

MILAN AND THE LAKES TRAVEL GUIDE



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Top 10 Attractions

Leonardo's Last Supper

The Last Supper, Leonardo da Vinci's 1495–7 masterpiece, is a touchstone of Renaissance painting. Since the day it was finished, art students have journeyed to Milan to view the work, which takes up a refectory wall in a Dominican convent next to the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. The 20th-century writer Aldous Huxley called it "the saddest work of art in the world": he was referring not to the impact of the scene – the moment when Christ tells his disciples "one of you will betray me" – but to the fresco's state of deterioration.

More on Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)

Top 10 Features

1 Groupings

Leonardo was at the time studying the effects of sound and physical waves. The groups of figures reflect the triangular Trinity concept (with Jesus at the centre) as well as the effect of a metaphysical shock wave, emanating out from Jesus and reflecting back from the walls as he reveals there is a traitor in their midst.

2 "Halo" of Jesus

The medieval taste for halos is satisfied without sacrificing Renaissance realism: Christ is set in front of a window, giving him the requisite nimbus without looking as if he's wearing a plate for a hat.

3 Judas

Previously Judas was often painted across the table from everyone else. Leonardo's approach is more subtle, and instead he places the traitor right among the other disciples.

4 The Table

The table probably uses the same cloth and settings that the monks would have used, heightening the illusion that they were sharing their meals with Jesus and the Apostles.

5 Perspective

The walls of the room in the painting appear to be continuations of the walls of the actual room you are standing in. The lines zoom in on Christ at the centre, drawing your eye towards his and helping to heighten the drama.

6 Light

Note the brilliant effects of the carefully worked interaction between the three sources of light – from the refectory itself, from the windows painted in the background, and from the windows on the refectory's left wall.

7 Reflections

A detail that heightens the illusion of reality: the colours of the disciples' robes are reflected in the glasses and pewter plates on the table.

8 Coats of Arms Above Painting

The lunettes, which are situated above the fresco, were also painted by Leonardo. It seems that he was as happy painting the perfect leaves around the Sforza coats of arms as he was composing the vast scene below.

9 Crucifixion on Opposite Wall

Most people spend so much time gazing at the Last Supper that they never notice the 1495 fresco by Donato Montorfano on the opposite wall, still rich with colour and vivid detail.

10 Example of Ageing

Montorfano's Crucifixion was painted in true buon fresco, but the now barely visible kneeling figures to the sides were added later on dry plaster – the same method Leonardo used.

Leonardo's Last Supper

Practical information

- Map J3

Tourist info:

- Piazza S Maria delle Grazie 2/Corso Magenta, Milan
- 02-8942-1146
- www.cenacoloviciano.it
- 8am–7:30pm Tue–Sun
- €6.50 plus €1.50 booking fee; free for EU citizens under 18 or over 65
- Cumulative ticket: Cenacolo, Pinacoteca di Brera and Museo Teatrale alla Scala: €10

Top tips

- Book ahead by at least two days (a week in spring), or you are unlikely to get in.
- The informative audio guide will help explain why such a deteriorated fresco is nevertheless so important.
- A few blocks down Via Magenta at via Carducci 13, Bar Magenta takes up a wide corner, a pleasing blend of Art Nouveau café and Guinness pub (see Bar Magenta, Milan).

A Vanishing Fresco

Rather than paint in buon fresco (the technique of applying pigment to wet plaster so that the colours bind with the base), Leonardo used oil paint on semi-dry plaster. Unfortunately, the image began to deteriorate even before he had finished the work. To worsen matters, Napoleon's troops used the fresco for target practice, and bombs during World War II ripped off the building's roof. A recent restoration removed centuries of over-painting by early "restorers" and filled in the completely vanished bits with pale washes.

Milan's Duomo

Milan's cathedral took almost 430 years to complete, from its 1386 inception to the façade's finishing touches in 1813 under Napoleon, but the builders stuck tenaciously to the Gothic style. In sheer figures it is impressive: it's the third largest church in the world, it has more than 3,500 exterior statues and is supported by 52 massive columns inside.

More on marvellous Churches in Lombardy

Top 10 Highlights



1 Façade
From the 16th century, various top architects submitted designs for the façade, but it wasn't until 1805–13 that the Neo-Gothic frontage with its bronze doors and reliefs was finally built. In 2002, the Duomo's exterior went under scaffolding for a major cleaning set to last a few years.



2 Naves
The interior is a thicket of 52 pilasters ringed with statues of saints in niches. The Gothic "tracery" on the vaulting of the four outer naves is actually ingenious trompe l'oeil paintings dating from the 16th century. The gloom helps the illusion.

3 Battistero Paleocristiano
A stairway near the entrance leads down to Paleochristian excavations, which have uncovered traces of Roman baths from the 1st century BC, a baptistery from AD 287 and a 4th-century basilica.



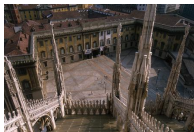
4 Stained-Glass Windows

Dozens of stained-glass windows create splashes of coloured light in the otherwise gloomy interior. The oldest, on the right aisle, date from 1470; the newest from 1988.

5 Funerary Monument to Gian Giacomo Medici
Leone Leoni created the 1560–3 Michelangelesque tomb of a local mercenary general, including a life-sized bronze of the man dressed in Roman centurion armour.

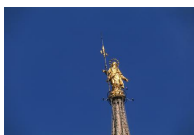
6 St Bartholomew Flayed
Marco d'Agrate's gruesome carving of 1562 shows the unfortunate saint with muscles and veins exposed and his flayed skin thrown rather jauntily over one shoulder.

7 Ambulatory and Crypt
The ambulatory is now open only to worshippers, but you can see a lovely example of a 14th-century Lombard sacristy door. Stairs nearby lead down into the crypt, where the body of Saint Charles Borromeo rests in a crystal coffin, and to the treasury, which is filled with elegant reliquaries and liturgical devices.



Milan's Duomo).

8 Ascent to Roof
Climb or take the lift up to the roof to explore the cathedral's remarkable Gothic crown of spires, gargoyles, statues and tracery – and for the views (see Exploring the Roof of



9 La Madonnina
Perched at the top of the Duomo's central spire, 108 m (354 ft) above ground level, the gilded copper "Little Madonna" has governed over Milan's best panorama since 1774. For

centuries she reigned as the highest point in the city until the Pirelli Tower stole her title.

10 Museo del Duomo The museum, housed in the neighbouring Palazzo Reale, contains stained-glass windows and tapestries removed from the Duomo for safekeeping. There is a masterpiece by Tintoretto, The Infant Christ among the Doctors, and wooden models of the Duomo.

Milan's Duomo

Practical information

- Map M4
- Piazza del Duomo, Milan
- 02-860-358
- Cathedral: 7am–7pm daily
- free
- Roof: 9am–5:45pm (to 4:15pm 16 Feb–14 Nov) daily
- €5 by elevator, €3.50 by stairs

Museo del Duomo:

- Piazza del Duomo 14
- 10am – 1:15pm, 3–6pm daily
- €6
- Cumulative ticket for roof and museum €7

Top tips

- You cannot enter if your shoulders are bare or your shorts or skirt rise above mid-thigh; bring a light shawl or two.
- On Milan's rare smog-free days, the view from the roof stretches across the plains as far as the Alps.
- You're spoilt for café choice around here, but nothing beats a Campari at historic Zucca just inside the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (see Zucca (Caffè Miani), Milan and Zucca in Galleria (Caffè Miani)).

La Fabbrica del Duomo

There's no better example of Milanese tenacity than the fact that their cathedral is a totally unspoilt example of the Gothic style, despite taking a full 427 years to build. The generations of builders somehow ignored the siren calls of every new style that came along, from Renaissance, then Baroque, to Neo-Classical. The phrase *la fabbrica del Duomo* – "the building of the Duomo" – in Milanese dialect is still used to refer to anything that seems to take forever to complete.

Pinacoteca di Brera

Milan's Brera is unique among Italy's major art galleries in that it isn't founded on the riches of the church or a noble family, but the policies of Napoleon, who suppressed churches across the region and took their riches off to galleries and academies. Over the next two centuries, the collections grew to take in some of the best Renaissance-era painting from northern Italy, representatives of the Venetian school and several giants of central Italy, including Raphael and Piero della Francesca.

Top 10 Works of Art

- 1 Umberto Boccioni's Riot in the Galleria**
In this work of 1911, the Milanese are dashing for the doors of Caffè Zucca (see Zucca (Caffè Miani), Milan). A companion, *The City Rises*, is also here.
- 2 Gentile Fabriano's Valle Romita Polyptych**
The Brera worked hard to reconstitute this altarpiece of 1410. The five main panels came with Napoleon; the other four were tracked down and purchased later.
- 3 Mantegna's Dead Christ**
Mantegna was one of the Renaissance's greatest perspective virtuosos, and this is his foreshortened masterpiece, painted in about 1500.
- 4 Giovanni Bellini's Virgin and Child**
The Brera houses several masterpieces by the early Venetian Renaissance master Bellini, including two very different versions of *Virgin and Child*. One is almost a Flemish-style portrait, painted when Bellini was 40. The other is a luminous scene of colour and light, painted 40 years later.
- 5 Tintoretto's Finding the Body of St Mark**
Tintoretto uses his mastery of drama and light in this work of the 1560s to highlight the finding of the body of St Mark by Venetian merchants in the Crusades.
- 6 Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altarpiece**
This 1472 scene shows Piero's patron the Duke of Montefeltro kneeling before the Virgin and Child. Just months earlier, the Duke's beloved wife had given birth to a male heir who tragically died within weeks.
- 7 Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin**
In this early work depicting the Virgin Mary's terrestrial marriage to Joseph, Raphael took the idea and basic layout from his Umbrian master Perugino, tweaking it with a perfected single-point perspective.
- 8 Caravaggio's Supper at Emmaus**
This 1605 work was Caravaggio's second painting of the Supper. The deep black shadows and bright highlights create mood and tension.
- 9 Canaletto's Bacino di San Marco**
The undisputed master of 18th-century Venetian cityscapes did at least seven versions of this scene of St Mark's bell tower and the Doge's Palace.

10 Francesco Hayez's The Kiss

This passionate 1859 scene – painted when Hayez was 68 – was intended as an allegory of the struggle for independence and the importance of family.

The Brera Collections

- 1 13th-Century Paintings (Rooms II–IV)**
Italian art simply wouldn't be the same without the naturalism, bright colours and emotive qualities that Giotto brought to the world of painting, and his influence is clear in works such as *Three Scenes from the Life of St Columna* by Giovanni Baronzio of Rimini. Other works here trace the Gothic style from Central Italy (Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Andrea di Bartolo) to Venice (Lorenzo Veneziano and Jacopo Bellini). The best works are Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Virgin and Child* and Gentile da Fabriano's *Valle Romita polyptych*.
- 2 Jesi Collection of 20th-Century Art (Room X)**
When Maria Jesi donated her fine hoard in 1976, the Brera became the first major museum in Italy to acquire a significant 20th-century collection. Boccioni's *Riot in the Galleria* is highlighted on p12; other master-works are by Morandi, Severini, Modigliani, Picasso and Braque.
- 3 Venetian Renaissance (Rooms V–IX; XI–XIV)**
It is the art of Venice that steals the show at the Brera, and the bulk of the museum's important and memorable works fill these ten rooms: Mantegna's *Dead Christ* (see) and numerous superlative works by his brother-in-law Giovanni Bellini. It all culminates in the brushy, stormy, wonderously lit and intriguingly coloured scenes of Venice's High Renaissance trio: Tintoretto, Titian and Paolo Veronese.
- 4 Lombard Renaissance (Rooms XV–XIX)**
The stars of the Lombard section are the 16th-century Campi clan from Cremona, painters inspired by Raphael and, above all, Leonardo da Vinci. Tiny room XIX is devoted to the direct heirs of the Leonardo revolution: Il Bergognone and Bernardino Luini.
- 5 Marchese Renaissance (Rooms XX–XXIII)**
These rooms feature Flemish-inspired artists and 15th-century painters from the central Marches province. The latter took local art from the post-Giotto Gothicism into a courtly Early Renaissance style, exemplified by Carlo Crivelli.
- 6 Tuscan Renaissance (Rooms XXIV–XXVII)**
The paintings here are few, but they're stunners: Piero's *Montefeltro Altarpiece* and Raphael's *Marriage*

of the Virgin (see Piero della Francesca's Montefeltro Altarpiece and Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin), alongside works by Bramante, Signorelli and Bronzino.

7 17th-Century Bolognese Renaissance (Room XXVIII)

As Florence and Rome got swept away with Mannerist fantasies and experiments, Bolognese artists held the line on Classical Renaissance ideals. In this room we see Ludovico Caracci, Il Guercino and Guido Reni engaged in an ever more crystalline and reductive naturalistic style.

8 Caravaggio and his Followers (Room XXIX)

Caravaggio's use of harsh contrast and dramatic tension in paintings such as the Supper at Emmaus (see) influenced a generation of painters. The works of some of the best of them – Mattia Preti, Jusepe de Ribera and Orazio Gentileschi – are hung here too.

9 Baroque and Rococo (Rooms XXX–XXXVI)

In the late 16th century, Italy moved from Renaissance naturalism to the ever more ornate stylings of the Baroque, with Daniele Crespì and Pietro da Cortona to the fore. The Baroque fed off its own overblown conventions until it became Rococo, a style heralded by Tiepolo and Giuseppe Maria Crespì.

10 19th-Century Painting (Rooms XXXVII–XXXVIII)

There's not so much to pique one's interest in these final rooms, save Francesco Hayez's monumental scenes and the pseudo-Impressionist Macchiaioli school (Fattori, Segantini and Lega).

The Palace

The late Baroque Palazzo di Brera was built from 1591 to 1658 as a Jesuit college, but not completed until 1774, after the Jesuits were dissolved. The vast courtyard centres around a bronze statue of Napoleon in the guise of Mars. It was commissioned in 1807, but did not arrive until 1859.

Pinacoteca di Brera

Practical information

- Map M2
- Via Brera 28, Milan
- 02-722-631
- www.brera.beniculturali.it
- 8:30am–7:15pm Tue–Sun
- Adm €5; free for EU citizens under 18 or over 65
- Cumulative ticket (available at Cenacolo): Pinacoteca di Brera, Cenacolo and Museo Teatrale alla Scala: €10

Top tips

- Make sense of the works on display with the excellent audio guides.
- Cheap guided tours for any number of people are available weekdays, but must be booked 2–3 days in advance.
- The bars of the Brera district (see Bar Jamaica) make for great snacking or a post-gallery apéritif.

Castello Sforzesco



This massive, sun-baked rectangular bastion in Milan is actually a complex of fortresses, castles and towers begun in 1451 for Francesco Sforza, largely restored in 1893–1904, and again after massive World War II damage. Its many collections include art and sculpture from the early Middle Ages to the 18th century, decorative arts, musical instruments, Oriental art, and archaeology – all free of charge.

Top 10 Highlights

1 Michelangelo's Rondanini Pietà
Michelangelo started his career with a Pietà carved at the age of 25 (now in St Peter's, Rome), and while the master was famous for not finishing his statues, in this instance it was not his fault. At the age of 89, in 1564, he was struck down (probably by a stroke) literally while chipping away at this sculpture.

2 Funerary Monument for Gaston de Foix
Gaston de Foix was Duke of Nemours, Marshall of France, ruler of the French Milan Duchy, post-humous hero of the 1512 Battle of Ravenna and Louis XII's nephew. His tomb's ethereally sculpted elements, carved by Bambaia in 1510, are now dispersed (see Castello Sforzesco).

3 Sala delle Asse
The "Plank Hall" was decorated in 1498 by Leonardo da Vinci with a trompe l'oeil arbour of geometrically intricate vines on the vaulted ceiling. This was painted over many times; the only bit we can be sure is original is a monochrome sketch of a twisting root, on the wall between the two windows.

4 Mantegna's Madonna in Glory
Bellini's famous brother-in-law painted this magnificent altarpiece for a Verona church in 1497,

making it one of his final works. The harshness of his youthful style is tempered by age and experience to yield this solid, naturalistic approach.

5 Bellini's Madonna and Child
This is an early Bellini, painted 1468–70, with touching detail. Mary wears a pearl-trimmed pink shawl. Jesus gazes at a lemon in his hand.

6 Bellini's Poet Laureate
The attribution of this portrait, painted in 1475, has wavered between Bellini and Antonella da Messina. There is an almost Flemish attention to detail in the hair and eyes of the subject.

7 Arcimboldo's Primavera
Arcimboldo developed the weird style of painting metaphoric "portraits" – in this case, using fruits and flowers to personify "Spring" as a human profile.

8 Trivulzio Tapestries
The Tapestries of the Twelve Months were designed by Bramantino in 1503 and named for the man who commissioned them, General Gian Giacomo Trivulzio.

9 Civico Museo Archeologico

Milan's civic archaeology museum's collections go from local, Lombard artifacts of Paleolithic tribes to Italy's last Celtic peoples of the 1st century BC.

10 Parco Sempione

The 47-hectare (115-acre) park northwest of the castle is central Milan's only real green space. A public park since 1893, many of its structures are fine early 20th-century Art Nouveau.

Castello Sforzesco

Practical information

- Map K2
- Piazza Castello, Milan
- 02-8846-3807
- www.milanocastello.it
- 9am–5:30pm daily
- Free
- Some sections closed for renovation 2002–2003/4; locations of displays may change

Top tips

- Ask about special tours, sometimes at night, that can get you into many non-museum sections of the castle that are normally closed to the public, and sometimes up on to the battlements themselves.
- The snack vans on-site are over-priced, and the nearest bars are best avoided. Head down Via Dante to the café at no. 15, where you can enjoy oversized panini and decent gelato.

Gaston de Foix's Tomb

In 1510, King Francis I ordered a tomb for the young hero. Bambaia executed an effigy of the warrior lying in state and beautiful high relief panels. When the French pulled out of Milanese affairs in 1522, the tomb was unfinished. The pieces were sold off, winding up here, in the Ambrosiana (see Bambaia's Detail from the Tomb of Gaston de Foix), in Turin and in London.

Pinacoteca Ambrosiana

Local Cardinal Federico Borromeo founded this library (of some 35,000 volumes and over 750,000 prints) and painting gallery in Milan in 1603 after a formative time spent in Rome's artistic circles. It was (and is) a place in which to study theological issues via academic tomes and works of art, a truly Renaissance mix of religion, intellectualism and aesthetics. There are paintings by such greats as Tiepolo, Francesco Hayez and Jan Breughel.

Top 10 Works of Art

1 Botticelli's Madonna del Padiglione
Angels pull back a rich canopy to reveal a scene of Mary and Jesus in a pastoral setting. This work dates from the 1490s, after Botticelli's religious crisis turned him from the famed mythological scenes of his brilliant youth.

2 Leonardo's Portrait of a Musician
This portrait, quasi-Flemish in pose and detail, yet glowing with a sense of human psychology typical of Leonardo, has been said to be of various subjects, but most likely depicts a musician of the Sforza court. It is almost certainly by Leonardo, but probably retouched over the years.

3 Leonardo's Codex Atlantico
Reproductions of pages from these oversized tomes reside inside glass-topped tables. They are filled with Leonardo da Vinci's sketches.

4 Titian's Adoration of the Magi
This courtly tumble of the three kings kissing the toes of baby Jesus in his manger was part of Federico Borromeo's original collection, a complex work from 1560 that the cardinal described as "a school for painters".

5 Luini's Holy Family
If this looks familiar, it is because, especially early on, Luini was almost slavishly devoted to the manner of his master Leonardo da Vinci, and in fact this painting is based on a famous drawing by Leonardo.

6 Bassano's Rest on the Flight into Egypt
The Venetian master Jacopo Bassano was turning to a densely coloured palette, rich in contrasting tones, when he produced this work in 1547.

7 Raphael's Cartoon for School of Athens
This is the preparatory drawing for Raphael's famous fresco of Greek philosophers with the faces of Renaissance artists.

8 Caravaggio's Basket of Fruit
This still life was probably acquired from Caravaggio by the cardinal during his Roman sojourn. The painting shows how Caravaggio was, even at the age of 25, perfecting the hyper-realism he would soon apply to large canvases and more complex scenes.

9 Bril's Landscape with St Paul
This is the most dramatic of the over half-dozen Bril works on display, showcasing how Bril managed to work

with the early 17th-century's most popular sacred scenes but set them in his beloved, intricately executed landscape form.

10 Bambaia's Detail from the Tomb of Gaston de Foix
The Milanese sculptor Bambaia carved this series of small marble panels with delicate figures surrounded by military accoutrements and mythological creatures, all in extraordinary high relief. This is but a part of the work; most of the monument is in the Castello Sforzesco.

