

LAKE COMO & LAKE LUGANO GETTING STARTED

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

Lake Como, the wildest and least visited of the great Lombard lakes, is full of surprises. Remarkable villas set in awe-inspiring parks are laced around the southern half of the lake. You could take in the major ones (in Bellagio, Varenna, Tremezzo and Cernobbio) in three days. Como and Lugano, the main town on sister Lake Lugano, are worth a day each (especially for the views at the end of their respective funicular rides). Gourmands can combine fine food with wonderful views once they've invested in a little planning. Walkers of all levels can stride into surprisingly untouched country and then gain altitude for breathtaking panoramas.

TOP TOURS

♥ LAKE COMO CYCLING

A local cycling enthusiast will take you on one-day mountain-bike tours of Lake Como – or around Lombardy, into Switzerland and even to Rome. (www.lakecomocycling.com; tours €120)

♥ GIRO DELLE FRAZIONI DI BELLAGIO

A three-hour guided walk takes you around Bellagio and surrounding hamlets. (tours €10; ☎ 9.15am Mon May-Sep)

♥ COMO CITY TOUR

Discover the main monuments of the old heart of Como on this two-hour walking tour of central Como, run by Mondo Turistico. (www.mondoturistico.it; tours €8)

♥ AERO CLUB COMO

The Aero Club Como offers seaplane flights around Lake Como, from short flights over its southern half to longer jaunts to Lake Lugano. (☎ 031 57 44 95; www.aeroclubcomo.com)

♥ DORSALE

This two-day hike goes from Brunate to Bellagio, skirting little-visited villages. A challenging variant climbs along the crests. (p116)