

Lake Garda

Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Lake Garda is the largest lake in Italy, held between the southern Alps and the plain of the Po. Its two halves feel like different places. The north is narrow and steep-sided, with rock walls dropping straight into the water and roads that run through tunnels. The south is wide and open, with low hills, olive groves and long pebble beaches. Three regions meet on its shores: Lombardy to the west, Veneto to the east and Trentino to the north.

The lake works best as a trip built around several towns rather than one base. Families come for the theme parks and shallow beaches in the south. Sailors and windsurfers come north for the winds that blow almost every day in summer. Walkers head up Monte Baldo, and wine travellers stay in the hills behind the eastern shore. The writer *Gabriele d'Annunzio* spent his last years above the western shore, and the Roman poet *Catullus* wrote about Sirmione two thousand years ago.

When to visit

Spring and early autumn are the best times to come. The weather is mild, the gardens are open, and the roads and beaches are far quieter than in midsummer. July and August are hot and crowded, especially at weekends. Many hotels and gardens close from November to March, and the boat timetable shrinks to a minimum, so winter is a poor time for a first visit.

If you can choose, aim for the first half of October and the Festa dell'Uva e del Vino in Bardolino. The lakefront fills with stalls pouring the local wines, and the weather is usually still warm enough to sit outside.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for watersports	8° / 13° Feels like 5°	1° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for cycling	10° / 16° Feels like 7°	3° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for cycling	14° / 20° Feels like 11°	5° / 0°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for hiking	18° / 24°	9° / 4°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	14° / 10°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for watersports	28° / 35°	19° / 14°	Humid air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for watersports	31° / 36°	21° / 16°	Humid air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for watersports	31° / 37°	21° / 16°	Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	16° / 11°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	12° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for cycling	14° / 18°	7° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for cycling	9° / 13° Feels like 6°	3° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, September, October

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

Top sights

A Rocca Scaligera stands at the entrance to Sirmione's old town, surrounded by a moat and reached over a drawbridge. It is one of the few castles in Italy with its own fortified harbour, built by the Scaliger lords of Verona in the 13th century.

At the tip of the same peninsula, **B** Grotte di Catullo is the ruin of a large Roman villa, set among olive trees several centuries old. The name honours a local tradition; the villa was actually built after the poet's death.

C Il Vittoriale degli Italiani above Gardone Riviera was the home of the poet and soldier *Gabriele d'Annunzio*. He filled the house with objects from his life and had the prow of a warship built into the hillside garden. Allow at least half a day.

D Castello Scaligero rises on a rock over Malcesine's harbour on the eastern shore. The German writer *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* was briefly arrested here as a suspected spy while sketching the walls in 1786.

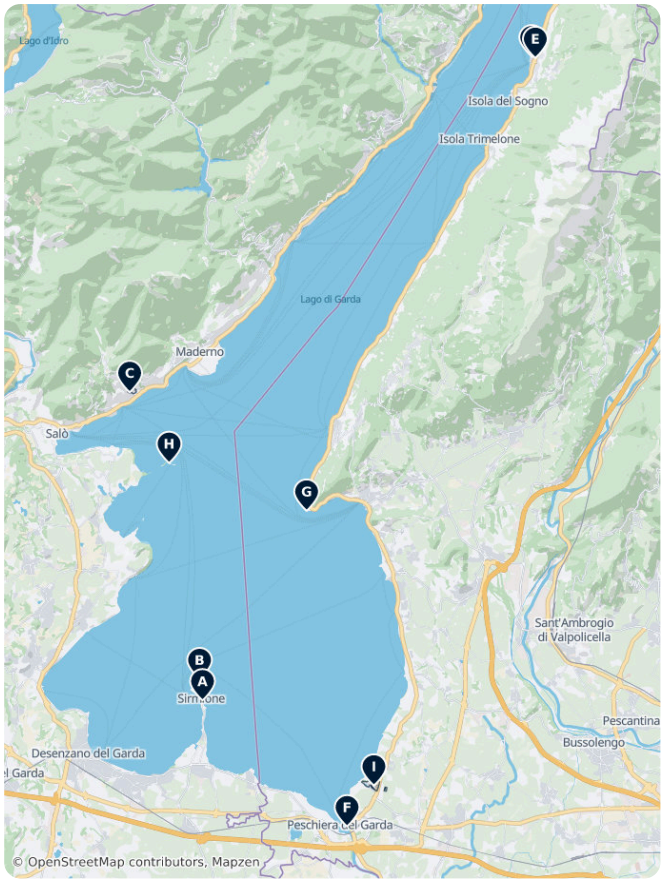
From the same town, **E** Funivia Monte Baldo carries you to the ridge of Monte Baldo in about 20 minutes, with a change of cabin halfway up. The upper cabin turns slowly as it climbs, so everyone gets the view down the length of the lake.

