

Lake Como

Lombardy · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Lake Como is a narrow, Y-shaped lake in the Italian Alps, ringed by grand villas, terraced gardens, and pastel-colored villages. Steep green mountains rise straight from the water, and small ferries connect the shoreline towns faster than any road can. Wealthy visitors have come here since Roman times, and the grand villas built for European nobility from the 1600s onward still line the shore today.

The lake suits travelers who want a slower, scenic trip: touring historic gardens, riding a ferry between towns, and eating lunch on a terrace with a mountain view. It suits couples, garden lovers, and anyone who prefers small towns to big cities, since the sights here are spread across several villages rather than concentrated in one place. Como, the largest town on the lake, was the birthplace of the physicist *Alessandro Volta*, who invented the battery; the volt, the unit of electrical potential, is named after him.

When to visit

Spring and autumn are mild and are the best times to visit, with thinner crowds than summer. Summer is warm and humid, and the lake gets busy with visitors, especially on weekends. Winter is cold and quiet, and many villa gardens and some hotels close for the season.

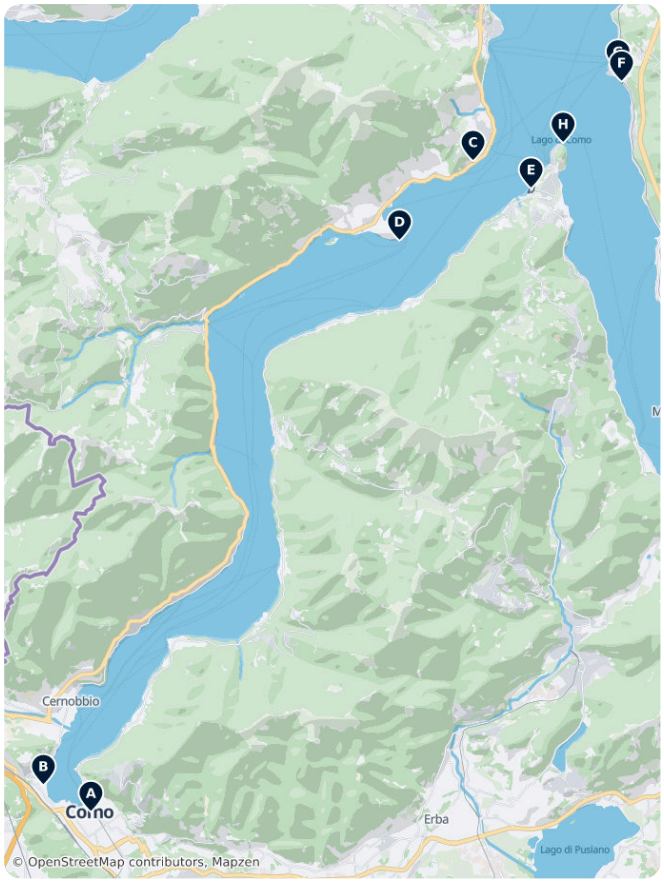
Time a spring visit around the Concorso d'Eleganza, a celebrated classic car and motorcycle show held every May at Villa d'Este in Cernobbio, when collectors bring rare cars from across the world.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for watersports	7° / 12° Feels like 4°	0° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Fair Fair for hiking	9° / 16° Feels like 6°	2° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for hiking	14° / 20°	5° / -1°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for hiking	17° / 23°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Good Good for sightseeing	22° / 27°	14° / 8°	17 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	26° / 31°	18° / 12°	15 rainy days · Humid air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	28° / 32°	20° / 14°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for watersports	27° / 32°	20° / 14°	Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 28°	15° / 9°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 24°	11° / 6°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for hiking	13° / 19°	6° / -1°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Poor Poor for hiking	8° / 13° Feels like 5°	2° / -7°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



A Duomo di Como is Como's marble-fronted cathedral, built over several centuries and topped with a Baroque dome that is visible from across the lake.

Facing the water nearby, B Villa Olmo is a neoclassical villa with formal gardens open to the public, built in the late 18th century for the noble Odescalchi family.

C Villa Carlotta in Tremezzina is famous for its terraced gardens, which bloom with azaleas and rhododendrons every spring.

D Villa del Balbianello, on a wooded point near Lenno, has appeared in several films for its dramatic setting above the water. The gardens can be visited on your own, though seeing the villa's interior requires a guided tour.

