



Beautiful Italian Lakes

Viaggio Italia Travel escorted tour

2020 dates and prices

3 May - 16 May 2020	\$4550
20 September - 3 October 2020	\$4750

Highlights

Join us on a 14-day excursion from Milan to Lake Maggiore, Lake Como and Lake Garda. This exquisite part of Italy has been the playground of the Italian jet set for centuries and for good reason...

- Personally-escorted 14-day tour with expert local guides in each location
- Stays in Milan, Stresa, Menaggio and Desenzano
- Ride the scenic Centovalli Express rail from Locarno in Switzerland
- Visit the fabulous Borromean Islands, including Isola Bella's amazing tiered gardens and palace
- Wander the small towns on Lake Como, including a guided tour of beautiful Villa Balbianello (of Star Wars and James Bond fame) and a visit to bellissimo Bellagio
- Enjoy an authentic cooking and dining experience with Moreno in the little village of Gittana above Lake Como
- Tour pretty little Isola Garda: still the home of the Borghese Cavazza family
- Explore little towns around Lake Garda, such as Sirmione, Limone and Malcesine
- Search for Romeo and Juliette in romantic Verona
- Take guided walking tours of Milan's Duomo (including the rooftop walk), Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Teatro alla Scala, Castello Sforza, and Da Vinci's The Last Supper



The enchanting Italian lakes have long been the summer haunt of the rich and famous and today we can visit the extraordinary palazzos and villas that are dotted along the shores of each of the lakes.

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Your itinerary

Italy's northern lakes are famous for their natural beauty and enchanting towns that are dotted along their shorelines. We'll start in the great northern capital of Milan, before venturing out staying in the lakeside villages of Stresa, Menaggio and Desenzano.

Day 1 – Milan: City of fashion and food

Guests will be arriving at different times and we will be on hand to assist when you check into our hotel and to help orient you. You will then have free time until 5:00pm, when all our guests will join us for welcome drinks and a chance to talk about our time in Italy's Lakes District. Later we will take a walk to familiarise ourselves with the local area which will finish at a lovely Italian restaurant for our first meal together, and an opportunity to get to know the other travellers who will be sharing this tour with you.

Inclusions: Welcome drinks, orientation walk

Meals: Dinner



Day 2 – Milan: The historical centre

Milan's Duomo – or Cathedral – is the most iconic image of this great city and that's where we'll start our walking tour. To get there it's a short ride on Milan's excellent Metro system. You'll also have full use of this system for the whole day, as we provide you

with a day pass to use to explore the city once the formal tour is concluded. At the Duomo, you'll take the elevator to the roof for a fantastic view of the city from the terraces, before skipping the lines with your local guide to take a tour inside this incredible and historic Gothic masterpiece. It's a unique experience. Later we'll walk across to see the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II – the famous shopping mall with its arched glass ceiling, before visiting the Piazza della Scala where we'll take a guided tour of the famous Teatro alla Scala opera house.

Inclusions: Metro pass, guided tour of the historical centre, elevator access to the Duomo terraces

Meals: Breakfast

Day 3 – Our first view of the lakes!

Today we're off to Lake Maggiore! It's only about an hour by private minibus transfer from Milan to Stresa where your hotel is right by the lake with water views and in the heart of the old town. It's a great little town to wander, with lots of little shops up and down the streets and piazzas, as well as a wonderful panoramic walk along the lakeside. Once we've settled in, we'll be taking a walk along the lake to ride the funicular to the top at Mottarone, where you will be able to take in fabulous views over the lake, including the Borromean Islands. It is a nice walk, but it is about a kilometre to the funicular, so we do offer this as an optional activity. Later we'll take a short walk in the town to orient you, and we'll end at a lovely local ristorante for dinner.



Inclusions: Transfer by private minibus to hotel, funicular pass

Meals: Breakfast, dinner



Day 4 – Borromean splendour

Last night you will have seen the Borromean Islands from the shore. Today we will get to visit these three islands that take their name from the aristocratic Borromean family, who - in the 16th and 17th centuries - transformed the islands of Bella and Madre into grand, luxurious residences, while the third island, named "dei Pescatori" (after its age-old fishing community) was left to continue its traditional way of life. Each offers a very different experience. Isola Bella's palace and gardens are the epitome of opulence and luxury. In contrast, the Isola dei Pescatori, with its village unchanged by time, offers a fascinating simplicity. Finally, the exotic atmosphere of the lush and tranquil Isola Madre can be ascribed to the gardens that almost totally cover it. We will take the ferry to each island in turn, enjoying guided tours of Bella and Madre, with independent time to explore as well. Later you can use your ferry

pass to explore other parts of the lake and we can give you plenty of ideas for that!