F Peschiera del Garda Fortress wraps the old town of Peschiera in a pentagon of Venetian walls and water. It was listed by UNESCO in 2017 as part of a group of Venetian defensive works.

G Punta San Vigilio is a small wooded headland north of Garda town. An avenue of cypresses leads down to a tiny stone harbour. The bay next to it, Baia delle Sirene, is one of the nicest places to swim on the eastern shore.

Out in the water off San Felice del Benaco, H Isola del Garda is the lake's largest island, with a neo-Gothic villa and terraced gardens. It is private, and can only be seen on a booked guided visit that arrives by boat.

At the southern end, I Gardaland Park is the biggest theme park in Italy and the single reason many families choose Garda. Go early or late in the season if you can; queues in August are long.



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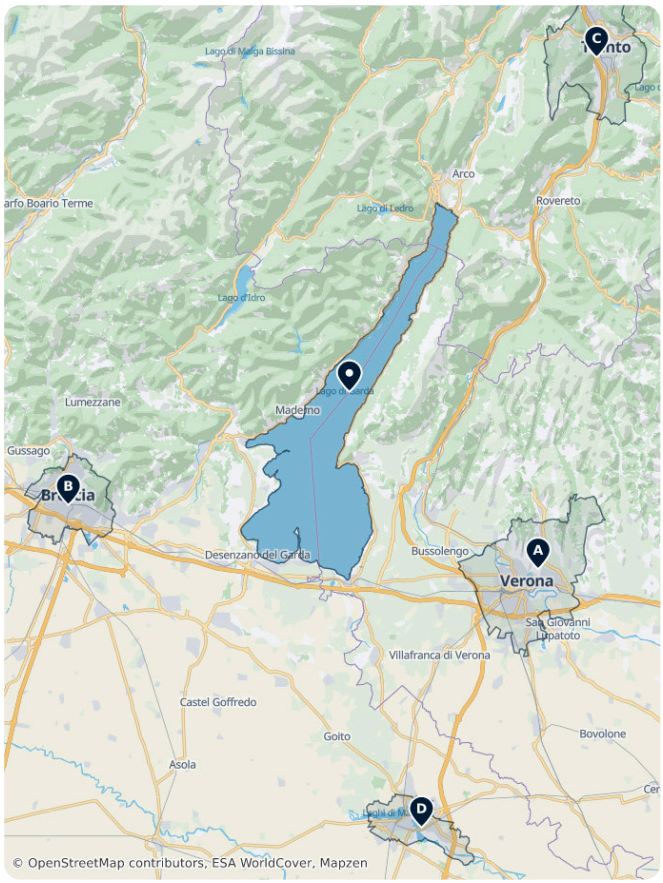
What to experience

Most of what people remember about Garda happens on or above the water.

- Sail or windsurf at Nago-Torbole in the early afternoon, when the southerly Ora wind arrives almost every summer day and fills the northern basin with sails.
- Ride the cycle path at Limone sul Garda, a walkway bolted to the rock face and hanging out over open water.
- Walk or cycle the Strada del Ponale, an old road cut into the rock face above Riva del Garda, now closed to cars and open to walkers and bikes.
- Drive the Strada della Forra above Tremosine, a narrow road that climbs through a gorge. Stop in the village at the Terrazza Panoramica / Terrazza del Brivido, a terrace built out from the cliff 350 metres above the lake.
- Paraglide from the top of Monte Baldo and land on the lakefront at Malcesine, a tandem flight of around 20 minutes.
- Take the car ferry across the lake at sunset just for the crossing, with the mountains on both sides turning pink.

