

A scenic view of a colorful Italian lakeside town at dusk. The town is built on a hillside, with buildings in various colors (red, yellow, orange) and terracotta roofs. The buildings are reflected in the calm water of the lake. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and picturesque.

Lake Como, Maggiore & Orta

Italian Lakes Cultural Walking Adventure

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—Travel + Leisure

A Retreat to the Lake District

A Renaissance mirage, the villa floats on a mirror-smooth lake. It's morning. The mountains that slide into the water are still hidden in deep blue shadows, except the peaks high above that are tipped in apricot alpenglow. Italy's Lake District always makes us poetic, and this Classic Journey cultural walking tour visits the three most inspiring lakes: Como, Maggiore and Orta. Since the Roman emperors, these gracious waterside resorts have drawn visitors. The climate is mild, loaded with the vibrant colors of Alpine wildflowers and lush semi-tropical gardens. Our footpaths sometimes traverse mountaintop meadows and often hug the crystal clear waters. We spend generous parts of several days on leisurely cruises and visit fine villas, palaces and fishing villages. Nowhere else does stunning scenery, mellow air and rich history come together with such romantic results.

DAY 1

BELLAGIO

- Meet your guide in Milan for a seamless start to your trip
- Explore Villa Serbelloni's gardens

You meet your guide in central Milan and transfer to Bellagio, sometimes called the prettiest town in Europe and always seeming to be flag-bedecked, with geraniums ablaze in every window and bougainvillea veiling the staircases, or *montées*, that thread through the town.

Your first stop is a visit to the Italian-style gardens of Villa Serbelloni, complete with fountains, statues and lush flower beds. These luxurious grounds boast an array of Mediterranean and subtropical plants and flowers that bask in the year-round sunshine. Following your visit, there's ample time to roam the narrow streets that lead down to the lake or stop at a café.

Later in the afternoon, you return to your lakeside hotel, named in Italian for "beautiful view". You're welcomed by our friend, Tiziana, whose family has owned the hotel since 1880.

You have time to relax and explore the lovely terraced gardens that have replaced the vineyards that once surrounded the villa before you enjoy a welcome dinner of local specialties, such as freshly-caught fish with risotto and ravioli.

Overnight: Bellagio

Meals: D

DAY 2

BELLAGIO

- Meander through the cobbled streets of the lakeside village
- Walk through scenic countryside to a lakeside villa for a wine tasting
- Sample the local gelato overlooking the lake

You follow your guide on a scenic loop walk today that leads you directly out of your hotel, into the countryside surrounding Bellagio, and ultimately back on foot. Throughout the day your walk links a great variety of activities that immerse you into the history and culture of the region.

You begin your morning explorations by meandering through the cobblestone streets of Bellagio. Here, your local guide shares historical anecdotes and stories about the town's significant place in the history of silk weaving in the Lake District. After visiting the Romanesque church of San Giacomo, a leisurely stroll leads from the picturesque lakeside town to nearby Villa Melzi, whose magnificent gardens boast more than 500 species of exotic plants and 14 acres of flowering azaleas and rhododendrons.

You continue on foot a short distance to lovely Villa Crella. Your reward is a wine tasting, and often the opportunity to talk with Lorenzo, the owner and your host, who has restored the family estate. Sometimes you linger here for lunch. But you're also flexible, and so other times you prefer to stretch your legs after the wine tasting. On these occasions, you continue along a scenic footpath a short distance to visit with a friend at his trattoria for lunch and the chance to sample the locally made polenta *uncia*—polenta, butter, cheese and roasted garlic.

As you return on foot to Bellagio, there's time for gelato while you enjoy the afternoon sunlight on the lake. If you find yourself with excess energy after your gelato, your guide is happy to lead an hour-long hike through the beautiful countryside hamlets that surround Bellagio, where small villages and beautiful gardens are carved between the lush green hillsides.

Overnight: Bellagio

Meals: B, L

DAY 3

COMO / BRUNATE

- Explore the village of Como, including time to shop for famed silks
- Ride a funicular to a countryside walk above olive groves
- Relax or choose to join an optional afternoon walk to a fishing village

Awaking at your lakeside home, you decide to escape to the quiet of the hills surrounding the lake for a portion of the day. Fortified with a breakfast of local specialties, you take a short boat ride to Como where you stroll through the historic town and admire the incredible architecture—a mixture of Renaissance Italian and 19th century British—and then on to the funicular station. A scenic ride on the funicular takes you to the mountain village of Brunate, situated above century-old olive groves.