In Bellagio, E Villa Melzi d'Eril has one of the first English-style gardens built on the shore of the lake, planted with camellias and exotic species.

F Villa Monastero in Varenna sits directly on the shore, and its lakefront terrace and botanical garden are open to visitors.

Above Varenna, G Castello di Vezio is a medieval hilltop fortress with wide views over the lake, reached by a short, steep walk.

Overlooking Bellagio, H Punta di Spartivento sits where the lake divides into its southern and eastern arms, and is one of the most photographed spots on Lake Como.

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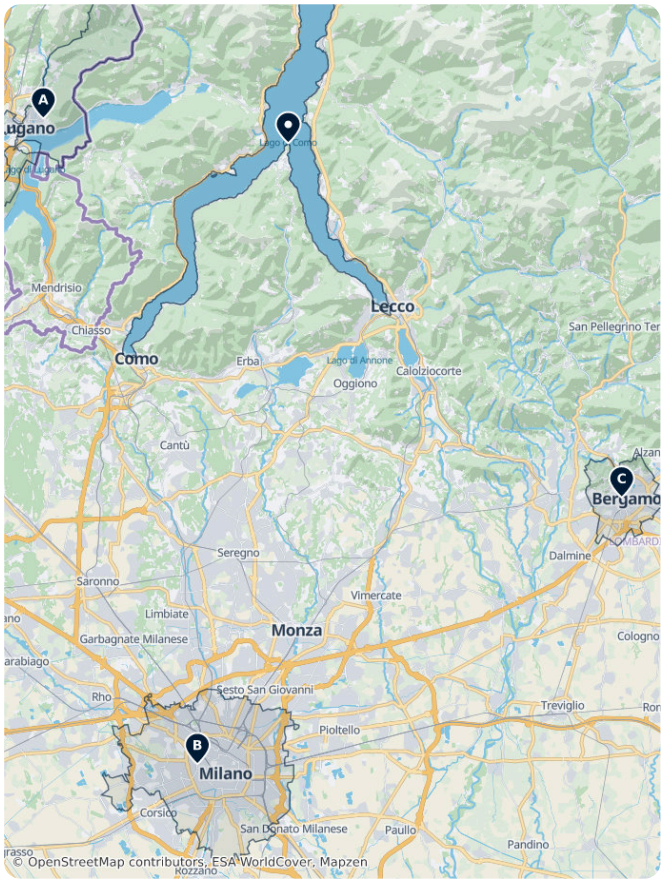
What to experience

- Ride the more than 100-year-old funicular from Como up to Brunate, a hilltop village with a panoramic view over the whole lake.
- Hop a passenger ferry just to cross the lake and back, standing on deck for the view of the villas and mountains from the water.
- Walk the wooden catwalks through the Orrido di Bellano, a narrow gorge where a mountain stream crashes past just below your feet.
- Take a small boat from Tremezzina out to the ruins and church on Isola Comacina, the lake's only island.
- In summer, rent a small motorboat that needs no license to explore the shoreline at your own pace.
- Walk a stretch of the Greenway del Lago di Como, an easy waymarked path linking villages along the western shore, with views across to Bellagio the whole way.

Day trips

Lake Como sits close to some of northern Italy's biggest draws, and right on the border with Switzerland.

- A Lugano, Switzerland: under an hour by car, bus, or train. A lakeside city with its own promenade and a car-free old town; bring a passport or ID card for the border crossing.
- B Milan: about 40 minutes by train from Como. Italy's fashion and design capital, with its own cathedral, the La Scala opera house, and major shopping streets.
- C Bergamo: about 1.5 hours by car, or around 2 hours by train with a change in Milan. A walled hilltop old town, Città Alta, reached by funicular, with narrow lanes and wide views over the plain below.
- The Valtellina wine valley: about 1.5 to 2 hours by car, northeast of the lake. Known for its terraced vineyards and Nebbiolo-based red wines.



Where to explore

The lake's towns each have a different character, and passenger ferries make it easy to visit several in one day.