Pinacoteca Ambrosiana

Practical information

- Map L4
- Piazza Pio XI 2
- 02-806-921
- www.ambrosiana.it
- 10am–5:30pm Tue–Sun
- Adm €7.50

Top tips

- You can buy a cumulative ticket for the Ambrosiana, Museo Diocesano and Museo del Duomo.
- Just around the corner on Via Spadari is Peck (see Cracco-Peck, Milan), one of Italy's best food emporia and oversized tavole calde (bars).

Raphael's Revelation

In the final School of Athens fresco, Michelangelo (depicted as Heraclitus) lounges on the central steps. The detail is missing in this sketch because Raphael only added him when, half-way through painting, he got a glimpse of the Sistine Chapel and was deeply impressed.

Sant'Ambrogio

One of Milan's oldest basilicas (founded by St Ambrose in 379) served as a model for most of the city's early medieval churches. It was enlarged in the 9th century, and what we see today dates largely from 1080 (albeit with later reconstructions). It instantly became Milan's most beloved house of worship when the wildly popular (and future patron saint) Ambrose was buried here in 397. Everything is well signposted in Italian and English.

Top 10 Highlights

1 Atrium
The first clue that this church is something apart is the lovely, elongated atrium between the entrance and the church, built from 1088 to 1099 using columns with 6th-century capitals depicting fantastical scenes.

2 Façade
The austere but balanced façade consists of five arches fitted under the peaked roof line. It is flanked by two mismatched towers: the Monks' Tower on the right from the 9th century and the Canons' Tower on the left from 1144.

3 Serpent Column
Just on the inside of the third pier on the left stands a short column topped by a curlicue of a bronze serpent, a 10th-century Byzantine work (although local legend says it's the serpent cast by Moses).

4 Bergognone's Redeemer
This limpid, late 15th-century Renaissance scene of the Risen Christ was originally positioned on the wall to the right of the altar (where its painted trompe-l'oeil architecture was far more suited). It was later removed and placed in the first chapel on the left.

5 Sarcophagus of Stilicho
This late Roman-era sarcophagus preceded the pulpit (No. 6) built around it. The tomb is aligned with the original walls, while the pulpit is aligned with the nave.

6 Pulpit
This composite of 11th- and early 12th-century Romanesque relief panels was rescued after the church ceiling collapsed in 1196 and reconstructed into this magnificent pulpit.

7 Golden Altar
A master goldsmith, Volvinio, crafted the "golden altar" in 835. The Life of Christ is in gold leaf on the front, and the Life of St Ambrose in gilded silver on the back.

8 Ciborium
This altar canopy sits at the centre of the presbytery. Its four ancient Roman columns support a canopy of four 10th-century Lombard polychrome stucco reliefs.

9 Apse Mosaics
The vast, colourful mosaic depicting Christ Pantocrator was largely pieced together between the 4th and 8th centuries, though bits were touched up or redone between the 17th and 20th centuries, especially

after a 1943 bombing tore away half of Christ and the Archangel on the left.

10 Sacello di San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro
Sant'Ambrogio was built next to a Paleo-Christian cemetery and a chapel decorated in the 5th century with a glittering dome of almost solid gold mosaics. The basilica grew to include the chapel and its ancient mosaics.

Sant'Ambrogio

Practical information

- Map K4
- Piazza Sant'Ambrogio 15, Milan
- 02-8645-0895,
- 7am–noon, 3–7pm Mon–Sat, 7am–1pm, 3–8pm Sun;
- free
- San Vittore in Ciel d'Oro
- 9:30am–11:45pm, 2:30–6pm daily;
- church free, museum adm €2

Top tips

- The best of the more portable objects formerly in the church treasury and small museum are now displayed in the Museo Diocesano.
- Walk northwest to the fabulous Art Nouveau café/pub Bar Magenta at Via Carducci 13 (see Bar Magenta, Milan).

St Ambrose

Ambrose (340–97) became Archbishop of Milan in 374, where he set about building the four great basilicas (this church, San Lorenzo, San Nazaro and San Sempliciano), tutoring St Augustine (whom he baptized into Christianity), and generally controlling the city from his bishop's throne. He was canonized soon after his death and became the city's patron.

Lake Maggiore's Isole Borromee

This trio of islets – Isola Bella (“Beautiful Island”), Isola Madre (“Mother Island”) and Isola Superiore, or Isola dei Pescatori (“Isle of the Fishermen”) – has been shaped by the Borromeo family, who in the 16th and 17th centuries turned Bella and Madre into vast garden-and-palace complexes. If you’ve time only for one, make it Isola Bella, though its ornate, formal gardens are less relaxing and botanically interesting than Isola Madre’s.

More on day’s itinerary including Isole Borromee

Top 10 Highlights



1 Isola Bella: Borromeo Palace

The vast Borromeo Palace and its grounds dominate the island. The palace is largely 17th century, but wasn’t finished until 1959. The sumptuous rooms have

stucco ceilings and are filled with inlaid dressers, Murano chandeliers and fine paintings.

2 Isola Bella: Sala di Musica in the Palace

The palace’s most important room is named for its collection of antique instruments. On 11 April 1935, Mussolini met here with Laval of France and Ramsay MacDonald of Britain in an attempt to stave off World War II.

3 Isola Bella: Tapestries in the Palace

This detail-rich series of 16th-century Flemish works is based on that popular theme for medieval tapestries: the unicorn (which is also a Borromeo heraldic totem).



4 Isola Bella: Grottoes

Artificial caves were all the rage in the 18th century. They were decorated with a sort of grand, intricate pebble-dash in black-and-white patterns.

5 Isola Bella: Borromeo Tombs

The “Private Chapel” was built in 1842–4 as a mausoleum for a pair of late Gothic/early Renaissance 15th-century family tombs as well as the 1522 Monument to the Birago Brothers, carved by Renaissance master Bambaia.



6 Isola Bella: Gardens

This pyramid of terraces is topped by a unicorn, the edges lined by statue-laden balustrades. A few pairs of white peacocks strut over the clipped lawns.

7 Isola Madre: Villa Borromeo

This summer villa was built largely between 1518 and 1585. Today it is a museum with mannequins in Borromeo livery and paraphernalia from puppet theatres.



8 Isola Madre: Botanical Gardens

The surprisingly lush and extensive gardens around the Villa Borromeo are filled with exotic flora. Take the time to walk around the island, past the azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias famous since the 19th century.

9 Isola Madre: Kashmir Cypress

Europe’s largest cypress spreads its 200-year-old, weeping Oriental strands of needles over a gravel courtyard to one side of the Villa Borromeo.



10 Isola Superiore

The Borromei pretty much left this island (also known as Isola dei Pescatori,) alone when they were converting its neighbours into sumptuous garden-palaces, allowing the island’s fishing hamlet to develop more naturally into a tourist draw today.

Lake Maggiore's Isole Borromeo

Practical information

- Map A2
- Access is from the ferry docks at Stresa
- www.borromeoturismo.it
- Isola Bella 0323-30-556,
- 22 Mar–26 Oct: 9am–5:30pm (Oct until 5pm) daily,
- adm €8.50
- Isola Madre 0323-31-261
- 22 Mar–26 Oct: 9am–5:30pm (Oct until 5pm) daily
- adm €8.50

Top tips

- Buy discounted island admission tickets along with your ferry ticket at the Stresa docks.
- Isola Bella's gardens remain open all day, but access is via the Palazzo so you can't enter between noon and 1:30pm.
- There are many cafés on Isola Bella's quay. Café Lago serves sandwiches, coffee and lager to a backdrop of rock music.

The Borromeo Family

The Borromeo clan fled political intrigue in Tuscany for Milan in 1395, where they bank-rolled the rise of the Visconti. Building a pan-European financial empire, they bought the Arona fiefdom in 1447. They skilfully tacked through the era's turbulent political winds, married wisely, and associated with the Sforza while slowly acquiring control of Lake Maggiore. The family still owns the islands.

Certosa di Pavia

Gian Galeazzo Visconti founded this charterhouse in 1396 as a vast family mausoleum, set 8 km (5 miles) north of Pavia. Finished in the mid-16th century under the Sforzas, it became one of the great monuments of the Lombard Renaissance. After the 1782 suppression of the Carthusian order, it was abandoned, then inhabited for brief spells until, in 1968, the Cistercians moved in to stay.

More on Pavia

Top 10 Highlights

1 Façade

The astounding and rich façade has decorative flourishes and polychrome marbles that set it apart and make it one of Italy's most important and idiosyncratic examples of late 15th-century architecture. The initial work was undertaken in 1473–99; the top part was continued after 1525, but never finished.

2 Perugino's Altarpiece

The central panel of the Eternal Father (1499) is all that remains here of the original full altarpiece by Umbrian master (and Raphael's first teacher) Perugino. The flanking panels are by Bergognone, while below are 16th-century reproductions of the other, original Perugino panels.

3 Bergognone's Works

Bergognone rules the Certosa, providing altarpieces for three chapels, plus part of Perugino's altarpiece. He also frescoed the seventh chapel on the right and the ends of both transepts, brilliantly blue with lapis lazuli.

4 St Ambrose with Saints

In Bergognone's 1492 altarpiece in the sixth chapel on the left, St Ambrose is enthroned and surrounded by four saints. The group is in a setting similar to the chapel interior, to create the illusion that they are present.

5 Funerary Monument of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este

The most renowned work in the Certosa is an empty tomb (see Certosa di Pavia), with remarkably lifelike effigies of the couple lying in state, carved in 1497 by Cristoforo Solari.

6 Ivory Altar

The Florentine sculptor Baldassare degli Embriachi carved this ivory triptych altarpiece (1400–1409), with 76 compartments and more than 100 tiny statues. It was stolen in 1984, leading to the uncovering of a ring of international art thieves outside Naples. The treasure, slightly damaged, was recovered.

7 Tomb of Gian Galeazzo Visconti

It's only fitting that the Certosa's founder should be buried here, in a monument of 1492–7 depicting scenes from Visconti's life, carved by Gian Cristoforo Romano. The sarcophagus below is by Andrea Alessi, while the statues of the Virgin, Fame and Victory were added in the mid-16th century.

8 Great Cloister

This large arcaded cloister is lined with the homes of the Cistercian monks who still inhabit the Certosa. These are cosy little two-storey houses with a tiny private chapel and walled gardens at the back.

9 Little Cloister

Guiniforte Solari designed this lovely arcaded space for the monks to gather and contemplate – and probably admire the magnificent flank of the church above.

10 Monks' Shop

The Cistercian monks make their own Chartreuse liqueurs, herbal soaps and scents, which they sell here to the public.

Certosa di Pavia

Practical information

- Map C5
- Via del Monumento 4, Pavia
- Oct–Mar: 9–11:30am, 2:30–4:30pm Tue–Sun; Apr: 9–11:30am, 2:30–5:30pm Tue–Sun May–Sep: 9–11:30am, 2:30–6pm Tue–Sun
- Free
- For more details, contact Pavia's tourist office 0382-22-156

Top tips

- Avoid visiting at the weekend, when the sight is very crowded.
- To get past the elaborate 1660 iron screen at the end of the nave, wait until one of the monks escorts a small group in to see the famous tombs and cloisters.
- There's nowhere to eat near the Certosa, so either head into Pavia itself, or bring a picnic and buy some of the monks' liqueur.

A Peripatetic Tomb

The sad story behind the beautiful tomb of Ludovico il Moro and his wife Beatrice d'Este illustrates that even the best-laid plans of the mightiest men can go terribly awry. The duke and his wife were meant to be buried together in Milan's Santa Maria delle Grazie (where the Last Supper had just been painted). But Ludovico ended up dying in exile in France, so only Beatrice was buried in Milan, and the church, strapped for cash, sold the funerary monument to the Certosa in 1564.

Bergamo

One of Northern Italy's surprising gems, Bergamo mixes medieval charm with a cultural sophistication that has made it popular among Italy's cognoscenti. Bergamo has been a split-level town since Roman times, when a civitas (today's medieval Upper Town) perched atop the hill and a suburbia (the modernized Lower Town) spread into the plain.

Top 10 Sights



- 1 Piazza del Duomo**
This square is dominated by elaborate Bergamasco architecture: the entrance to Santa Maria Maggiore, the façade of the Capella Colleoni and a fanciful baptistry of 1340.



- 2 Piazza Vecchia**
One of Northern Italy's most theatrical squares is surrounded by retro-medieval stone buildings, Renaissance palaces, a 12th-century tower and several historic cafés.

- 3 Cappella Colleoni**
The anchor of the twinned Piazas Vecchia and del Duomo is this magnificent Renaissance chapel devoted to Bergamo's warrior-lord Bartolomeo Colleoni. In pink and white patterned marble, it is covered with reliefs and Rococo frescoes.



- 4 Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore**
Inside the basilica, every inch of ceiling is covered with frescoes. Against the back wall is the tomb of composer Gaetano Donizetti. The gorgeous, early 16th-century, inlaid wood panels fronting the choir are by Lorenzo Lotto.

- 5 Museo Donizettiano**
Here are the original sheet music, piano and memorabilia of Bergamo's early 19th-century composer Gaetano Donizetti. He died, in the very bed on display here, of syphilis in 1848.



- 6 Via Colleoni**
The main drag of Bergamo's Upper Town is lined with shops and wine bars, modest medieval palaces and churches, tiny squares and half-timbered houses. It's closed to most traffic, and filled every evening with hordes of locals and visitors.

- 7 Castello**
Built by the town's Venetian lords in the 16th and 17th centuries, the castle in the hamlet of San Vigilio on Bergamo's hill has been reduced to the romantically decrepit ruins you can see today, with a public garden boasting fine views.

- 8 Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea**
Bergamo's modern art gallery features exhibitions alongside a permanent collection with works by some of Italy's key 20th-century painters: Giovanni Fattori, Boccioni, De Chirico, and Morandi as well as some nice Kandinskys.

- 9 Galleria dell'Accademia Carrara**
This excellent gallery is renowned for its outstanding works by early 16th-century master Lorenzo Lotto. Paintings by Raphael, Botticelli, Bellini and Mantegna round out the collections.

- 10 Teatro Donizetti**
Although the façade dates from 1897, this respected theatre was built in 1792, and the Neo-Classical interiors are wonderfully preserved. It has an annual opera season, plus ballet and drama.

Bergamo

Practical information

- Map D3
- Tourist info, Upper Town: Vicolo Aquila Nera 2 (off Piazza Vecchia)
- 035-232-730
- www.ap.t.bergamo.it
- Basilica 9am–noon (until 1pm Sun), 3–6pm daily;
- free
- Museo Donizettiano 9:30am–1pm, 2–5:30pm Tue–Sun; Oct–Mar: closed weekday afternoons;
- free
- Castello 9am–dusk daily
- free
- Galleria d'Arte 10am–1pm, 3–6:45pm Tue–Sun
- free
- Galleria dell'Accademia Carrara 9:30am–1pm, 2:30–6:45pm Tue–Sun (Oct–Mar: to 5:45pm);
- adm €2.58

Top tips

- To get to the Upper Town from the train station, take bus 1 or 1A and transfer (free) to the Funicolare Bergamo Alta.
- The Caffè del Funicolare has sweeping views over the valley, and over 50 beers and 100 whiskies (see Shops, Cafés and Nightspots in Smaller Lakes and Towns and Places to Eat in Smaller Lakes and Towns).

The Lower Town

Few visitors make it to the open, spacious streets of the Lower Town, laid out largely in the 20th century (but settled since Roman times). The chief boulevard of this vibrant area is the Sentierone ("big path"). This is where most Bergamaschi head of an evening to shop in the stores and meet at the cafés.

Mantova

This town is known for its fine palaces, its masterpieces by Mantegna and Giulio Romano and its position surrounded on three sides by wide, shallow, swamp-edged lakes. These man-made lakes make the area humid in summer and rather damp and chilly in winter, creating a slight air of melancholy. The poet Virgil was born here in 70 BC. By 1328, the town had come under the rule of the Gonzagas, who held onto the reigns of power until the Austrians took over in 1708.

Top 10 Sights



1 Duomo
Fire claimed the Gothic cathedral. The façade is late Baroque (1756), and the interior was designed by Giulio Romano in imitation of Paleochristian basilicas.

2 Palazzo Ducale
Highlights in the Gonzagas' rambling fortress-palace include tapestries by Raphael and Mantegna's Camera degli Sposi frescoes (1465–74).

3 Piazza Broletto
Just north of Piazza delle Erbe is this tiny square hemmed in by medieval buildings, including the 1227 broletto (town hall) and the Palazzo Bonacolsi.



4 Piazza delle Erbe
Piazza delle Erbe is a wonderfully jumbled, lively urban space, lined by arcades, filled with a food market each morning, and ringed by a fascinating assemblage of buildings.



5 Basilica di Sant'Andrea
Lodovico Gonzaga commissioned this glorious basilica in 1470 from Leon Battista Alberti, its façade a highly original take on Classicism. Mantegna is buried in the first chapel on the left.

6 Rotonda di San Lorenzo

This rotund church is a relic from an earlier age, built in 1082 and retaining scraps of medieval fresco in its otherwise pleasantly bare brick interior.

7 Teatro Scientifico Bibena
This jewel-box of a late Baroque theatre is named after the architect who designed it, and was inaugurated in 1770 with a concert by Mozart, then a 13-year-old prodigy.

8 Palazzo d'Arco
A Neo-Classically remodelled palazzo from the Renaissance, this includes the 1520 Sala del Zodiaco, frescoed with astrological signs, in an original 15th-century wing.



9 Casa di Mantegna
Mantova's most famous artist, Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), custom-built this house-and-studio in 1466–74. It includes a circular courtyard and a portrait of himself by his fellow-artist and friend Titian.



10 Palazzo Te
Giulio Romano's Mannerist masterpiece is an ingenious interplay of spacious courts, sweeping building wings and discreet gardens. Built in 1525, it was frescoed largely by Romano.

Mantova

Practical information

- Map H6

Tourist info:

- Piazza Mantegna 6
- 0376-328-253
- www.aptmantova.it
- Duomo 7:30am–noon, 3–7pm daily;
- free
- Palazzo Ducale 8:45am– 7:15pm Tue–Sun;
- adm €6.50
- Sant'Andrea 7:30am– noon, 3–7pm daily;
- free
- Rotonda 10am–noon, 3–5pm daily;
- donation
- Teatro 9:30am–12:30pm, 5–6pm Tue–Sun
- adm €2
- Palazzo d'Arco 10am–12:30pm, 2:30–5:30pm Tue–Sun;
- adm €3
- Casa di Mantegna 10am–12:30pm Mon–Fri & 3–6pm Tue–Sun;
- free
- Palazzo Te 9am–6pm Tue–Sun, 1–6pm Mon;
- adm €8

Top tips

- Meander like a true Mantovano: hire a bicycle from La Rigola, on Lungolago dei Gonzaga.
- Caffè Miró is on the tiny piazza in front of Sant'Andrea (see Shops, Cafés and Nightspots in Smaller Lakes and Towns and Places to Eat in Smaller Lakes and Towns).

Boat Tours

The Gonzagas widened the Mincio River, cupping their city within three defensive lakes. Lined by reeds, floating with clouds of white lotus imported from China in the 1920s, and now the protected homes of waterfowl and the highest concentration of fish in Italy, they're at their best in late May and June. You can take boat tours with Negrini, Via S. Giorgio 2 (0376-322-875) .

2

Where to Stay

Accommodation Tips



1 Hotels

Italian hotels are categorized from one-star (basic) to five-stars (deluxe), based largely on the amenities offered rather than such esoteric considerations as charm, historic setting, or central location. At three stars and above, all rooms have at least private bathroom, TV and phone.

2 Agriturismo (Farm Stays)

Some working farms – usually vineyards – offer rooms. This translates to largely inexpensive lodgings in bucolic settings. Some are luxury, some very rustic. Agriturismo, Terra Nostra and Turismo Verde are the main consortiums.

3 Villa Companies

Top villa rental agencies in the UK include International Chapters and Cottages to Castles. In the US, try Marjorie Shaw's Insider's Italy, the Parker Company and Villas International.

4 Choosing a Villa

Ask for a schematic layout and as many pictures as possible of the interior and exterior of the apartment/villa and the grounds. Find out how many others might share the villa or other houses on the complex.

5 Rooms to Rent

The tourist office has a list of these invariably cheap options. They can range from a lovely room with semi-private access to a cramped spare bedroom in someone's modern apartment. It can be a great way to meet locals.



