



From Menaggio to Porlezza along the former railway line



This itinerary follows the traces of the former railway line that ran between Menaggio and Porlezza from 1884 until 1939, connecting Lake Como with Lake Lugano. The route runs through the Menaggio Valley, mainly on paved paths, and touches the Lago di Piano Nature Reserve. Please note that some small sections run along roads used by local traffic.

ITINERARY: Menaggio - Grandola ed Uniti - Bene Lario - Carlazzo - Porlezza

STARTING POINT: Menaggio - boat dock in via IV Novembre

LENGTH: 13.5 km

ALTITUDE AT DEPARTURE: 200 m

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE: 377 m

TOTAL ASCENT: 250 m

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTY: easy



The railway line between Menaggio and Porlezza was opened in 1884 in order to attract more tourists from northern Europe to the area. Arriving by train to Lugano the tourists were then transported by steamboat to Porlezza from where the train brought them to Menaggio. After World War I it became a simple working class transit system and was also used to transport timber of the woods of Mount Galbica and ice of Lake Piano. After World War II the train line was abandoned.

Route: The former railway station of Menaggio is in **Via IV Novembre**, where today a grocery store (Consorzio Agrario) stands, just next to the ferry dock. This is where our itinerary starts. Continue left down Via IV Novembre. After 50 meters, at a small parking area, cross the road and head up the steep ramp that leads to the Menaggio Youth Hostel parking lot. Turn left and take **Via Privata Fratelli Castelli**. After 400 meters, take the right fork at the bend and continue straight along Via Privato Fratelli Castelli that climbs steeply along the side of Monte Crocetta.

In order to overcome the incline from Menaggio (207 m) to Cardano (377 m), the train would head south for about 600 m and reverse its direction on a siding (where the locomotive, after being separated, was turned on a turntable to be attached to the rear of the train) to continue northwards.

After 500 meters, keep left at the fork. After another 600 meters, the **Via Privata Fratelli Castelli** leads onto the main **State road 340**, which connects Menaggio to Lugano. Cross it paying attention to the heavy traffic, and follow it to the left, uphill, for just 50m. At



The cycle path

the next bend pick up the cycle lane. The track enters a valley and passes a 90 m long tunnel. At the fork ignore the road to the right leading down to the Agriturismo Barcola and continue left. Shortly ahead the track ends onto the **SP8 road of Grandola ed Uniti**.

Cross it and keep straight on the cycle lane that runs behind Bar Stazione. Where it ends, turn left and cross the state road 340 at the traffic lights. Pay attention while walking the road opposite to the traffic direction for about 40 meters. Then take the cycle lane on the left. You end onto the Provincial road 9 which you follow to the left.

After 200 m you pick up the continuation of the cycle path on the right.

You skirt a plain called Binadone flanked by the woody slopes of Monte Crocione (1640 m) and Monte Galbiga. Near the village of Grona the track ends. Continue to the right along **Via Cascine**. When you get to an intersection, take the cycle track right in front of you (sign for Lago di Piano) entering the **Nature Reserve Lago di Piano**. Pass the campsite Ranocchio, continue along the shores of Lake Piano. The large reedy area is an ideal breeding place for water birds. Among the aquatic species, the most easily to be observed are the mallard, the coot, the moorhen, the mute Swan, the gray heron and the great grebe.

At the **Casa della Riserva**, the Visitor Centre, there is an information office and a small ecomuseum (for information tel. +39 0344 74961). In front of the office there are some nice picnic tables with a view of the lake. On the left, you can notice the so-called Montecchio del Brione, a drumlin moulded by past glacial action with the village of **Castel S. Pietro** at its top. We recommend a small detour in order to visit this old settlement with its houses clustered close to each other. The stone wall and the narrow passages give the idea of a fortress, which is what it used to be in the Middle Ages.

Continuing on the track you will cross a wooden bridge over the river Cuccio. Follow the course of the river until you reach the **main road SP14**. Continue to the right for approximately 100 m and then cross the main road and turn into **Via Prati** that leads to the residential complex called "Porto Letizia." On the left side of the main building take the path that skirts Lake Lugano.

After crossing the bridge over the river Val Rezzo, go down some steps to resume the continuation of the lake side promenade that leads to the center of Porlezza. Back the same way.



On the shore of Lake Piano

