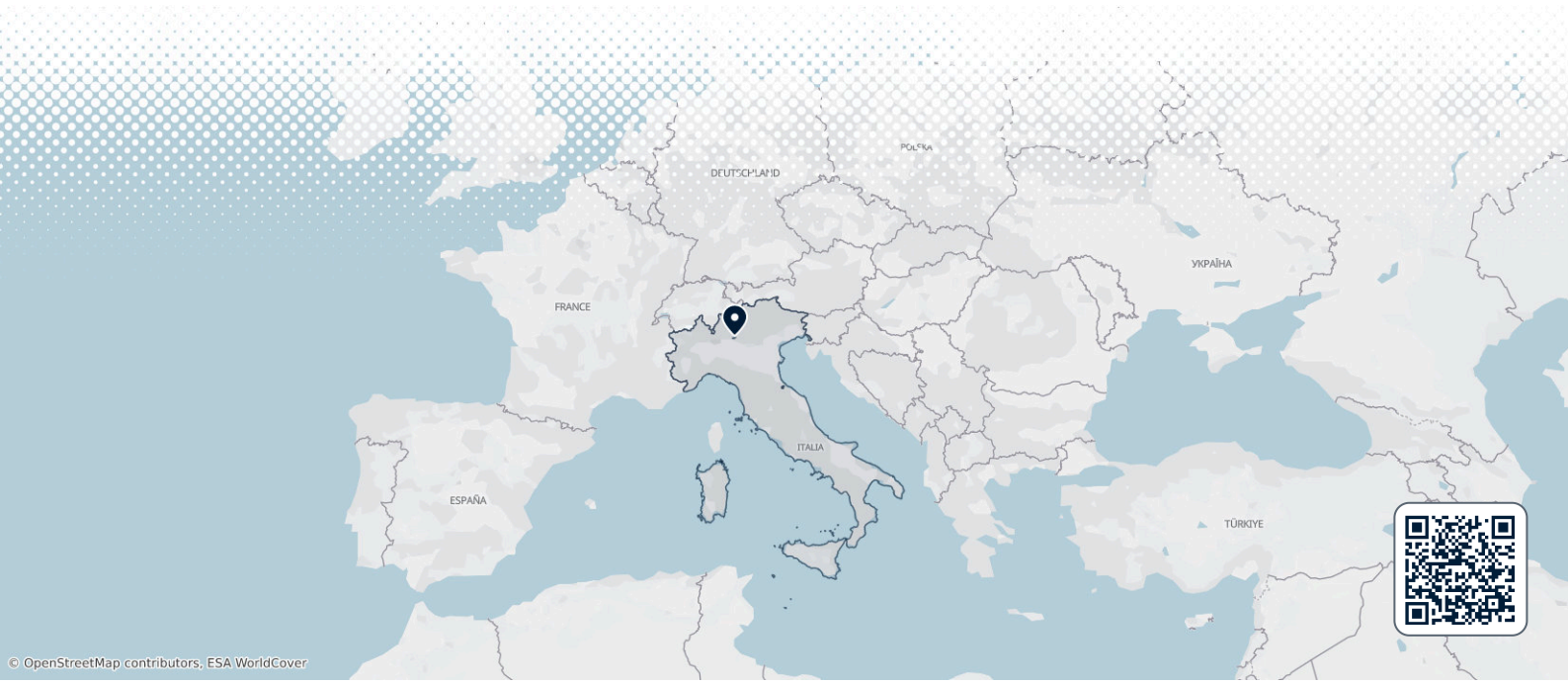


Lake Iseo

Lombardy · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Lake Iseo, also called Sebino, lies between Bergamo and Brescia in the foothills of the Alps. It is smaller and quieter than Lake Como and Lake Garda. Steep green mountains rise from the water in the north. In the south, the lake opens onto the vineyards of Franciacorta, a wine area known for its sparkling wine.