6 Camping and Caravaning

Camp sites (campeggi) are widespread, but you end up paying almost as much as for a cheap hotel: a fee per person, for your vehicle and for the pitch itself (see

Self-Catering and Camp Sites).



7 Hostels

All cities and major towns have cheap beds in sex-segregated, shared dorms. They are full of international students, and usually impose a curfew of midnight or so. Most official

IYH hostels are on the edges of towns.

8 Should You Reserve?

Making a reservation in advance is always wise, especially for the first night of your stay and particularly if you have your heart set on a special hotel. The best-known can book up months in advance. However, if you are not fussy, you should be able to find a room when you arrive, at most times of year you visit.

9 Booking Services

For a small fee, most tourist offices and private hotel consortiums will help you find a room. Their offices are usually located in the main train stations and airports. So far, the countless internet booking services have highly erratic stables of hotels in their databases.

10 Quirks that can Affect the Price

Rooms without private bath, without a view, or for stays longer than three days often come cheaper. An extra bed in a room usually costs 30–35 per cent more. Breakfast may not be included; parking may be extra; and prices on minibar items and phone calls (local or international) are often exorbitant.

Places to Stay

1 Grand Hôtel des Iles Borromées, Stresa

One of Italy's top hotels (with a starring role in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*), this is as sumptuous as you'd expect at the prices.

► *Corso Umberto I 67 • Map A3 • 0323-938-938 • www.borromees.it • €€€€€*

2 La Palma, Stresa

Almost luxury-level living at relatively moderate prices: lake views from balconies, oversize marble bathrooms, pool.

► *Corso Umberto I 33 • Map A3 • 0323-32-401 • www.hlapalma.it • Closed Dec–Feb • €€€*

3 Primavera, Stresa

A small hotel in the pedestrian centre of Stresa. Simple rooms have the basic amenities.

► *Via Cavour 30 • Map A3 • 0323-31-286 • www.stresa.it • Closed winter (exc Christmas and New Year) • €€*

4 Verbano, Isola Superiore (Isola dei Pescatori)

A lovely retreat. The much-requested rooms at the front overlook the restaurant (see *Il Sole di Ranco*, Lake Maggiore).

► *Map A3 • 0323-30-408 • www.hotelverbano.it • Closed Jan • €€*

5 Grand Hotel Majestic, Verbania-Pallanza

One of Maggiore's top hotels since 1870, with spacious rooms, courtyard and lawn.

► *Via Vittorio Veneto 32 • Map A2 • 0323-504-305 • www.grandhotelmajestic.it • €€*

6 Pironi, Cannobio

The wedge-shaped 15th-century building has a frescoed loggia and splashing fountain. Rooms exude antique charm.

► *Via Marconi 35 • Map B2 • 0323-70-624 • www.pironihotel.it • Closed Nov–Mar • €*

7 Il Portico, Cannobio

Modern hotel in a quiet corner of town. Its porticoed restaurant and best rooms overlook the lake.

► **Piazza Santuario 2 • Map B2 • 0323-70-598 •**
www.portico.godzilla.it • €



modern.

► **Via Sempione 17 • Map B1 • 41-091-743-0282 •**
www.grand-hotel-locarno.ch • €€



8 Grand Hotel, Locarno

In 1925, European leaders met in this grand dame of a hotel to sign the Locarno Treaty (which failed to prevent World War II). Public spaces are Belle Époque genteel; rooms are

9 Il Sole, Ranco

The best lodgings on the east shore. Rooms mix antique furnishings with modern comforts, and there's a great restaurant.

► **Piazza Venezia 5 • Map A3 • 0331-976-507 •** www.relaischateaux.com • Closed Dec-Feb • €€€€

10 Conca Azzurra, Ranco

A modern lakeside retreat with a pool and tennis courts.

► **Via Alberto 53 • Map A3 • 0331-976-526 •**
www.concaazzurra.it • Closed mid-Dec-mid-Feb • €€

Milan's Luxury Hotels

1 Four Seasons

The top hotel in town was converted in 1993 from a 15th-century convent, complete with some frescoes. Superior rooms are on the street side, deluxe ones open on to the cloisters. Milan's best shops are nearby, and one of the area's best restaurants, Il Teatro, is in the hotel's basement (see Il Teatro del Four Seasons, Milan).

► **Via Gesù 8 • Map N2 • 02-796-976 •**
www.fourseasons.com/milan • €€€€€



2 Grand Hotel et de Milan

The Grand has been Milan's most intimate luxury hotel since 1863, a darling of inveterate shoppers and La Scala stars (it was Callas's Milan home). Composer

Giuseppe Verdi was resident for 30 years.

► **Via Manzoni 29 • Map M3 • 02-723-141 •**
www.grandhoteletdemilan.it • €€€€€

3 Grand Hotel Duomo

The popularity of this five-star hotel isn't simply due to its topnotch appointments, new wing of suites themed on films and modern artists, or the fact that the Beatles called this their "home in Milan". Above all this, the main draw is that the suites, along with a few enviable doubles, overlook the spires of the cathedral right next-door.

► **Via S Raffaele 1 • Map M4 • 02-8833 •**
www.grandhotelduomo.com • €€€€€

4 Hotel de la Ville

It's near the Duomo, and enjoys the facilities of any upmarket hotel, but at prices 20 to 40 per cent lower than the competition. The rooms are adorned with silk and 18th-century-style antiques.

► **Via Hoepli 6 • Map M3 • 02-867-651 •**
www.sinahotels.com • €€€€€



5 Principe di Savoia

Built in 1927 in a 19th-century Lombard style, this is the most elegant of Milan's top hotels. Its Principe Tower was built in 2000 for businessmen who like their modern office

conveniences in an old-fashioned atmosphere.

► **Piazza della Repubblica 17 • Map N1 • 02-62-301 •**
www.luxurycollection.com • €€€€€

6 Spadari al Duomo

This gem, designed by Urbano Pierini and filled with original works by contemporary artists, is near the Piazza Duomo. Stylish rooms come with wonderful features such as marble sinks and hydromassage shower stalls. Room rates drop 20 per cent Friday to Sunday.

► **Via Spadari 11 • Map L4 • 02-7200-2371 •**
www.spadarihotel.com • €€€€

7 Antica Locanda dei Mercanti

This converted apartment between the Duomo and Castello is a wonderful home-away-from-home. The quiet rooms have floral draperies, matching headboards and the occasional exposed beam. The more expensive terrazzo rooms have small terraces and canopy beds.

► **Via San Tomaso 6 • Map L3 • 02-805-4080 •**
www.locanda.it • €€

8 Diana Majestic

A Liberty-style hotel focused on a lush courtyard garden. The rooms have a modern elegance with such top-end amenities as Bose stereos.

► **Viale Piave 42 • Map P2 • 02-20-581 •**
www.sheraton.com • €€€€€

9 Ariosto Hotel

Luxurious amenities and refined service without a high price tag. Rooms either overlook the private garden or open on to the Liberty-style façades of this residential street, and all come with lovely wood furnishings, high-speed internet connections, and VCR. Free bikes are provided for guests.

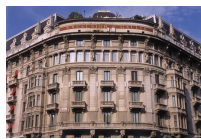
► **Via Ariosto 22 • 02-481-7844 •** www.brerahotels.com • €€€€

10 Carlton Hotel Baglioni

This 1962 hotel on the north side of the shopping district sports non-smoking rooms (unusual in Italy), 19th-century-style silk brocades and inlaid furnishings. There is also a business centre.

► *Via Senato 5 • Map N2 • 02-77-077 •*
www.baglionihotels.com • €€€€€

Milan's Best Business Hotels



1 Excelsior Hotel Gallia

This bastion of sophistication knits together the best of both worlds: genuine 1937 Liberty-style class with modern comforts and amenities. The rooms have a quirky elegance, the

baths are marble-clad, and the dual phone lines have a PC hook-up. Ten conference rooms are so well-equipped there are even simultaneous translators. The solo business traveller will thrill at the extra-wide single beds – uncommon in Italy.

► *Piazzale Duca d'Aosta 9 • 02-678-5713 •*
www.lemerien-excelsiorhotelgallia.it • €€€€€

2 Westin Palace

The general décor is a genteel Empire style, but the "smart rooms" have high-tech facilities, and the plush business centre has on-staff translators. Choose from 13 well-equipped conference rooms. There is also a fully equipped gym.

► *Piazza della Repubblica 20 • Map N1 • 02-63-361 •*
www.westin.com • €€€€€

3 Una Hotel Century

Near the central station, north of Piazza della Repubblica, this property is made up entirely of business suites: 148 sleek, modern units, each with a bedroom and separate living room/office.

► *Via F Filzi 25B • 02-675-041 • www.unahotel.it •*
€€€€€

4 Capitol Millennium

The name may no longer mean cutting edge, but this towering modern hotel does boast the latest in business technologies. Rooms include dual phone/modem lines, internet access via your TV, and in the suites (both executive and conference), a private PC, fax, and large screen TV.

► *Via Cimarosa 6 • 02-438-591 •*
www.capitolmillennium.com • €€€€€

5 Doriagrand Hotel

A large hotel with modern, comfortable bedrooms, four conference rooms, and secretarial services. Tourists will appreciate that weekend rates are a mere 40 per cent of the midweek prices.

► *Viale Andrea Doria 22 • 02-6741-1411 •*
www.doriagrandhotel.it • €€€€€

6 Una Hotel Cusani

In 2001 the Radisson Bonaparte became part of the Una hotel chain, but that hasn't changed its spacious rooms or comforts. A prime location, across from the Castello Sforzesco.

► *Via Cusani 13 • Map L3 • 02-85-601 •*
www.unahotel.it • €€€€€

7 Marriott

With 18 meeting rooms, a well-equipped business centre, a floor of Executive rooms, and a location straight down the street from the Fiera, the Milan Marriott was built for the business traveller. If only it were nearer the centre for some sightseeing when the meetings are over.

► *Via Washington 66 • 02-48-521 • www.marriott.com • €€€€€*

8 Mediolanum

The austerity of this cement-grey hotel is relieved by the personal touch brought by family management, though many rooms are rather on the small side. Facilities include meeting rooms with secretarial services and ISDN lines.

► *Via Mauro Macchi 1 • 02-670-5312 •*
www.mediolanumhotel.com • €€€€€

9 Grand Hotel Fieramilano

If you're in town for a trade show, you can get no more convenient a hotel than this, opposite the Fiera. Contemporary rooms are given a touch of warmth by richly patterned fabrics.

► *Viale S Boezio 20 • 02-336-221 • www.atahotels.com • €€€€€*

10 Hotel Executive

This massive hotel on the north end of the Brera district has rooms decorated in a sumptuous antique style, masking its range of high-tech amenities. There's a full-fledged business centre and 21 meeting rooms.

► *Viale Sturzo 45 • 02-62-941 •*
www.hotel-executive.com • €€€€€

Milan's Mid-Range Hotels

1 Antica Locanda Solferino

Milan's most eccentric hotel is beloved by fashion gurus and film stars. What it lacks in amenities such as minibars and large bathrooms, it makes up for with its flower-fringed balconies, homey mismatched furnishings and breakfast-in-bed.

► *Via Castelfidardo 2 • Map M1 • 02-657-0129 • No A/C • €€€*

2 London

The most old-fashioned of three moderate hotels on a block near the Castello offers smiling service, bright, large rooms with worn but solid old furnishings, and 10 per cent off the next-door restaurant. Rooms get smaller as you go up each floor, so try for the ground floor.

► *Via Rovello 3 • Map L3 • 02-7202-0166 •*
www.traveleurope.it/hotellondon.htm • €€

3 Rovello

The most characterful of the Via Rovello hotels has been renovated with shiny wood floors, stylish furnishings, and orthopaedic beds. But it has kept the wood-beamed ceilings, classy dressing rooms and unusually spacious bedrooms.

► *Via Rovello 18 • Map L3 • 02-8646-4654 • €€€*

4 Giulio Cesare

The most modernized of the hotels on Via Rovello sports sleek new baths and contemporary furnishings lit by elegantly tall windows. Amenities, however, are a notch below those of its neighbours, with gruff staff and no laundry or concierge service.

► *Via Rovello 10 • Map L3 • 02-7200-3915 • www.giuliocesarehotel.it • €€*

5 Santa Marta

The Rovello's sister hotel sits on one of the few streets remaining of Old Milan; a crooked cobblestoned lane of little shops and classic Milanese restaurants. Sensible, comfortable rooms range from cramped to spacious. You're well positioned for Milan's top sights.

► *Via Santa Marta 4 • Map L4 • 02-804-567 • €€€*

6 Ariston

A novel approach to Italian inn-keeping: an eco-hotel. The electrical devices are engineered for low power consumption; the showers conserve water; the tap water and even the air are purified; the breakfast spread is organic. Naturally, the desk rents out bicycles.

► *Largo Carrobbio 2 • Map K/L4 • 02-7200-0556 • www.brerahotels.com • €€€*

7 Manzoni

The nondescript Manzoni may have only half the class of top-notch neighbours, but it's also half the price. Save your funds for the boutiques, for this is the epicentre of Milan's top shopping district. Don't bother paying extra for the suites, which are only slightly larger than the other rooms.

► *Via Santo Spirito 20 • Map N2 • 02-7600-5700 • www.hotelmanzoni.com • €€€€*

8 Genius Hotel Downtown

A resort chain bought this modern hotel on a quiet street in 2002 and renovated it with bright, thick carpets, new furnishings and orthopaedic beds, and largish baths. There is an entire non-smoking floor.

► *Via Porlezza 4 • 02-7209-4644 • www.geniusresort.it • No A/C • €€€*

9 Hotel Star

This modern hotel sits on a quiet side-street between the hopping Brera neighbourhood and the Castello. The parquet floors with their Oriental rugs support orthopaedic beds and slightly worn, functional furnishings. The baths, however, are ultra-modern; some with hydromassage showers.

► *Via dei Bossi 5 • Map L3 • 02-801-501 • www.hotelstar.it • No A/C • €€€*

10 Gran Duca di York

In the 19th century, this palazzo was used by the nearby cathedral to house visiting cardinals. Today, rooms are marred by ugly 1970s furnishings, yet it is comfortable, some bedrooms have terraces and the location is great.

► *Via Moneta 1a • Map L4 • 02-874-863 • €€€*

Milan's Budget Gems

**1 Speronari**

Two-star amenities (only half the rooms have private baths and TVs) and a four-star location on a pedestrian street one block off the Piazza del Duomo, all at one-star prices. Rooms on the top floors get more light; those on the courtyard escape the noise from trams.

► *Via Speronari 4 • Map M4 • 02-8646-1125 • €*

2 Promessi Sposi

This personable hotel, named after Manzoni's literary classic (see I Promessi Sposi (The Betrothed)), sits on a square at the foot of the middle-class shopping boulevard of northern Milan. Though at the top end of budget, it's probably the best value of any hotel in Milan. Most rooms are quite large by Italian standards and furnished in an airy style with rattan pieces.

► *Piazza Oberdan 12 • Map P1 • 02-2951-3661 • www.hotelpromessisposi.com • €€*

3 Gritti

Blandly modern but friendly three-star place on a quiet piazza. The elderly owner is always around to keep an eye on things, and the location and amenities (A/C, mini-bar, TV) make it a steal.

► *Piazza S Maria Beltrade 4 • 02-801-056 • www.hotelgritti.com • A/C • €€*

4 Paganini

Staying at this tiny hotel on a residential street off Corso Buenos Aires is like moving in with friends. The high-ceilinged rooms are large and kitted out with spare but homey furnishings. Only one of the eight rooms has a private bathroom.

► *Via Paganini 6 • 02-204-7443 • €*

**5 Ullrich**

It may lack character and class, but the price is hard to beat anywhere in Milan, let alone just a few blocks south of the Duomo. None of the seven basic rooms has a private

bathroom, but shared facilities are large, new and clean.

► *Corso Italia 6 • Map L5 • 02-8645-0156 • €*

6 Kennedy

Of the many bare-bones pensioni in this neighbourhood near the public gardens and Corso Buenos Aires, the Kennedy singles itself out for cleanliness, friendliness and the fact that its fifth-floor location allows a few rooms to peek over the rooftops at the distant spires of the Duomo. For once, an espresso and croissant in the hotel bar is as cheap as at a local café. Two of the rooms have full bathrooms.

➤ *Viale Tunisia 6 • Map P1 • 02-2940-0934 • €*

7 Nuovo

This modest one-star hotel is hidden two blocks behind the Duomo and has a few quirky touches, such as huge stone sinks, moulded door frames and stone balconies, but otherwise is fitted with beaten-up modular furnishings and prone to a grumpy management.

➤ *Piazza Beccaria 6 • Map N4 • 02-8646-4444 • Fax 02-7200-1752 • €*

8 Commercio

A tiny hotel perfectly sited between the Brera, Castello and Duomo. It does most of its business with workmen, but tourists are welcome as long as they don't mind rooms with box showers, sink and bidet (but no toilet), and paying cash in advance. Ask to see several rooms as some are much nicer than others.

➤ *Via Mercato 1/Via d. Erbe • Map L2 • 02-8646-3880 • No credit cards • €*

9 Vecchia Milano

It's on the high end of inexpensive, but worth it for the charming, semi-rustic wood panelling, good-sized rooms and location on a quiet street west of the Duomo. Many rooms come with third beds that flip down from the wall – great for budget-minded families.

➤ *Via Borromei 4 • Map L4 • 02-875-042 • €€*

10 Ostello Piero Rotta

Milan's rather institutional hostel is located out of the city centre, near the San Siro stadium. It has a nice garden, however.

➤ *Via M Bassi 2 • 02-3926-7095 • €*

Self-Catering and Camp Sites

1 Rescasa, Milan

This is one of the main organizations for self-catering accommodation – called “Residenza” in Italian, and usually available on a monthly basis. On the website is a downloadable brochure with dozens of options in Milan and throughout the region.

➤ *Via Serbelloni 7 • Map P2 • 02-7600-8770 • www.rescasa.it • €-€€€€*

2 Santospirito Residence, Milan

A dozen classy mono-apartments right in the heart of Milan's chichi shopping district. Expect walnut floors, satellite TVs, and flowering ivy cascading down the walls of the private courtyard. Linens are changed daily; kitchenettes cleaned twice a day.

➤ *Via Santo Spirito 17 • Map N2 • 02-7600-6500 • www.santospirito.it • €*

3 Planet Residence, Milan

Boringly modular but spacious apartments of two or three rooms, with A/C, VCR, modem hook-ups, kitchenettes, laundry service, and thrice-weekly cleanings. Daily and weekly rates are available.

➤ *Via Rovigno 23 • 02-2611-3753 • www.planetresidence.it • €€*

4 Camping Isolino, Verbania, Lake Maggiore

This oasis of tranquility sits on the promontory of a natural reserve along a private sandy beach. It's one of the best-equipped in the region, with a market, pizzeria, restaurant, video games, pool, mountain bike excursions, Latin dancing, windsurfing lessons and even a disco.

➤ *Via per Feriolo 25 • Map A2 • 0323-496-080 • www.isolino.it • Closed Oct–Mar • €*

5 Camping Conca d'Oro, Feriolo di Baveno, Lake Maggiore

The verdant campground lies outside Baveno in the Toce stream natural reserve. Amenities include a restaurant, mini-market, bikes and kayaks, video games and sports on a white-sand beach.

➤ *Via 42 Martiri 26 • Map A2 • 0323 28116 • www.concadoro.it • Closed Sep–Mar • €*

6 Camping Villaggio Gefara, Domaso, Lake Como

This small, two-star campground sits right on the beach, with a bar and laundry room, beach volleyball, and plenty of shops and watersports nearby.

➤ *Via Case Sparse 188 • Map C2 • 0344-96-163 • www.campinggefara.it • Closed 6 Oct–27 Mar • €*



7 Camping Brione, Riva, Lake Garda

Set in greenery near the beach, the camping and caravan site has minigolf, swimming and tennis. Small tents can be pitched amid olive terraces.

➤ *Via Monte Brione 32 • Map H3 • 0464-520-885 • www.campingbrione.com • Closed Oct–Mar • €*



8 Campeggio Garda, Limone, Lake Garda

Just outside the historic centre of Limone, on its own private beach, this camping site offers wind-surfing and sailing, and two pools. The grounds include a fish

restaurant, wood-oven pizzeria, beach grill, and supermarket.

➤ *Via IV Novembre 10 • Map G3 • 0365-954-550 • Closed Nov–Feb • €*

9 Camping del Sole, Lake Iseo

This large camping site offers plenty of greenery right on the lake (book ahead for the precious few lakeside sites). Facilities include a restaurant, market, cycle hire, laundry, as well as two pools and tennis and basketball courts.