Inclusions: All day ferry pass, entry to all islands, guided tours of Isola Bella and Isola Madre

Meals: Breakfast



Day 5 – Lago Maggiore Express

It's a very full day today, as we are off to Switzerland (so remember to take your passport!). The Lake Maggiore Express is a very nice trip, that starts with a cruise up the lake on the ferry, enjoying lunch before relaxing and taking in the mountain scenery and pretty little towns along the lake. After a short stop in Locarno – an interesting Swiss town on the shores of Lake Maggiore. Later we will return to Stresa on the famous Centovalli narrow gauge train, which offers a scenic ride through alpine villages to Domodossola: a quaint little town from where we take the regional train back to Stresa.

Inclusions: Lake Maggiore Express: ferry to Locarno, return to Stresa by Centovalli scenic train

Meals: Breakfast, lunch



Day 6 – Lake Como (looking for George!)

It's time to leave Lake Maggiore and head to Lake Como. We'll keep an eye out for George Clooney along the way as we take our private minibus around the lakes to the pretty village of Menaggio on Lake Como. Our lakefront hotel is in a perfect position; just a short walk from the ferry port. Once settled, we'll take a ferry across the lake to the lovely little town

of Varenna where there is a walk of about 25 minutes up to Castello di Vezio, which offers (again) magnificent views. This is an optional activity, as the walk will test your legs and the paved path is uneven in areas. Those not wanting to come can wander Varenna, and maybe enjoy an aperitivo in one of the many lakeside bars and restaurants. Later we'll enjoy a meal together at our favourite little ristorante right by our hotel.... bellissima....

Inclusions: Transfer to Menaggio by private minibus, entry to Castello di Vezio

Meals: Breakfast, dinner

Day 7 – Exploring the lake

Lake Como has long been a retreat for wealthy Italians, especially the Milanese, and they've left behind some amazing villas and today we are going to take a guided tour of Villa Balbianello: famous as a location for both Star Wars and James Bond movies. Its architecture and gardens will astound you with the tales of their past coming to life through our expert local guide. We'll transfer by private boat across to the famous little town of Bellagio, where you will enjoy a light lunch before having the rest of the afternoon to explore the winding alleys that lead up and down the hills that sit beside the lake before taking the ferry for the short trip back to Menaggio.

Inclusions: Private transfers to Villa Balbianello and Bellagio, return ferry pass to Menaggio, entry and guided tour of Villa Balbianello, visit to Bellagio

Meals: Breakfast, lunch

Day 8 – An authentic cooking and dining experience!

In the little village of Gittana, about a 10-minute drive by private van in the hills above Varenna, is a wonderful family-owned restaurant run by Moreno and his wife Rossella. We take the ferry across then enjoy a welcome cappuccino and Italian biscotti at their restaurant, before enjoying a private group cooking class. Moreno will lead and give us all the chance to join in and learn the tricks, like how to fold and shape tortelloni or roll gnocchi. We'll break for spuntino (Italian snack time) and enjoy fresh bread, salame and cheese from the local valley, and a little of the local D.O.C. wine. Then it's back to the cookery lesson, where fresh ingredients and passion for food will provide us with a great authentic lunch time at around 2.00 p.m. You'll receive a certificate of attending signed by Moreno and Rossella and a glass of

limoncello before we wish them 'arrivederci e grazie mille' around 4.00 pm when we will be transferred back to Varenna, and then back to Menaggio.

Inclusions: Transfers to and from the restaurant, cooking class plus food and drinks as indicated above

Meals: Breakfast, lunch and snacks as indicated above



Day 9 – Goodbye Como, hello Garda!

The third lake we will visit is Lake Garda: the largest lake in Italy. We'll be picked up by our private minibus and transferred to Desenzano on the south-west shore of the lake. We think of Maggiore as 'sophisticated' and Como as 'dreamy'. Garda is 'energetic'. Many northern Europeans come for sailing and other water sports, and the towns are lively and fun throughout the year. If we're lucky there may be markets or a festival on! In any case it's a great place to stay. After checking in, we'll provide an orientation walk of the town – it is another gem – before heading to a little portside restaurant for dinner together.