In the middle of the lake rises Monte Isola, a car-free island of fishing villages and olive groves. Around the shore, the town of Iseo is the main base in the south, with a long lakefront promenade. Lovere in the north is an old town of stone houses climbing from the harbour, and Sarnico and Pisogne have small old centres by the water. The lake suits a slow stay of a few days, with short boat trips, cycling, easy walks and wine tasting.

When to visit

May, June, September and October are the best months, with warm days and calm water. July and August are hot and humid, with afternoon storms and crowded beaches and ferries at weekends. From November to March the lake is very quiet, and some hotels and restaurants close, but the ferries to Monte Isola run all year.

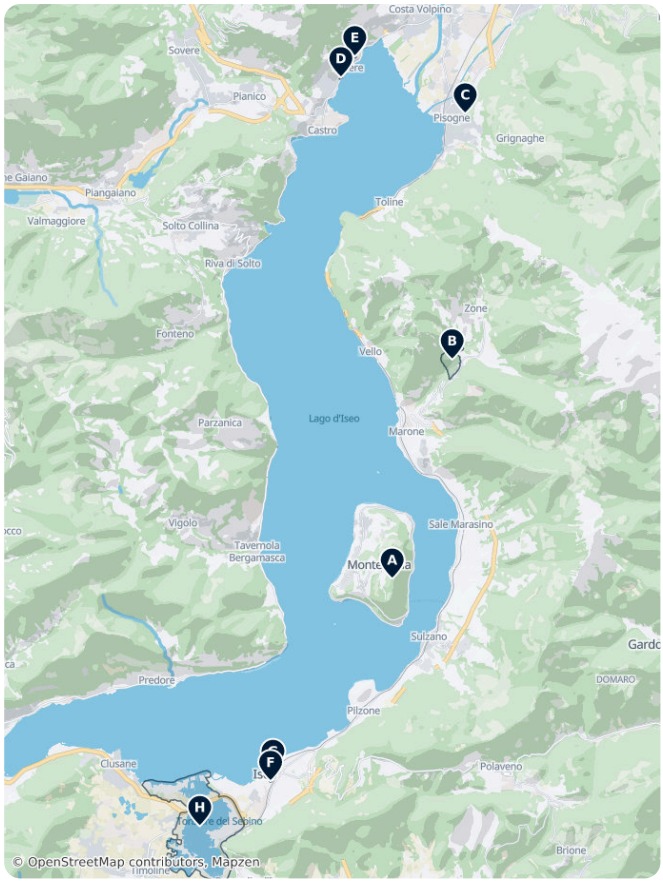
The biggest celebration is the Festa di Santa Croce in Carzano on Monte Isola. For one week in September, the villagers cover their streets with hundreds of thousands of handmade paper flowers. It takes place only once every five years, and the last one was in 2025.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 13° Feels like 4°	1° / -4°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for cycling	10° / 16° Feels like 6°	2° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Great Great for hiking	14° / 20° Feels like 11°	4° / -1°	Dry air · Calm winds
April	Good Good for hiking	18° / 23°	8° / 3°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 28°	13° / 9°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 33°	17° / 12°	Calm winds
July	Good Good for sightseeing	30° / 35°	19° / 15°	Humid air · Calm winds
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	30° / 35°	19° / 15°	Humid air · Calm winds
September	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 30°	15° / 10°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 25°	11° / 6°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for cycling	13° / 18°	5° / -1°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for cycling	8° / 13° Feels like 5°	2° / -3°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, June, September, October

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

Top sights



A Santuario della Madonna della Ceriola stands on the highest point of Monte Isola, at about 600 m. A cobbled mule track climbs to it from the village of Cure, and the views take in the whole lake. Inside is a carved wooden statue of the Virgin from the 12th century.

B Riserva Naturale Piramidi di Zone protects the earth pyramids above the east shore, near the village of Zone. Rain carved these tall clay columns out of old glacial deposits, and many still carry a large boulder on top. A loop path of about one hour runs through the reserve.

C Chiesa di Santa Maria della Neve is a small church in Pisogne. Its walls are covered with scenes of the Passion of Christ, painted by *Romanino* in the 1530s.