➤ *Via per Rovato • Map E4 • 030-980-288 • www.campingdelsole.it • Closed Oct–Mar • €*

10 Campeggio Citta di Milano

Milan's only campground is by the SS22 road to Novara (take bus 72 from the De Angeli Metro stop) near the San Siro stadium. It's got four-star facilities – pool, sports, disco – plus a waterpark nearby.

► *Via G Airaghi 61 • 02-4820-0134 • Closed 1 Dec–31 Jan • €*

Hotels in the Smaller Towns

1 San Lorenzo, Bergamo

The classiest hotel in Bergamo opened in 1998 in a converted convent at the north end of the atmospheric upper town. The service is impeccable, and the rooms done in a pleasing minimalist style.

► *Piazza Mascheroni 9a • Map D3 • 035-237-383 • www.hotelsanlorenzobg.it • €€*



2 Agnello d'Oro, Bergamo

Built in 1600, the hotel has a mountain chalet look to it. The receptionists can be brusque, but the rooms are cosy, if unimaginatively furnished. Book a room at

the front, where small, flower-filled balconies give views over the bustling main drag below.

► *Via Gombito 22 • Map D3 • 035-249-883 • €*

3 San Lorenzo, Mantova

This lovely hotel is furnished with luxurious appointments and 18th and 19th-century panache. It occupies a set of town-houses amid the pedestrianized historic district and has a roof terrace offering a panorama of Mantova.

► *Piazza Concordia 14 • Map H6 • 0376-220-500 • www.hotelsanlorenzo.it • €€€*



4 Broletto, Mantova

A 16th-century palazzo of wood-beamed ceilings and a vaguely rustic contemporary décor sits a mere 100 m (300 ft) from Lake Inferiore.

► *Via Accademia 1 • Map H6 • 0376-326-784 • €€*

5 Duomo, Cremona

The contemporary rooms may be simple and spare, but they are comfortable. Best of all, those facing the pedestrianized street have a view (or rather, half a view) of the Duomo façade half a block away. Its restaurant and pizzeria are reasonable.

► *Via Gonfalonieri 13 • Map E6 • 0372-35-242 • €*



6 I Due Roccoli, Iseo

Set in its own quiet park high above the lake on the road to Polaveno, this family-run hotel offers a countryside escape of rustic-tinged rooms and splendid views of the lake

and mountains. There are tennis courts, a pool and an excellent restaurant (see I Due Roccoli, Iseo, Lake Iseo).

► *Via Silvio Bonomelli • Map E4 • 030-982-2977 • www.idueoccoli.com • €€*

7 Iseolago, Iseo

The Iseolago mixes the best of a resort hotel with the class of a fine inn, so you get parquet floors and silk drapes but also a modern fitness centre, two pools, tennis courts, and watersports at the beach. The one drawback is that it is in the suburbs, so you need a car.

► *Via Colombara, 2 • Map E4 • 030-98-891 • www.iseolagohotel.it • €€*

8 Villa Crespi, Lake Orta

A fantastical 1879 Moorish-style villa, complete with minaret, lies at the turn-off for Orta San Giulio. Suites and rooms are sumptuous, with either mosaic or parquet flooring, carved wooden furnishings, silk brocade walls, and bed canopies. The restaurant serves excellent regional cuisine.

► *Via Fava, 18 • Map A3 • 0322-911-908 • www.lagodortahotels.com • Closed 7 Jan–13 Feb • €€€€*

9 Villa Principe Leopoldo, Lake Lugano

This bastion of 19th-century luxury overlooks Lugano from its Swiss hillside. Facilities range from a business centre to a fitness room, beauty spa and swimming pool. The Villa offers sumptuous suites; the Residence annex more subdued double rooms.

► *Via Montalbano 5 • Map B1 • 0041-95-985-8825 • www.leopoldohotel.com • €€€€€*

10 Vittoria, Brescia

Brescia's only real hotel in the historic centre offers all the five-star amenities you could ask for in an imposing Fascist pile. Freestanding columns in the suites are a nice touch. Shame it's priced for businessmen's expense accounts.

► *Via X Giornate 20 • Map F4 • 030-280-061 • www.hotelvittoria.com • €€€€*

3

Where to Eat

Tips for Eating Out



dishes of cured meats and cheeses.



A friendly waiter

1 Restaurant Types

A ristorante is the most formal, expensive, eatery; a trattoria a family-run, moderately-priced joint; an osteria anything from a simple trattoria to the equivalent of a pub with

2 The Italian Meal

Italian meals, especially dinners, are drawn-out affairs of two to four hours, with the courses listed below followed by an espresso and digestive liqueur (digestivo) such as grappa. Lunch is similar and was once the day's largest meal; but life's modern pace is shortening it. Breakfast is traditionally an espresso or cappuccino with a sweetened roll or croissant (brioche or cornetto).

3 Antipasto

This is the appetizer course. A typical offering would be bruschetta (toasted bread rubbed with garlic, olive oil, salt, and sometimes tomatoes) and/or cured meats such as prosciutto, salami, bresaola (thin slices of dried beef) and carpaccio (wafer-thin raw beef). Also popular are nervetti (a cold salad of pickled calf tendons) or a caprese salad of tomatoes and mozzarella.

4 Primo

The first course. Risotto (creamy arborio rice) is usually studded with seasonal vegetables, sausage bits (alla mantovana), or sometimes a seafood medley. Pastas include tortelli di zucca (pumpkin-stuffed pockets), strangolapreti (balls of ricotta and spinach), agnolotti (tiny, meat-filled ravioli), and pizzoccheri (a casserole of buckwheat pasta layered with cheese, potatoes and onions). Soups (minestre) include minestrone (vegetable soup), simple zuppa pavese (bread and eggs in broth), and cassoeûla (see Casoeûla).

5 Secondo

The main course. Meats include bistecca or manzo (beef), vitello (veal), agnello/abbacchio (mutton/spring lamb), pollo (chicken), maiale (pork), cinghiale (boar), coniglio (rabbit), and anatra (duck). A cotoletta is a cutlet, usually veal; a braciola is a chop, usually pork. Meats are usually simply grilled or roasted. A grigliata mista is a hearty mixed meat platter. Lake fish are covered on p67.

6 Dolce

The dessert. Most popular are hard almond biscuits with sweet wine for dunking, lemon sorbet (sorbetto), or gelato (ice cream). Egg custards are also favourites, as is tiramisù (a rich dessert with espresso and sweet cream). A macedonia is a diced fresh fruit cup.

7 Wine and Water

No Italian meal is complete without red (rosso) or white (bianco) wine (vino); either a carafe (un litro) or a half-carafe (mezzo litro) of the usually excellent house wine (vino della casa), or a bottle of the good stuff. Italians temper their wine by drinking equal amounts of water, either fizzy (gassata, frizzante) or still (non-gassata).

8 Cover Charges and Tipping

The pane e coperto (bread and cover) charge of €1 to €4 per person is unavoidable. If the menu says "servizio incluso", service charge is built in – though it is customary to round up the bill. If not, tip a discretionary 10 to 15 per cent.

9 Restaurant Etiquette

Jacket and tie are rarely required. Waiters expect you to linger over your meal, and won't rush you (some visitors mistake this for slow service).



10 Bars and Tavole Calde

Most Italian bars serve sandwiches and pastries alongside a morning cappuccino and cornetto, espresso throughout the day and aperitifs in the evening. A tavola calda is a glorified

bar with pre-prepared dishes steaming in trays behind a glass counter.

Restaurants



1 Cracco-Peck, Milan

In 2000–2001, this bastion of fine Milanese cooking was completely overhauled and reopened under the guidance of Carlo Cracco, who once worked in Alain Ducasse's fabled

Montecarlo restaurant. You will find wonderful classics here, including risotto or cotoletta alla milanese and ossobuco (see Culinary Highlights of Lombardy). If the stratospheric prices make you cringe, know that just around the corner at Via Spadari 9 is plain old "Peck", one of the finest food emporia in Italy, where raw ingredients and prepared dishes can make up a glorious picnic.

2 Il Teatro del Four Seasons, Milan

Milan's youngest deluxe hotel has surprised a jaded public by creating two superlative restaurants. The better of the two is the more refined basement eatery where chef Sergio Mei oversees creative Mediterranean dishes. The degustazione (tasting) menu is magnificent.

3 La Milanese, Milan

Classic Milanese cooking doesn't get much more fundamental, or much better, than this. Service is dour but good-natured, and the menu is simple. You can even get by just with the risotto e ossobuco, a half-portion of each staple dish on one plate for a low price.



4 Joia, Milan

Swiss chef-owner Pietro Leeman spent time in the Orient before opening Milan's temple of vegetarian cuisine, and many of his dishes have a hint of the exotic that put them in a gourmet category. The wine list is joined by a selection of ciders and organic beers.

5 Al Pont de Ferr, Milan

Set at the foot of its namesake iron bridge over a canal, this Naviglio standby boasts on its menu: "Good cooking is a friend of the good life and an enemy of a hurried one". You can ponder this over a long, satisfying meal.

6 Aimo e Nadia, Milan

Aimo and Nadia Moroni are acknowledged as the top chefs in all Milan. They are fanatical about hunting down the very best ingredients, and it shows in such delectables as risotto with pumpkin flowers and truffles. It's a bit of a haul from the centre of the city, but it is very much worth it.

7 Villa Fiordaliso, Lake Garda

The setting is marvellous: beyond the historic Liberty-style villa (now a hotel) where D'Annunzio lived and Mussolini's mistress spent her final days, the tables are scattered about a shaded terrace lapped by lake waters. The cuisine is inventive and international, if sometimes overly minimalist (see Villa Fiordaliso, Gardone Riviera).

8 Il Sole, Ranco, Lake Maggiore

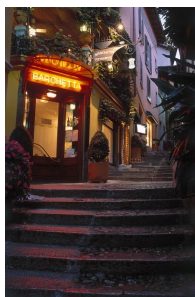
For more than 150 years, the Brovelli family has run an inn and osteria in the tiny lakeside village of Ranco. The restaurant – serving high-class creative cuisine – has summertime seating on shaded terraces. The wine list stupefies with more than 1,200 choices, and they'll set up a wine tasting to accompany your degustazione (tasting) menu.



9 Barchetta, Lake Como

Restaurants in such touristy towns as Bellagio rarely rise to the level of quality that this has achieved under chef-owner Armando Valli and his assistant Davide Angelini. The signature dish

is the *sinfonia degli otto sapori del lago*, a "symphony" of eight lake fishes. For dessert, try the traditional *paradel* – honey ice cream with raisins (see Barchetta, Bellagio).



Barchetta exterior



10 I Due Roccoli, Lake Iseo

Here, when the weather is fine, you can dine on the terracotta terrace high in the hills above Iseo, with a view across a rose-fringed lawn to forested mountains beyond.

The cooking is superb, and makes wonderful use of lake fish and other fresh local ingredients (see I Due Roccoli, Iseo, Lake Iseo).



Lake fish

Places to Eat

1 Ponte Rosso

Ignoring the hipness of Naviglio, Ponte Rosso serves up hearty dishes from Milan and Trieste.

► Ripa di Porta Ticinese 23 • Map J6 • 02-837-3132 • Closed Wed dinner and Sun • €€

2 Al Pont de Ferr

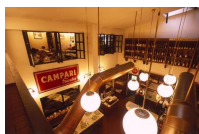
Of Naviglio's many great eateries, this is one of the few whose renown is entirely due to the quality of food (see Al Pont de Ferr, Milan).

► Ripa di Porta Ticinese 55 • Map J6 • 02-8940-6277 • €€€

3 Le Vigne

A mix of local and Piemontese cuisines. The *caramelle di ricotta e spinaci* (like ravioli) can't be beaten.

► Ripa di Porta Ticinese 61 • Map J6 • 02-837-5617 • Closed Sun • €€



4 Premiata Pizzeria
Navigli's most popular pizzeria, with semi-industrial décor and a coveted terrace. Book ahead.

► *Via Alzaia Naviglio Grande 2 • Map K6 • 02-8940-0648*

• Closed Tue lunch • €

5 Asso di Fiori

Its theme is simple: include Italian cheeses in as many dishes as possible, culminating in a stupendous cheese platter.

► *Alzaia Naviglio Grande 54 • Map K6 • 02-8940-9415*
• Closed Sun • €€€

6 Trattoria Famiglia Conconi

A short and tasty seasonal menu at this family-run restaurant. Good wine list too.

► *Alzaia Naviglio Grande 62 • Map K6 • 02-8940-6587*
• Closed Mon • €€€

7 Grand Hotel

Tucked down an alleyway off Viale Liguria, here you can enjoy inventive, exquisite Milanese/Mantovana cuisine on a garden terrace.

► *Via Asciano Sforza 75 • Map K6 • 02-8951-1586*
Closed Mon • €€€

8 Sadler

Claudio Sadler, perhaps the top chef in Milan, melds modern techniques with regional cuisine in a contemporary setting.

► *Via Trolio 14 • 02-5810-4451 • Closed Sun • €€€€€*



9 Trattoria Aurora
The fixed-price menu at this temple of Piedmontese cuisine is incredible value and reason enough to come. Yet the vine-shaded setting is the restaurant's coup de grace.

► *Via Savona 23 • Map J5 • 02-8940-4978* • Closed Mon • €€€

10 Aimo e Nadia

Pricey and out in the suburbs, yet Aimo and Nadia (a Tuscan-born husband-and-wife team) run this place with exquisite taste throughout, and it ranks among Milan's very, very best (see Aimo e Nadia, Milan).

► *Via P Montecuccoli 6 • 02-416-886 • Closed Sat lunch and Sun • €€€€€*

Cafés and Entertainment Venues

1 Bar Magenta

Comfortable, Parisian-style café with outdoor seating, a decent food menu, tasty cocktails and Guinness on tap (see Bar Magenta, Milan).

► *Via Carducci 13 at Via Magenta • Map K3 • €*



2 Pasticceria Marchesi

A delightfully Old World café and chocolatier near the Last Supper (see Pasticceria Marchesi, Milan).

► *Via Santa Maria alla Porta 13 • Map K3 • €*

3 Bar Jamaica

One of half a dozen bars and gelaterie (ice-cream parlours) lining a pedestrianized stretch just north of the Pinacoteca. It was one of Milan's first bohemian bars, given its name by a local journalist who thought it resembled the bar in Hitchcock's Jamaica Inn.

► *Via Brera 32 • Map L2 • €*

4 El Tombon de San Marc

Though it's touting a full menu these days, most people still head to the Brera's San Marc for its bar, beers and late hours.

► *Via San Marco 20 • Map M1 • €*

5 Le Trottoir

Miniscule, arty disco with live acts and throngs of trendy Milanese stuffed into a narrow space and spilling out onto the street.

► *Corso Garibaldi 1 • Map L2*

6 Bar Radetzky

This minimalist, down-to-business café has been around forever, best-known for a quick espresso in the morning and an aperitivo stop in the evening.

► *Corso Garibaldi 105 • Map L1 • €*

7 Bar Margherita

Comfortable, modernish lounge with deep cushions, decent snacks and good cocktails.

► *Via Moscova 25 • Map L1 • €*

8 Hollywood

Fashion models and designers still hold on to the Hollywood as their own club.

► *Corso Como 15*

9 Tunnel

This warehouse under the railway station is where you come to see rock bands before they become big stars.

► *Via Sammartini 30*

10 Teatro degli Arcimboldi

Originally the temporary venue for La Scala's opera and ballet companies it is way out in the industrial suburb of Bicocca – but well worth the trip for performances in a state-of-the-art theatre.

► *Viale dell'Innovazione • 02-7200-3744*

Cafés and Wine Bars



1 Zucca (Caffè Miani), Milan

Verdi and Toscanini would stop by after La Scala shows and King Umberto I declared that it served the best coffee in Milan. It even shows up in Boccioni's *Riot in the Galleria* (see). This café opened inside the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (see Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II) in 1868, though the Art Nouveau décor came a little later. Its prime location at the galleria entrance gives a

great view of the Duomo façade (see Zucca in Galleria (Caffè Miani)).



2 Cova, Milan

The Faccioli family opened Cova near La Scala theatre in 1817 and, though it was later moved to Milan's prime shopping street, Via Montenapoleone, it has remained in the family – and

continues to be café of choice for the city's elite – ever since. Its made-in-house pastries, chocolates and sandwiches are some of the most exquisite in town, and they brew up a mean cappuccino to boot. There's an elegant little tea room with refined service if all the window shopping has left you too tired to stand, but since this is still Italy, you're also welcome to just run in and toss back an espresso.



Cova, Milan

3 Sant'Ambroseus, Milan

Looking every inch the 1936 café, from its wood-paneelling to its pink stucco decorations, Sant'Ambroseus is counted among the great temples of chocolate in Italy. Their speciality is the ambrogio: an indulgence of dark chocolate wrapped around an egg cream.

4 Corso Como 10, Milan

Run by former Vogue fashion editor Carla Sozzani with the same over-priced, excruciatingly trendy verve that has made her attached boutique such a popular success, the café offers great aperitivi and a chance to hobnob with Milan's elite.

5 Caffè Letterario, Milan

When Teresa D'Ambrosio opened this place, she envisaged the fin de siècle cafés where artists met, writers scribbled away at corner tables, professors spent an hour or two poring over the papers and political thinkers made plans in hushed tones. And, indeed,

Milan's intelligentsia do appear to have taken the bait and placed themselves at appropriate tables.

► Via Solferino 27

6 Bar Magenta, Milan

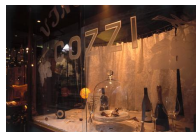
A lovely corner café that's a cross between an Irish pub and a Parisian Art Deco café, with a zinc bar, high ceilings, free newspapers and a decent list of dishes along with coffee, beer, cocktails and apéritifs.



7 Pasticceria Marchesi, Milan

A wonderful old-fashioned café and chocolatier happily "discovered" by many a visitor trekking out to see the Last Supper. The décor hasn't changed since 1824,

the coffee is quite good and the pastries are favoured by Giorgio Armani.



8 Vineria Cozzi, Bergamo

Don't let the over-busy window decorations and trilling recorded birdsong put you off – Cozzi is the best spot in all of Bergamo to while away an hour or two

with some wine and a choice of cheeses, cured meats, quiches and tortes.



9 Caffè del Tasso, Bergamo

For over 500 years, the Tasso has been Bergamo's meeting spot for everyone from princes to rebels. Garibaldi and his red shirts met here in revolutionary

days; in fact, it was once such a hotbed of discontent that a decree (displayed on the wall) was made in 1845 prohibiting rebellious conversations here. Now the only seditious sentiments are grumbles about the price of a cappuccino.



10 I Portici del Comune, Cremona

You just can't get a better seat in town than one at an outdoor table set under a lofty medieval arcade with the façade of Cremona's Duomo filling up your

panorama. The coffee is good (not always a given), as are the panini and gelato.

Venues, Clubs and Cafés

1 Zucca in Galleria (Caffè Miani)

A gorgeous Liberty-style café, with views of the Duomo. Zucca holds the dubious honour of having introduced Milan to the apéritif Campari (see Zucca (Caffè Miani), Milan).

► **Map M3** • *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II/Piazza Duomo 21* • www.caffemiani.it • €



2 Caffè Martini

This café may be overpriced but is great for Duomo views and watching the people, processions and protest rallies at Milan's heart.

► **Map L3** • *Via dei Mercanti 21* • €

3 La Banque

This businessmen's lunch spot transforms into a yuppie disco – one of the few in Central Milan – with live music after 11pm; dress well.

► **Map L3** • *Via Porrone 6* • 02-8699-6565 • www.labanqueweb.com

4 La Scala

After an extensive restoration programme this magnificent opera house has recently reopened.

► **Map M3** • *Piazza della Scala* • www.teatrodellascala.org

5 Nepentha

Perennial Milan discotheque just a few blocks south of the Duomo where the chic set come to dine then dance the night away.

► **Map M4** • *Piazza Diaz 1*

6 I Panini della Befi

Very popular panino bar at lunch, with umbrella-shaded tables on a pedestrian street. Stellar sandwiches, decent coffee.

► **Map N4** • *Via Beccaria 4* • €

7 Sant'Ambroseus

This historic café and tea room is also known for making some of the best chocolates in Italy (see Sant'Ambroseus, Milan).

► **Map N3** • *Corso Matteotti 7* • €

8 Cova

Nestling in the heart of Milan's boutique district since 1817, Cova offers excellent coffee and pastries (see Cova, Milan).

► **Map N3** • *Via Montenapoleone 8* • €

9 Ice Nice

Snacks and sushi, coffee and cocktails in a nook off the main shopping area.