Inclusions: Private minibus transfer to Desenzano

Meals: Breakfast, dinner



Day 10 – Isola Garda: jewel of the lake

The morning will be yours to relax and enjoy the town – Tuesday is usually market day. After lunch we will take the ferry to Sirmione: a popular town with a Roman and medieval history from where we will visit the medieval

castle before taking a boat over to Isola del Garda. The Borghese Cavazza family open the island - which is still their home - for private guided tours. We'll enjoy a welcome drink and get to taste some local olive oil, before getting the opportunity to visit a couple of rooms in the residence and explore the beautiful Italian and English gardens. Later, we will return to Sirmione for some free time before catching the ferry back to Desenzano.

Inclusions: Return ferry pass to Sirmione, entry to the castle, guided tour of Isola del Garda including boat transfers.

Meals: Breakfast



Day 11 – Verona: wherefore art thou Romeo?

Verona is a lovely city less than half an hour from Desenzano. We'll take a private minibus for the trip to Verona and meet our local guide for a walking tour to learn the history behind this great city – and the story behind

Juliette's balcony. Later, you'll have free time to explore the town on your own before we return by private minivan to Desenzano.

Inclusions: Return minibus transfer to Verona, guided tour of the city

Meals: Breakfast

Day 12 – The little towns by the lake

The towns that sit along the shores of this long lake are picturesque and are great places to wander, take photos, look for a bargain or just sit and watch the world go by. We'll be taken by private minivan on a leisurely drive around the lake, stopping to roam towns such as Malcesine, Riva and Limone. This will be a whole day adventure and one you will long remember.

Inclusions: Private minivan tour of some of the small towns around the lake

Meals: Breakfast

Day 13 – A Last Supper

Today we leave the lakes and head back to Milan by private minibus. After settling in at the hotel, you'll head out to take a walking tour that will include a visit to see Da Vinci's famous work: The Last Supper* and the imposing Castello Sforzesco - the medieval castle where we'll hear tales of its historical importance to the Milanese and explore the expansive Parco Sempione in which the castle is set. Later we will head out for our final dinner together.

Inclusions: Private minibus transfer to Milan, guided walking tour of Castello Sforza and surrounds, skip the line entry to The Last Supper*, day pass for Metro

Meals: Breakfast, dinner



Day 14 – Farewell from Milan

This is our last morning in Milan. We will be available to assist in your transfers to the airport or the rail.

Meals: Breakfast

**See next page*



Any questions? Just ask us!

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions at all about this wonderful tour! We're here to help!

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Useful information

Tour pace and physical requirements

The tour is easy-paced. Apart from the split time in Milan, we stay at least 3 nights in each location, so we aren't moving hotels every day. There will be walking tours of up to 3-4 hours in duration.

While of course we are there to help - clients are responsible for their luggage.

On some day tours, we do need to board ferries using gangplanks with railings.

The tour provides a good balance between organised tours and time to explore independently.

Transport

- Metro
- Minivans and minibuses
- Ferries
- Centovalli Express train

Hotels

All hotels have been selected following a rigorous personal inspection tour. Most are 3-4-star hotels. Where available, we have selected lakefront rooms.

A single supplement is available on request. We do not add a margin to this – it is simply what hotels charge us.

Inclusions

- Shared twin hotel accommodation including city taxes
- Usual maximum: 12 guests per tour
- All transfers as indicated
- All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 5 dinners
- Fulltime tour director and licensed local guides for local tours
- Day tours and activities as listed in the itinerary
- All entry fees to tour locations and other listed activities, including funicular (Stresa)
- **Last Supper:** Getting tickets to the Last Supper has become challenging and Milan has changed the way tour operators get tickets. We are confident we will get tickets and will go out of our way to do so, however if we are unsuccessful, we will substitute this part of the tour with an experience that will be of higher monetary value at our own cost.

Hopefully, though, this won't be necessary. We'll keep you in the loop!

The tour does not include:

- Drinks and extras in hotel unless indicated in the itinerary
- Anything not mentioned in the "Inclusions" section or itinerary

Please be sure to read our Terms and Conditions, which you can find on our website at:

<https://www.viaggioitaliatravel.com.au/bookings>

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. We are a family-owned company, and we want to make sure you know all you need to about our tours so that you can be well-prepared and have a great time with us.

Grazie mille!!

Gary



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