Day trips

The lake sits within easy reach of several of northern Italy's best-known towns and wine regions.



- A Verona: about 20 minutes by train from Peschiera del Garda, or 40 minutes by car from the eastern shore. A Roman arena that still hosts opera in summer, plus a compact old centre on a bend of the river.
- The Valpolicella wine hills: about 40 minutes by car from the eastern shore. Terraced vineyards and cellars producing Amarone, one of Italy's strongest and most famous red wines.
- B Brescia: about 15 minutes by train from Desenzano, or 40 minutes by car. A large Roman forum, a UNESCO-listed monastery complex, and far fewer tourists than Verona.
- C Trento: about 1 hour by car from Riva del Garda. An alpine city with frescoed facades, a hilltop castle, and a modern science museum designed by *Renzo Piano*.
- D Mantua: about 1 hour by car from the southern shore. A Renaissance city ringed by three artificial lakes, with the vast Ducal Palace of the Gonzaga family.

Where to explore

Each shore has a different character, and the ferry network makes it easy to see several towns in one day.

- Sirmione, on a long thin peninsula in the south, is the busiest place on the lake, with a castle, Roman ruins and hot sulphur springs.
- Desenzano del Garda is the largest town on the lake and has its own railway station, which makes it the easiest base to reach without a car.
- Peschiera del Garda, also on the rail line, sits inside Venetian fortress walls at the point where the river Mincio leaves the lake.
- Bardolino and Garda, on the eastern shore, are the centre of the lake's wine country and have wide lakefront promenades.
- Salò has the longest promenade on the lake and a quieter, more Italian feel than the resort towns.
- Gardone Riviera was built as a winter health resort and still has grand hotels and subtropical gardens.
- Torri del Benaco is a small harbour town on the eastern shore, and the terminal for the car ferry across to the west.
- Malcesine sits under Monte Baldo and has the lake's most dramatic castle setting.
- Limone sul Garda is squeezed between cliffs and water, and is known for the stone terraces once used to grow lemons.
- Riva del Garda and Nago-Torbole, at the northern tip, are the centre for sailing, windsurfing and climbing.

Getting there

- **By air**: Verona Villafranca (VRN) is the closest airport, about 25 km from the southern shore. A shuttle bus runs to Verona Porta Nuova station in about 15 minutes, and trains from there reach Peschiera and Desenzano in 15 to 25 minutes. Bergamo Orio al Serio (BGY), Milan Malpensa (MXP) and Venice Marco Polo (VCE) all serve the lake too, with transfers of roughly 1.5 to 2.5 hours.
- **By train**: the Milan to Venice main line runs along the southern shore, with stations at Desenzano del Garda–Sirmione and Peschiera del Garda. From Verona the journey is about 15 to 20 minutes, and from Milan about 1 to 1.5 hours. There is no station at the northern end of the lake; for Riva del Garda, take the train to Rovereto and a bus from there.
- **By bus**: regional buses run from Verona up the eastern shore, from Brescia up the western shore, and from Rovereto and Trento down to the northern towns.