As you amble along your footpath, you pass through a grouping of beautiful private villas dating to the end of the 19th century. From this panoramic lookout, you are treated to an astonishing view of the lakes below, and on a clear day, across to Switzerland and the neighboring mountains.

You return along the same path to Brunate and the funicular. Descending to Como, it's your choice to explore its fantastic architectural and artistic tradition, or perhaps search the local shops for shirts and scarves made of the famous Como silk. For lunch, you can sample delicious salami and cheese, prosciutto, olives and fresh bread, complimented by beautiful views of the lake. Back in Bellagio mid-afternoon, it's your option to relax in town or join your guide for a scenic walk of under an hour to the fisherman's village of Pescallo on the lakeshore. This evening you join your local friends at a dinner arranged on an enchanting private terrace with breathtaking views of the lake and mountains.

Overnight: Bellagio

Meals: B, D

DAY 4

LAKE LUGANO

- Follow the lakeside past wildflowers to several charming villages
- Linger over lunch in a rustic *osteria*
- Arrive at your home in Stresa

Beautiful Mount Bre is perched above Lake Lugano in Ticino, the Italian speaking area of Switzerland. This morning begins with a walk of discovery—a privately guided stroll through the cobbled streets and pastel-colored neoclassical palazzi. The highlight is a visit to the most famous ornate church in Lugano, *Santa Maria degli Angeli*. Here, there is a chance to view great work created by Bernardino Luini.

After, you start a scenic lakeside walk that offers a profusion of color from March to October from the quaint village of Castagnola. As the season progresses, narcissuses and May-lilies give way to azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias, then finally roses, oleanders and hydrangeas. You finish your walk in Gandria, a charming lakeside town and historic fishing village. This afternoon, cross back over the border into Italy and continue to Stresa on Lake Maggiore. In town this evening, you enjoy dinner in a fine local trattoria.

Overnight: Stresa

Meals: B, D

DAY 5

LAKE ORTA / SAN GIULIO

- Visit with a cheese-maker and try their local specialties
- Boat to San Giulio and its 1000 year-old basilica
- Soak up stunning views on a private speedboat ride on Lake Orta

Leaving lovely Lake Maggiore this morning, you ascend into the mountains where you stop for a visit with a local cheese-maker. Here you have the opportunity to try the local specialty, La Toma del Mottarone ("mountain", or "country cheese"), and to see the process of cheese making. With your appetite satiated and your senses peaked, take a short drive to the quaint village of Orta San Giulio, one of the most picturesque corners of Italy. With your guide and fellow guests, you follow the narrow, cobbled streets through Orta as they wind up and past colorful houses with ornate balconies to Sacro Monte - a collection of chapels dedicated to Italy's patron saint, St. Francis Assisi, set in a beautiful park.

In the afternoon, you travel to the islet of San Giulio by motor launch for a visit to its 1000-year-old basilica and exploration around the charming island. Continue on a beautiful walk with stunning views of the lake around the promontory of Orta San Giulio, or if you are up for a more challenging walk, embark with your guide on a longer hike through mountain villages and hamlets.

Back on the mainland, enjoy a relaxing lunch at a quaint trattoria. Later, soak up more spectacular views on a private speedboat ride. Or if you'd prefer, take some time to explore Orta, filled with great shopping and delicious treats, including locally made organic gelato. Later, you return to the hotel with some time to rest. Enjoy dinner at one of the charming local restaurants, relax with a glass of local white wine in the hotel garden, or take a dip in the pool. Following dinner, you may want to enjoy a *passeggiata* (or "evening stroll") along the lake.

Overnight: Stresa

Meals: B, L

DAY 6

BORROMEAN ISLANDS

- Wander in the baroque gardens of Isola Bella
- Walk through mountain villages and hamlets
- Explore Stresa

This morning you board a private boat for a ride out to Isola Bella ("beautiful island"). It's one of the Borromean Islands where one of Italy's wealthiest families built a series of palaces and gardens in the 17th century. After lunch, join your guide at Palazzo Borromeo, set amid perfectly preserved baroque gardens.

This afternoon, take a short drive to Mount Mottarone, which separates Lake Orta from Lake Maggiore. From the village of Levo, you follow a scenic downhill path through small villages and woods full of birch, lime and hazelnut trees. Along the way, you see Someraro, a village that clings like a balcony overlooking the lake. Return to Stresa on foot for some shopping, exploring independently or just relaxing at the hotel garden and pool before dinner.

