemetery there. The castle is linked to Theodolinda, the Lombard queen, who features in many places in the region of High Lombardy. Ancient monasteries have left their traces all over the territory: in particular Santa Maria Hoè, entrusted to the Servi di Maria in 1456, and rebuilt in the early part of the seventeenth century on the remains of a pre-existing thirteenth century church which has paintings by Camillo Procaccini, frescoes by Fiammenghino and others by the eighteenth century Ferrano. Queen Theodolinda is thought to have also founded the tower which overlooks the wonderful hill between Colgna and Piecastello, named Campanone di Brianza. The other tower is the result of restoration carried out in 1888 on a seventeenth century bell tower of the S. Vittore church, which perhaps, because of its position at 625 metres and views over most of the territory, was used to control and warn of any foreign invasions in the XVII-XVIII centuries.

**TO BE SEEN**

**ASTRONOMY OBSERVATORY - MERATE**

Via E. Bianchi, 46  
For information: Phone No. +39 039 999111 - Fax +39 039 9991160 - www.merate.mi.astro.it

Open the first Friday that is not a Bank Holiday of every month. There are four guided visits during the day at 9:30am, 10:30am, 2:30pm, 3:30pm. Daily admission €2.00 per person; children and Seniors €1.00.

**“DON MICHELANGELO AMBROSIONI” CIVIC NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM - MERATE**

Via Collegio A. Manzoni, 45  
For information: Museo Phone No. +39 039 9908636; Biblioteca Phone No. +39 039 9903147

Botany, Zoology and Mineralogy collections and a section dedicated to fossils.
THE HISTORICAL HEART OF BRIANZA

Open every Saturday that is not a Bank holiday from 9:30am to 12:30pm; on Tuesdays from 9am to 12:00pm and on Thursdays from 2:30pm to 5:30pm. Admission free. Groups can book guided visits at the public library during opening hours: Mondays 2:30pm – 7pm; Tuesdays from 9am to 1pm. Wednesday to Friday 9:30am - 12.30pm and 2:30pm – 7pm; Saturdays 9:30am to 6pm.

BELVEDERE MARTIZAY PARK – “LA LIMONERA” PARK - MONTICELLO

Via Sirtori - For information: Comune di Monticello - Phone No. +39 039 9231616

The park has a splendid view over the Po Valley and the Apennines and enjoys a particularly mild micro-climate featuring olive groves and typical Mediterranean essences. It is possible to visit the works of Aligi Sassu in the nearby church (Frescoes of the Crucifixion and the Stations of the Cross) and in the nearby Town Hall. The library is in what was the Serra dei Limoni (the lemon greenhouse) from which the Park gets its name “La Limonera”.

Open every day from 8am to 6pm in Winter periods and from 8am to 8pm in the Summer.

VILLA FACCHI PARK - CASATENOVO

Via Castelbarco 7 - For information: Library Phone No. +39 039 9202959

Open every day from 9am to 5pm; in the Summer until 8pm with extended opening times during special evening events.

SANTA MARGHERITA CHURCH - CASATENOVO

For information: Segr. Comunale Phone No. +39 039 9235212
You need to request a permit from the council to visit this church and then arrange a time with the church’s caretaker.

CRIB MUSEUM - OSNAGO

For information: Phone No. +39 039 587217

A collection of both ancient and contemporary artistic cribs both from all over the world. Open Sundays and holidays from 10am to 12:00pm and from 2:30pm to 7pm - on request during other periods. No admission fee but please make a donation.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATION - CASSAGO BRIANZA

Via don Giovanni Motta 2 - For information: Phone No./Fax +39 039 9217646 - www.cassiciaco.it - info@cassiciaco.it

The collection has numerous archaeological exhibits found in recent digs, dating back to Gallic-Celtic settlements of the II century B.C. and up to the Roman-barbaric period.

Open Sundays from 11am to 12:30pm; prior-bookings necessary on other days. Admission free. The Sant’Agostino archaeological park, created externally, is always open.

LITURGICAL MUSEUM - CALCO

Via Chiesa 2 - For information: Chiesa Prepositurale di San Virgilio Phone No. +39 039 508472

It exhibits articles and furnishings from the seventeenth century to present day; a historical archive of the XVI century. Open on request. Admission free.
THE BRIANZA LAKES

Where the plains and the Larian Triangle mountains meet are a series of five small lakes, in an orderly row, surrounded by rolling hills: Lakes Montorfano, Alserio, Pusiano and Annone, and to the south of Lecco, Lake Garlate, formed by the River Adda. All of them can be reached easily either on foot, by bicycle or even on horseback, thanks to the footpaths and small roads that go through the reeds and woodland. To get the most enjoyment out of these places, it is possible to reach small beaches or picnic areas by gliding over the calm waters, abound with fish, in rowing boats, strictly no motors allowed. As it is so near to airports and road networks the whole area is easily accessible and is a regular destination for tourists who want to spend a day out in the countryside.

Going from west to east we meet the lakes one after the other. The tiny Lake Montorfano is a natural reserve, a paradise for swimmers who will find clean and particularly warm waters and on a clear day enjoy the view of Mount Rosa. On the banks there you will find the eighteenth century Villa Barbavara and the prestigious golf club Villa d’Este. On the hill that overlooks the small town there are the ruins of the ancient castle of the Mandelli family. Albavilla, certainly of Roman origins, is situated in one of the most beautiful areas of Brianza. It spreads from the shores of Lake Alserio up to 1319 metres on Mount Boletone. It is a holiday resort from the last century, but is still “invaded” by Sunday tourists who arrive during the summer weekends to reach the Vicerè Alp, the starting point for several excursions on the surrounding mountains.