- Como, at the southern tip, is the largest town on the lake and the easiest to reach by train, with a walkable historic center.
- Bellagio, on the point where the lake divides into two arms, is the most visited village, known for its steep, arcaded stairways and lakefront promenade.
- Varenna, on the eastern shore, is a quieter fishing village with colorful houses built directly into the cliffside.
- Menaggio, on the western shore, is a good base for hiking and water sports, and sits close to the Swiss border.
- Tremezzina groups several small villages, including Lenno and Tremezzo, known for their historic villas and gardens.
- Cernobbio, just north of Como, is known for its luxury lakefront hotels.
- Lecco, at the tip of the lake's eastern branch, sits beneath dramatic limestone peaks and has a livelier, less touristy feel.
- Laglio, a small village on the western shore, is known for a lakefront villa owned by the American actor George Clooney.

Getting there

- **By air**: The main gateway is Milan, served by Malpensa (MXP) and Linate (LIN) airports, plus Bergamo's Orio al Serio (BGY) airport for low-cost carriers. From Malpensa, the fastest route is the Malpensa Express to Saronno with a change to a regional train to Como, about 1 hour total; a taxi or private transfer also takes about 1 hour direct to the lake.
- **By train**: Regular trains run from Milano Centrale to Como San Giovanni, about 40 minutes, and to Lecco, about 50 minutes, both on the lake. Trains also connect from Lugano in Switzerland.
- **By car**: The A9 motorway links Milan and the Swiss border directly to Como. Expect tolls and, in summer, slow traffic on the narrow roads that circle the lake.

Getting around

- **Ferries**: Passenger ferries run by Navigazione Laghi connect every town on the lake and are the fastest way to get around, especially between Bellagio, Varenna, and Menaggio. Buy tickets at the pier ticket office or the operator's official site; a one- or multi-day pass pays off if you plan to hop between several towns. Navigazione Laghi
- **Bus**: Regional buses circle the lakeshore roads and reach villages the ferry does not, but are slower than boats between the main towns.
- **Taxi boats**: Private water taxis are available in Bellagio, Como, and Varenna for a faster, more direct crossing, at a higher price than the scheduled ferry.
- **On foot**: Each lakeside village is small and easy to explore on foot, but the roads connecting them are narrow, hilly, and not built for walking between towns.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Each lakeside village is compact and easy to explore on foot, but the roads connecting them are narrow and hilly, so getting between towns usually means a ferry, bus, or car rather than a walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling is possible but the lakeshore road is narrow, winding, and shared with motor traffic, so it suits confident cyclists more than casual riders.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: A car helps for reaching smaller villages and hillside sights, but is not needed if you are staying in one or two lakeside towns and using the ferries. Traffic on the single road that circles the lake is slow, especially on summer weekends.
- **Parking**: Central Bellagio, Varenna, and Como have limited parking; most visitors park at a paid lot on the edge of town and walk in, or arrive by train or ferry instead.
- **Restrictions**: Some village centers restrict cars to residents during peak season; watch for local signs rather than assuming free access.

Food & drink

Lake fish shows up on most menus here: look for risotto with perch (persico) or whitefish (lavarello), and missoltino, a traditional sun-dried, salted shad that has been a Lake Como specialty for centuries. Polenta, often paired with local game or cheese, is another mountain-influenced staple.

For a meal with a view, look for restaurants along the lakefront promenades in Bellagio and Varenna, where terraces face the water. Dining customs follow the rest of Italy: a cover charge (coperto) is normal and tipping is not expected.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Lake Como is very safe for tourists. The main risks are practical rather than criminal: pickpocketing on crowded ferries and at busy piers in high season, and slippery cobbled lanes in villages like Bellagio and Varenna. If you swim in the lake, stay close to shore in signed swimming areas; currents and boat traffic can be a hazard further out. The narrow, winding roads around the lake also see far more cyclists, scooters, and pedestrians than a typical highway, so drive cautiously.

History

Como was founded as a Roman colony, and Roman-era remains, including the Terme Romane, can still be seen in the old town, which still follows its Roman street grid inside the walls. Parts of the medieval walls survive too, including Porta Torre and the hilltop fortress of Castello del Baradello.