Overnight: Stresa

Meals: B, D

DAY 7

LAKE MAGGIORE / MILAN

- Enjoy a morning at leisure in Stresa
- Transfer back to Milan seamlessly

Sleep in. Or use the time this morning to stroll through Stresa's historic center. Enjoy some time on your own to relax and discover last minute keepsakes before you continue on to Milan where you part company at Milano Centrale Train Station in the early afternoon.

Meals: B



Tour Hotels



Belvedere Bellagio Hotel

A lovely lakeside hotel that has been owned and operated by the Martinelli Manoni family since 1880. Then, it was known as 'La Vignetta', because of the grape vines that surrounded it and the incredible views of the water and mountains.

OVERNIGHT: Bellagio | **NIGHTS:** 3



Grand Hotel Des Iles Borromees

Built in 1863, Grand Hotel des Iles Borromées overlooking Lago Maggiore is rich in history and traditions, while still boasting modern comforts and the latest facilities.

OVERNIGHT: Stresa | **NIGHTS:** 3

Tour Dates & Prices

To see the full list of dates and prices for this tour, go to our website by clicking [here](#).

Want to travel with just your group on a date of your choosing? Visit [CLASSICJOURNEYS.COM/PRIVATE](https://www.classicjourneys.com/private) to learn more about Private Journeys.

Trip Essentials

TRIP LENGTH	7 Days, 6 Nights
START	Lobby of Hotel De La Ville, Milan, Italy
END	Milan Central Train Station, Milan, Italy
TERRAIN	Moderate on good valley, mountain and lakeside trails, utilizing cable cars and boats as backup support. Vans are used on the days we transfer between lakeside locations. At your option, 2 to 4 hours of walking per day.

What's Included

- Award-winning boutique hotels that provide you unlimited access to the people and places, culture and history you came to experience
- All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 4 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

- Privileged Access Events
- Perfect Pairings Dinners
- Wine on Us
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ENJOY THE UNEXPECTED

When you travel with Classic Journeys, you can expect handcrafted surprises built into every trip, but some things just can't be anticipated. Unusual weather, a once-a-year festival or an unscheduled site closing will inspire us and your local guide to improvise and modify this itinerary. Likewise, the hotels named here are used on the majority of our trips, but occasionally one of them can't accommodate us. If that happens, you can count on us to let you know before departure and make sure you're in a hotel of equal or better quality. It's our goal to make your trip exceptional!

**Any discount offered cannot be combined with other offers, and only applies to published (regularly scheduled public) departure dates in our catalogs or on our website.

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At the end of the day, we fundamentally believe that every guest on every departure of every trip should have a trip of a lifetime. We're fortunate to play the role of well-connected friend, linking our guests with amazing guides, artisans, winemakers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, naturalists, and too many others to list here.

That's what motivates me and our team — in our La Jolla HQ and around the world — every day. Join Us!

Samuel
President & Founder



You can expect the highest standards:



Luxurious Lodgings:

Ours include coveted properties that appear in "World's Best" and "Gold List" rankings.



Included Activities:

You'll never be surprised with add-on fees on your activities that include snorkeling to cooking lessons.



Local Guides:

Your guides are locals who are always at your side like well-connected friends.



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With an average of just 10-12 guests, it's a small footprint that guarantees you access that's off-limits to larger groups.



Amazing Cuisine:

From Michelin-starred restaurants to lunch in a farmhouse kitchen, you'll have a seat for the region's signature dishes.



Unmatched Value:

"Excellent value" and "unbeatable access" are two of the reasons that Travel + Leisure has consistently voted us a World's Best Tour Operator.

You'll enjoy these handcrafted travel experiences in Italian Lakes...

- Personal guided visits to a 1000-year-old basilica and the chapels of Sacro Monte
- Meeting a local cheesemaker and sampling his specialties
- Walking scenic paths through alpine meadows, extravagant villa gardens and mountain villages
- Relaxing over three nights at the 5-star Grand Hotel des Iles Borromees in Stresa on Lake Maggiore
- Getting the inside scoop from local guides who are happiest when they get you away from the beaten path and into the countryside they love

"The walks were just right. I really appreciate a trip that doesn't cater to extreme athletes; the walks provided a perfect amount of exercise."

-Barbara K., Memphis, TN.