Getting around

- **Ferries**: scheduled boats link almost every town on the lake and are the most pleasant way to move around. Buy tickets at the ticket office on each pier; day passes for a zone or the whole lake pay off quickly. A car ferry crosses between Toscolano-Maderno and Torri del Benaco, which saves a long drive around either end. Service is much reduced outside the summer season. Navigazione Laghi
- **Bus**: three different regional operators cover the lake, one per region, so a single ticket rarely works for the whole shore. Buses are useful for towns the boats skip, but they are slow in summer traffic.
- **Taxi and water taxi**: private boat taxis operate from the main harbours and are far quicker than the road for short hops, at a much higher price.
- **On foot and by bike**: every lakeside town is small enough to walk. A shore-long cycle route, Garda by Bike, is still being built, so finished stretches are not yet joined up.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Every lakeside town is small and easy to explore on foot, but the roads between them are narrow, tunnelled and busy, so moving between towns means a boat, a bus or a car.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Cycling is popular here, and the shore-long Garda by Bike route is steadily being built, but the finished stretches are not yet joined up and the main shore roads are narrow and shared with traffic.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: yes if you want to reach the hill villages, the wine country or Monte Baldo. No if you are staying in one lakeside town and using the boats. The two shore roads are narrow, tunnelled and slow, and summer weekends can be very congested.
- **Parking**: nearly all lakefront parking is paid and marked with blue lines, typically 1.50 to 3.50 € an hour, payable at a machine or through a parking app. Larger towns have cheaper lots on the edge of the centre.
- **Restrictions**: the historic centre of Sirmione is closed to non-resident cars, so park before the castle bridge and walk in. The Strada della Forra above Tremosine is closed to campervans and to anything over 2.2 metres wide.

Food & drink

Garda cooking is lake food rather than seaside food. Look for coregone, a delicate whitefish usually grilled or baked, and dried lake sardines cured with olive oil and vinegar. Pike served with a caper and anchovy sauce is a classic of the western shore, often eaten with polenta. The hills around the lake are one of the northernmost olive-growing areas in Europe, and the local Garda DOP oil is lighter than southern Italian oil. Wine is split by shore: crisp white Lugana in the south, light red Bardolino and white Custoza on the east.

For eating, the promenades at Salò and Torri del Benaco have the best mix of view and quality, and the old harbour square in Desenzano del Garda is busy with locals in the evening. Prices on the water are noticeably higher than one street back.

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 Garda is a safe destination and violent crime against visitors is rare. The usual care applies against pickpockets on crowded ferries and in the narrow lanes of Sirmione in high season.

The real risks are on the water. Wind can rise quickly in the afternoon and the lake becomes rough within minutes, which catches out people on paddleboards and small rented boats. Check the forecast before going out, stay near the shore, and remember that the warm surface layer is thin: below roughly 10 metres the water stays cold all year. On land, the shore roads are narrow and full of tunnels, cyclists and scooters, so drive slowly. Tap water is safe to drink.

History

The Romans came here for the same reasons visitors do now. Grotte di Catullo at Sirmione was a luxury villa, and the mosaic floors of Villa romana di Desenzano del Garda survive from a country estate of the same era.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Scaliger family of Verona took the lake and built a chain of castles to hold it. Rocca Scaligera was one link in that chain, and Castello Scaligero still guards the harbour at Torri del Benaco. Venice took over in the 15th century, and later ringed Peschiera with the bastions you can still walk today.

The hills just south of the lake saw one of the bloodiest days of the 19th century. On 24 June 1859, French and Piedmontese armies fought the Austrians at Solferino and San Martino. A Swiss traveller, *Henry Dunant*, arrived after the battle and was appalled by the treatment of the wounded. He went on to found the Red Cross. The Ossario di San Martino della Battaglia holds the remains of thousands of the dead.

The lake also gave its name to the last chapter of Italian fascism. From 1943 to 1945 the German-backed Italian Social Republic was run from villas along the western shore, and is still known as the Republic of Salò.

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 Garda Essentials

Lake Garda features a diverse landscape ranging from the Roman ruins of the Grottoes of Catullus to medieval fortifications like the Scaliger castles in Sirmione and Malcesine. The region includes the cliff-side Santuario della Madonna della Corona and the Vittoriale degli italiani estate. Natural landmarks include the turquoise Lago di Tenno, the Varone waterfalls, and the expansive Parco Giardino Sigurtà. Cultural sites like the watermills of Borghetto and the private Isola del Garda complement modern attractions like Gardaland.





A Scaliger Castle

The Scaligero Castle is a fortress from the Scaliger era, access point to the historical centre of Sirmione, on Lake Garda.