Lake Alserio, once joined to Lake Pusiano, is surrounded by meadows that go right down to its shores. The area is a perfect oasis for enjoying yourself in the outdoors, picnic areas and the pleasant and leisurely pathways that can be enjoyed on foot or by bicycle and that lead to the villages of Merone and Monguzzo. The little town of Alserio, among the lakes and green hills, is home to Villa Cramer, on the Tassera hill. The hill is linked to the famous battle that took place in 1160 between Barbarossa (Redbeard) and the Milanese, the “Battle of Tassera”, whose historical enactment takes place every year in August. Giovanni Segantini paid tribute to the beauty of Lake Pusiano by immortalizing the landscape and the silent reeds in his paintings. The village, of the same name, is also very picturesque and is famous for its fantastic firework display in honour of the Madonna della Neve, that illuminates the whole village as well as the lake. From the small shrine dedicated to the Virgin, there is a wonderful panoramic view, with the Isle of Cypresses in the forefront. In the village is “Palazzo Carpani Beauharnais” (the Palace of Carpani Beauharnais) which, during the eighteenth century, became the regular residence of the Habsburgs and then subsequently Eugenio Beauharnais, Napoleon’s stepson and Viceroy of Italy. Slightly to the North, in the pre-alpine landscape and set among the mountains is Lake Segrino. The “mite bacinella” (mild basin) by Carlo Emilio Gadda.

The Brianza Mountains and Lake District Ecomuseum

The “Brianza Mountain and Lake District Ecomuseum” project makes the most of the environmental, landscape and natural beauties as well as the historical-artistic sacred places of the area. All this is tied to the hard-work of the inhabitants, but also to their wealth whose “universal value” denote the particular characteristics that make them known as cultural landscapes not easily confused or copied. They are enclosed between the PreAlps, the hills of “Monte di Brianza” (the Brianza Mountain), the mountainous massifs of Corni di Canzo, Cornizzolo, Moregallo and the pre-alpine, moraine lakes south of the piedmont line. At the foot of these mountains architectural jewels like “San Pietro al Monte” (St Peter’s on the Mountain) and important natural areas like the Monte Barro Park, spread over a hilly (Monte della Brianza, Brianza Mountain) area and moraine area (Brianza lakes). In these localities, if on the one hand they were particularly important for their industrial development in the past two centuries, on the other they maintain valuable artistic testimonies from the past, from “Campanare della Brianza” to the “Battistero di Oggiono”, from the villas and noble residences of the nineteenth century to the “Pariniani di Bosisio” areas, from the factories (no longer in use) for working silk and iron to the rural centres of historical villages. It is a land with a wealth of memories, routes, picturesque scenery, but also ancient crafts, spread over pleasant hills, mountainous massifs and moraine lakes, along the valley furrows of Monte Cornizzolo and Monte del Brianza, an hilly lands south of the main connection with Venice (Via Postumia). A corner of the world stretched over rocks, natural little ravines and wide grassy spaces; a path and economy with its sometimes rural sometimes petrified industrial aspects, matched to a harmonic combination along the valley, floor road. The area is bordered by a range of mountains including Cornizzolo, Corni di Canzo, Moregallo, Monte Barro and by the Annone, Pusiano and Segrino lakes as well as by the San Genesio ridge (Monte di Brianza).
who lived at Longone, is one of the best equipped for leisure activities with a cycle-pedestrian path that goes around the whole perimeter, rowing boat and canoe rental and beaches for sunbathing which are well equipped and open to everyone.

Lake Annone, also known as Oggiono, is the largest of the lakes of Brianza at 5,70 metres squared and 11 metres deep and is separated into two parts by the small peninsula of Isella. Here a road perhaps crossed the narrow stretch over a “pons longus” of large stones.

In the area among Oggiono, Annone and Bosisio, there are meadows from which they used to extract peat where they discovered the remains of lake-dwelling inhabitants from the Polada civilisation (XVI-XIV century B.C.). Annone Brianza stretches along the promontory, which almost touches the opposite peninsula of Isella and seems to divide Lake Annone. Not far from the centre the late fifteenth century oratory of S. Giorgio remains isolated, with frescoes possibly by the Master of Pala Sforzesca. Here in one of the most beautiful areas of green Brianza, is the Lecco Golf Club which has a backdrop of the Grigne and Resegone Peaks and is the only golf centre in the Lecco province. Nearby is the Molteno hill which once had a castle where you now see the church of San Giorgio with its panoramic views from the churchyard and classic bell tower by Ambrogio Nava (1864). In the nearby Garbagnate Monastero, the small, elegant Romanesque Church of San Nazaro (XII century), which has sculptures and votive scenes, stands on a barbaric site, which uncovered reliquaries, knives and buckles now kept in the Museum of Lecco. On the other side of the Milan-Lecco Highway, Costa Masnaga spreads into many hamlets, separated by important industrial areas such as the Costa Centemero Workshops. The three towers can be visited and are connected by a green pathway of 9km which skirts the Lambro River and the Bevera torrent. The green pathway is used by nature-lovers who can walk or ride along it.

The “pariniano” Itinerary at Bosisio Parini

The “pariniano” Itinerary is aimed at promoting Bosisio Parini and making it well-known. The village was the birthplace of Giuseppe Parini and some of the monuments represent fundamental stages in the life of the man of letters; the church where he was baptised, the desk he used while teaching at the Brera Academy and the house where the poet was born. The latter has been transformed into a small museum where you can see objects which, even if not originals, belonged to the rural period of the time; a pastoral world from which the poet drew much inspiration.