D Pinacoteca Tadini is the art gallery of Lovere, in a neoclassical palace on the lakefront. It shows Italian paintings from the 15th century onwards, porcelain, and a marble stele by *Antonio Canova*. It opens from spring to autumn, and only on a few days in winter.

E Basilica di Santa Maria in Valvendra stands on a terrace above Lovere. The large Renaissance church has frescoes by *Floriano Ferramola* and painted organ doors by *Moretto*.

F Castello Oldofredi rises on a rock at the edge of Iseo's old centre. The fortress has corner towers and a keep from the 11th or 12th century, and today it houses the town library and a war museum.

G Pieve di Sant'Andrea is the parish church of Iseo, with a Romanesque front and a massive bell tower. Inside is a painting of Saint Michael by *Francesco Hayez*.

H Riserva Naturale Torbiere del Sebino is a wetland of reed beds and ponds just south of Iseo, left by old peat digging. Paths and wooden walkways lead past birdwatching spots, and a

small entry fee is charged. Bikes are not allowed inside the reserve.

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What to experience

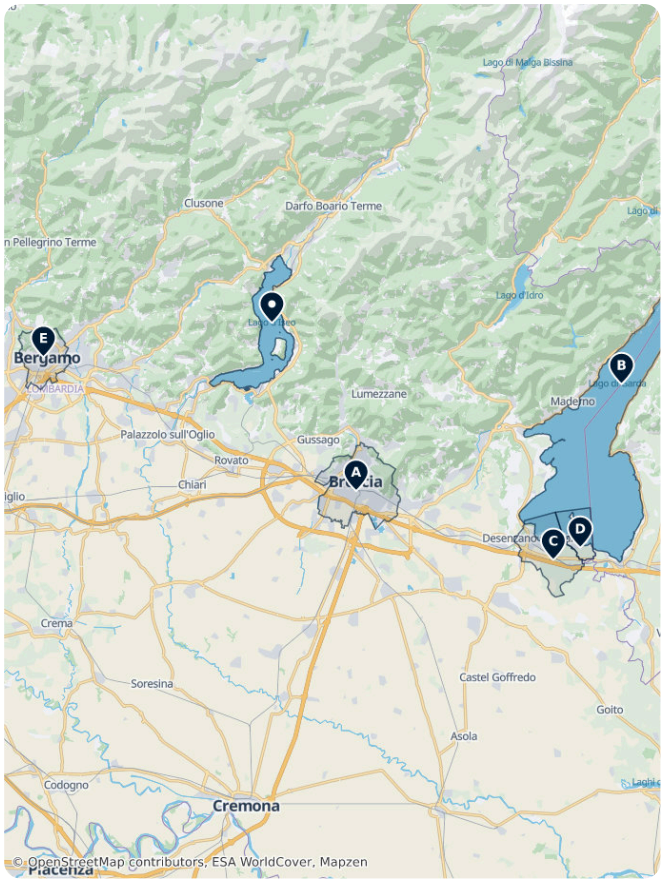
On Lake Iseo, the best days are spent on the water, on a bike or on the island.

- **Circle Monte Isola on foot or by bike**: Take the 5-minute ferry from Sulzano and follow the car-free road of about 9 km around the island. It passes fishing villages, olive groves and the harbour of Peschiera Maraglio. You can rent bikes on the island, but the island can limit bikes on busy days.
- **Take a boat around the small islands**: South of Monte Isola lie the islands of San Paolo and Loreto. Both are private, so you see them only from the boat, but a cruise around Monte Isola passes close to them.
- **Swim at a lakeside beach**: In summer, the towns have grassy or pebble beaches with lidos, such as those at Iseo, Sulzano and on Monte Isola. The water is warm enough for swimming from June to September.
- **Walk to the Bogn**: On the west shore near Riva di Solto, a short path leads to a small bay where layers of rock drop straight into the lake.

