

A circular itinerary to discover the wild and surprising eastern shore of Lake Como, with small villages that hide precious little jewels. It then moves from the lake to the mountains, climbing to the heart of the Larian Triangle, as the region between the branches of Como and Lecco is called, visiting "the holiday resorts" in vogue among the Milanese in the last century that to this day meet the needs of those searching for places to relax and to enjoy active tourism too.


Departure and arrival point: Como

Como can be reached by car by taking the Como Centro exit on the A9 motorway and by Trenitalia or Trenord trains from Milan to Lugano.

Duration: full day + any stops


The Treasures of the Larian Triangle



 The itinerary can best be covered by car with some transfers on foot; it can also be covered by bicycle for those with professional bicycles and a good level of fitness. The most demanding climb is 13 km long, with a difference in altitude of 800 metres and an average gradient of 7%. We recommend great care and attention as there are no reserved lanes and some sections of the road are very narrow and extremely busy.



From Como take the provincial road SP583 towards Bellagio. The road, which runs high above the lake, offers magnificent views over Como and the opposite shores of the lake. The first village we come across is **Blevio**, which is divided into seven hamlets many of which have several noble villas. We descend slightly to the lakeside village of **Torno**, which deserves a stop (for the visit see itinerary 3). The state road rises again on the woody slope and a short while later enters the Municipality of

 Faggeto Lario that links the mountain hamlets of Molina, Lemna and Palanzo and that of Riva on the lake, which has a small lido at the very end of the road open to vehicles. We continue again along the state road to reach Pognana Lario and then **Careno**, one of the most characteristic villages on the lake. We recommend a visit to it by parking just beyond the village and returning on foot to take the dirt track under the main road and descending after the parish church through narrow streets to the landing stage and the beach (see box). Just beyond Careno, the road reaches **Nesso**.

CARENO and NESSO






Seen from the lake, **Careno** has a very unusual upside down triangular shape with the small Romanesque church of **Saint Martino** (12th century) at its peak. We reach it by descending stone steps, along the way discovering panoramic binoculars formed by arches and narrow passageways between old houses. We can enjoy the feeling of peace and times gone by this village – that seems to slide into the lake - transmits. The church (normally closed) has some

interesting frescoes and externally features a portico, which opens towards the lake and has a charming mullioned arch and a tall stone bell-tower. It was the church of the community that remained independent for the entire Middle Ages. Skirt the church to reach the tiny beach, whilst the staircase descends to the small harbour served by the "Navigazione Lago di Como" company in summer.




Nesso is a village of prehistoric origin that was romanized at the end of the 1st century and became an important church with the spread of Christianity. The parish church dates from the 11th century but shows now Baroque forms with later stucco decorations and frescoes. Nesso is famous for its Orrido, a waterfall that drops into a tall, narrow gorge that divides the village in two. To visit Nesso, park near the branch road for Pian del Tivano. From here, a charming dirt

track begins close to the lake that leads back towards the Orrido. The best point for observing it is precisely from the Romanesque bridge of Civera where our walk ends, after passing the small square near the landing stage and the covered passageway of a beautiful house with wonderful views of the lake and a millstone hanging on the wall.



Return to the car to leave the lake and climb along the panoramic road that winds upwards to **Piani del Tivano** (photo 4), offering magnificent views on the way. This handy tarmacked road crosses the entire plain, which is situated at 900 metres above sea level. On Sundays, this grassy hollow   is a popular destination for hundreds of tourists thanks to its wide, open green areas that are ideal for picnics and mountains walks in summer, becoming crosscountry skiing, sledging and snow-shoe tracks in winter (for information  SCI Club Sormano). The highest point of the road is in Colma, a popular observation point thanks to its views over the hills of Brianza, the Po Plain, the outline of the pre-Alps and the Valassina Valley. It is also popular with astronomy enthusiasts thanks to the **observatory**; run by the Gruppo Astrofilli Brianza, it is open to the public for observations and guided visits. (www.osservatoriosormano.it)



Colma di Sormano became famous in the 1970s when its extremely steep climb, known as the “wall of Sormano” (photo 5), was a leg in the Giro di Lombardia cycle race. Cancelled after just a few years due to its steepness that, exceeding 25% in some stretches, forced many cyclists to dismount and continue on foot, it remains popular with many cycling enthusiasts, so much so it was recently decided to turn it into an open-air museum, putting back on the tarmac comments and moments from the cycle races, recording the gradient and also a description of the vegetation at the sides of the road and the peaks that can be seen on the horizon. In recent years it has also been put back into the route of the historical race. On foot, the “wall” is a great shortcut for Sormano. By car instead follow the winding road that descends towards Asso that we reach after about a dozen kilometres. The road bends again, circling the centre, and then flanks the River Lambro. On the left we can note the waterfall of Vallategna, a thirty-metre drop of the Foce Stream into the River Lambro. Continuing beyond the Ferrovie Nord station we reach the centre of Canzo, a small holiday resort with beautiful shops and elegant patisseries, ideal for a quick and delicious break. About 1 kilometre    south of the village is Segrino Lake, a small pre-Alpine lake where bathing is permitted, flanked by a 5 km pedestrian-cycle path. On the eastern side, the cycle path gives access to some small free beaches, whilst to the south, in the municipality of Eupilio, there is a lido to which access is possible subject to payment.