Museum of the place of birth of Giuseppe Parini

For information: Comune di Bosisio - Phone No. +39 031 3580511
www.comune.bosisioparini.lc.it
Book to visit. Admission free.
Set between lakes and mountains, Erba was founded by the Romans in an extremely fortunate position. Its territory stretches along the 1100 metres of the summit of “Capanna Mara”, from where you can admire Lake Como and the shores of the smaller Lakes Alserio and Pusiano. There are many religious and public buildings in the town and the surrounding area. In particular, the ancient church of Sant’Eufemia, whose tall Romanesque bell tower is considered the symbol of Erba. The earliest part of the building appears to date back to the mid Vth century. Important works were carried out at various stages, but above all in the 1500s. Inside there are many valuable paintings and a precious wooden cross with the figure of Christ painted on it from the XVIth century.

From a historical point of view, the ancient Roman and Medieval centre of Villicino in the heart of Erba is very interesting; a narrow and winding district that starts from a fortified entrance, overshadowing an elegant double-arched window, and ends below the tower. Other valuable monuments are the spectacular open theatre on the panoramic Licinium knoll and the War Memorial by Giuseppe Terragni, reached by a long and steep stone stairway. On the first tiers of the surrounding mountains you can find the parks of ancient villas like Villa Amalia, today public property, built from a project by Leopoldo Pollack, it stands where the Franciscan convent of “Santa Maria degli Angeli” used to be and Villa Majnoni, the town hall. In the hamlet of Crevenna is the hermitage of San Salvatore, an antique convent built in XVIth century by the congregation of friars “Cappuccini Minori” and still has its original sixteenth century cloister.

There are also many medieval castles and fortresses in the area, in particular may we point out the castles of Pomerio and Casiglio, impressive structures built for defence and restructured in modern times, the former now used for receptions and the latter as a hotel.
In the Brianza area south of Erba there are other interesting towns. Monguzzo is dominated by a castle, once a Visconti fortress and subsequently used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a manor house. Inverigo is linked to the name of the noble, Milanese Crivelli family who chose to build the stunning Cypress Avenue leading from the lavish house, still known today as Villa Crivelli, to the Shrine of Santa Maria della Noce. The latter stands on a picturesque square where the headquarters of the lively silk-worm market used to be up until the nineteenth century. The church was built in the sixteenth century, but was restructured several times in the following centuries. Inside there is the “miraculous” fresco of the XVth century. Villa La Rotonda, situated at the top of the hill, is also famous as a valuable example of neoclassic art with its elegant entrance hall, preceded by an extravagant stairway and a large dome that covers the characteristic wide circular hallway, giving the villa its name. The rear façade of the building is preceded by the spectacular “loggia dei Giganti” (the Giant’s lodge) with its six magnificent sculptures by Pompeo Marchesi.

Anzano del Parco is home to the vast garden of the elegant Villa Carcano, designed at the end of the eighteenth century by the architect L. Pollack. Alzate Brianza boasts the presence of noble villas like Villa Baragiola and Villa Odescalchi.

TO BEE SEEN

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND WATER MUSEUM - ALBESE CON CASSANO

Via Pulici 25
Phone No. +39 031 426122 - Fax +39 031360224 - www.albese.it - segreteria@comune.albeseconcassano.co.it

Inaugurated in 2004 in a restructured washhouse. There is a collection of various instruments and tools, including a tub for washing clothes, a water fountain and a fire extinguisher, from the early twentieth century. Visits can be booked and admission is free.

BIRD OBSERVATORY - AROSIO

c/o Il Nibbio Via Cascina Perego 1
Phone No./Fax +39 031 762162 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale

The museum has a series of showcases with 375 examples of stuffed birds. The observatory is actually along one of the main, Italian flight paths for migrating birds. Visits can be booked in the Spring. Admission free.

CIVIC MUSEUM VILLA COMUNALE DI CREVENNA - ERBA MUSEUM

Via U. Foscolo 23
Phone No./Fax +39 031 3355341 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale - museoerba@libero.it

The museum has exhibits from the most ancient populations of the High Brianza and the Larian Triangle territory, tracing their history through numerous articles and precious craftwork. Open Tuesdays from 9am to 12pm; Wednesdays and Fridays from 2:30pm to 6pm. Admission free.
The wealthy and noble Milanese families chose the green area south of the Lario and bordered by the Adda and Seveso Rivers, as a holiday and leisure resort; a place to retreat to in summer until the first winter fog arrives. Today the Brianza area is representative of Italian entrepreneurship, an active and productive area linked above all to small and medium-sized industries, in particular to the furniture production industry. In fact, it is in the Como Brianza area that a fifth of all Italian furniture is produced. In the winter months the farmers carried out carpentry activities as a support to their agricultural activities and this winter pastime was successfully transformed into an industry.

Cantù is one of the most important towns involved in this transformation. Known both for its wood industry as well as its artistic treasures, this flourishing community is in the heart of the Brianza area at the top of a hill that dominates the surrounding area. Around it there are numerous hamlets, each one with its own characteristics and interesting monuments. The most significant, without a doubt, is the architectural complex of Galliano with the Basilica of San Vincenzo and the Baptistry of San Giovanni, which plays an important role as an example of Romanesque-Lombard style. The church has been restructured on several occasions yet still has important frescoes that decorate the nave and apse. (See “Romanico nella Brianza comasca”- Romanesque style in the Brianza Como area). In the centre of Cantù there are also other religious buildings of considerable importance, such as the church of San Paolo with its extremely high bell tower commonly referred to as “il fuso della Brianza” (the spindle of Brianza). The building has ancient origins, probably going as far back as the Xth century, but it was excessively restructured in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when it substituted the Galliano Basilica as the Cantù parish church. Not far from here is the church of Santa Maria, a late seventeenth century building, designed by the same architect as the Milan Cathedral. The architectural structure is very interesting, made up of the superimposition of two cylinders.