► **Map M2** • *Via Borgospesso* • €

10 Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi

Top conservatory with free concerts by Milan's philharmonic orchestra.

► **Map P3** • *Via del Conservatorio 12* • www.conservatoriomilano.com • Free

4

Places of Interest

Museums

1 Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Lombardy's most important painting gallery, displaying works by Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Piero della Francesca, Caravaggio, Tintoretto, Veronese, Coreggio, Lotto, Carpaccio, Tiepolo, El Greco and Rembrandt.

2 Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan

This formidable mix of Old Masters was started by Cardinal Federico Borromeo as an adjunct to the Ambrosiana Library. Famously, the library is home to the Codex Atlanticus, which contains the lion's share of Leonardo's drawings and sketches – photocopied pages from it are displayed in the Pinacoteca. Elsewhere, you'll find paintings by Botticelli, Titian and Caravaggio, as well as Raphael's giant preparatory sketch for the School of Athens.

3 Castello Sforzesco, Milan

The greatest free museum in Italy! There's a bit of everything: paintings by the likes of Bellini and Mantegna, a stupendous cycle of 16th-century tapestries, archaeological collections and, its greatest piece, Michelangelo's achingly unfinished Rondanini Pietà.

4 Museo Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan

Poldi-Pezzoli's Milanese mansion is preserved as a monument to his collections, from Persian tapestries, ancient arms and armour to historic jewellery and, above all, art. In one room alone, there are paintings by Piero della Francesca, Giovanni Bellini, Mantegna and Botticelli.

5 Museo Nazionale della Scienza e delle Tecnica – Leonardo da Vinci, Milan

Had Leonardo possessed more technological ambition, we might have had working versions of his helicopters, water screws, gatling guns, parachutes and siege engines over four centuries ago. As it is, we can make do with the (modern) wooden mock-ups on display at this science and technology museum, alongside instructive exhibits on physics and antique autos and aeroplanes.

6 Civico Museo Archeologico, Milan

Among the top pieces in this small archaeological collection, which traces Lombard and neighbouring civilizations from prehistory to the end of the Roman era, is the Trivulzio Cup. This precious 4th-century glass cup has a delicate glass netting hovering just above the chalice surface on thin stilts of glass, along with a raised inscription that reads "Drink to Enjoy Long Life".

7 Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan

If it has to do with the opera in Milan, it's on display here. It's an odd collection, from costumes worn by Nureyev or Callas to historic musical instruments, and from Verdi's death mask (and some of his original scores) to Toscanini's batons.

8 Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan

Milan's gallery of modern art is among the best in Italy. The works concentrate on Italian artists of the 20th century, including De Chirico, Modigliani and Boccioni. The collection is housed in the Palazzo Reale. The

museum underwent restoration in 2004. Call ahead to confirm opening hours.

9 Galleria dell'Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

We can thank Napoleon's penchant for looting the art of his conquered territories for the existence of the Carrara, named after the count who, in 1795, stewarded the emperor's collection. Pillaged from across Northern Italy, in its ranks are works by Botticelli, Raphael, Bellini, Mantegna, Canaletto, Carpaccio, Guardi and Tiepolo. Above all, though, come to admire the emotion-filled Renaissance paintings of Lorenzo Lotto, a Venetian painter who settled in Bergamo in 1513.

10 Museo della Città, Brescia

Though there are Romanesque carvings and detached frescoes galore in the cloisters, chapels and chambers of this medieval monastery, the real focus here is on Brescia's great era as a Roman colony, and the archaeological works on display are astoundingly beautiful, numerous and well-preserved.

Sights

1 Museo Nazionale della Scienza e delle Tecnica – Leonardo da Vinci

The National Science and Technology museum knows what draws the crowds, hence its subtitle, "Leonardo da Vinci," which refers to the wooden scale models of his inventions, which fill the main hall. However, the telecommunications work of Marconi, displays on physics, cinematography, electricity and other scientific marvels don't get short shrift either (see Museo Nazionale della Scienza e delle Tecnica – Leonardo da Vinci, Milan).

► Via San Vittore 21 • **Map J4** • www.museoscienza.org
• 9:30am–4:50pm Tue–Fri, 9:30am–6:20pm Sat–Sun • Adm



2 Sant'Ambrogio

Second only to the Duomo among Milan's great churches (and to many, rather more beautiful), this 4th-century basilica, with a cloistered entryway, Paleochristian mosaics,

medieval carvings and late Renaissance frescoes, counts among the region's main Top 10.



Sant'Ambrogio

► **Map K4**



3 San Lorenzo Maggiore

A free-standing row of 16 Corinthian columns – once part of a 2nd-century temple – sets San Lorenzo's frontal piazza off from the road. The vast interior of the church is magnificent and sombre. It was built on a circular plan, with a ring-shaped ambulatory and matroneum, or raised women's gallery, which often marked such early churches. The Chapel of S. Aquilino, to your right as you

enter the building, preserves 4th-century mosaics, a 3rd-century sarcophagus and a Roman-era portal.

► *Corso di Porta Ticinese 39 • Map L5 •*
www.sanlorenzomaggiore.com • 8:30am–6:45pm daily
 • Free

4 Museo Diocesano

This museum houses important works from the treasures of churches across Milan and Lombardy. In addition to numerous small panels by the 14th- and early 15th-century post-Giotto Gothic schools of central Italy, it preserves 17th-century Flemish tapestries and a number of fine altarpieces. Among these are Hayez's glowing Crucifixion with Mary Magdalene and Tintoretto's Christ and the Adulterer.

► *Corso di Porta Ticinese 95 • Map K5 •*
www.museodiocesano.it • 10am–6pm Tue–Sun • Adm

5 Sant'Eustorgio

The chapels opening off the right side of this ancient church were added between the 11th and 13th centuries, and frescoed in the 1300s and 1400s – Bergognone provided the triptych in the first one. The immense and impressive Arc of St Peter Martyr in the magnificent Portinari Chapel (see Sant'Eustorgio, Milan) was carved by Balduccio.

► *Piazza S Eustorgio • Map K6 • 7:30am–12:30pm, 3:30–6:30pm daily. Museum: 10am–6pm • Free*



6 I Navigli

A city as grand as Milan needed a port, so the long pool of the Darsena was dug in the 12th century, with the Naviglio Grande – a 50-km/30-mile canal stretching to the Mincio

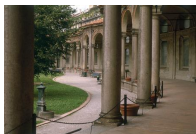
River (and thence the Po to the Adriatic) – leading into it. Today, the Navigli district is Milan's most lively, bohemian neighbourhood. Its old warehouses now contain fashionable apartments and the towpaths are lined with restaurants, clubs, bars and shops. Its streets teem nightly with foodies out for a fine meal, young folks cruising the bars and street vendors spreading out sheets and rickety tables to form an impromptu bazaar. This is the only part of the city that stays open during the dog days of August.

► *South and east of Piazza XXIV Maggio • Map J3*

7 Santa Maria presso San Celso

The name reflecting its proximity to the abutting Romanesque church of San Celso, this Renaissance church shot up with remarkable speed between 1493 and 1506. Its most alluring aspect is the cloister-like court before the entrance, designed by Cesare Cesarino and considered one of the best examples of early 16th-century architecture in Milan.

► *Corso Italia 37 • Map L6 • 7am–noon & 4–6:30pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon & 5–7:15pm Sat–Sun • Free*



8 Rotonda di Via Besana

This Greek-cross church, dating from 1713, is now used for exhibitions. It is surrounded by a small green park bounded by a lovely rosette-shaped ring of a cloister. Here, in summer,

films are shown al fresco.



Rotonda di Via Besana

► *Via Besana/Viale Regina Margherita • Map P5 • Open for exhibitions*

9 Santa Maria della Passione

Originally a modest Greek-cross church of 1486–1530, it was elongated with a massive nave and deep chapel niches in 1573 to make it the second largest church in Milan. Its interior is dominated by the work of Daniele Crespi: a portrait of San Carlo in the first chapel on the left, most of the Passion series below the cupola at the crossing, the organ doors and throughout the Museo della Basilica (a series of rooms that open to the right of the altar).

► *Via Bellini 2 • Map P3 • 7am–noon, 3:30–6pm daily*
 • Free



10 Abbazia di Chiaravalle

A countryside abbey now surrounded by the roar of suburban Milan, Chiaravalle has survived the centuries since its construction (between 1172 and 1221) remarkably well. Its lovely Romanesque architecture is enhanced by 15th- and 16th-century murals and a Luini Madonna with Child in the right transept.



Abbazia di Chiaravalle

► **Via S Arialdo 102 • 9am–11:45am, 3–6:45pm Tue–Sat, 10:30am–11:45am, 3–6:45pm Sun • Free**

Small Towns and Villages

1 Sabbioneta

An entire town planned between 1556 and 1591 to Renaissance ideals, Sabbioneta is the legacy of Vespasiano Gonzaga Borromeo, who, bereft of heirs, put his energies into a complex of palaces and a theatre.



2 Crema

Though originally a fiercely loyal satellite of Milan, Crema's formative period was under the Venetians (1454–1797). It's a tidy town of white and pink marble façades, a delightful Duomo and a civic museum that includes scores by composer Francesco Cavalli.

► **Map E5 • Tourist info: Via dei Racchetti 8 • 0373-81-020 • www.acrema.it/Proloco**

3 Lodi

Built in 1158 after Barbarossa (see 1176: Lombard League Defeats Barbarossa) razed the original town 5 km (3 miles) to the west, Lodi is celebrated for its Duomo and octagonal church of the Incoronata. The latter is slathered with frescoes, gilded stuccoes and fine paintings by Il Bergognone.

► **Map D5 • Tourist info: Piazza Broletto 4 • 0371-421-391 • www.apl.lodi.it**



4 Pavia

The capital of northern Italy during the Dark Ages is now lost in Milan's suburban sprawl but retains its historic centre. In addition to the glorious Certosa (see Certosa di Pavia), other

important churches include San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro and San Michele, both full of Romanesque carvings, and the Duomo, whose architects included Bramante and

Leonardo. Pavia also boasts a Renaissance bridge and 14th-century castle with paintings by Antonella da Messina, Correggio, Bellini, Luini and Tiepolo.

► **Map C6 • Tourist info: Via Fabio Filzi 2 • 0382-22-156 • www.apl.pv.it**

5 Vigevano

Lodovico "Il Moro" Sforza (1452–1508) was born in the castle that dominates this town of silk and shoe factories. The arcaded Piazza Ducale was designed by Bramante; the Baroque Duomo was built in 1680.

► **Map B5 • www.vigevano.org**

6 Castiglione Olona

In the 14th century Cardinal Branda Castiglione fell in love with the new Gothic painting style he saw in Florence and was determined to import it to his hometown. The aging painter Masolino did some of his best works in the cardinal's palace and the Chiesa della Collegiata. The Chiesa della Villa nearby is a Brunelleschian church with colossal saints flanking the entrance.

► **Map B3 • Tourist info: Piazza Garibaldi 4 • 0331-858-048**

7 Civate

The main town on little Lake Annone was a medieval stop for pilgrims visiting its 8th-century abbey, which was said to house a set of Saint Peter's Keys to Heaven (long-vanished). In the hills above town is the stunning Romanesque retreat of San Pietro al Monte.

8 Chiavenna

The chief town of the Alpine valley is littered with crotti – caverns used to cure meats and cheeses – many of which have been converted into osterie. An old stone quarry above town is now home to a botanical park; the Parco Marmitta dei Giganti contains glacial potholes and prehistoric carvings.

► **Tourist info: Via V Emanuele II 2 • 0343-36-384 • www.valchiavenna.com/chiavenna**

9 Val Calmonica Villages

The villages of Capo di Ponte and Nadro di Ceto are the best access points for the prehistoric rock carvings found in the valley north of Lake Iseo. The images are at least 3,000 years old and include hunting scenes.

► **Tourist info: Via S Briscoli 42, Capo di Ponte • 0364-42-080 • www.invallecamolnica.it**

10 Bormio

This year-round skiing village high in the Valtellina is equal parts high-class resort and medieval village. It's also a gateway to a park of glaciers, peaks, trails and gorgeous Alpine vistas.

► **Tourist info: Via Roma 131b • 0342-903-300**

Lakeside Towns

1 Sirmione

The loveliest town on the lake is set at the tip of a long peninsula. It has the ruins of an ancient Roman villa

and a remarkably intact medieval castle (see Grotte di Catullo, Sirmione, Rocca Scagliera, Sirmione).

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: Viale Marconi 2 (just before town entrance) • 030-916-245 • www.comune.sirmione.bs.it*

2 Desenzano

A large and delightful town, settled in the Bronze Age and a retreat since the Roman era. Its top attraction is the Villa Romana (see Villa Romana, Desenzano).

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: Via Porto Vecchio 34 • 030-914-1510*

3 Salò

This genteely faded resort became the capital of Mussolini's short-lived Republic of Salò (1943–5) in the closing chapters of World War II.

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: Lungolago Zanardelli (in the Palazzo Comunale) • 0365-21-423*

4 Gardone Riviera

The fruits of Gardone's long popularity as a resort developed into magnificent villas and gardens, including Hruska and the Vittoriale (see Il Vittoriale, Gardone Riviera, Giardino Botanico Hruska, Gardone Riviera).

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: Corso Repubblica 8 • 0365-20-347*

5 Toscolano–Maderno

These twin towns enjoy a great beach and the glorious church of Sant'Andrea, with its Romanesque capitals and fading frescoes.

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: Lungolago Zanardelli 18 • 0365-641-330*

6 Limone sul Garda

Little Limone is tucked into a cove, with a long beach, small harbour and dozens of hotels.

► **Map G3** • *Tourist info: Lungolago Zanardelli 18, Maderno • 0365-641-330 • www.limone.com*

7 Riva del Garda

A bustling town, blessed with good surfing and the medieval Torre d'Apponale and Rocca Castle. Just inland lies Arco, home to an elegantly ruined castle (see Lake Garda).

► **Map H3** • *Tourist info: Giardini di Porta Orientale 8 • 0464-554-444*

8 Torbole

History put Torbole on the map in 1439 (see Lake Garda). Aside from that, the town is known chiefly as a good base for lake sports.

► **Map H3** • *Tourist info: Via Lungolago Verona 19 • 0464-505-177*



9 Malcesine

Among exhibitions on local natural history and prehistory, the town's castle contains a room devoted to Goethe, who was briefly imprisoned as a suspected Austrian spy when he was

caught sketching the castle.

► **Map H3** • *Tourist info: Via Capitanato 6–8 • 0457-400-044*

10 Bardolino

Bardolino has been famous since Roman times for its light red wine, celebrated at the museum. The town also has two wonderful Romanesque churches.

► **Map G4** • *Tourist info: P Aldo Moro • 045-721-0078*

► *Museo del Vino: www.museodelvino.it*

Lakeside Attractions

1 Isole Borromee, Lake Maggiore

This trio of islets off Stresa – two clad in gardens and palaces, the third with a fishing village – rank among the top 10 sights in the whole region (see Lake Maggiore's Isole Borromee).



2 Santa Caterina del Sasso, Lake Maggiore

The façade and interior of this church perched just above the water are covered with decaying frescoes dating from the hermitage's foundation in the 13th century to its suppression by the Austrians in the 19th; the Dominicans returned in 1986. Be warned: there are many steps down from the car park, and the ferries servicing the ancient dock are infrequent. Look out on the loggia for a winch assembly once used with a basket to raise the daily shopping – and the occasional frail monk – from the boat decks.



3 Rocca di Angera, Lake Maggiore

This 8th-century Lombard fortress dominates Angera's headland. Expanded in the late 13th century by the Visconti of Milan, it later became the seat of its own county, and in 1449 passed to the Borromeo clan. Today the glowering fortress preserves delicate medieval frescoes and a Doll Museum.



4 Bellagio, Lake Como Perhaps the loveliest town on any of the lakes has it all: a harbourside arcade of cafés, sumptuous gardens surrounding stately villas, steep medieval alleys, and hotels and shops in all price ranges. The Romanesque church of San Giacomo has a 12th-century pulpit with reliefs of the Evangelists (see Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio and Bellagio).



A steep lane in picturesque Bellagio

5 Como's Duomo, Lake Como The exterior of Como's cathedral, begun in the late 14th century, is a festival of statues and bas-reliefs. Inside are Renaissance altar-pieces and tapestries (see Duomo, Como).

6 Villa Carlotta, Lake Como Owing its beauty and fame to three owners, the villa itself was begun in 1643 for Giorgio Clerici. In 1801 it passed to lawyer Gian Battista Sommariva, and he filled it with Neo-Classical sculptures and Romantic paintings. The former include Palamede by Canova and Cupid and Psyche by his student Tadolini; the latter a famed Last Kiss of Romeo and Juliet by Francesco Hayez, master of stolen-kiss scenes. In 1847 it passed to the Prussian Princess Carlotta, who lent it her name while her husband, Prince Giorgio di Sassonia-Meiningen, furnished it in Empire style. He also created the magnificent botanical gardens (see Villa Carlotta, Tremezzo).



7 Varenna, Lake Como Varenna is less touristy than Bellagio and almost as rewarding. It has a waterfront promenade, two small churches with medieval frescoes on the main square, two villas-with-gardens to wander, and the half-ruined Castello di Vezio high above town. Just south of Varenna, the Fiumelatte gushes from the cliff face down about 250 m (800 ft) into the lake, making it the shortest river

in Italy. Oddly, it flows only from March to October (see Villa Monastero, Varenna, Villa Cipressi, Varenna and Varenna).

8 Il Vittoriale, Lake Garda An over-the-top Art Nouveau overhaul of this villa owned by the flamboyant poet, adventurer and national hero Gabriele d'Annunzio was financed by none other than Mussolini himself – basically as a bribe to silence d'Annunzio's criticism of the fascist government (see Il Vittoriale, Gardone Riviera).



9 Sirmione, Lake Garda Jutting into the lake from the southern shore is a skinny peninsula. At its tip sits the postcard-perfect town of Sirmione, guarded by a striking castle complete with moat and drawbridge.

It's a popular resort, with plenty of hotels and shopping, but also some fine little churches and the ruins of a Roman villa at the promontory's very tip (see Grotte di Catullo, Sirmione and Sirmione).

10 Giardino Botanico Hruska, Lake Garda Arturo Hruska, Swiss dentist to Europe's royalty in the early and mid-20th century, laid out these sumptuous botanical gardens between 1940 and 1971 (see Giardino Botanico Hruska, Gardone Riviera).

Things to Do



1 Windsurfing Each summer, windsurfers from across Europe descend on Garda's wind-pounded northern shores – especially in Riva and Torbole – for some of the best lake surfing on the

continent. Surf hire shops can be found in Riva, Torbole and Sirmione.

2 Diving While this isn't the tropics, the waters are clearer than you might expect. Subterranean surprises include an underwater Jesus near Riva. Equipment is available in various outlets.

3 Mountain-Biking Whether you want to explore the flatlands to the south, tackle mountains rising sheer from the north shores, or simply wend along the lake itself, hire a bike to see Garda at a leisurely pace.



4 Climbing and Paragliding For adventure sports such as climbing and canyoning, head to Arco, just north of Riva, for the Guide Alpine or Multi Sport Centre, which can also hook you up with a paragliding run, as can Paragliding Club in Malcesine.

► *Guide Alpine*
0464-507-075, •
www.guidealpinearco.com

► *Multi Sport Centre*
0464-531-080, • www.multisport3.com

► *Paragliding Club* 045-740-0152

5 A Round of Golf

The golf at Garda isn't great, but if you want to break out the nine-iron, there are several courses on the southwest shore and one on the east shore.

- **Garda Golf, Soiano del Lago**, • 0365-674-707
- **Golf Bogliaco, Toscolano**, • 0365-643-006
- **Ca' Degli Ulivi, Torri del Benaco**, • 045-627-9030

6 Fura Club, Lonato

One of the best clubs in Italy, Fura is a visual experience – a screen surrounds the dance floor, so you can watch yourself dance.

- **Map G4** • **Via Lavagnone 13** • 030-913-0652 • www.fura.it

7 Disco Bar Café Latino, Riva

This disco overlooks the harbour from giant picture windows.

- **Map H3** • **Via Monte Oro 14** • 0464-555-0785 • Fri–Sat

8 Kursaal, Sirmione

A happy blend of retro disco and ballroom dance hall.

- **Map G4** • **Via S Martino della Battaglia, Lugana** • 030-919-163

9 Dehor, Lonato

This disco spins house and 70s–80s pop and funk in a refined, Mediterranean-style club two miles off the autostrada. Once a month there's a theme party night.

