

A walking itinerary to discover Lenno, a village in the Mid-Lake area overlooking the splendid Gulf of Venus that boasts authentic artistic jewels, including the world-famous Villa del Balbianello. A charming panoramic walk leads to the Sacred Mountain of Ossuccio, one of the nine pre-Alpine sacred mountains that make up the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The itinerary covers an area known locally as Zoca de l'Oli or "oil hollow". In fact, the area enjoys such mild climate it is perfect for growing olives and producing olive oil.



1

Departure point: Lenno.

Lenno can be reached by bus on line C10, by NLC boat or by car along state road SS 340.

Note: the 45-minute walk from Lenno to the Sacred Mountain has a difference in altitude of 200 metres

Lenno and the Sacred Mountain of Ossuccio




From Lenno landing stage follow lakeside Viale C. Lomazzi (photo 2) as far as Piazza XI Febbraio. Here we find the **Church of Saint Stefano** and the ancient octagonal **baptistry** dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist (photo 3). The current parish church was built on the foundations of a site of ancient religious tradition although the current building is the result of refurbishment carried out in the 16th-century.

Dating from the latter half of the 11th century, the baptistry is in beautiful local Romanesque style, with simple and sombre exterior and blind arch decorations, and houses fragments of mediaeval frescoes.

From the square, we cross the state road using the underpass, turn right and after the bus stop and post office, take the small lane on the left towards the **Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Soccorso** (via Soccorso).

At the "Cooperativa", continue for about 50 metres and then turn left. Pass in front of the Church of the Santissima Trinità, take Via Don Cadenazzi and follow it to the right before immediately turning left onto Viale Libronico. Continue straight ahead and turn right at the second junction, following signs for the "Santuario" (*Sanctuary*) as far as cobbledstone Via Pasquale Castelli. Follow it, keeping to the left and then cross Perlana Stream to reach the first chapel and the climb to the **Sacred Mountain**,

 which is highly recommend for its artistic value, but above all the wide panoramic views it affords.



2



3

THE SANCTUARY OF THE BEATA VERGINE DEL SOCCORSO



© Paolo Ortelli

Along the cobbled street that gradually climbs to the **Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine del Soccorso** (419 metres above sea level) are a series of frescoed chapels decorated with statues and stuccoes by the Intelvese School. Dedicated to the Mysteries of the Rosary, these small temples were built between 1635 and 1714 and are part of the context of the pre-Alpine Sacred Mountains of Piedmont and Lombardy, sacred complexes at the entrance to the Alpine valleys in places of particular landscape interest. The aim of the Sacred Mountains

was to favour, by means of a pilgrimage, consolidation of the faith thanks to an admirable integration of spiritual, architectural, artistic and natural elements and at the same time to combat the diffusion of Protestant Reformation. The itinerary ends at the Church of the Beata Vergine that houses prestigious frescoes and stuccoes, as well as a 14th-century Our Lady with Child. The statue, which is venerated by many, is the work of the Campionesi Masters. To this day, the sanctuary is a destination favoured by numerous pilgrims, above all on the feast day of 8th September. In 2003 the Sacred Mountain of Ossuccio was declared a World Heritage Site.

From the sanctuary it is possible to reach the **Abbey of Saint Benedetto** in Val Perlana, a beautiful example of local Romanesque style (11th century). Taking about 2 hours, the walk is extremely demanding, but rewards anyone attempting it with spectacular views. Information at the Tourist Information Offices.



After visiting the church we retrace our steps to reach the 4th chapel. From here, continue along Via Giovanni Castelli for about 600 metres as far as Via Andrea Castelli on the right. At this point, signs for the Greenway begin; this is an approx. 10-km walk that links the villages of Colonno and Griante. The itinerary is marked by blue and yellow signs and on the ground by metal manhole covers with the words "Greenway of Lake Como". We can now decide to either continue straight to Lenno or visit **Comacina Island** (from March to October only).