As well as religious buildings, Cantù boasts many other residential constructions that decorate the city and the surrounding area: the Town Hall Villa in neoclassic style with a wonderful garden used for summer shows and concerts; Villa Sacchi, a late, neoclassic style with an open gallery and traditional banisters with small posts; Villa Orombelli in the hamlet of Fecchio and even the neoclassic Villa Foppa Pedretti facing the church of the Galliano Basilica.

Thriving Cantù is also well known for its craftwork, not only in wood but also lace and lacework carried out using reels from the 1500’s. Every year the International Exhibition of Lace and Lacework assists in promoting this tradition.

Not far away is the town of Lurago d’Erba, known for its reed and wickerwork.

On the other hand the little town of Cucciago is famous for the production of the artist’s pipe, as well as for its Shrine to the Madonna della Neve where frescoes and other Romanesque elements have survived despite subsequent restructuring in the eighteenth century. Not far from here is Carimate with its Visconti castle, a powerful fortification in typical Lombard style, built by Luchino Visconti in the XIVth century on what is thought to have been the site of another building. The high towers, the embattled walls and the high Gothic windows were, however, restructured in the nineteenth century and today the ancient manor house has been transformed into a luxury hotel. Carimate is also well-known for its prestigious golf Club while the hamlet of Montesolaro is known for the elegant Villa Vismara-Calvi-Radice Fossati, an eighteenth century building with a 500 metre scenic avenue leading up to the entrance.

At Mariano Comense, an important town dominated by the San Maurizio hill, we can admire the precious
Romanesque baptistery, covered by a small octagonal lantern, as well as various patrician villas like Villa Besana and Villa Passalacqua which now houses the Town Hall.

At Minoprio you can find Villa Raimondi, built in the eighteenth century. The villa is surrounded by an immense botanical garden full of different shrubs and types of flower, and headquarters to the Fondazione Minoprio (Minoprio Foundation), a famous horticultural school of international prestige that trains young people for work in agriculture and flower nurseries.

The municipality of Cadorago is characterised by the presence of numerous wall paintings by top Italian and foreign artists (Tadini, Saltarelli, Bellini etc.) and valuable sculptures (Luzzani, Vioni etc.) which decorate the façades of various houses.

At Fino Mornasco we’d like to draw attention to Villa Raimondi, restructured in the nineteenth century by the neoclassic architect Simone Cantoni. In the park there is a small church where Giuseppe Garibaldi and the young marquess Giuseppina Raimondi were married in 1860.

Cassina Rizzardi is known on the other hand for its prestigious golf course and in particular for its centre for the production of mulberry silk cocoons dedicated to the study and breeding of silk worms.

Cantù is commercially known for its production of wood furniture. The secret of this prestigious activity is to customise each piece of furniture, creating an exclusive handmade creation, made to measure for each client. The producers benefit themselves by collaborating with locally trained architects and designers from specialised schools. The producers have formed associations that hold permanent exhibitions to offer visitors the chance to view the latest production in the furniture industry. The “Galleria del Design e dell’Arredamento” (the Gallery of Design and Furnishings) proposes research activities, the promotion and documentation of projects and the achievements in the fields of design and furnishings through its publications and exhibitions.
Outlet stores
Outlet stores, originally called company shops, are sales areas where customers can buy directly from the producer at very advantageous prices.
The articles are varied, from Lorio shoes or Levis jeans to designer clothes like Armani or Ambrosoli products, but above all the most renowned product is silk.
Since Como is the capital of Silk there are many factories where you can buy scarves, ties, material by the metre or finished products.
The complete list can be found in the information offices.

Cernenate is an ancient and active community in the Brianza Como area, which counts amongst its monuments the parish church of S. Vito and Modesto of XIII century and the church of S. Vincenzo. In the hamlet of Asiago the Nursery school is a beautiful example of rationalist architecture by Cesare Cattaneo.
Lomazzo is one of the Como villages with the most thriving of economies, situtated on the border with the Milan province, and has always been an area for both commercial and cultural exchanges. This is evident by the monuments that decorate the town: the Arco della Pace, in memory of the great peace of Lomazzo, is one of the main symbols of the village, dating back to 1875; the baroque style church of San Siro, dating back to 1732; it is made precious by the frescoes found inside where there is also an ancient painting by the school of Morazzzone; the “Brolo” and the church of San Vito: the square in front of San Vito, known as Brolo San Vito, was where the peace treaty between the cities of Como and Milan was drawn up during the Renaissance period. The project for the church of San Vito (1800) was prepared by the famous Swiss architect Simone Cantoni. The church still has a marble altar made by the great contemporary sculptor Francesco Somaini (1926-2005). We bring to your attention also: the Villa Carcano-Raimondi which has rooms considered the best examples of Lombardy and Renaissance architecture in Italy, and Somaini cotton mill that is a perfect example from the nineteenth century textile industry and the workingmen’s village; it is also worth visiting which can is found close by to the factory.
Turate: The oldest known fact about Turate is the donation of Liutprando in 712, but the discovery of some Roman tombs date back even further. Among the monuments to visit are the Casa Militare Umberto 1°, a small museum which opened in 1899 exhibiting articles from the “Risorgimento”, and the Shrine to the Madonna in Campagna with its unique nave and chapel dedicated to the Madonna with baroque decorations dated at around 1650.
TO BE SEEN

**CLAC FURNISHINGS AND DESIGN GALLERY - CANTU’**

Via Borgognone 12  
Phone No. +39 031 713114 - Fax +39 031 713118 - www.clacsrl.it – galleriadesign@clacsrl.it

The “Galleria del Design e dell’Arredamento” of Cantù can be defined as the museum for furnishings of the Lombard production district. The Galleria is involved in research, documentation and the promotion of temporary exhibitions for projects on interior furnishings and decoration.