Viale Guglielmo Marconi 2, 25019 Sirmione, Brescia, Italy (45.49229, 10.60853)

Mo	Closed
Tu–Sa	08:30–19:30
Su	08:30–13:30

+39 030 916468



B Grottoes of Catullus

Grottoes of Catullus is the name given to the ruins of a Roman villa built between the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the...

Via Catullo, Sirmione, Lombardy 25019, Italy (45.50133, 10.60673)

+39030916157



C Castello Scaligero

Not only does this beautiful medieval castle offer splendid scenic views, it also houses history and natural science museum.

Via Castello, Malcesine, Veneto 37018, Italy (45.76624, 10.80857)



D Santuario della Madonna della Corona

A 16th-century pilgrimage site built into a vertical cliff face on Mount Baldo, 774 meters above sea level. The sanctuary features a Gothic facade and overlooks the Adige Valley.

Località Gabbiola, 37020, Italy (45.64962, 10.85620)

madonnadellacorona.it, +39 045 7220014



E Gardaland Park

Gardaland Resort is an amusement park resort located in northeastern Italy.

Via Derna 4, 37014 Castelnuovo del Garda (45.45594, 10.71269)

gardaland.it, +39 045 6449777



F Vittoriale degli italiani

The Vittoriale degli italiani is a hillside estate in the town of Gardone Riviera overlooking Lake Garda in province of Brescia, in...

25083, Italy (45.62450, 10.56602)

vittoriale.it



G Garda Island

Isola del Garda, Isola di Garda, or Isola Borghese is the biggest island on Lake Garda.

Isola del Garda, 25010 San Felice del Benaco, Province of Brescia, Italy (45.59346, 10.58822)

isoladelgarda.com, +39 328 612 6943



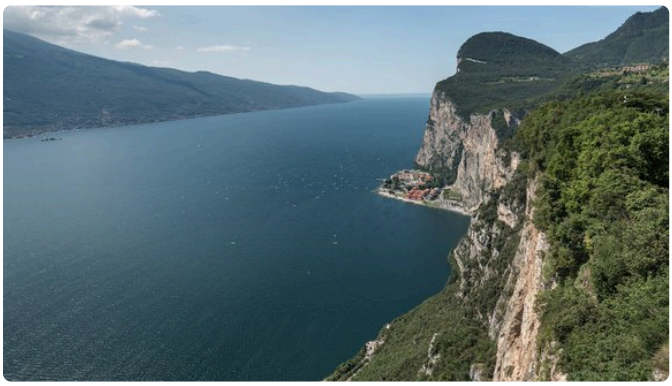
H Cascate del Varone

The Cascate del Varone are pair of waterfalls that fall into a vertical cave located 3 kilometers north-west of the northern end of Lake...

38060, Italy (45.91137, 10.83386)

Mo–Su 09:00–19:00

cascata-varone.com



I Terrazza Panoramica / Terrazza del Brivido

A viewing platform in Tremosine sul Garda suspended 350 meters above the water. It provides vertical views of Lake Garda and the winding Strada della Forra.

10 Piazza Arturo Cozzaglio, Tremosine sul Garda 25010, Italy (45.77083, 10.76075)

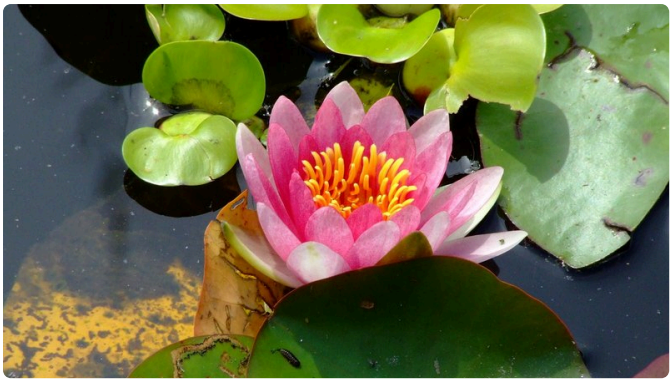


J Borghetto, Valeggio Sul Mincio

A medieval village on the Mincio River known for its historic watermills, the 14th-century Visconti Bridge, and proximity to the Scaligero Castle of Valeggio.