Day trips

Trains and short drives reach these places in a day, listed from the closest:

- Franciacorta — 15 to 20 minutes by car from Iseo. Visit a wine cellar in the rolling hills south of the lake, and cycle the quiet lanes between the villages.
- A Brescia — about 30 minutes by train from Iseo. The city has Roman ruins, two cathedrals side by side and a castle on a hill.
- B Lake Garda — about 45 minutes by car to C Desenzano del Garda or D Sirmione at its southern end. It is the largest lake in Italy, with a lively shore and boat trips.
- E Bergamo — about 45 minutes by car. Take the funicular up to the walled upper town, with its squares, churches and views over the plain.
- Capo di Ponte — about 50 minutes by car, or by train on the railway that runs along the east shore. The rock carvings of the Val Camonica, a UNESCO World Heritage site, cover the rocks in several parks around the village.



Where to explore

Monte Isola is the island in the middle of the lake, a short ferry ride from Sulzano and Sale Marasino.

The two nearest cities are Brescia to the south-east and Bergamo to the west. For more lakes, Lake Garda lies to the east and Lake Como to the north-west. Milan is about an hour away by car.

Getting there

- **By air**: Milan Bergamo Airport (BGY) is the closest, about 40 minutes by car from Iseo. Milan Linate Airport (LIN) and Verona Airport (VRN) are each about 1 hour by car. By public transport, go first to Brescia and take the train to Iseo from there.
- **By train**: Regional trains on the Brescia–Iseo–Edolo line take about 30 minutes from Brescia to Iseo. The line then follows the east shore through Sulzano, Sale Marasino, Marone and Pisogne. Brescia has fast trains from Milan, Verona and Venice. Trenord
- **By bus**: Buses from Bergamo serve the west shore, including Sarnico and Lovere.
- **By car**: Leave the A4 Milan–Venice motorway at the Rovato or Palazzolo exits and drive north to the lake, about 20 minutes. See the driving section for parking.

Getting around

- **Ferries**: Boats link the towns, Monte Isola and the small islands. The crossings to Monte Isola from Sulzano and Sale Marasino take about 5 minutes and run every 15 to 20 minutes all year. Other routes run less often, mainly in summer. Buy tickets at the pier ticket offices or online. Navigazione Lago d'Iseo
- **Train**: The railway along the east shore links Iseo with Sulzano, the main port for Monte Isola, and continues to Pisogne in about 30 minutes. Buy tickets at the station machines or in the Trenord app. Trenord
- **Bus**: Local buses run along the west shore between Sarnico and Lovere, but they are infrequent.
- **On foot**: The old centres and lakefronts are compact and easy to walk, but the towns are far apart. On Monte Isola you can walk between the villages on paths and the quiet ring road.
- **Cycling**: Good in places. Monte Isola and the lanes of Franciacorta are popular. The lakeside path between Vello and Toline has been closed since a landslide in September 2026, so check before you go. The main shore roads are narrow and busy.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The lakeside towns and Monte Isola are easy to explore on foot, but the towns are far apart, so you need boats, trains or a car between them.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

Monte Isola and the Franciacorta lanes are good for cycling, but the main shore roads are narrow and busy.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Helpful. The towns are spread around the lake, and buses on the west shore are rare. Without a car, stay on the east shore near the railway and use the ferries.
- **Monte Isola**: Visitors cannot take cars or motorbikes to the island. Leave the car in the paid car parks at Sulzano or Sale Marasino, which fill up early on summer weekends.
- **Parking**: Paid parking on blue lines is the rule in the lakeside towns. Pay at the machines or with a parking app, and expect full car parks in Iseo and Sarnico on sunny weekends.
- **Restrictions**: The old centres of the towns are largely pedestrian.

Food & drink

Lake fish is the local speciality. The best-known dish is tinca al forno con polenta, baked tench with polenta, from the fishing village of Clusane just west of Iseo. Monte Isola is known for dried and salted lake sardines, usually served grilled with polenta and olive oil, and for its salami. Olive trees grow on the sunny slopes around the lake and give a mild local oil.

South of the lake, Franciacorta makes sparkling wine in the same way as Champagne. Many wineries offer tastings and cellar tours, but book ahead. For a meal, head to the restaurants around the small harbour of Clusane, the waterfront of Peschiera Maraglio on Monte Isola, or the squares of Iseo's old town.