Open from Tuesdays to Fridays 10:30am-12:30pm/2:30pm-6pm; Saturdays and Sundays 11am-1pm/3pm-7pm. Admission free.

**WOOD MUSEUM “RIVA 1920 CENTRE” - CANTU’**

Via Borgognone 12  
c/o CLAC - Phone No. +39 031 733094 - Fax +39 031 7073338 - www.riva1920.it

It is a collection of wood-working machines and tools, created by the Riva Industria Mobili (Riva Furniture Industry) in Cantù, coming from both Italian and foreign artisanal workshops.

Opening hours: from Tuesdays to Fridays from 10:30am to 12:30pm and from 2:30pm to 6pm. Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 1pm and from 3pm to 7pm. Admission free.

**BEE MUSEUM - BREGNANO**

Via Menegardo  
Phone No. +39 031 747464 - Fax +39 031 745583 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale

In the museum you can find over 2000 pieces about bees and beekeeping in general.

Open on the last Sunday of the month from 9:30am to 11:30am. Admission free.

**CENTRE FOR MULBERRY SILK COCOON BREEDING - CASSINA RIZZARDI**

Via Monte Grappa 10  
Phone No. and Fax +39 031 880405/541335 - www.provincia.como.it/sistemamuseale

It is the headquarters for educational activities and for studies on the techniques for the breeding of silkworms.  
Open from May to September by phone booking only. Guided visits with admission fee.
From an architectural point of view the style that most characterises the Larian region is without a doubt the Romanesque style. It developed around the year 1000 in various parts of Europe and in the Como area it developed its own style which became particularly widespread, mainly because the Como Masters School became representative of this new way of constructing. The Romanesque style in these areas uses stone principally and its main characteristic is the simplicity and purity of the decorations, putting architecture before sculptures. As well as the abovementioned churches in Como: S. Abbondio, S. Fedele and S. Carpoforo and the public buildings like Porta Torre, in Brianza there are also some of the best preserved groups of architectural buildings and medieval baptistries.

**Basilica of San Vincenzo and Baptistery of San Giovanni - Galliano**

On the outskirts of Cantù there is the Galliano ecclesiastic centre, made up of the Basilica of San Vincenzo and of the Baptistery of San Giovanni. According to legend, the basilica was built on the ruins of an ancient pagan temple around VIth century A.D., however, the first documentation that confirms the existence of the church refers to its consecration in the XIth century when Arìberto da Intimiano was its caretaker. He was to be the future Archbishop of Milan who was responsible for its extension and decoration. The church of San Vincenzo owes its cycle of frescoes on the nave walls to him, which even if partially destroyed, represent one of the best pictorial sequences of the period in northern Italy. In the following centuries the Basilica was slowly abandoned to the point that it was deconsecrated and transformed into a farmhouse during the nineteenth century. In recent times careful restoration has brought it back to its ancient splendour. Inside there is a raised presbytery under which an ancient crypt remains. The apse has wonderful frescoes such as the magnificent “Maestà del Cristo, tra Santi, Profeti e Arcangeli” (The Majesty of Christ among Saints, Prophets and Archangels) and in the lower part, episodes from the life of San Vincenzo. The frescoes on the right-hand walls of the nave tell the stories of Sansone and San Cristoforo, even though some episodes are missing.

The Baptistery, situated on the right hand side of San Vincenzo, is a complex building probably built in the XIIth century, with a subsequent building pronaos and covered by an octagonal lantern. The site still has a baptismal font in the centre, made from a large millstone from Roman times for the baptismal rites of immersion.

**The Abbey of San Giovanni Battista - Vertemate**

About a kilometre from the centre there is an important monastic group of buildings of the Cluny order with the Abbey of San Giovanni Battista dating back to the eleventh century. The church is a Romanesque structure with three naves and still has a part of its ancient cloister. There are also valuable frescoes from the XIVth century which decorate the outside and part of the apse, attributed to an anonymous Lombard master.

**Baptistry of San Giovanni - Mariano Comense**

The Baptistry in Mariano Comense is probably from the same period as the Galliano Baptistery, also dedicated to San Giovanni and likely built in the early XIIth century. It has an interesting structure, a square plan with four semicircles at the sides, and an octagonal dome. Unfortunately the building has undergone various modifications during the centuries, but careful restoration has brought it back to its original design.
Just outside Como there is an area with many populated towns and interesting natural landscapes. The Regional Park “Spina Verde” (Green Thorn) starts at the foothills of the city and joins Como to the towns of S. Fermo della Battaglia, Cavallasca, Parè and Drezzo. It is an interesting area for several reasons: it is on this very site where the first settlements were made in the Como area as can be seen by the existing ruins, medieval monuments, findings from recent history and of course, many pathways and panoramas of rare beauty.

San Fermo was the scene of the famous battle for the liberation of Como, fought by the Garibaldini against the Austrians in 1859, during the Second War of Independence. The church of Santa Maria Nullate is also interesting to visit. Recent and careful restoration works have brought to light interesting findings from the Celtic period which can be seen through glass flooring panels.