17 Via Guglielmo Marconi, Valeggio sul Mincio 37067, Italy (45.35398, 10.73613)

borghitalia.it/pg.base.php



K Parco Giardino Sigurtà

Parco Giardino Sigurtà is a natural park of 60 hectars in the town of Valeggio sul Mincio, in the Veneto region of Italy.

(Unnamed Road), 37067, Italy (45.36203, 10.73156)

sigurta.it



L Lago di Tenno

Lago di Tenno is a lake at Tenno in Trentino, Italy. At an elevation of 550 m, its surface area is 2.5 km².

38060, Italy (45.93822, 10.81613)

Beaches and Caravan Sites

Lake Garda's shoreline features a diverse mix of public pebble beaches and private holiday parks. This selection includes unique geological formations like the flat rock slabs of Jamaica Beach and specialized locations such as Bracco Baldo Beach, which caters specifically to dog owners. For those traveling by motorhome, the list highlights well-equipped sites in Lazise and Desenzano that provide essential services like power supply, sanitary dump stations, and rare sandy lakefront access.



A Jamaica Beach

Located at the tip of the Sirmione peninsula, this area features large, flat rock slabs submerged in shallow, clear water. It is accessible via a walking path near the Grottoes of Catullus.

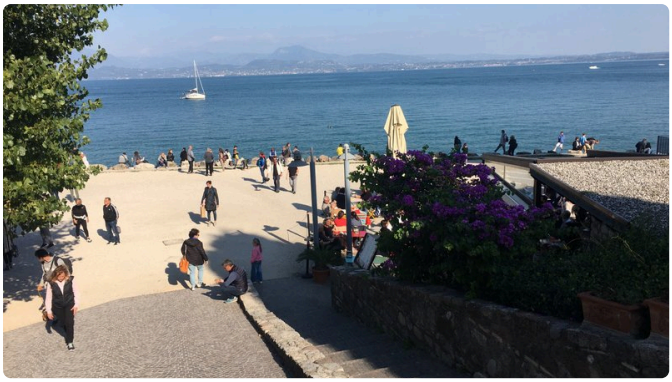
25019, Italy (45.50254, 10.60614)



B Spiaggia dei Sabbioni

A large pebble beach in Riva del Garda featuring extensive grassy areas, showers, and proximity to local sailing clubs and bike paths.

(Unnamed Road), 38066, Italy (45.88137, 10.84796)



C Santa maria di lugana

A pebble beach at the entrance to Sirmione with accessible paths and public park facilities.

35 Via Antiche Mura, Sirmione 25019, Italy (45.49439, 10.60836)



D Bracco Baldo Beach

A dedicated dog beach in Peschiera del Garda featuring a fenced area, sunbeds for pets, and showers. Paid entry is required.

1 Via Giuseppe Parini, Peschiera del Garda 37019, Italy (45.45251, 10.66867)

E Mokai Beach

A pebble beach in Garda town equipped with a bar and sunbed rentals.

52 Via Tavine, 25087, Italy (45.59686, 10.52328)

F Spiaggia Desenzanino

A pebble beach near Desenzano del Garda town center with sunbed rentals and an on-site restaurant.

85 Lungolago Cesare Battisti, Desenzano del Garda 25015, Italy (45.47472, 10.53863)

G Camping La Quercia

A large holiday park in Lazise featuring a rare sandy beach, multiple swimming pools, and comprehensive sports facilities.

37017 Lazise sul Garda, IT (45.49285, 10.73297)

Mo–Su 07:00–13:00, 15:00–23:00

laquercia.it, +39 045 647 0577

H Camping Spiaggia d'Oro

Campsite in Lazise providing direct access to a sandy beach, a water park, and full caravan hookups.

Loc. San Felice 12, 37010 Torri del Benaco, IT (45.63367, 10.70291)

spiaggiadoro.info

I Piani di Clodia

Holiday park offering seven swimming pools, sports courts, and wheelchair-accessible caravan pitches with Wi-Fi access.