From the 1600s onward, and especially during the 18th and 19th century Grand Tour era, wealthy European families built the lakeside villas that still define the shoreline today. The physicist *Alessandro Volta*, born in Como in 1745, invented the first electric battery. Tempio Voltiano, shaped like a small Roman temple, was built in his honor and displays his instruments. A monument to Volta, Alessandro Volta (monument), stands near the lakefront.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



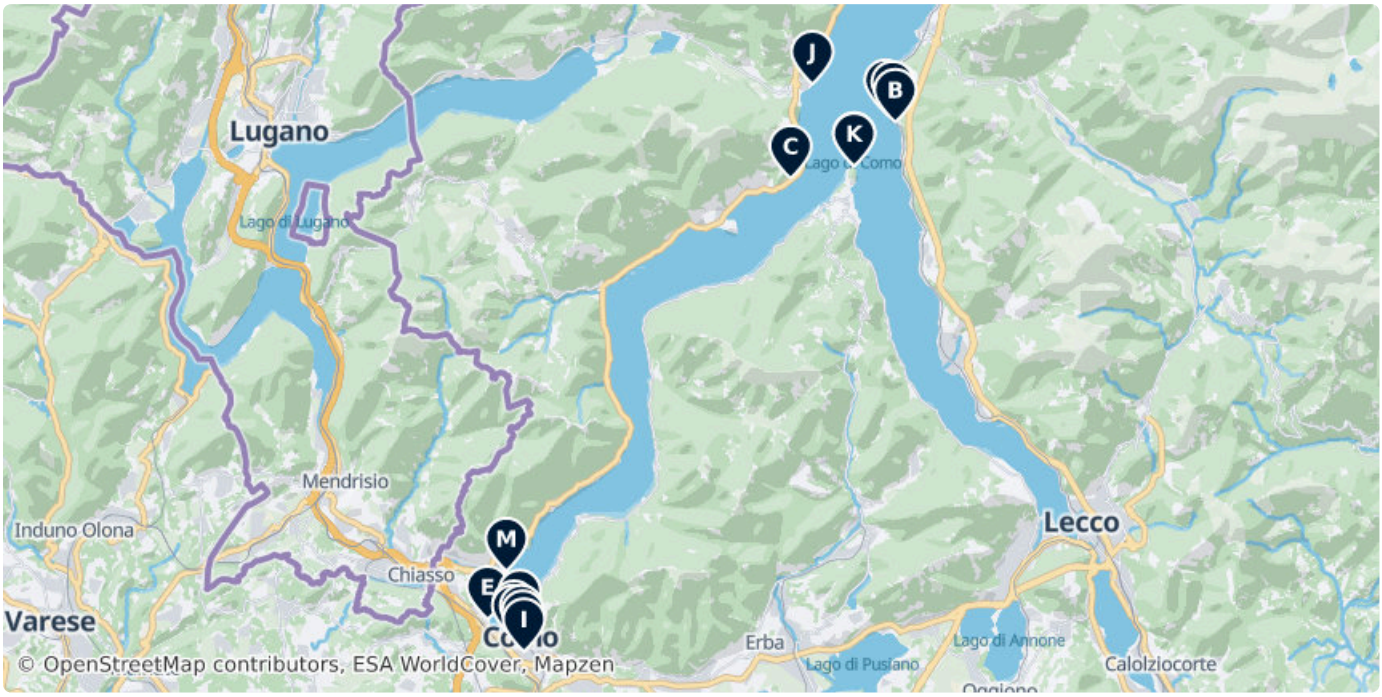
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Lake Como's Absolute Essentials

This selection spans the shores of Lake Como, featuring neoclassical landmarks like Villa Olmo and the expansive botanical gardens of Villa Carlotta and Villa Monastero. Architectural highlights include the Gothic-Renaissance Como Cathedral and the Romanesque Basilica of San Fedele. The list covers essential transport hubs like the Como-Brunate Funicular and the central ferry terminals, alongside historical monuments dedicated to local figures like Alessandro Volta and the silk weavers of Menaggio. Medieval heritage is represented by Vezio Castle and the 12th-century Porta Torre city gate.





A Cathedral of Como

Como Cathedral is the Catholic cathedral of the city of Como, Lombardy, Italy, and the seat of the Bishop of Como.

Piazza Duomo, 6, 22100 Como, Italy (45.81178, 9.08368)

Mo–Sa	10:30–17:00
Su	13:00–16:30

cattedraledicomo.it/index.php/it/, +39 031 3312275



B Villa Monastero

Villa Monastero is located in Varenna, Province of Lecco, on the shore of Lake Como.

Viale Giovanni Polvani 4, 23829 Varenna (46.00769, 9.28803)

villamonastero.eu, +390341295450



C Villa Carlotta

Villa Carlotta is a villa and botanical garden in Tremezzo on Lake Como in Northern Italy.