Carrying on you reach a hilly area which has reminders of the past with its ancient homes and a myriad of small villas, making this district a popular residential area, chosen specifically by many.

Cavallasca is the next town, with the prestigious Villa Imbonati now used as the Town Hall. The building dates back to the mid 1600’s, built according to the wishes of Carlo Antonio Imbonati who made it a meeting place for artists and writers. The small nineteenth century church of San Rocco is also interesting, it is also called the “chiesetta dei pittori” (the artists’ church) as it has a valuable Way of the Cross painted by 14 contemporary artists.

Cavallasca is the first of three towns that formed the municipality of Lieto Colle (Happy Hill) with Parè and Drezzo from 1928 to 1956. It is an outspread town with a romantic name that overlooks the important Valmulini. This valley, with glacial origins, is crossed by the Faloppia torrent where many watermills were built in medieval times for the productions of flour and oil. In 1500 it became a border area and was used for smuggling activities that characterised the whole territory and its economy for decades.

The border with Switzerland has various pedestrian passes as well as roads and encloses an area where the ancient world survives and where traces of the modern world are conspicuous. There are lively towns with thriving business and remote corners where you can have the pleasure of walking in the silence of cultivated fields and simple open clearings.

There is no lack of artistic or historical sites, such as the thousand-year-old Rodero Tower or tourist attractions like the steam train that connects Valmorea to Mendrisio, in the Ticino Canton. This particular railway track, inaugurated in 1926, is only 8 kilometres long and has only recently started to function again with its original locomotive and carriages.

From an artistic point of view the town of Olgiate Comasco is interesting with its two churches dedicated to Santi Ippolito and Cassiano, and the other at San Gerardo, as well as valuable civil buildings such as Palazzo Volta, now the Town Hall, the nineteenth century Villa Camilla and the group of buildings called “il Medioevo” (the Middle Ages) which is a construction of eclectic style currently used as the Civic Centre.

Further to the south there is a pine forest with original characteristics which have been left from building projects. In the forest there are some “cascine” (farmhouses) occupied by agricultural companies which specialise in certain crops, and centres like the “Pinetina” at Appiano Gentile where the sports facilities, which include a golf course, are the training “base” for champions of famous football clubs. There is also a leisure area where you can spend hours in the open air in complete relaxation.
Just beyond Lurago Marinone is the church of San Giorgio, which preserves valuable frescoes, and has numerous eighteenth and nineteenth century villas in its surrounding area, good examples of industrial archaeology.

The Como–Milan motorway crosses the entire plain. Travelling north along it, just outside of Como, is the town of Grandate where it is possible to visit a unique museum dedicated to toy horses. This interesting organization was built inside the stables where the famous thoroughbred Tornese was born in the late 1950s. It has over 520 exhibits of toy horses, made starting from the XIIIth century.

The vicinity of many Como villages to the Swiss border, both on the southern plains and around the lake, brought about the smuggling phenomenon. An illegal activity, which in this border region, was a part of every day life. It started due to the low incomes earned from hard labour and the deprivation that characterised the years after the Second World War until the 1970s. True life accounts have today gained a romantic halo thanks to the many books and novels they have inspired, but above all from the items that were smuggled into the country: sugar, coffee, stock cubes and above all cigarettes, vastly different from what is smuggled nowadays. There were two main figures involved: the “spalloni” (smugglers) and the “finanzieri” (customs officers). The former, that is the smugglers, loaded large sacks of cigarettes called “bricolle” (a type of basket) onto their shoulders; the only weapons they had were their strength and speed, thanks to which they managed to cross the border passing through holes in the net, in the most hidden of places and almost always at night, pursued by the customs officers “finanzieri”, whose job was to catch them. From this great piece of local history, the only accounts that exist are those memories that were passed down verbally from one generation to the next. Nowadays, fortunately, two interesting museums have been opened on this topic, one in Como at the head office of the Customs Police and the other at Erbonne, in Val d’Intevis, where it is possible to view objects, clothes and documents about this phenomenon, which became almost legendary due to its important role in the Larian culture.

THE PARKS

There are numerous protected areas in the Province of Como.

The name “Spina Verde” (Green Thorn) refers to the hilly ridge that stretches North-West of Como on both sides of the Italian-Swiss frontier. Due to the particular layout of the park, which squeezes itself like a thorn between the city and its outskirts, it has become the green breathing space of the whole area. The framework of the Spina Verde hills is made up of sedimentary rocks dating back to the Tertiary era.

The area has numerous places of interest whether natural, with its impressive man-made chestnut tree forests, created for fruit and wood production, or historical with its archaeological remains, educating us on the first inhabitants of the Como area, and monuments from various periods. In fact you can see the medieval Castello Baradello, the symbol of the Park, or the Romanesque Basilica of S. Carpoforo, and more recent findings such as the trenches of Sasso di Cavallasca.

Do not forget the recreational aspect of the park with its numerous footpaths, panoramic viewpoints and retreats.

Parco Spina Verde
Via Imbonati 1 - 22020 Cavallasca
Phone No./Fax +39 031 211131
segreteria@parcoregionalespinaverde.191.it

The area’s main characteristic between Pineta di Appiano Gentile and Tradate Park, is the stretch of woods that make up about 85% of the whole area. Its close proximity to large cities, the presence of an efficient road network and railway lines make the park easily accessible. As far as the morphology of the area is concerned, it is made up of morainal deposits following various glaciations, and the vegetation is typical of the Lombard moorland.