- **Map G4** • **Via Fornace dei Gorgi 2** • 030-991-9948 • Fri, Sat & Tue

10 Sesto Senso Club, Desenzano

Popular nightclub with laser lights pouring over a pounding dance floor shaking to house music, pop and Europop.

- **Map G4** • **Via dal Molin 99** • 030-914-2684

Best of the Rest

1 Museo del Risorgimento

Find out about the heroes after whom two-thirds of Italy's streets are named at this museum tracing Italy's 19th-century risorgimento (unification) movement.

- **Via Borgonuovo 23** • **Map M2** • 9am–1pm, 2–5:30pm Tue–Sun • Free

2 Porta Nuova

Piecemeal city gate incorporating ancient Roman funerary reliefs and a 13th-century marble tabernacle.

- **Via Manzoni/Piazza Cavour** • **Map N2** • Free

3 Palazzo Dugnani

A 17th-century palazzo containing a Tiepolo fresco and a museum of cinema.

- **Via Manin 2b** • **Map N1-2** • 3–6pm Fri–Sun • Adm

4 Museo di Storia Naturale

Dinosaurs and taxidermied creatures are among the exhibits at the natural history museum founded in 1838.

- **Corso Venezia 55** • **Map P2** • 9am–6pm Tue–Sun • Free



5 Palazzo Litta

Italy's state railway headquarters and a theatre occupy the expansive Rococo palazzo near the Last Supper.

- **Corso Magenta 24** • **Map K3** • Open for exhibitions

6 Museo Teatrale alla Scala

From hand-written scores to costumes, anything related to La Scala is at this temporary home until 2005 (see Museo Teatrale alla Scala, Milan).

- **Corso Magenta 71** • **Map K3** • www.teatroallascala.org • 9am–6pm daily • Adm

7 Arco della Pace

Luigi Cagnola built this magnificent triumphal arch in 1807 for Napoleon to pass through when visiting Milan. It didn't get finished quite in time and was inaugurated instead by a bemused Habsburg emperor.

- **Piazza Sempione** • **Map J1** • Free



8 Pirelli Tower

Its reign as the world's tallest concrete skyscraper lasted less than a decade, but this wedge rising on the site of Pirelli's first tyre factory remains a symbol of Lombardy's robust economy.

- **Piazza Duca d'Aosta** • Free

9 Ippodromo

In 1999, Milan's horse track became home to a bronze horse cast by an American foundation determined to bring to fruition Leonardo da Vinci's oft-sketched equine tribute to Lodovico il Moro.

- **Piazzale dello Sport 16** • 9:30am–6pm

10 San Siro (Stadio Meazza)

"The Scala of football", shared by rivals Inter and AC Milan.

- **Via Piccolomini 5** • Open for matches • Adm • Museum (Gate 4, Mon–Sat adm)

5

History and Culture



Moments in History

1 298–283 BC: Third Samnite War
The Po Valley and land to the north, once called Cisalpine Gaul, was a Celtic province that often found itself up against Rome. Its alliance with the Samnites failed, and Rome used the excuse to push its boundary north of the Po.

2 AD 313: Edict of Milan
During Rome's decline Milan became de facto capital of the Western Empire. Constantine, holding court here in 313, made Christianity the Empire's official religion, setting a new course for European history.

3 572: Fall of Pavia to Lombards
In the 5th century barbarian tribes overran the disintegrating Roman Empire. Most came, sacked and left, but the Germanic Lombards took Pavia in 572 and settled in the Po Valley, expanding across the north. Eventually the Byzantines and Charlemagne trounced them, and the region dissolved into a network of city-states that lasted throughout the Middle Ages.

4 1176: Lombard League Defeats Barbarossa
When Swabian Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa) levelled Milan and set up his own puppet mayors, the region's happily self-governing cities banded together as the Lombard League and with papal support forced Barbarossa to return their autonomy.

5 1277: Ottone Visconti Defeats the Torriani
Archbishop Visconti overthrew the leading Torriani family in 1277. Under 160 years of Visconti rule, Milan extended its hegemony over much of the north.

6 1450: Francesco Sforza Comes to Power
The last Visconti died in 1447, leaving only an illegitimate daughter who couldn't inherit the title but was married to one Francesco Sforza. Milan's young Ambrosian Republic rashly hired Sforza to defend them from Venetian power-grabbers. Instead, he cut a deal with Venice, split up the territory and made himself duke.

7 1499: The Sforza Cede Milan to France
Francesco's son Galeazzo Maria was murdered in 1476, after which power passed to Galeazzo's brother Lodovico, who was known as "Il Moro" ("The Moor") on account of his looks. Lodovico ushered the Renaissance into Milan, inviting the likes of Leonardo da Vinci to his court, but in 1499 ceded control to Louis XII. The city changed hands repeatedly until Austria seized power in 1706.

8 1848: Cinque Giornate Revolt
The 19th-century Risorgimento (unification movement) inspired the Milanese to rise up, on March 18, for five days, with their victory triggering the demise of Austrian rule. By 1859 King Vittorio Emanuele II controlled Lombardy: he sent General Garibaldi off to conquer the rest of the peninsula, forming a new kingdom – Italy.

9 1945: Mussolini Executed
Mussolini's fascist regime ended after his alliance with Hitler put Italy on the losing side of World War II.

As the Allies drew closer Mussolini fled with his mistress. They were caught by partisans and shot on Lake Como, their bodies later strung up on Milan's Piazzale Loreto and stoned.

10 1990: Lombard League Wins Local Elections
Northern resentment of sharing wealth with the poor south found political expression in the Lombard League, a separatist party that came to prominence in 1990. Re-dubbed the Northern League, the party espoused federalism and in 2001 gained power as part of the Forza Italia coalition led by media mogul Silvio Berlusconi.

Top 10 Historical Figures

1 St Ambrose (334–97)
Milan's bishop put down the Arian heresy and helped establish Church autonomy.

2 St Augustine (354–430)
St Ambrose's star pupil – an African-born philosopher.

3 Theodolinda (500s)
Lombard queen who converted her populace to orthodox Christianity.

4 Gian Galeazzo Visconti (1378–1402)
This conqueror of vast territories was the first Milan ruler to gain the title of Duke.

5 Lodovico "Il Moro" Sforza (1452–1508)
"The Moor" ruled Milan's Renaissance court but ceded to France, later siding against the French and being exiled.

6 St Charles Borromeo (1538–84)
The crusading archbishop carried out Counter-Reformation ideals in the north.

7 Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737)
The greatest violin-maker who ever lived learned his craft in the city of Cremona.

8 Alessandro Volta (1745–1827)
This Como physicist invented the battery in 1800 and gave his name to the electrical unit.

9 Antonio di Pietro (b. 1950)
The Christian Democrat party collapsed in 1992 following this magistrate's investigation into political corruption.

10 Silvio Berlusconi (b. 1936)
The founder of the Forza Italia party survived bribery scandals to serve as prime minister in 1994 and from 2001.

Top 10 La Scala Premieres



1 L'Europa Riconosciuta (1778)
Salieri's bellicose but lighthearted opera opened La Scala on 3 August 1778.

2 La Pietra del Paragone (1812)
Rossini's work signalled La Scala's shift from comic opera and Neo-Classical works to Romantic melodrama.

3 Chiara e Serafina (1822)
The first of many fun-loving Donizetti premieres.

4 Norma (1831)
Of Bellini's three La Scala premieres, the most famous is *Norma*, a Druid-Roman love triangle that ends badly.

5 Nabucco (1842)
Verdi would become La Scala's greatest home-grown composer, but he suffered two flops before this hit.

6 Mefistofele (1868)
Boito's first great success led to a collaboration with Verdi that produced *Otello* in 1887 and *Falstaff* in 1893.

7 Aida (1872)
After a long absence from La Scala, Verdi offered this Egyptian melodrama.

8 Madame Butterfly (1904)
Puccini's tale of enduring love between a Japanese geisha and an American soldier.

9 Turandot (1926)
Puccini struck lucky again with exotic Asian fare – and, for once, a happy(ish) ending.

10 The Rake's Progress (1951)
Under Toscanini's direction, La Scala started opening up to foreign works, including this Stravinsky classic.

Books and Films Set in Lombardy

1 I Promessi Sposi (The Betrothed)
Written in the 1800s, Alessandro Manzoni's novel is a window into Lombard life in the 1600s, set in Milan and Manzoni's Lake Como hometown of Lecco during Spanish rule. It is required reading for all Italian schoolchildren and has been translated into many languages.

2 A Farewell to Arms
Ernest Hemingway's World War I novel (written in 1929) tells the story of an American soldier wounded while fighting for the Italian army. He convalesces in a Milan hospital, and, after inadvertently deserting while escaping the Germans, reunites with his love in Stresa on Lake Maggiore. They stay at the Des Iles Borromées hotel (where Hemingway himself often stayed) before fleeing by boat across to Swiss Locarno.

3 Twilight in Italy
The first place D H Lawrence and his lover Frieda settled during their European peregrinations was the shores of Lake Garda, during the winter of 1912–13. In 1916 he compiled his notes on those happy first months spent in Italy and wrote this travelogue.

4 A Month by the Lake
It's 1937, and a group of stodgy society Brits and bored Yanks loosen their mores and inhibitions on the shores of Lake Como. Vanessa Redgrave and Uma Thurman head up the cast of this 1995 film by John Irvin. You can visit its setting, the Villa Balbianello, Lake Como.

5 Miracle in Milan
Vittorio de Sica's 1951 fable of a magical dove that grants wishes to the inhabitants of a Milan slum uses an early version of "special effects", bridging the popular Neo-Realistic style of Italy's post-war cinema with the era of magical realism in film-making that Fellini would make famous.

6 A Traveller in Italy
H V Morton, who in his youth gained fame scooping the story of Tutankhamun's tomb discovery in the 1920s, became one of the 20th-century's best, if little-known, travel writers. His 1950s journey through Italy is an erudite combination of travelogue, history and wonderful prose, all of it surprisingly undated.

7 La Notte
Film director Michelangelo Antonioni takes the slow death of affection between a couple, masterfully played by Marcello Mastroianni and Jeanne Moreau, and sets it against a backdrop of rapidly industrializing Milan in 1960.

8 Theorem
Pier Paolo Pasolini's usual mix of sex, homosexuality and a communist critique on the emptiness of bourgeois life defines this 1968 film. Handsome stranger Terrence Stamp raises the libidos of a middle-class Milanese family, then further stirs up their lives by disappearing.

9 The Spider's Strategem
Before gaining international fame, Bernardo Bertolucci made this 1969 story of a dysfunctional family haunted by the fascist past. He set this psychological drama in the quirky town of Sabbioneta.

10 Star Wars Episode II
George Lucas knew that even his vaunted digital special effects couldn't hold a candle to the extraterrestrial beauty of Lake Como, which, with very little touching-up, filled in for Naboo's lake district in the fifth *Star Wars* instalment, *Attack of the Clones* (2002). Beautiful Villa Balbianello (see Villa Balbianello, Lake Como) is again a backdrop for romantic scenes.

6

Shopping

Top 10 Fashion Houses and Gurus

1 Armani

Italy's top fashion guru is the master of smart clothes that, for a price tag with far too many zeroes, can help anyone look like a model.

2 Versace

Made "violently elegant" designs popular and costumed many La Scala productions in the 1980s.

3 Prada

The most chillingly expensive of Milan designers, Prada breathed new life into relaxed minimalism with the help of a small red stripe.

4 Mila Schön

A giant of fashion who pioneered the double-face fabric in the 1960s.

5 Krizia

Ever an eclectic designer, Mariuccia "Krizia" Mandelli has been flouting trends and winning awards since 1954.

6 Ermenegildo Zegna

Fourth-generation, environmentally-aware firm that uses the finest cashmere, merino and mohair in its fabrics.

7 Moschino

An enfant terrible of Milan's fashion scene since 1983.

8 Missoni

This husband-wife team has charmed the fashion world since 1953 with its multi-coloured, zigzag knitwear.

9 Trussardi

Founded by a Bergamasco glove-maker in 1910, Trussardi produces classic cuts and gorgeous leather accessories.

10 Ferré

His recent lines are aimed at the youth market (Ferré Jeans) and people of a larger build (Ferré Forma).

Things to Buy

1 Designer Clothes

Milan, of course, is monumentally important to the world of fashion. Every important fashion label, whether local or based in Paris, New York or Florence, maintains a boutique in Milan. For those whose tastes outstrip their budgets, Milan is also home to some excellent stock shops and discount outlets.



2 Shoes

Italian shoes range from the practical to the gorgeous and outrageous. Some will last you a lifetime; some are just for very special occasions. All the famous labels offer lines of shoes, but you'd do best to seek out the specialists, whether it be a haute-couture work of art at Ferragamo, a mass-produced Italian brand name or a designer bargain from Rufus.

3 Handbags

Swoon over the designs from Prada and Bottega Veneta, or the slightly less pricey Coccinelle. Or, plump for one of the many well made, non-label leather bags, still in great Italian style.

4 Design Objects

Italian industrial designers are maestros at turning everyday objects such as kettles, lighting systems and juicers into works of art. The often whimsical, usually beautiful and always ergonomically sound results are on sale throughout Italy, or you can go right to the source on Lake Orta. Here, an artisan tradition gave rise in the late 19th century to firms such as Alessi, Bialletti and Lagostina.

5 Linens

Bassetti and Frette offer affordable, stylish linens. The haute couture of sheets and tablecloths is represented by Pratesi and, at the pinnacle, Jerusum, which provided the lace-edged linens for Italy's royal family in the 19th century.

6 Silk

Como has long been Italy's chief purveyor of finely spun silk fabrics. The Milanese maestros of haute couture come to Como to finger the fabrics that will soon be draped across a supermodel's shoulders. These same sought-after silks are available to the public in factory warehouses around Como and in shops across Lombardy.



7 Art and Antiques

Milan's art dealers offer a rich collection of lesser-known Byzantine and Baroque works and a plethora of 19th-century oils and other relatively affordable works of art. You'll find an embarrassment of 18th-century Venetian chairs, country-style hardwood dressers and Empire-style clocks cluttering the antichità shops.

8 Wine

Lombard wines are generally excellent (see Top 10 Wines). Furthermore, the lakes border both the Veneto – home to Valpolicella, Pinot Grigio and Soave – and Piemonte, where the mighty Barolo, Barbera and Barbaresco reds are crafted.



9 Books

A catalogue of Milanese galleries, a glossy tome of lake scenes or a translation of local literary classic *I Promessi Sposi* (see *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed)) might be a more treasured souvenir than a sheaf of postcards or trinkets.



10 Jewellery

Though it's not a top European capital of baubles and precious gems, Milan's jewellers hold their own. Seek out the bold creations of Donatella Pellini or the cutting-edge minimalism of Xenia. For something more classic, try Gobbi 1842 and especially Mario Buccellati, a firm that since 1919 has produced exquisite jewellery, elegant tableware and renowned silver objets d'art.



Objets d'art

Top 10 Wines

1 Bardolino

The best-known wine is a light, balanced red from Lake Garda's Veneto shore.

2 Valtellina

This meaty red from the hills of Lake Como is powerful: one type is named "Inferno".

3 Franciacorta

South of Lake Iseo, Italy's only DOCG sparkling wine; try Satèn. Also red (Cabernet-Merlot) and white (Chardonnay-Pinot) DOCs.

4 Lambrusco

Thick, dark, fizzy red from Mantova. Cheap but delicious; great with pizza.

5 Oltrepò Pavese

Also slightly fizzy, lighter and tangier than Lambrusco. The Garda region also produces familiar varieties.

6 Garda Bresciano

A collection of wines from the lower reaches of Lake Garda, including Gropello and the rounder Chiaretto from the Mincio valley.

7 San Martino della Battaglia

A tart white made from Tocai grapes of Friuli; there's also a dessert liqueur version.

8 Lugana

This balanced white is made from Trebbiano grapes on the southern shores of Lake Garda.

9 San Colombano

Milan's own red is chiefly significant for making the DOC level despite being grown on the outskirts of an industrial city.

10 Grappa

Italy's firewater is a digestivo ("digestive" liqueur) distilled from the leftovers of the grape-squeezing process.

7

Itineraries



A Day in Central Milan

Morning

Start at 10am amid the stupendous collections of **Pinacoteca Ambrosiana**.

Work your way south to Via Torino and the jewelbox of a church, **Santa Maria presso San Satiro**, then walk north up Via Torino until you reach the Piazza del Duomo, Milan's vast public living room.

Continue along the piazza's western edge and divert up Via Mercanti to see the raised porticoes of **Palazzo della Ragione**. Now cross the huge **Duomo** square to enjoy the marvels of Italy's second-largest cathedral (see Milan's Duomo). Don't miss exploring its roof.

Take a platter of cheese and meats in **Zucca** (see Zucca in Galleria (Caffè Miani)) at the entrance to **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II**, the grandest shopping arcade in Italy.

Afternoon

Exit the arcade at Piazza della Scala, flanked by the famed opera house and **Palazzo Marino**. Behind the latter is the church of **San Fedele**. After seeing this walk northeast past the surreal **Casa degli Omenoni**.

Turn left to visit the excellent **Museo Poldi-Pezzoli**, then continue north on Via Manzoni, admiring its palazzi and Armani boutique, until you come to Milan's prime shopping street, **Via Montenapoleone**.

Shoppers will spend the rest of the day here; museum hounds can take in the **Museo Bagatti Valsecchi**. Both should stop for drinks at **Cova**.

A Day on Lake Maggiore

Morning

Be at the **Stresa** ferry dock by 10am and buy a day pass for island hopping as well as admission tickets for the **Isole Borromeo** sights.

Ride to **Isola Bella** first to spend two hours exploring the collections of the **Borromeo Palace** and the intricate gardens above it. Then catch the 12:25pm ferry for the short hop to the **Isola Superiore**, where you can settle into a lakeside table on **Verbanò's** terrace for lunch with a view (book ahead of time (see Verbanò, Isola Superiore (Isola dei Pescatori)).

Mid-Afternoon

Wander the tourist/fishing village after lunch before continuing on the boat to **Isola Madre**.

The **Borromeo Villa** on Madre takes only a half hour to wander, but the vast botanical gardens surrounding it are a delight, thick with exotic flora and populated by colourful exotic birds. The multi-lingual map handed out explains many of the rare specimens and is remarkably informative too.

Try to catch a return ferry that stops on the mainland at Lido/Funivia for **Montarone** – one stop before Stresa proper. Get off here and stroll along the little-used waterfront promenade for the final 20-minute walk back to downtown Stresa. You will be rewarded with a lovely

late-afternoon view of the islands on your left, and romantically crumbling, abandoned villas on your right.

A Day with Leonardo

Morning

To spend time with the great Renaissance genius you must transgress the division between north and south Milan.

Begin the day's itinerary at the Cordusio metro stop, then walk west on Via Meravigli three blocks to the corner with Via S Maria alla Porta for a cappuccino at **Pasticceria Marchesi**. Continue west, and pop into the **Museo Archeologico** (see Civico Museo Archeologico) for 20 minutes of historical musing.

Make reservations long in advance for a 10am admission to the Last Supper (see Santa Maria delle Grazie). Take time to fully appreciate Leonardo's art.

Go east along Corso Magenta to Via Carducci to relax at the Art Nouveau **Bar Magenta** and enjoy an early lunch.

Afternoon/Evening

Turn down Via Carducci four long blocks to Via San Vittore (you'll see across the street the Pusterla di S Ambrogio, a remnant of the medieval city gates) and turn right for the **Museo della Scienza** (see Museo Nazionale della Scienza e delle Tecnica – Leonardo da Vinci).

At around 3:30pm double back along Via S Vittore to S Ambrogio. Trek down Via Edmondo De Amicis to Corso della Porta Ticinese, where your first stop is the magnificent **San Lorenzo Maggiore**. Peruse the works in the **Museo Diocesano**, then continue to **Sant'Eustorgio**.

A block south brings you into the bar and restaurant zone of the **Navigli**, ready for a post-itinerary drink and a superb meal (see Shops and Nightspots in Southern Milan, Places to Eat in Southern Milan).

Touring the Great Museums of Northern Milan

Morning

There are two major museums in this itinerary, so start off early at the **Castello Sforzesco** when it opens at 9:30am. Work your way up to **San Sempliciano** around 11am, then make your way southeast to the church of **San Marco**.

Continue up Via San Marco to have lunch at one of Milan's great simple trattorie, **Latteria San Marco** (see Latteria), then head back down the street, cross Via Pontaccio, and plunge into the vast art collections of the **Pinacoteca di Brera**.