Via Fossalta 42, 37017 Lazise (45.48343, 10.72664)

Mar-Oct Mo–Su Open 24/7
Mar 25-Oct 10 Mo–Su Open 24/7

pianidiclodia.it, +39 045 7590456

J La Spiaggia Area Sosta Camper

A 24/7 camper stop in Desenzano del Garda equipped with power supply, a sanitary dump station, and Wi-Fi.

Via Vo 19 (45.48725, 10.52127)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

campergardalake.com, +390309140243

K Beach Baia del Vento

Pebble beach in San Felice del Benaco offering views of Isola del Garda and Monte Baldo.

(45.58984, 10.57133)

spiaggiabaiadelvento.com

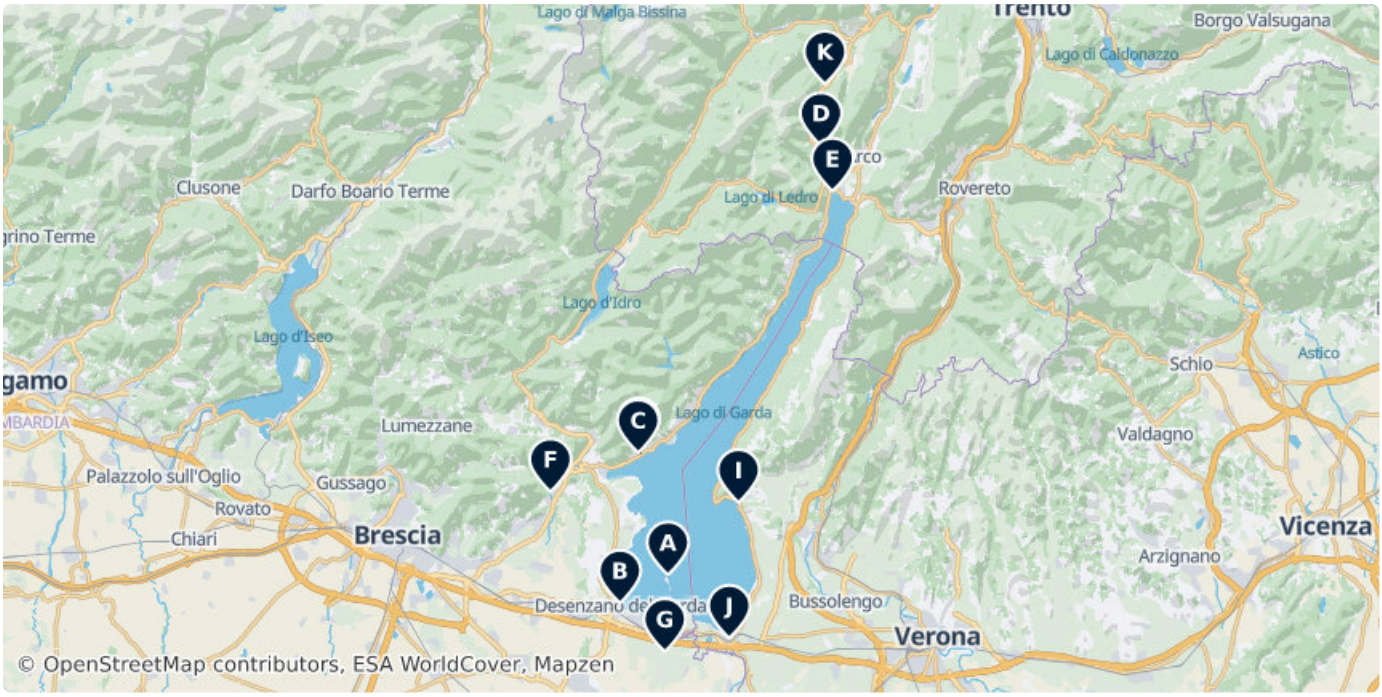
L Baia delle sirene

Private beach located within Parco San Vigilio, featuring olive groves and a children's play area. Paid admission applies.

