


This itinerary departs from Bellagio to discover the mountain zone, a very interesting area in terms of both landscape and nature. It climbs to the Ghisallo Pass, where the famous Sanctuary of Madonna del Ghisallo stands. Nearby is Jungle Raider Park, an adventure park built on trees, with trails to suit adults and children alike.

Departure point: Bellagio. Bellagio can easily be reached from Como along provincial road SP 583 or by car and then NLC ferry from Varenna or Menaggio/Cadenabbia.

Duration: half day + any stops

By car from Bellagio to the Cyclists' Sanctuary



 The itinerary can be covered by car, with short stretches on foot. The fittest can also cover it by bicycle, following the legendary Ghisallo leg of the Giro d'Italia bike race. The total difference in altitude is 790 metres.

From the ferry landing stage in Bellagio, following signs for Lecco, take the road that climbs through the municipal park and at the end turn right past the town hall. After passing Bellagio cemetery on the left, there are splendid views of the Lecco branch of the lake and a magnificent expanse of olive trees that stand inside Villa Giulia.

VILLA GIULIA


Built in 1624, it was refurbished throughout at the end of the 18th century. With a neoclassical feel, it has three floors and a central body with two wings. The part of lawn in front of the villa, known as the Vialone, was dug out specially by one of its owners, Count Venini, so that he would be able to admire views of the Como branch of the lake.

The villa has had various owners including the King of Belgium, Leopold I, Antonio Mella, who turned it into a hotel for a brief period, Count Blome von Buol-Schauenstein, the Polish banker Baron Gay and the Romanian nobleman Kirakirschen; it is currently owned by a family from Milan.




Continue along SP 41 Valassina leaving the villa on the left and after about 600 metres, at the roundabout follow signs for Magreglio. Continue for about 2.5 km and near "Trattoria La Busciona", make a first stop in the small clearing in front of the restaurant to admire splendid views of Bellagio promontory (photo 2), the upper lake and the mountains all around. Return to the itinerary and after about 1 km turn left towards Chevrio - Makallè to one of the most beautiful panoramic points in Bellagio. About 200 metres after the turning at the small chapel follow signs on the left for "Trattoria Baita Belvedere", turn left again and reach the restaurant at the end of a short stretch of dirt track. Park



 your car to continue on foot. After about 10 minutes is the panoramic lookout point called **Belvedere Makallè**.

Return to the car and back on the main road turn left. Pass the village of Guello and after a straight stretch of road there is a junction with the small church of Guello on the right.

 Continue on the left on the main road towards Civenna - Erba and after about 2.5 km is **Civenna** where another stop at the panoramic viewpoint on our left, near the playground, is possible. Here stands a statue of a blazing torch, a monument in memory of all those who have died in motorcycling accidents that is visited every year on 1st November during a huge and extremely heartfelt motorcycle rally.

Cross the village and continue for about 3 km as far as Colle del Ghisallo, the mountain pass that connects the promontory of Bellagio to Valassina.

At the pass, which is 754 metres above sea level, we are in the Municipality of Magreglio. Here we find the small **Sanctuary of Madonna del Ghisallo**. According to ancient legend, its name derives from a certain Count Ghisallo who in the mediaeval period was attacked by bandits on these roads, at a point where there was a chapel dedicated to Our Lady. He vowed to build a church there if he survived the dangerous situation and indeed, was saved. The chapel was gradually extended until a church was built in 1623 at the peak of the climb. This climb is traditionally crossed from the north side during the Giro di Lombardia cycle race and has also been included several times in the Giro d'Italia. For this reason, Our Lady of Ghisallo is particularly venerated by cyclists and in 1948 Pope Pius XII proclaimed her universal patron saint of cyclists. On that occasion, a votive torch blessed by the Pope was brought from Rome to the sanctuary by relay race; the last two cyclist-torch bearers were Gino Bartali and Fausto Coppi, who are commemorated in two statues at the entrance to the church.