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 Iseo is very safe, with little crime beyond the odd theft from parked cars at busy beaches and car parks. Do not leave bags visible in the car.

The main risks are on the water. Winds blow regularly over the lake, and summer storms can arrive quickly in the afternoon, so check the forecast before you rent a boat or a paddleboard. Swim at the beaches and lidos, not near the ferry piers, and do not dive from the cliffs at the Bogn. On the mountain paths above the lake, wear good shoes and carry water.

History

The lake fills a valley carved by an Alpine glacier, and the glacier also left the deposits that formed the earth pyramids of Zone. In the Middle Ages, local lords ruled the shores from castles. In Iseo, Castello Oldofredi carries the name of the Oldofredi family, and the front of Pieve di Sant'Andrea holds the tomb of *Giacomo Oldofredi*, a lord of Iseo who died in 1325.

From the 15th century the lake was part of the Republic of Venice. Trade in wool cloth made Lovere rich, and its merchants paid for Basilica di Santa Maria in Valvendra. In the 19th century, workers cut peat south of Iseo to fuel kilns and silk mills. The flooded pits later became the wetland of Riserva Naturale Torbiere del Sebino.

In the summer of 2016, the artists *Christo* and *Jeanne-Claude* made the lake famous around the world. Their Floating Piers, yellow walkways resting on the water, let visitors walk from Sulzano to Monte Isola and around the island of San Paolo for about two weeks.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

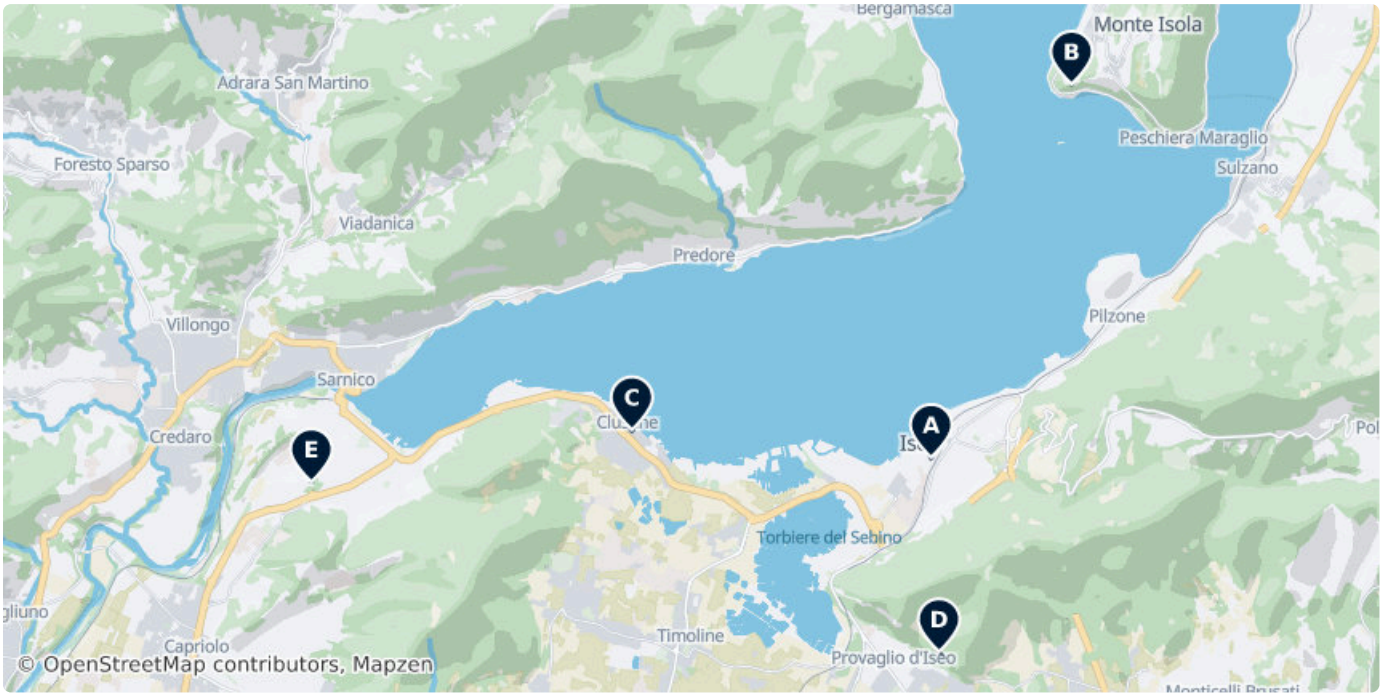
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LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Castles and Fortresses