Strada statale 340 Regina 5605, 22019 Tremezzina, IT (45.98640, 9.23084)

Mar 22-Sep 29 Mo–Su	09:00–19:30
Sep 30-Oct 27 Mo–Su	09:00–18:30
Oct 28-Nov 03 Mo–Su	10:00–17:00

villacarlotta.it, +39 0344 40405



D Como-Brunate Funicular

A cable railway opened in 1894 that connects the city of Como to the hilltop village of Brunate, reaching an elevation of approximately 700 meters.

4 Piazza Alcide De Gasperi, Como 22100, Italy (45.81755, 9.08286)

funicolarecomo.it



E Villa Olmo

Villa Olmo is a neoclassical villa located in the city of Como, northern Italy.

Via Simone Cantoni, 1, 22100 Como, Italy (45.81898, 9.06537)

Tu–Su	10:00–18:00

+39 31 571979



F Basilica of San Fedele

The Basilica of San Fedele in Como is located in the city center. The present Romanesque church dates from 1120 and is dedicated to the...

Piazza S. Fedele, 22100 Como, Italy (45.80969, 9.08459)

parrocchiasanfedelecomo.it/comosanfedele/



G Monument of Alessandro Volta

A 19th-century bronze statue by Pompeo Marchesi honoring the Como-born physicist who invented the electric battery.

Piazza Alessandro Volta, 22100 Como, Italy (45.81179, 9.07930)

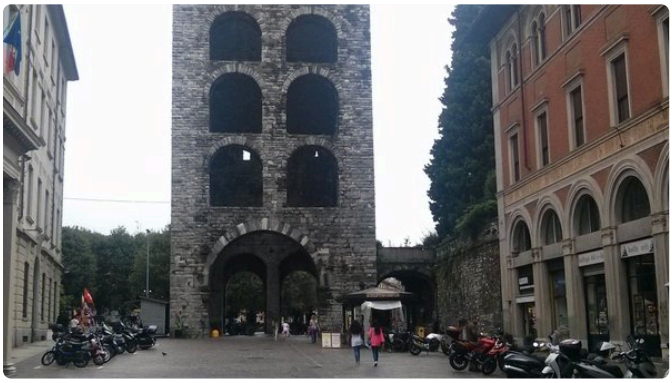


H Vezio Castle

Castello di Vezio is a castle located nearby Varenna and Perledo, northern Italy.

Castle of Vezio, Perledo, Lombardy 23828, Italy (46.01067, 9.28666)

castellodivezio.it, +393334485975



I Porta Torre

The Basilica of Sant'Abbondio is a Romanesque-style 11th-century Catholic basilica church located in Como, region of Lombardy, Italy.

Via Cesare Cantù, 22100 Como, Italy (45.80666, 9.08520)



J Monumento alla Tessitrice

Located in Menaggio, this sculpture commemorates the local women who worked in the lake region's historic silk and textile industry.

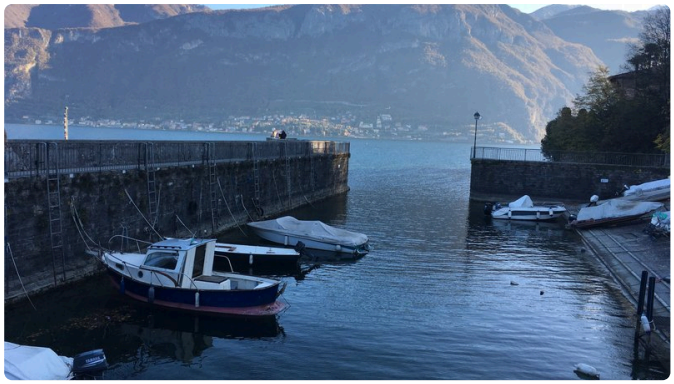
13 Via Stoppani, Menaggio 22017, Italy (46.02214, 9.24270)



K Bellagio Porto turistico

A marina and docking area for private vessels and water taxis, located on the western side of the Bellagio peninsula.

28c Via Enrico Vitali, 22021, Italy (45.99109, 9.26557)



L Punta di Spartivento

A scenic viewpoint at the northern tip of Bellagio where the lake branches into three directions: toward Como, Lecco, and Colico.