Afternoon

If you're an art fan, you'll probably spend the rest of the afternoon at the Pinacoteca, ready for a passeggiata and dinner when you emerge near closing time. But if it doesn't grab you, knock off after 90 minutes and you'll

have time to continue east along Via Fatebenefratelli to Piazza Cavour.

If it's between Friday and Sunday, you can turn up Via Manin to pop inside the **Palazzo Dugnani**; otherwise, skirt the Giardini Pubblici on Via Palestro to peruse the modern art inside the **Villa Reale**, then the dinosaur skeletons and wonderfully outdated 19th-century dioramas inside the **Museo di Storia Naturale**.

Finally, to round off a full and busy day, head for your dinner reservations at **La Terrazza**.

Town Hopping

Morning

To cruise the lake you can buy point-to-point tickets, or peruse the single-ticket cruises that visit several towns and may include villa admissions. This itinerary assumes you have already checked out Como's sights before spending the night in **Bellagio**.

Begin the next day with a cappuccino at Bellagio's **Caffè Rossi** across from the dock before boarding the 10:30am boat to **Villa Carlotta**, where you have an hour to visit the collection of art and lush gardens of the lake's greatest villa.

Catch the ferry down to Isola Comacina to dig into a sumptuous feast at the **Locanda** (see Locanda dell'Isola Comacina, Ossuccio). After a second helping of their "spiked" coffee, you'll have a bit of time to work off the meal by exploring the island's overgrown church ruins before grabbing the boat back up the lake to **Varenna**.

Mid-afternoon

Continue walking off the big lunch by climbing up to the romantic, panoramic Castello di Vezio above town, then descend and pop into Varenna's little churches. Poke around the gardens of **Villa Monastero**, then finally head down to the lakefront arcade for a short stroll then a meal by the water at the splendid **Vecchia Varenna** (see Vecchia Varenna, Varenna).

Unless you decide to spend a relaxing night in quiet and little visited Varenna, make sure you finish dinner before 9pm, when the last ferry leaves for Bellagio.

Two Days from Garda to Como

Day One

The smaller lakes and towns are scattered across Lombardy and eastern Piemonte, impossible to see in one short trip, but some of the best can be enjoyed on a leisurely two-day drive from Lake Garda to Lake Como.

Head west on the A4 Autostrada to **Brescia** to spend your first morning admiring its museum and Roman sights. Having lunched at **Due Stelle** (see Due Stelle, Brescia), continue to nearby **Lake Iseo**. Explore the eastern shore, especially the Romanino frescoes in Pisogne, the small museum in Lovere and the weird rock pinnacles outside of Zone.

If you can, spend the night at **I Due Roccoli** (see I Due Roccoli, Iseo), or at least have dinner there (see I Due Roccoli, Iseo, Lake Iseo).

Day Two

On Day Two, drive north into the **Val Calmonica** (see Val Calmonica Villages) to view some of the valley's prehistoric rock carvings. Then head back south to diverge west at Lovere for the back road to **Bergamo**.

Check into your hotel and spend the afternoon enjoying the Renaissance architecture and carvings of the Colleoni Chapel, the excellent Accademia Carrara gallery, medieval town square and, of course, the town's shops, cafés and wine bars.

End your day with a hearty meal at the aptly named **Antica Hosteria del Vino Buono** (the "Ancient Inn of Good Wine"; (see Antica Hosteria del Vino Buono, Bergamo)).

Two Days on Lake Garda

Day One

If you're here to relax and sightsee rather than thrash the waves up near **Riva** (see Riva del Garda), then spend your days on the southern end of the lake. **Sirmione** is both a charming and lively base.

On your first day, stop in **Desenzano** to see the **Villa Romana** before driving out to Sirmione itself. Walk out to the far tip of the peninsula to wander the ruins of the **Grotte di Catullo** (see Grotte di Catullo, Sirmione). On your way back into town, divert to the right to pop into San Pietro and see its medieval frescoes.

Navigate the throngs of the tiny centre to clamber up the balustrades of the **Rocca Scagliera** (see Rocca Scagliera, Sirmione) for a sunset panorama.

Take a passeggiata (stroll) with the crowds before heading down to the **Vecchia Lugana** (see Vecchia Lugana, Sirmione) for an exquisite evening meal.

Day Two

On day two, drive around to **Gardone Riviera** to tour Gabriele d'Annunzio's delightfully idiosyncratic **Il Vittoriale**, then have a refined meal on the terrace of the **Villa Fiordaliso** (see Villa Fiordaliso, Gardone Riviera).

After lunch, take the time to wander the grounds at **Giardino Botanico Hruska** before either making your leisurely way back to Sirmione – if you are basing yourself there – or heading further up the lake to explore the small lakeside towns of **Limone** or **Riva** (see Limone sul Garda, Riva del Garda).

8

Practical Info

Arriving in Milan

1 By Air from the UK

Alitalia, British Airways, Ryanair, Easyjet and British Midlands all fly direct London to Milan; bmibaby flies East Midlands to Milan. British Midlands also flies into Bergamo. From Ireland, Aer Lingus flies direct Dublin to Milan; British Airways and Alitalia route you through London.

2 By Air from North America

There are direct flights to Milan from the major North American cities on most US and Canadian airlines as well as Italy's Alitalia. Most arrive at Malpensa airport.

3 By Air from Australia

Alitalia flies Sydney to Rome, from where you can transfer to Milan. Qantas flies from various Australian and New Zealand cities to Rome via Bangkok, though it's cheaper to fly via London.

4 By Air from the Continent

The national airlines of each European nation connect to Milan. On the continent, Ryanair flies to Milan from Frankfurt-Hahn, Brussels, Paris and Barcelona; Virgin Express flies in from Brussels.

5 Internet Air Bargains

Most airlines use their websites to promote sales and bargain tickets. Expedia and Travelocity collate most regular best fares offered from the US and UK. Booking engines run by airline consortiums include Orbitz in the US and Opodo in Europe. Also check sites such as Lastminute.com.



Shuttle (50 mins, 2–3 per hour) to central Milan.

6 Malpensa Airport

Closer to Como than to Milan, the airport is linked by the Malpensa Express to Cadorna station in western Milan (40 mins, leaving every half hour). You can also catch a bus: Malpensa Express or



7 Linate Airport

Milan's secondary airport, just east of the city, receives many Alitalia flights as well as those from across Europe. STAM and ATM buses leave every half hour for the 25-minute trip to

central Milan (buy tickets on bus). Alternatively, take a taxi into the centre. It's the quickest and easiest option, and not terribly expensive.

8 By Train

From London, you can take the Eurostar to Paris and pick up one of three daily trains to Milan (they take between 6 hours 30 mins and 10 hours 30 mins). Various express trains (EC/IC/EN) head to Milan from many other European cities.

9 Milan's Train Stations

Most trains arrive at Milan's Stazione Centrale; its tourist office is hidden down a corridor of shops off the arrivals hall. Other stations include Cadorna, also known as Milano Nord (services to Malpensa airport and Como), Porta Genova (Asti, Alessandra and other points southwest), and Porta Garibaldi (Lecco).



10 By Car

The A4 comes into Italy via southern France, passing Turin on its way to Milan; it continues to Venice. The only way in from the north is over one of the Alpine passes: the Sempione from

the Geneva region; St Gotthard from Luzern, or St Bernard from the Swiss/German border. They link up in Italy as the A2.

Getting Around Milan & the Lakes

1 By Train

Italian trains, run by FS, are speedy and efficient, but don't cover every Lombard corner. Each station posts its own schedule – departures on yellow, arrivals on white – and newsstands sell national schedules. Ticket lines can be long (automated machines are now helping), and strikes (sciopero) annoyingly frequent. You must stamp one end of your ticket at the station's or track's yellow box before boarding.



2 By Coach (Long-Distance Bus)

Coaches (pullman) are slower and no cheaper than trains. They are best used to reach destinations where trains don't go.

3 By Ferry

Lakes Como, Garda, Maggiore and Iseo each have a public ferry system run by Navigazione Laghi. The smaller lakes have skiffs connecting towns or running out to islands. Private boats and water taxis charge at least twice as much as public boats.

4 By Rental Car

The best way to explore the environs. Local outfits are rarely cheaper than international agents, and arranging a rental from your home country is invariably the best option. Most companies require a theft protection charge, but check if your credit card covers this first.

5 Road Signs and Maps

TCI (Touring Club Italiano) maps are best and widely available in Italy. Michelin maps have more sightseeing indications, including scenic roads highlighted in green. Italian road signs (green for routing via Autostrada highways, blue for state roads) indicate destinations more often than route numbers; on any road, check the map to note the towns and villages it passes, as well as the destination city.



6 Road Rules
Speed limits: 30–50 kmh (20–30 mph) in town; 80–110 kmh (50–70 mph) on two-lane roads; and 130 kmh (80 mph) on highways. Left lanes are truly for passing only. On wide,

hard-shouldered roads, Italians regularly pass by swerving into the oncoming traffic, which obliges by using its own hard shoulder.

7 Tolls and Fuel

Lombardy's only toll roads are the autostrade connecting the main cities. Unleaded petrol is *senza piombo* or *verde*; diesel is *gasolio*. Though most stations close Sundays, many have automated machines that accept notes and credit cards.

8 Parking

Though few hotels have their own parking, many have agreements with local garages. Round blue signs with a red slash mean no parking. Legal parking is always marked: white-lined spaces are free; yellow-lined spaces are restricted to residents only and blue spaces available for an hourly fee.

9 City Bus, Tram and Metro

Milan has a mix of transport: buses, trams and an underground, and all use the same tickets. Buy them at tobacconists (*tabacchi*), indicated by a white-on-brown "T" sign, newsstands, or bars. Stamp one end on the bus or tram when you board. They are good for a set time period during which you may transfer.

10 Taxis

You'll find taxi ranks at airports and stations. Any hotel or restaurant will know the local Radio Taxi number to call for you. Standard rates go up with luggage, after 8pm, on Sundays, and for trips outside the centre. Tip about 10 per cent.

General Information



1 Italian State Tourism Board

Provincial tourism boards control most information, so ENIT (Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo), the national tourist office, is well-intentioned but of little help. However, you will find links to the local Lombardy tourist boards on their website.

2 Tourist Offices in Lombardy

Local *informazioni turistiche* offices, often indicated as "APT" or "Pro Loco", are good for free maps, sight and museum opening hours, and hotel directories. The amount of information beyond that varies widely, but most are friendly. Milan's tourist office is on Piazza del

Duomo at Via Marconi 1 (02-7252-4301), with a branch in Stazione Centrale (02-7252-4360).

3 Immigration Laws

Citizens of the UK, Ireland, US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia need only a valid passport to visit Italy for up to 90 days for tourism.

4 Customs

You may bring into Italy personal items with the following quirky limits: 400 cigarettes (or 550 grammes of tobacco), 2 cameras, 10 rolls of film, a pair of skis, two tennis rackets, one shooting gun with 200 cartridges and a litre of alcohol.



5 Opening Hours

Most shops and businesses open at 8 or 9am, shut for *riposo* from about 12:30 to 3 or 4pm (museums and churches, too), and close around 6–8pm. In larger cities, the

riposo is disappearing in favour of *orario continuato*, working straight through.

6 Electricity and Outlets

Italy is on 220V/50 cycles. To operate a 110V device you need a converter (most laptops and camcorders have this built in). To plug it in, you need an adapter from your pronged plugs to Continental Europe's two round pins.



7 TV & Newspapers

Most hotels 3-stars and above get satellite TV with CNN and BBC news. Train station and central piazza newsstands are best for finding English-language newspapers (the

International Herald Tribune comes with an Italy Daily insert). Informer (www.informer.it) is Milan's ex-pat English-language magazine.

8 When to Go

Lombardy has a mild climate, a bit hotter and drier than most of the UK. August heat can be oppressive, while January snow is common. Spring's middle ground keeps hotels booked in the cities, but summer is the season for the lakes. There is some winter skiing in the Alps ringing the lakes to the north.

9 High Season and Holidays

High season is Easter–Jul and Sep–Oct. But while cities are deserted mid to late Aug, lakeside resorts are packed right through Jul–Aug. Milan's trade fairs (Mar, Apr, Oct) make finding hotel rooms and classier dinner reservations high impossible. National holidays are: 1 & 6 Jan, Easter Sun & Mon, 25 Apr, 1 May, 15 Aug, 1 Nov, and 8, 25 & 26 Dec.

10 What to Pack

Italians dress well, so it's a good idea to take at least one nice outfit, though few restaurants require jacket and tie. Many churches do not allow bare knees or shoulders (no shorts, miniskirts, or vests).

Ways to Save Money

1 Sightseeing for Free

Lombardy's churches are free, and contain some of Italy's greatest art and architecture. The best chapels often require some payment, however. Italy's gorgeous, palazzo-rimmed squares are free theatres of life, and the price of a cappuccino will get you a front row seat.

2 Sightseeing at a Discount

Discount admission to sights and museums varies greatly: the age cut-off may be 6, 12, 14, or 18, or just "students" and seniors (over 60 or sometimes 65). National museums are free under 18 and over 60 to everyone except US citizens. Many towns now sell tickets that combine several sights.

3 Travel Discounts

Under 18s can buy a Carta Verde for about €13 and receive 30 per cent discount on any train ticket; the same deal for over 60s is called Carta Argento. But none of Italy's rail passes will pay off financially if you're sticking to Lombardy.

4 Lease a Car

For periods longer than 21 days, a short-term lease is often cheaper than renting a car. Unlike with rentals, you also get full insurance coverage with no deductible, plus a brand-new car straight from the factory. The pioneers in this arrangement are Europe By Car and Auto Europe (see By Rental Car), though other agencies are starting to pick up on the concept.



5 Save Money on Accommodation

Generally, prices rise the closer you are to the centre of town. Making do with a one or two-star hotel or taking a room without private bathroom in a central hotel is preferable to looking outside the centre or in the uninteresting but cheap train station neighbourhood. Also, avoid using the room phone and mini-bar – both are overpriced.

6 Cheap Eats

In food-loving Italy, price or category of restaurant has little to do with the quality of food, so a cheaper osteria or trattoria can be as tasty an option as a fancy ristorante. Be aware that appetizers tend to cost almost as much as first courses, but tap water (acqua dal rubinetto) is usually free. Tavole calde and bars (see Bars and Tavole Calde) offer super cheap hot meals.

7 Have a Picnic

For little money, you can visit a string of small delis (alimentari), greengrocers (fruttivendolo), bread and pastry shops (panetteria/pasticceria), and wine stores (enoteca/fiaschetteria) and create your own picnic fit for a king. Then choose your location – overlooking a lake, or in a town's main square, perhaps.

8 Pay in Cash

Cash will often get you a discount in shops and smaller hotels, as they won't have to pay a credit card commission. However, make sure you leave with some kind of receipt, as by law you have to carry it 400 m beyond the store (a whole branch of the Italian police is devoted to financial fraud).

9 Visit in the Off-Season

Spring and now autumn too are getting more crowded than summer, and hotels and airlines often extend their high-season prices accordingly. Mid-Nov to just before Easter is low season in Italy, when rates on air fares and hotels can drop considerably. However, facilities around the lakes (especially in resort towns) almost completely shut down in winter.

10 Shop Wisely

When possible, non-EU visitors should save purchasing for one store to hurdle the VAT limit and get a refund (see Tax Refunds). Go for artisan products rather than souvenirs, and, if you can, purchase directly from the crafts-people. Also, buy what you can't get at home – look for local produce.

Shopping Tips



1 Shop Hours

Shops open around 8am and close 7–8pm, with long afternoon breaks (see Opening Hours).

2 Haggling

Bartering over price is the life-blood of markets, but isn't the norm in the majority of shops. Many market stallholders now hail from Middle Eastern countries where bargaining is an art form, so be ready to go through the full ritual: you acting less and less interested, the stallholder acting more and more offended.

3 Tax Refunds

Italy's Value Added Tax (IVA) is included in the price tag of every item. Non-EU visitors who spend more than €155 in one shop can get the tax refunded. Ask the store to help you fill in the forms; then bring them and the receipts to the customs office at the airport to complete the paperwork. Your refund will be mailed (though it may take some months). Stores marked "Tax Free Shopping for Tourists" speed up the process, giving you a cheque for the customs office to stamp, which can then be redeemed at the airport's Tax Free Shopping desk.

4 Customs Limits

UK and Irish citizens can bring home virtually anything duty free (though, in principle, limits such as no

more than 90 litres of wine apply). US citizens are limited to \$400 worth of goods duty-free, including 1 litre of alcohol, 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars. Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand limitations are roughly similar. Unless you are from the EU, you are not allowed to take home flowers, bulbs, fruits, vegetables, meats (unless tinned) and cheeses runnier than brie.

5 Fashion

One of the world's elite capitals of fashion, Milan is home to many top names in haute couture: Prada, Armani, Versace, Mila Schön, Krizia, Missoni and Ferré, to name but a few. In March and October, supermodels draped in next season's fashions parade the runways in the MODIT fashion shows. Top couture isn't likely to be any cheaper in Milan (unless you go to a discount outlet), but buying clothes here has a certain cachet.

6 Design Objects

Italians are masters of industrial design, from Ferraris to funky Alessi tea kettles. So if the Ferrari doesn't fit your budget, consider some elegant or quirky kitchenware instead.

7 Bargain Hunting

For craftware, such as ceramics, carved wood and even leather shoes, try to visit the workshops and buy at source. For everything else, use the Italian shopper's three cardinal "S"s: sconti (reduced prices), saldi (sales), and spacci (discount outlets).

8 Ship Your Souvenirs

Rather than carry your perhaps bulky purchases all around Lombardy, see if the shop can ship them home for you on the spot. The fee is often worth the hassle saved. If you have a rental car big enough to store your goods, you could try the other tack: at the end of your trip post home your dirty laundry and anything you won't miss for a while, then use the space saved to pack your souvenirs.



9 Wine

Italy's best souvenir, though rather heavy (and US citizens can only take home one bottle without paying a duty). Shipping is expensive, so save it for when you discover a small vineyard

whose wines aren't exported and buy a whole case.



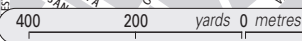
10 Crafts

Italy is renowned for the quality of its hand-painted ceramics – souvenirs that have a practical use as well as an aesthetic appeal. Milan is also home to fine jewellers, from big names such as Bulgari to artisans labouring in small boutiques.