Medieval castles guard the shores and hills around Lake Iseo. Visit the fortress in the centre of Iseo, see the tower of the Rocca on top of Monte Isola, and look for the castles of Clusane, Provaglio and Paratico at the south end of the lake.





A Castello Oldofredi

Medieval fortress on a rock just south of Iseo's old centre, with corner towers and an 11th–12th-century keep. Today it houses the town library and a war museum.

72 Via Mirolte, Iseo 25049, Italy (45.65840, 10.05060)



B Rocca Martinengo

Medieval castle on the slopes of Monte Isola above Siviano, also called Rocca Oldofredi-Martinengo. It is private, but its tower is a landmark seen from all over the lake.

25050, Italy (45.69989, 10.07296)

C Castello Carmagnola

Large square castle on the hill above Clusane, the fishing village west of Iseo. It is privately owned and seen from outside.

17a Via Gere, Clusane sul Lago 25049, Italy (45.66145, 10.00294)

D Castello di Provaglio d'Iseo

Ruins of a medieval castle on a hill above the Torbiere del Sebino wetland reserve.

Via San Rocco, 25050, Italy (45.63678, 10.05185)

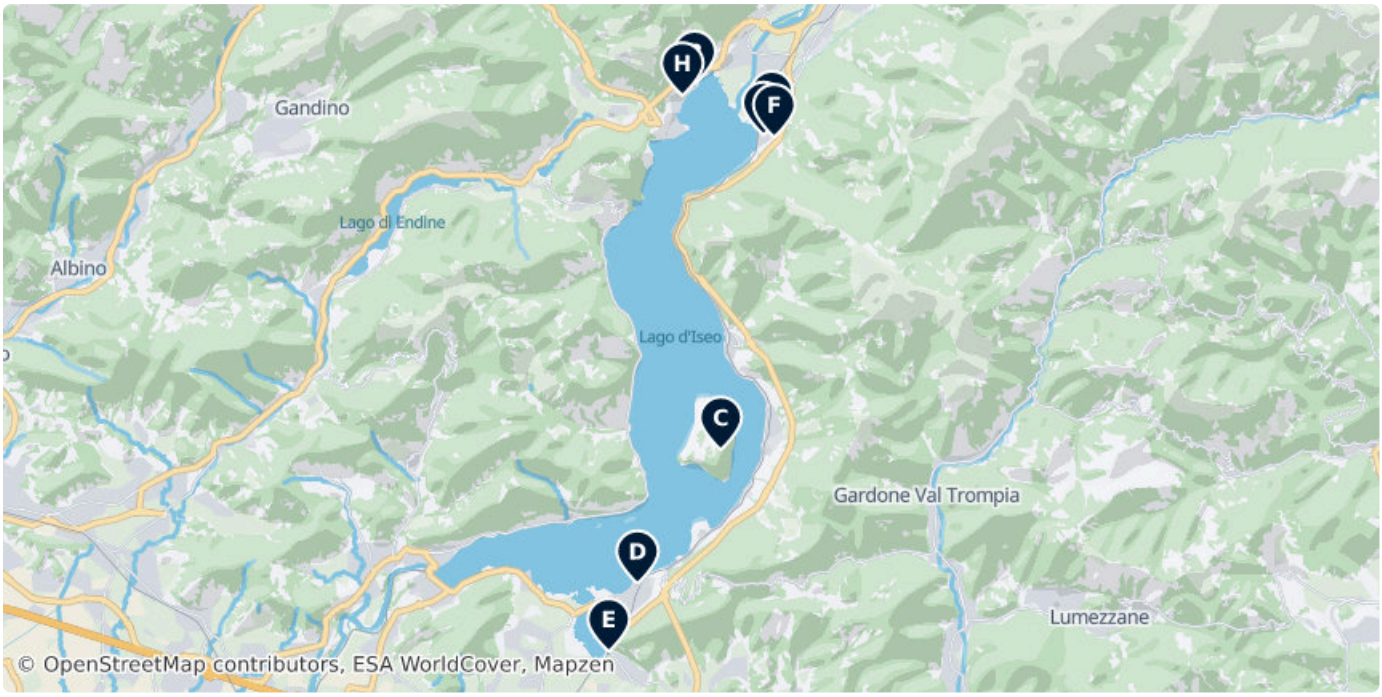
E Castello Lantieri

Remains of the medieval castle of Paratico, on the south-western shore where the Oglio river leaves the lake, opposite Sarnico.

25030, Italy (45.65567, 9.95189)

Churches and Sanctuaries

The churches around Lake Iseo hold some of the best art in the area. See the Passion frescoes by Romanino in Pisogne, the Renaissance basilica of Lovere, the Romanesque pieve of Iseo and the pilgrimage sanctuary on the top of Monte Isola.





A Santa Maria della Neve, Pisogne