SANCTUARY OF MADONNA DEL GHISALLO

This small church houses numerous mementoes of cycling champions as over the years the sports' biggest stars have adopted the habit of donating them to the sanctuary. We thus find the bicycles used by Bartali, Coppi and Merckx to ride to victory in the Tour de France, the special bicycles used by Moser to establish the hour record and several pink, yellow and world-champion jerseys. By the 1990s there were so many items they no longer fitted in the small church. Designed and built next to the sanctuary, the Cycling Museum was inaugurated on 14th October 2006 during that year's Giro di Lombardia, with a ceremony attended by several past and present cycling

champions. However, many important mementoes continue to be displayed in the sanctuary church. For information on the museum: info@museodelghisallo.it - www.museodelghisallo.it.



 Back in the car, take the road in front of the parking lot and continue towards Piano Rancio / San Primo. After about 3 km, in Piano Rancio, park in the large car park on the left to reach the nearby **Jungle Raider Park**. This is a rope park with ability trails suspended in mid-air, stretching between tree trunks with wooden boardwalks, Nepalese bridges and lianas. The park is open from April to October and offers nine trails, which vary in difficulty, and other activities. www.jungleraiderpark.com

Leaving the Jungle Raider Park, walk left and continue along via Piano Rancio to take a dirt track on the left called Via Menaresta. A 15-minute walk away is the source of the River Lambro, which, as the name of the road suggests, is called Menaresta.

THE RIVER LAMBRO

The Lambro - the main river in the Brianza area - begins life in the heart of the Larian Triangle, at 944 metres above sea level, near Pian Rancio. Here the river is little more than a trickle of water that springs forth from two sloping slabs of rock. The spring's name, "Menaresta" ("mena" meaning it goes and "resta" meaning it stays), mirrors its most unusual feature. In fact, it has a constant capacity all year round, but with an intermittent flow that means that periods during which the flow is more modest, are followed by moments of higher capacity. This is due to the peculiar subterranean water tank shaped like an upside-down syphon - when the water that collects in it exceeds the level of the bend, it flows out more copiously until it falls back below the outlet, thus decreasing external flow.



Return to the car and from the car park turn left and after a few metres, at a junction, turn right towards Bellagio. Just after the junction, we recommend stopping at the rock known as **Sasso di Lentina** (photo 6), one of the largest erratic masses in the area, transported here at the time of the glaciations. In distant times, these masses became detached from the Alps and were transported south for several hundred kilometres by the glaciers. When these finally withdrew and melted, about 12,000 years ago, the rocks were deposited in areas that had completely different types of rock and soil. As a result, these masses attracted the attention of ancient populations that made them the focus of their religious cults or used them, much more prosaically, as material for buildings or for sculpting.



We now continue in the same direction until we reach a new junction with the small church of Guello and then continue straight as far as Bellagio (13 km) (photo 7), once again enjoying the magnificent views that open up along the way.



EVENTS

Motorcyclist meeting: (Civenna) 1st November in front of the bronze flame erected at the most panoramic point on the Lake Como circuit.

Giro di Lombardia cycling race: in October the last 'Monument' of the European calendar, nicknamed "the Classic of the Falling Leaves", almost always crosses Ghisallo Pass.

Bellagio and Lake Como Festival: (various venues) summer classical music festival.

www.bellagiofestival.com

MARKETS

Magreglio (Madonna del Ghisallo): Secondhand market on the first Sunday in the month and craft market on the fourth Sunday in the month.

ACTIVE HOLIDAY

Trekking: the two-day hike "Dorsale del Triangolo Lariano" crosses the San Primo area. It is a 37 km long trail from Brunate to Bellagio. Description leaflets available at the Tourist Infopoints.

Walking: do not miss the walking tours of the hamlets and suburbs of Bellagio suggested by the Tourist Office PromoBellagio. Brochures available in different languages.

For holiday tips and activities in Bellagio, visit www.bellagiolakecomo.com