In this case, we follow the Greenway by taking Via Andrea Castelli on the right as far as the landing stage for the island close to Malagufi Lido and the beautiful Church of Saint Maria Maddalena with its picturesque bell-tower.



COMACINA ISLAND




This is the only island on Lake Como and despite its modest size (600 metres long, 200 metres wide and a perimeter of just 2 km) and the fact it is now uninhabited, it was once very important from both a religious and political point of view.


Fought over many times due to its strategic position, it was raised to the ground by the people of Como in 1169 as a vendetta for the island's alliance with Milan in the Ten Year War involving the two capitals. It retains many remains from its illustrious past including traces of a Roman wall, an early-Christian baptistery

with a double apse and above all, the Romanesque complex of Saint Eufemia (11th century). The only intact buildings are the Oratory of Saint Giovanni (17th century) and three Artists' Houses built in Rationalist style by the architect Lingeri in 1940. Many artefacts are housed in the Antiquarium Museum in Ossuccio, where tickets for entrance to the island can be purchased.

For information: tel. +39.034456369 - www.isola-comacina.it

Continuing from Via Giovanni Castelli towards Lenno along the Greenway, cross the state road and 20 metres further on take the small road on the right that leads to the gates of Villa Balbiano, a 17th-century residence with a simple façade preceded by an entrance nymphaeum, a fountain and a beautiful Italian parterre with skilfully-clipped holm oaks and cypresses.

Using a small bridge, cross Perlana Stream and take Via Regina, entering the historical nucleus of  **Campo**, a small and charming outlying hamlet of Lenno where there is a small beach with a shower.

Winding its way amid stone houses, narrow streets and descents to the lake, the itinerary passes in front of the entrance to Villa Monastero, which stands on the ruins of a 13th-century Benedictine  monastery, and after a short mixed road continues by flanking Dosso del Lavedo, which has picnic tables and a campsite. Just beyond Hotel Lavedo there is **Villa Balbianello** that can be reached walking up Dosso del Lavedo (1 km) or by taxi boat from the beach Lido di Lenno.




VILLA BALBIANELLO

Built in the late 18th century for Cardinal Durini, it incorporates an ancient monastery and is one of the most beautiful parts of Lake Como. The magnificent loggia, "embroidered" by a climbing ficus, offers panoramic views of the Mid-Lake area spanning from Bellagio to Comacina Island. Unsurprisingly, the villa has been chosen many times as a film set; the most famous films shot here include "Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones" and "Casino Royale".



On the upper floor of the residence, accessible thanks to a guided visit that must be booked when purchasing a ticket, there is an unusual museum that brings together the art collections and travel souvenirs of the villa's last owner, the explorer Guido Monzino, a lover of expeditions and man of great culture. In his will, he left the villa to the Italian environmental protection agency, FAI. The garden has terraces and balustrades and faithfully follows the lay of the land; it is steep and craggy in some points and gently sloping in others. The villa can be visited from mid-March to mid-November. Detailed information on www.fondoambiente.it.

 From Lenno Lido (a lido with facilities for which an entrance fee is payable), continue on the lakeside promenade past historical villas to return to the landing stage.


EVENTS AND MARKETS

Solemn feast of the patron saint of the Sanctuary: pilgrimage to the Sanctuary on 8th September
Feast of Saint John: (Ossuccio) with fireworks, setting ablaze of the island and religious boat procession on the weekend nearest 24th June.

MARKETS

Mercato di Lenno: Tuesday mornings on the lakeside promenade

ACTIVE HOLIDAY

 **Greenway of Lake Como:** Lenno is crossed by the Greenway, a gentle and panoramic 10 km pedestrian road that links Colonno and Griante. For this and other more demanding walks on the mountains of Lenno and Colonno, ask for leaflets from the Tourist Information Offices.
Nautical sports: on the lake between Lenno and Sala Comacina there are many places where motorboats, canoes, rowing boats and fishing tackle can be hired.