28c Via Enrico Vitali, 22021, Italy (45.99128, 9.26553)



M Villa Erba

Villa Erba is a 19th-century villa in Cernobbio, on the western shore of Lake Como in northern Italy.

Largo Luchino Visconti, 4, 22012 Cernobbio, Italy (45.83727, 9.07557)

lakecomotravel.com/villa-erba-lake-como/



N Varenna

The main ferry terminal in Varenna, serving as a primary link for the 'Mid-Lake' ferry circuit between Bellagio, Menaggio, and Cadenabbia.

1 Contrada del Porto, Varenna 23829, Italy (46.01128, 9.28271)



Como

The principal ferry terminal in the city of Como, providing high-speed hydrofoil and slow-boat connections to towns along the western shore.

9 Lungo Lario Trento, Como 22100, Italy
(45.81348, 9.07976)

Historic Religious Sites

This collection spans the Italian-Swiss border, showcasing architectural evolution from the 5th-century Baptistery of St. John in Riva San Vitale to the grand Gothic-Renaissance Cathedral of Como. The list features significant Romanesque structures like the Basilicas of San Fedele and Sant'Abbondio, the 10th-century Tempietto di San Fedelino, and various lakeside chapels. These sites preserve medieval frescoes, historic bell towers, and unique religious heritage across the Lombardy and Ticino regions.





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Piazza S. Fedele, 22100 Como, Italy (45.80969, 9.08459)

parrocchiasanfedelecomo.it/comosanfedele/



C Church of Sant'Abbondio

The Basilica of Sant'Abbondio is a Romanesque-style 11th-century Catholic basilica church located in Como, region of Lombardy, Italy.

Via Regina Teodolinda, 35, Como, Italy (45.80244, 9.08055)

diocesidicomo.it



D Chiesa parrocchiale di San Giorgio

A 13th-century parish church located in the central square of Varenna, featuring medieval frescoes and a pavement made of local black marble.

23 Piazza Venini, Varenna 23829, Italy (46.01009, 9.28417)

chieseitaliane.chiesacattolica.it/chieseita..., +390341830228



E Basilica of San Nicolò

The Basilica of San Nicolò is the main place of Catholic worship in Lecco.

Via Salvatore Sassi, 6, 23900 Lecco, Italy (45.85667, 9.38898)



F Chiesa di Sant'Andrea Apostolo

Located in the hilltop village of Brunate, this church is known for its Baroque-style interior and its position overlooking Lake Como.

Piazza della Chiesa, 22034 Brunate CO, Italy (45.81998, 9.09611)

G Chiesa di Santa Marta

A small historic church located in the center of Varenna, situated near the larger parish church of San Giorgio.

5 Piazza Venini, Varenna 23829, Italy (46.00977, 9.28433)

lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/1n080-000...



H Chiesa di Santa Tecla

A Romanesque-style church situated on the lakeside in Torno, featuring a notable portal and a bell tower that characterizes the village waterfront.

Via Plinio, 22020 Torno CO, Italy (45.85692, 9.11351)

lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/CO180-001...



I Tempietto di San Fedelino sul Lago Mezzola

The Tempietto di San Fedelino', also known as the Oratorio di San Fedele, is a 10th to 11th-century small, Roman Catholic sanctuary or...

22010, Italy (46.21476, 9.43965)

Sa–Su 11:00–12:00, 14:30–16:30

+393392908864



J Santuario di San Girolamo Emiliani

A monastery church and sanctuary in Somasca dedicated to the founder of the Somascan Fathers, forming part of a larger devotional complex.

(45.81116, 9.42931)

somascos.org/somasca/, +39 0341 420272



K Baptistery of St. John

The oldest Christian building in Switzerland. Baptism here was performed by dipping in a large basin with diameter of 1.9 metres.

5 Via dell'Inglese, Riva San Vitale 6826, Switzerland
(45.90456, 8.97092)



L Chiesa del Redentore

The primary Catholic place of worship in Cernobbio, featuring a 20th-century facade and serving as a central landmark for the lakeside town.

1 Piazza Don Marmori, Cernobbio 22012, Italy
(45.84168, 9.07567)

lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/CO260-002...



M Chiesa di San Pietro

Known as the "Red Church" due to its distinctive exterior color, this religious building is located in Castel San Pietro within the Swiss Canton of Ticino.