THE NOCCIOLINI FROM CANZO

In numerous patisseries in the village you will find a wide range of typical Nocciolini, small, crumbly biscuits similar to amaretti (almond macaroons), but hazelnut flavoured. Still produced following ancient recipes, they are recognized by the Lombardy region as a “traditional agricultural and food product”. The local confectioners' original recipe is secret but you can try these alternative homemade Nocciolini: mix 200 g hazelnut flour, 200 g sugar and one spoon white flour; add 8 egg whites beaten stirring gently to keep them from deflating. Place small heaps of the mixture on the baking tray and bake until they come out dry.

We continue by flanking the lake and then take the road on the left towards **Pusiano**. The road descends, offering us views of another small Brianza lake, Lake Pusiano (photo 6), with its picturesque, privately owned Cypress island, a place rich in history, declared site of cultural interest. At the traffic lights we turn right onto state road SS639 towards Erba. The road crosses the town of Pusiano, presenting us with **Palazzo Beauharnais** (15th-16th century), preceded by a public park completed by Eugène de Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepson and viceroy of Italy.





Lake Pusiano is well worth a stop because, as well as beautiful walks, it is possible to hire boats, go  fishing on the small artificial lakes of Eupilio or go on mini-cruises on solar powered ferries. (for information: www.navigazionepusiano.com)

We continue straight for about 4 km until we cross, in the territory of Erba, Via Milano just beyond the bridge. Here we turn right to reach the centre, again flanking the river. At the roundabout we turn left, go over the level crossing and turn onto the central road, Corso XXV Aprile, where we can park the car to walk along this shopping street or reach the staircase of the **Monument to the Fallen** (by Giuseppe Terragni, 1926-1929). Climb the long stone staircase to admire the panoramic views of the plain Pian d'Erba and the beautiful bell-tower of the Church of Saint Eufemia, the symbol of the city. Behind the shrine there is the open air Licinium theatre. At the foot of the staircase is the entrance to the public park of Villa Majnoni through which it is possible to reach the charming village of Villincino, the ancient settlement crossed by a narrow and winding quarter introduced by a 11th century gate-tower topped by an elegant mullioned arch.

Drive back to Como along the "old road for Como" that begins on the left of the staircase as Via Bartesaghi. Along the road we note Pomerio Castle, a mediaeval manor house with elegant neo-Gothic mullioned windows and remains of a tower dating from the 11th century in Buccinigo d'Erba and in Albese con Cassano, the delightful rural Church of Saint Pietro, which has a leaning bell-tower.

From Tavernerio we suggest returning to Como via Ponzate and Camnago Volta: at the roundabout in the centre of the village continue straight along Via Primo Maggio. After a short uphill stretch, the road descends towards Como following the valley of the Cosia Stream with panoramic views of the city and on clear days, of the Alps of Piedmont. Just beyond the church in Camnago Volta turn left to reach Campora cemetery where we find the **Mausoleum of Alessandro Volta**, the Comoborn inventor who spent the last years of his life here. In neoclassical style and topped by a metal canopy, it is introduced by two life-size statues representing Religion, praying for her model son and Science, crying over her lover. The period lamp-posts at the entrance are fuelled by methane, a gas discovered by the scientist, and were placed there in 1999 to mark the bicentenary of the invention of the battery.

  From the car park above Camnago church begins Ponte dei Bottini path: a cycle/pedestrian path that exploits the old tramway that once linked Como and Lecco (1 hour return journey) with benches and stopping spots in the clearings.

Back in Via Rienza, we can reach Como in just a few minutes, entering the city from Via Briantea.

EVENTS

Gnocchi festival: (Pognana) on 16th August handmade gnocchi can be savoured whilst enjoying splendid views from the small church of Saint Rocco.

Giubiana Feast: (Canzo) last Thursday in January, a bonfire to chase away the winter with a grand celebration rich in rural symbolism.


Biofera: (Canzo) in September; a fair promoting organic culture and agriculture, with stands, conferences, workshops and shows for children.

Madonna della Neve: (Pusiano) a traditional celebration on 4th and 5th August with an amazing illumination of the lake and a firework display (on 4th) and religious celebrations with a snowfall on the sanctuary on the mountain (on 5th).

MARKETS

Erba Thursday mornings, **Canzo:** Wednesday mornings

ACTIVE HOLIDAY

 **Mountain & race bike trails:** for trained bikers only, the Nesso-Colma di Sormano, the Asso-Colma di Sormano and the Ghisallo roads are the best uphill parcours.

Winter sports in Pian del Tivano: snow-shoes, cross-country skiing or bob, Pian del Tivano offers numerous possibilities for practicing the most "eco-friendly" winter sports.

Sport climbing: the Larian Triangle is rich with cliffs, vie ferrate and boulder blocks. In Erba very well-known climbing rocks are Buco del Piombo, Falesia del Tramonto, Sasso d'Erba and Tavarac; in Canzo the Via Ferrata Corni di Canzo and the Gajum blocks. (www.triangolariano.it)