Small church in Pisogne whose walls are covered with a Passion of Christ fresco cycle painted by Romanino in the 1530s.

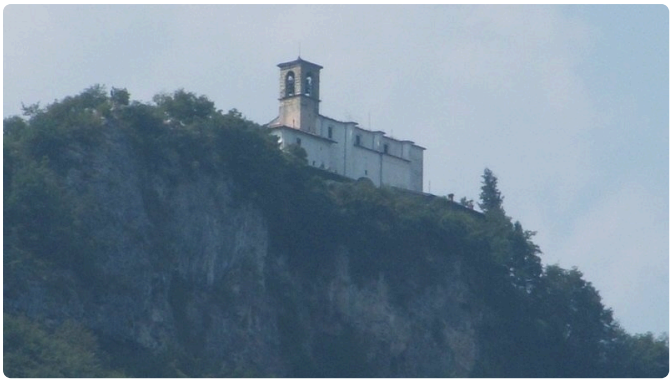
18 Viale Girolamo Romanino, Pisogne 25055, Italy
(45.80674, 10.11250)



B Basilica di Santa Maria in Valvendra

Large Renaissance church on a terrace above Lovere, with frescoes by Floriano Ferramola and organ shutters painted by Moretto.

5 Via Fratelli Pellegrini, Lovere 24065, Italy
(45.81946, 10.07737)



C Santuario della Madonna della Ceriola

Pilgrimage church on the highest point of Monte Isola, at about 600 m, reached on foot by a cobbled mule track. The views over the whole lake are wide.

25050, Italy (45.70339, 10.08928)



D Pieve di Sant'Andrea

Iseo's parish church, with a Romanesque façade and a massive bell tower.
Inside is a painting of Saint Michael by Francesco Hayez.

6 Piazza del Pusterla, Iseo 25049, Italy (45.66084, 10.05137)



E Monastero di San Pietro in Lamosa

Former Cluniac monastery on the edge of the Torbiere del Sebino wetland, with a frescoed church and views over the reeds.

6 Via Monastero, 25040, Italy (45.63924, 10.03822)



F Chiesa di Santa Maria in Silvis

Old parish church just outside the centre of Pisogne, with late medieval frescoes inside.

(45.80256, 10.11364)



G Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta

Baroque parish church of Pisogne, facing the lakeside square.

(45.80331, 10.10873)



H Santuario delle Sante

20th-century sanctuary in Lovere dedicated to Saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, founders of a teaching order of nuns.

13 Via San Gerosa, Lovere 24065, Italy (45.81577, 10.07174)

DATA SOURCES

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