The Borderland Area

The vicinity of many Como villages to the Swiss border, both on the southern plains and around the lake, brought about the smuggling phenomenon. An illegal activity, which in this border region, was a part of every day life. It started due to the low incomes earned from hard labour and the deprivation that characterised the years after the Second World War until the 1970s. True life accounts have today gained a romantic halo thanks to the many books and novels they have inspired, but above all from the items that were smuggled into the country: sugar, coffee, stock cubes and above all cigarettes, vastly different from what is smuggled nowadays. There were two main figures involved: the “spalloni” (smugglers) and the “finanzieri” (customs officers). The former, that is the smugglers, loaded large sacks of cigarettes called “bricolle” (a type of basket) onto their shoulders; the only weapons they had were their strength and speed, thanks to which they managed to cross the border passing through holes in the net, in the most hidden of places and almost always at night, pursued by the customs officers “finanzieri”, whose job was to catch them. From this great piece of local history, the only accounts that exist are those memories that were passed down verbally from one generation to the next. Nowadays, fortunately, two interesting museums have been opened on this topic, one in Como at the head office of the Customs Police and the other at Erbonne, in Val d’Intevis, where it is possible to view objects, clothes and documents about this phenomenon, which became almost legendary due to its important role in the Larian culture.
mostly silver pine trees mixed together with oak and chestnut trees, false acacias, hornbeams, birches and elm trees. The Fauna of the park has been counted as having 96 different species, 58 of which are nesting species including daytime predatory birds (northern goshawk, honey buzzard, sparrow hawk, buzzard and kestrel). The protected area is suitable for light leisure activities, with the wilderness of the woods; an ideal place for fun ecological excursions on foot or by mountainbike.

Information:
via Manzoni 11 - 22070 Castelnuovo Bozzente (CO)
Phone No. +39 031 988430 - Fax +39 031 988284
e-mail: parcopineta@libero.it

Valle del Lambro Regional Park
The park includes the banks of the Lambro River in the area between the Lakes of Pusiano and Alserio to the north and the Villa Reale Park at Monza to the south. The hilly areas of Milan and Como Brianza are the most interesting from a natural point of view, with excellent marshland environments, as well as the complex of monuments which include the Rotonda di Inverigo, Villa Crivelli and Santa Maria della Noce.

Consorzio Parco Regionale della Valle del Lambro
via Vittorio Veneto 19 - 20050 Triuggio (MI)
Phone No. +39 0362 970961/997137

The Lura Park
The Lura Park includes a narrow valley that forms south of Bulgarograsso up until the edge of Saronno; moreover, in the park there are also the woody hills of Guanzate and Cermenate. It is the typical natural environment of the Lombard high plains with oak and false acacia woods.

Consorzio Parco del Lura
(Parco Locale di Interesse Sovracomunale)
L.go Clerici 1 - 22071 Cadorago (CO)

TO BE SEEN

HORSE TOY MUSEUM - GRANDATE
Via Tornese 10 - Phone No. +39 031 382111 - www.chicco.com - museodelcavallogiocattolo.it

The museum hosts a special collection of horse toys coming from all over the world. Rocking horses, paper-mache figures, and horses made of the most various materials.
Opening hours: Monday 3:30pm-6:00pm; from Tuesday to Saturday 10:30am-12:30am/3:00pm-6:30pm. Please book for guided tours. Admission free.
The Brianza territory was “obliged” by its natural agriculture and close proximity to the big cities to boast an essentially humble type of cuisine. Cereal was the most suitable agricultural product for the area’s environment (principally rye, millet and barley, then maize) while the woodlands have always favoured hunting (birds and game) and the picking of chestnuts, walnuts, and freshwater crayfish.

To make the most of the ingredients available, the locals created cereal mixes to produce bread, as well as mixes of vegetables and pulses for soups, mixtures of meat and offal to make sausages. The Brianza area has predominantly “heavy” specialities like the “verzata” (pork meat with cabbage) - (“cazzoeula”, “casoela” ecc), “busecca” or “foiolo” (tripe), polenta and birds, “cotecotti con fagioli” (sausage and beans) and of course all the local salami products like “filzette” and “cacciatorini”. You can also find a very original “rustisciada”, a typical Brianza dish made with pork fillets and sausages fried with onions, Brunate onions if possible. And then of course polenta, sausage and beans, rabbit cooked Brianza style in traditional sauces, a Californian style cooked beef, a very tasty stewed sirloin that takes its name from an old farmhouse on the road between Viganò and Monza.

There are no particularly traditional desserts with the humble ingredients of most of the dishes not matching up to a confectionary tradition. You can try the typical “cotizza”, a homemade focaccia made of flour, milk, sugar and lemon peel, the “masigott” of Erba and the “nociolini” of Canzo. A common dessert in the Lecco area, with thousands of variations, is the “miascia”, made with maize flour, raisins, local honey and nuts.

As far as wine production is concerned, the Lecco Brianza area was abundant in vineyards until the nineteenth century. However, production was for personal consumption or for a small local market. The most admired wine comes from the hills of Montevecchia, which is becoming more known and recovering discreetly in the quality and quantity of its wine production thanks to the Park committee and a big agriturism market.
Near Switzerland and a stone’s throw from Milan and the Malpensa airport, the area is full of opportunities and facilities for organising conferences and exhibitions. There are even rich and diverse options to choose for unusual meeting venues as well as for leisure time, both for conference delegates as well as for their partners.

The **Centro Internazionale Esposizioni e Congressi Villa Erba (International Exhibition and Congress Centre)** is dedicated entirely to conference tourism, at Villa Erba in Cernobbio. The Centre includes a large villa from the late nineteenth century on the lakefront and a large park with elegant glazed-windowed pavilions (11,000 sq m covered) hidden among the green, century old trees.