6874, Switzerland (45.85872, 9.01369)

parrocchiacastello.ch/Chiese/Pietro.html



N Santuario Santa Maria dei Miracoli

A Renaissance-style sanctuary in the Swiss Canton of Ticino, built in the 16th century following a reported Marian apparition.

7 Salita alla Basilica, Morbio Inferiore 6834, Switzerland
(45.85369, 9.01474)



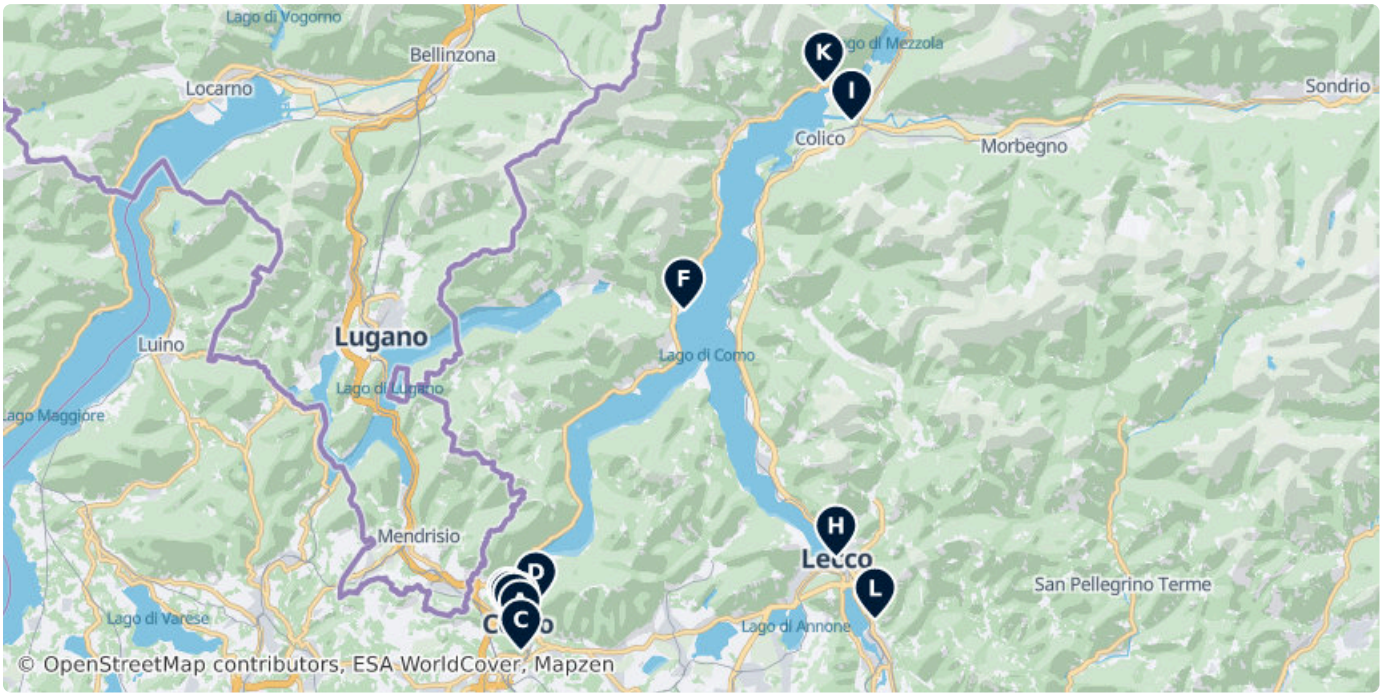
Basilica di San Vincenzo

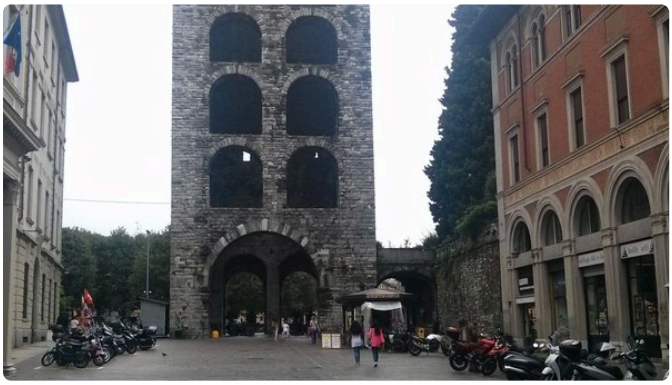
The Basilica di San Vincenzo is a church in Galliano, a frazione of Cantù, in Lombardy, northern Italy.