9

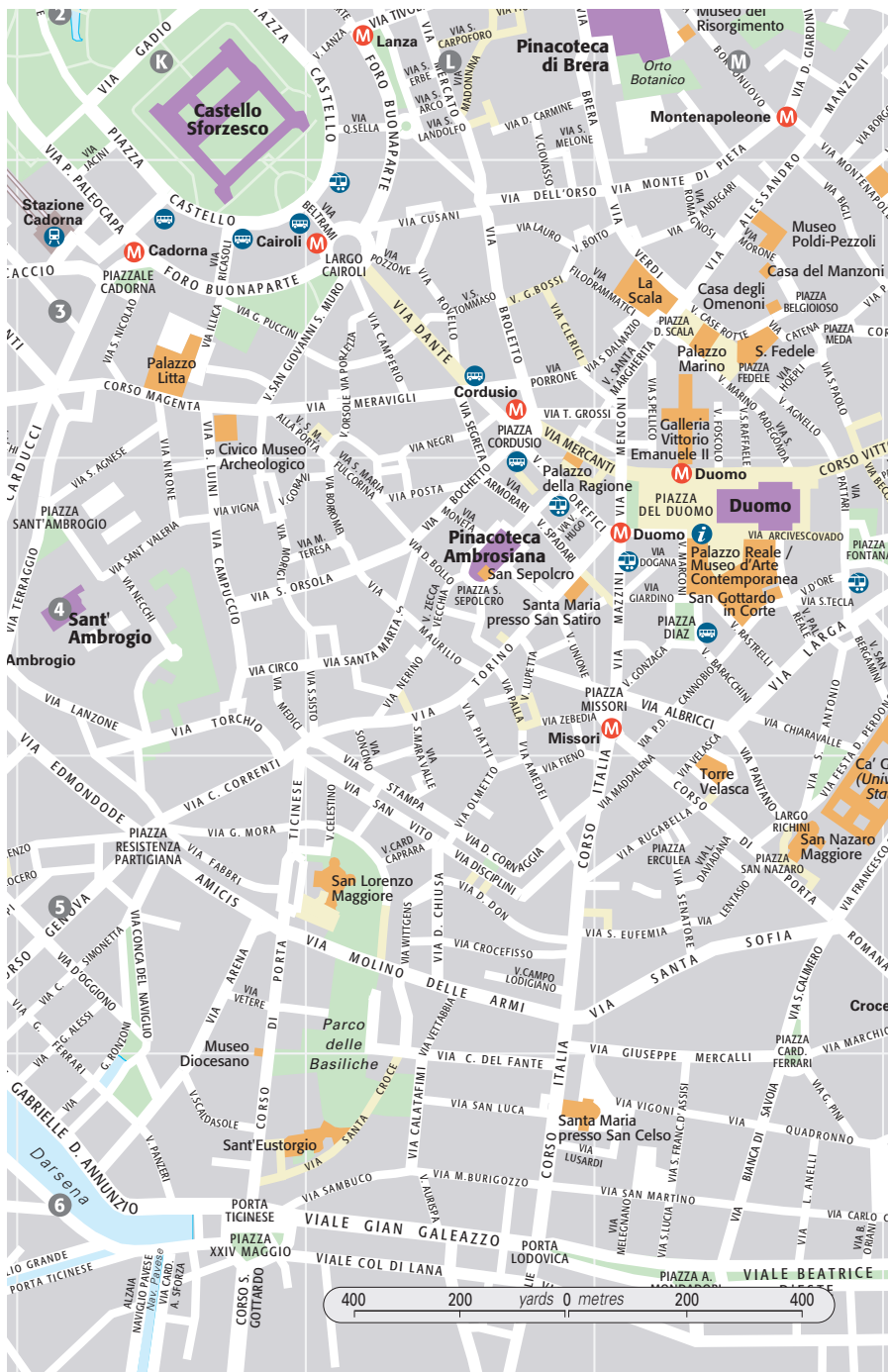
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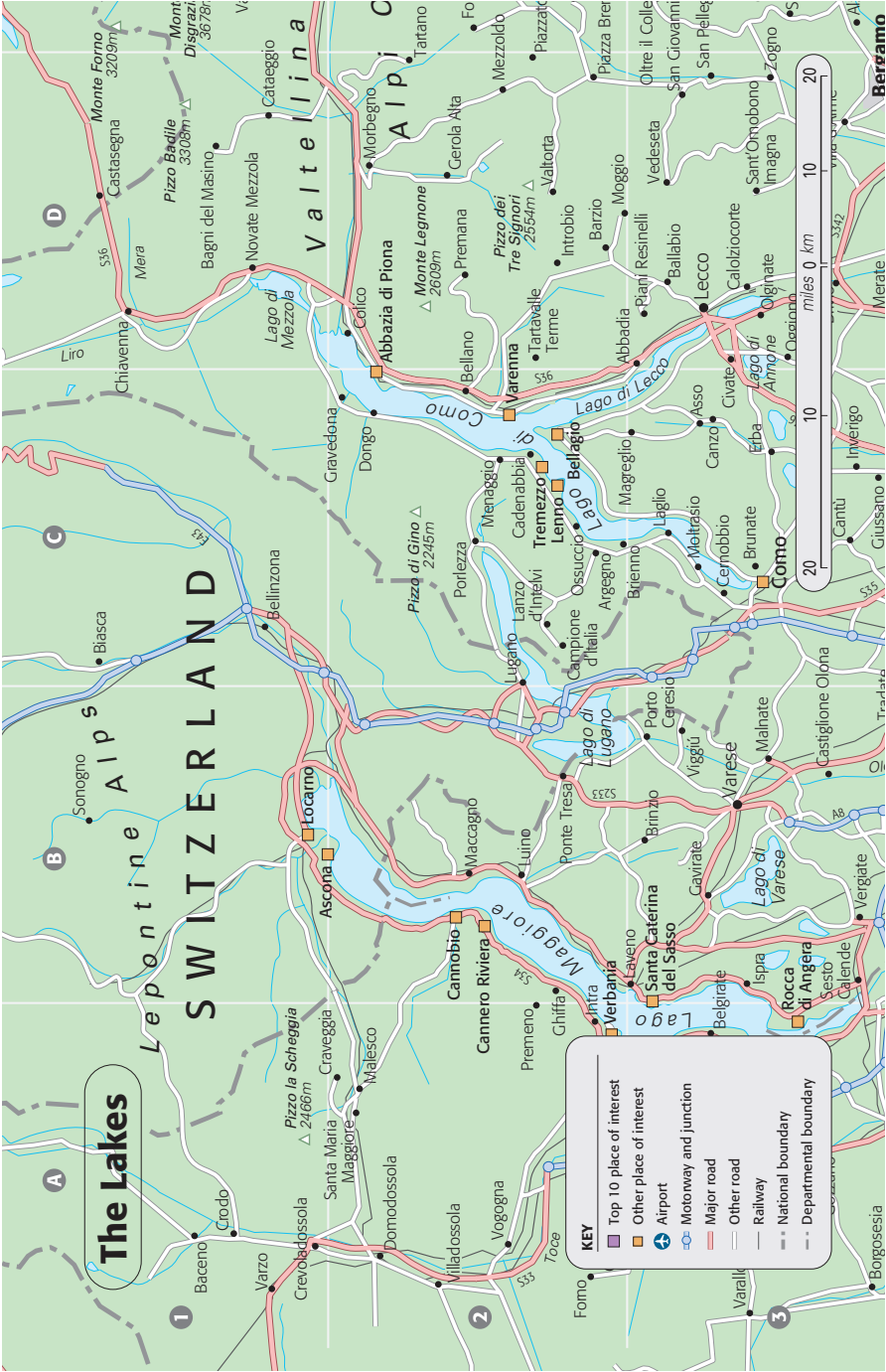


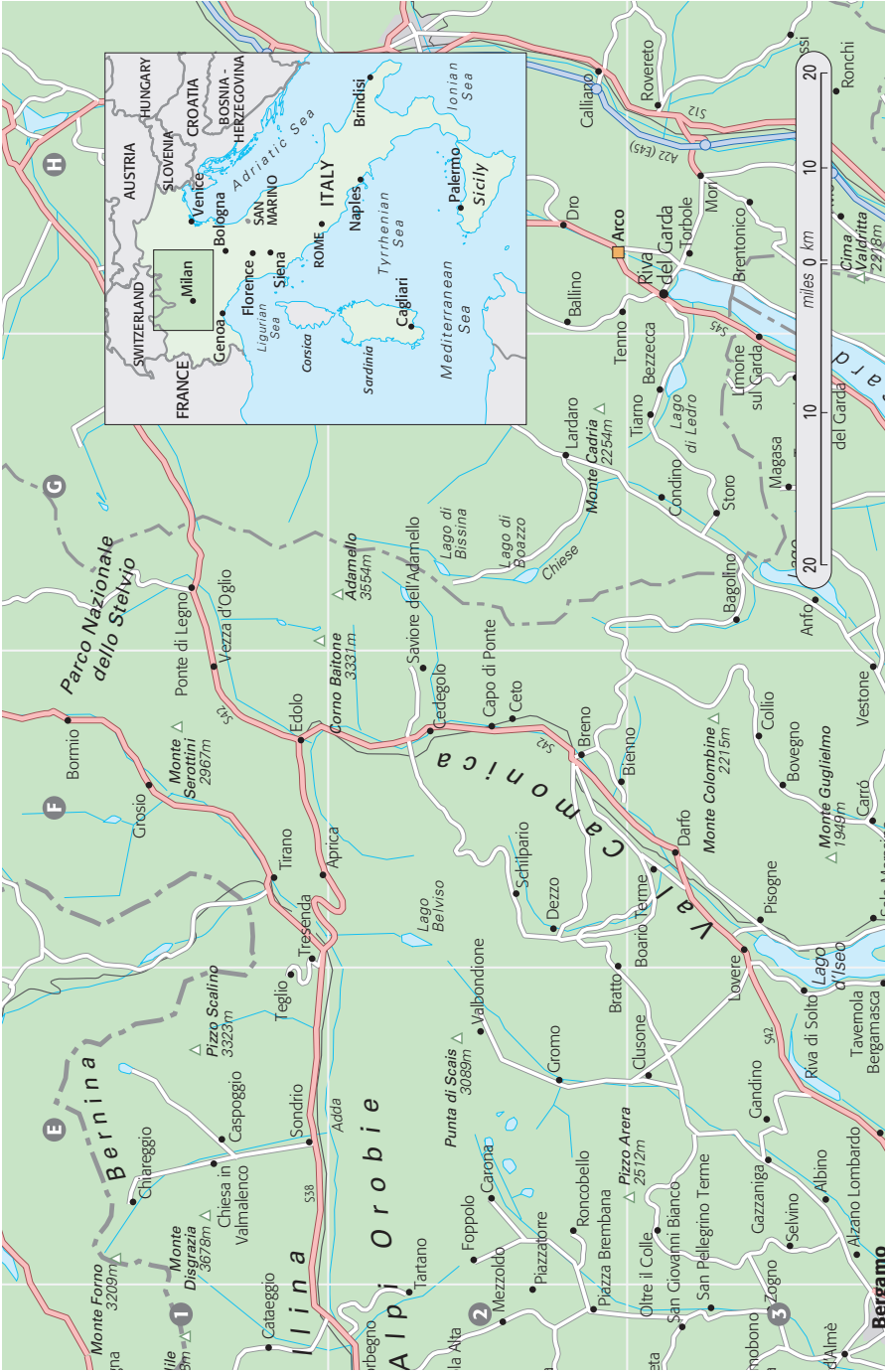


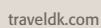


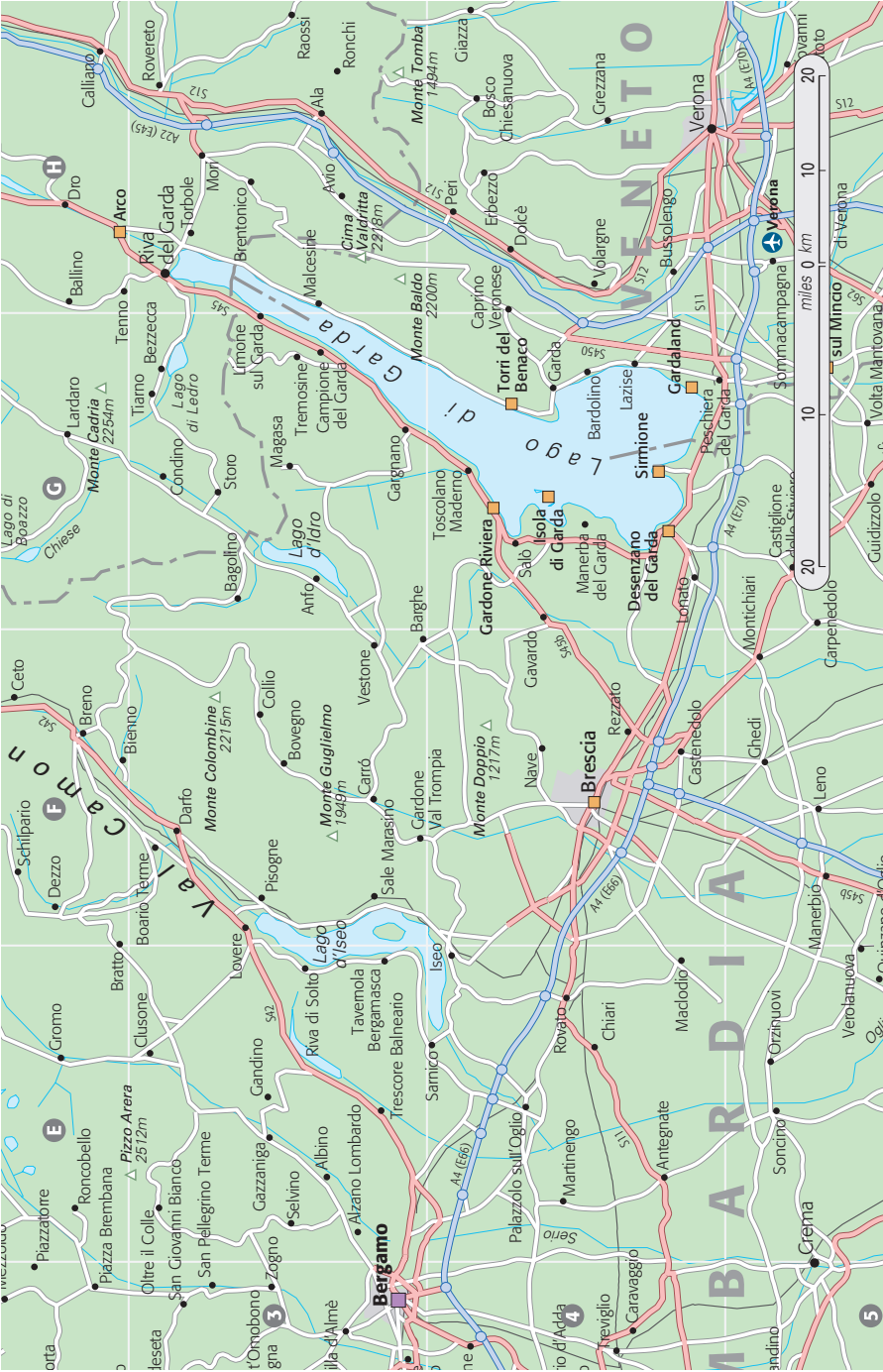


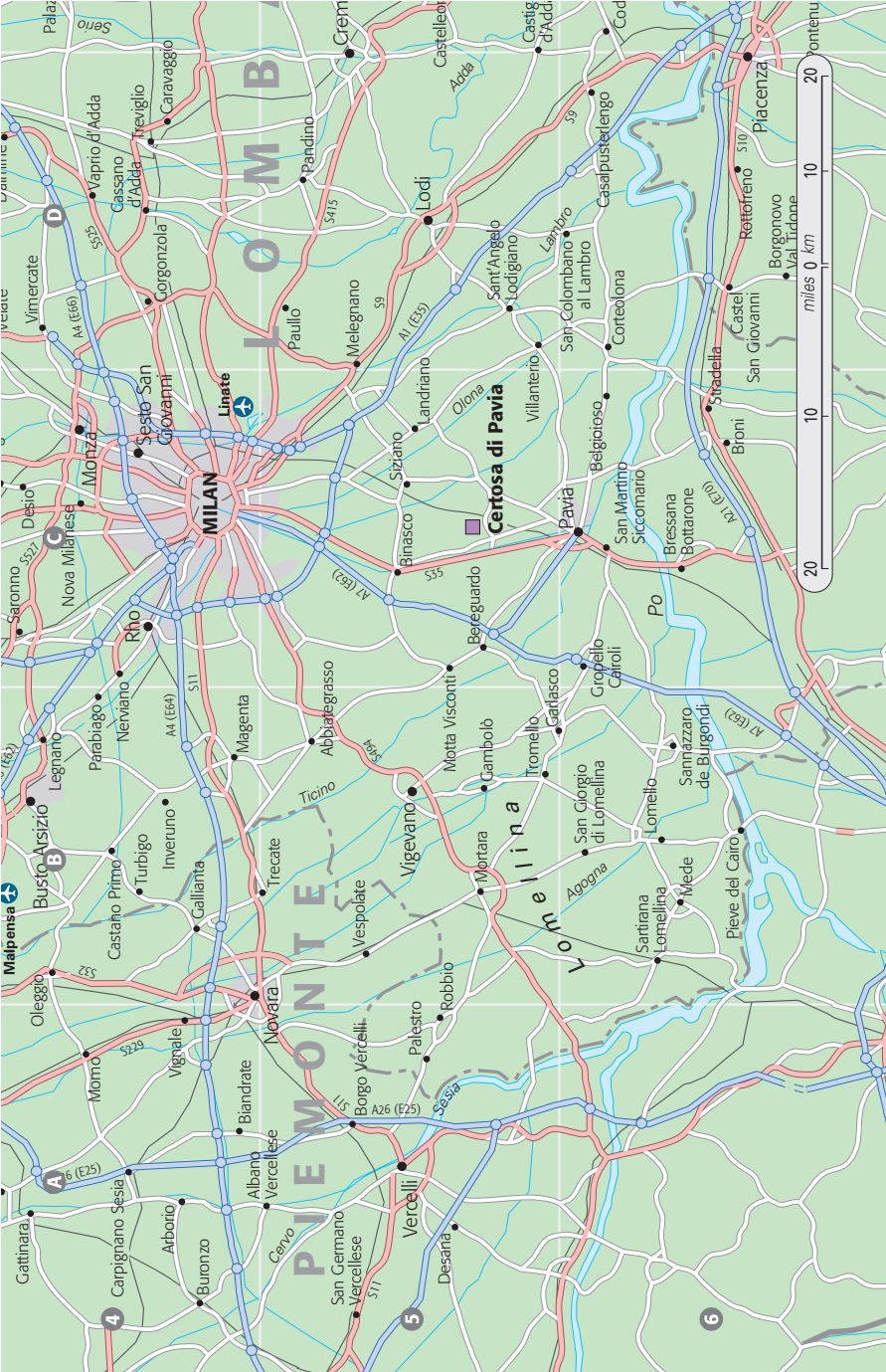


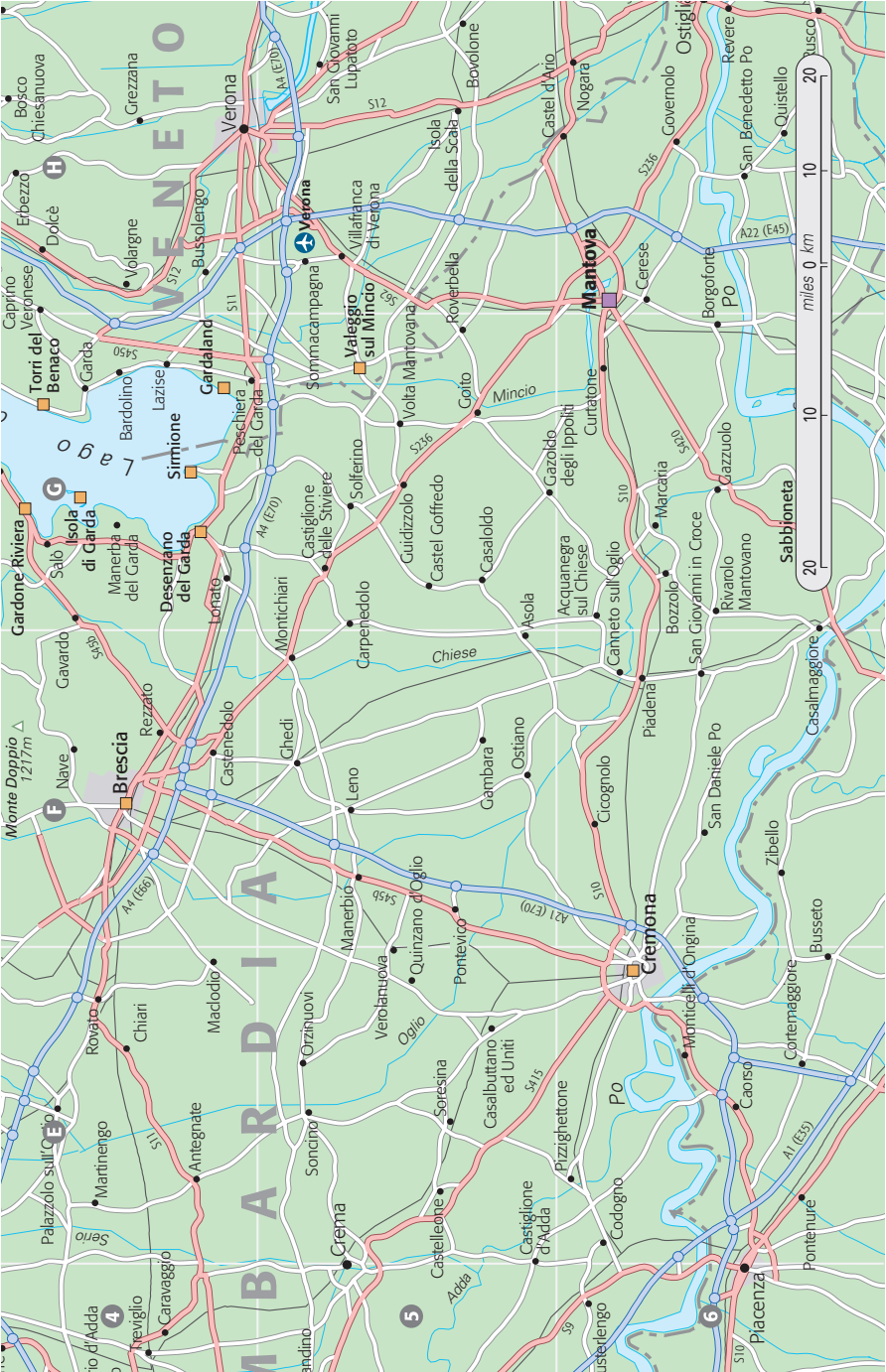


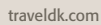














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