The villa is extremely attractive, with wide stairways that descend towards the lake. It also has its own private dock so conference delegates can arrive by lake, offering them the unforgettable view of the villa from the water. The exhibition pavilions (a main pavilion, three wings and two towers) offer a functional space of 6,500 square metres and can be divided into 280 stands at the most. The different sections can also be requested individually for meetings, courses etc. The main pavilion can hold more than 1,300 people and is equipped with mobile platforms that can be assembled in various formations.

Another beautiful villa that can be used for conferences and exhibitions is Villa Olmo, in Como. Designed at the end of the eighteenth century for the Marquis Odescalchi, today it belongs to the Municipality of Como. Napoleon, Radetzky and other important characters of Italian and European history have passed through its rooms, rich in stucco-work and frescoes. For high profile meetings there are also three five star hotels and several other 4 and 3 star hotels which are well equipped to host these events.

For information: www.villaerba.it

**Lariofiere (Lario trade fair centre) at Erba**

Lariofiere can boast of a winning collection. Erba is the centre of the Larian Triangle, 15km from Como and Lecco, 40 km from Milan; easily reached on the main Milan-Lecco road, the A9 Milan-Como motorway and the North Milan Railway service. At the centre of a region characterized by a strong entrepreneurial tendency, Lariofiere addresses a market that extends over the provinces of Como, Lecco, Milan and Sondrio.

It is an efficient and flexible structure, well established in a territory full of potential and burning with initiative. With 14,500 squared metres of exhibition space, it is a well-established trade fair centre and ideal place for companies to meet the general public. Divided into 3 main pavilions and connected by a main gallery, the Lariofiere exhibition centre is suitable for the organisation of various events simultaneously. The exhibition area has two main entrances and is surrounded by a convenient car park with over 1000 parking spaces, flowerbeds and gardens.

The external area of 30,000 squared metres can be used for shows, events or open-air exhibitions.

For information: www.lariofiere.com

** Institution of Villa Monastero at Varenna**

Villa Monastero, an ancient convent and patrician home, is today a conference centre which has been internationally recognised and offers agencies, universities, companies, associations and research centres the possibility of holding conferences, seminars, courses, workshops and other cultural events in an extremely special setting. The Villa has a main hall, called “Fermi”, dedicated to the famous Nobel Prize winner who held some lessons here, rich in marbles and with an enchanting view of the lake. The villa has every type of facility and there are four minor rooms (Nera room, Consiglio (Board) room, Polvani and Sottotetto rooms) for smaller groups.

There are also 12 rooms available (8 doubles and 4 singles) if required by the conference delegates that have been refurbished in a modern style. A room equipped with telephone, fax, photocopier, PC and broadband Internet connection, is available for conference administration. Furthermore it is also possible to organise buffets, receptions and coffee breaks both inside the villa and in the splendid garden overlooking the lake.

For information: www.villamonastero.it
TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICES

ANNUAL OPENING

COMO
P.za Cavour, 17 - Phone No. +39 031 269712 - Fax +39 031 240111
lakecomo@tin.it - www.provincia.como.it/turismo

LECCO
Via Nazario Sauro, 6 - Phone No. +39 0341 295720/0341 295721
Fax +39 0341 295730
info.turismo@provincia.lecco.it - www.turismo.provincia.lecco.it

BARZIO (LC)
P.za Garibaldi, 12 - Phone No. +39 0341 996255 - Fax +39 0341 910103

BELLAGIO (CO)
P.za Mazzini (Imbarcadero) - Phone No./Fax +39 031 950204 - prombell@tin.it

CAMPIONE D’ITALIA (CO)
Azienda Turistica - Via Volta, 3 - Phone No. 0041 91 6495051
Fax 0041 91 6499178 - www.campioneditalia.com - aptcampione@tico.com

DONGO (CO)
Info-Point Alto Lario - Palazzo Manzi - Phone No. +39 0344 82572

MENAGGIO (CO)
P.za Garibaldi, 8 - Phone No./Fax +39 0344 32924 - infomenaggio@tiscalinet.it

SEASONAL OPENING

ARGEGNO (CO)
Via Cacciatori delle Alpi, 42 - Phone No. +39 0341 822724 - Fax +39 0341 8221006

CERNOBBIO (CO)
Largo Visconti - Phone no. +39 031 349341 - www.comune.cernobbio.co.it

CANZO (CO)
P.za Chiesa, 4 - Phone No./Fax +39 031 682457 - procanzo@tiscali.it

DOMASO (CO)
Via Roma - Phone No. +39 0344 96322 - Fax +39 0344 83363
Tel. invernale +39 0344 96088 - promodomaso@hotmail.com

GRAVEDONA (CO)
P.za Garibaldi, 12 - Phone No. +39 031 996255 - Fax +39 031 910103

GRIANTE/CADENABBIA (CO)
Via Regina, 1/1 - Phone No. e Fax +39 0344 40393

LANZO D’INTELVI (CO)
c/o Palazzo Comunale - Phone No. +39 0344 840143

PORLEZZA (CO)
Via Ceresio, 2/B - Phone No./Fax +39 0344 62196 - prolocop@hotmail.com

SAN FEDELE INTELVI (CO)
Via Regina, 3 - Phone No. +39 0344 40493

TREMEZZO (CO)
Via IV Novembre - Phone No./Fax +39 0344 830367 - www.varennaitaly.com

VARENNA (LC)
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IMAGO - Cooperativa turistica - c/o Palazzo Manzi - Dongo (Co)
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