7 Via San Vincenzo, Cantù 22063, Italy (45.74162, 9.13853)

Historic Fortifications and Monuments

This collection highlights the defensive history and commemorative landmarks around Lake Como. It includes the 12th-century Castello Baradello and the ruins of Fort Fuentes, representing centuries of military architecture. Civic history is reflected in the medieval Broletto and the 13th-century Rocca di Somasca. The list also features significant monuments like the 30-meter-high Futurist war memorial and the Faro Voltiano lighthouse. These structures span from medieval fortifications to 20th-century tributes, offering insight into the region's strategic and cultural past.





A Porta Torre

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Via Cesare Cantù, 22100 Como, Italy (45.80666, 9.08520)



B Monument of Alessandro Volta

Bronze statue by Pompeo Marchesi inaugurated in 1838 to honor the physicist and inventor of the electric battery.

Piazza Alessandro Volta, 22100 Como, Italy (45.81179, 9.07930)



C Castello Baradello

The Castello Baradello is a military fortification located on a 430 m high hill next to the city of Como, northern Italy.

22100, Italy (45.79416, 9.08609)



D Faro Voltiano (Volta Lighthouse)

Octagonal 29-meter lighthouse built in 1927 in Brunate to commemorate the centenary of Alessandro Volta's death.

Via Giacomo Scalini, 22034 Brunate CO, Italy (45.82608, 9.10045)

lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture/schede/CO250-007...



E Monumento alla resistenza europea

Memorial featuring bronze panels inscribed with excerpts from the final letters of condemned European resistance fighters.

(Unnamed Road), Como 22100, Italy (45.81360, 9.07612)



F Monumento alla Tessitrice

Bronze sculpture depicting a woman at a loom, dedicated to the region's traditional silk weaving industry.

13 Via Stoppani, Menaggio 22017, Italy (46.02214, 9.24270)



G Broletto

Medieval town hall dating to 1215, featuring a Gothic-Romanesque facade with polychrome marble and an open ground-floor loggia.

15 Piazza Guido Grimoldi, Como 22100, Italy (45.81187, 9.08303)



H Torre di San Nicolò

96-meter neo-Gothic bell tower of the Basilica of San Nicolò, one of the tallest campaniles in Italy.

16 Via Giuseppe Parini, Lecco 23900, Italy (45.85697, 9.38908)

campaniledilecco.it



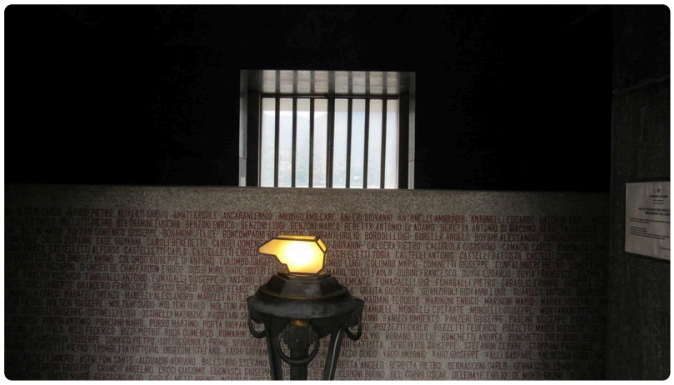
I Fort Fuentes

Fort Fuentes, Italian: Forte di Fuentes, is a former military fort on the hill of Montecchio or Monteggiolo near Colico, in the province of...

23823, Italy (46.14760, 9.40412)

Sa–Su 10:00–18:00

fortedifuentes.it, +390341940322



J Monumento ai Caduti delle Guerre

Futurist-style 30-meter tower designed by Giuseppe Terragni in 1933 to commemorate soldiers who died in World War I.

Via Giancarlo Puecher, Como 22100, Italy (45.81488, 9.07357)



K Villa Giulini

17th-century noble residence in Sorico featuring late-Baroque architectural elements.

Quinta Traversa Via Vittorio Emanuele, Sorico 22010, Italy (46.17311, 9.37731)



L Rocca di Somasca

13th-century fortification ruins overlooking Vercurago, historically associated with Alessandro Manzoni's literary figure, the Unnamed.

Via alla Valletta, 23808, Italy (45.81519, 9.42657)

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