37016, Italy (45.57767, 10.67292)

Museums & Archaeology

Lake Garda's historical landscape spans from prehistoric pile dwellings in Fiavé to the expansive Roman villa ruins at the Grottoes of Catullus and Desenzano. The region's military history is preserved at the Vittoriale degli italiani, featuring the MAS 96 torpedo boat, and the Risorgimento museum in Solferino. Local culture and art are showcased in the medieval Rocca of Riva del Garda and the Casa degli Artisti, while the Museo Archeologico della Valle Sabbia explores the area's ancient past through significant archaeological finds.





A Grottoes of Catullus

Grottoes of Catullus is the name given to the ruins of a Roman villa built between the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the...

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+39030916157



B Roman Villa of Desenzano

A significant Roman residential complex featuring well-preserved polychrome floor mosaics dating from the 1st to the 4th century AD. The site includes an on-site museum displaying archaeological finds recovered during the villa's excavation.

20 Via Scavi Romani, Desenzano del Garda 25015, Italy (45.47320, 10.53819)

+390309143547



C Vittoriale degli italiani

The Vittoriale degli italiani is a hillside estate in the town of Gardone Riviera overlooking Lake Garda in province of Brescia, in...

27 Via al Vittoriale, Gardone Riviera 25083, Italy
(45.62359, 10.56426)

vittoriale.it



D Casa degli Artisti

Riva del Garda is a town and comune in the northern Italian province of Trento of the Trentino Alto Adige region.

Via al Lago, Ville del Monte 38060, Italy
(45.92983, 10.82576)

casartisti.it



E MAG Museo Alto Garda

Located within the medieval Rocca of Riva del Garda, this museum features an archaeological section with Copper Age statue-menhirs, a picture gallery of 19th-century landscape paintings, and historical exhibits regarding the local territory.

Piazza Battisti 3a, 38066 Riva del Garda
(45.88452, 10.84224)

Mo–Su	10:00–18:00

museoaltogarda.it/it/, +39 0464 573869



F Museo Archeologico della Valle Sabbia

Exhibits archaeological finds from the Valle Sabbia and Lake Garda regions, covering a timeline from the Middle Paleolithic to the post-Renaissance period, with a specific focus on prehistoric pile-dwelling settlements.

Piazzetta San Bernardino 5, 25085 Gavardo
(45.58461, 10.43871)

Mo–We	09:00–13:00
Th	14:00–17:00
Fr	20:30–21:30
Sa	Closed
Su	14:30–18:30

museoarcheologicogavardo.it, +39 0365 371474



G Museo del Risorgimento di Solferino e San Martino

Commemorates the 1859 Battle of Solferino and San Martino with a collection of weapons, uniforms, and memorabilia from the Italian Risorgimento. It is located near the site where the idea for the Red Cross was conceived.

1 Località Torre San Martino, 25015, Italy (45.42448, 10.60212)



H M.A.S. 96

A preserved motor torpedo boat used by Gabriele D'Annunzio during the 1918 'Bucari prank.' It is housed within a dedicated pavilion on the grounds of the Vittoriale degli italiani estate.

Via delle Arche, 25083, Italy (45.62574, 10.56506)



I Museo del Garda

A local museum focusing on the history, traditions, and natural environment of the Garda territory, featuring exhibits related to traditional lake fishing and historical local crafts.

7 Lungolago Regina Adelaide, Garda 37016, Italy (45.57395, 10.70780)

museoterritorialedelgarda.weebly.com



J Scavi Romani

Archaeological remains of the Roman settlement of Arilica, located in the center of Peschiera del Garda. The site features foundations of domestic structures and paved streets dating back to the 1st century AD.

9 Piazza Ferdinando di Savoia, Peschiera del Garda 37019, Italy (45.43793, 10.69464)



Zona palafitticola di Fiavé

A UNESCO World Heritage site featuring the remains of prehistoric pile dwellings in a former lake basin. The site includes an archaeological park with life-sized reconstructed wooden huts based on local archaeological evidence.

Località Torbiera, 38075, Italy (45.99097, 10.83161)

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