

TRAVEL

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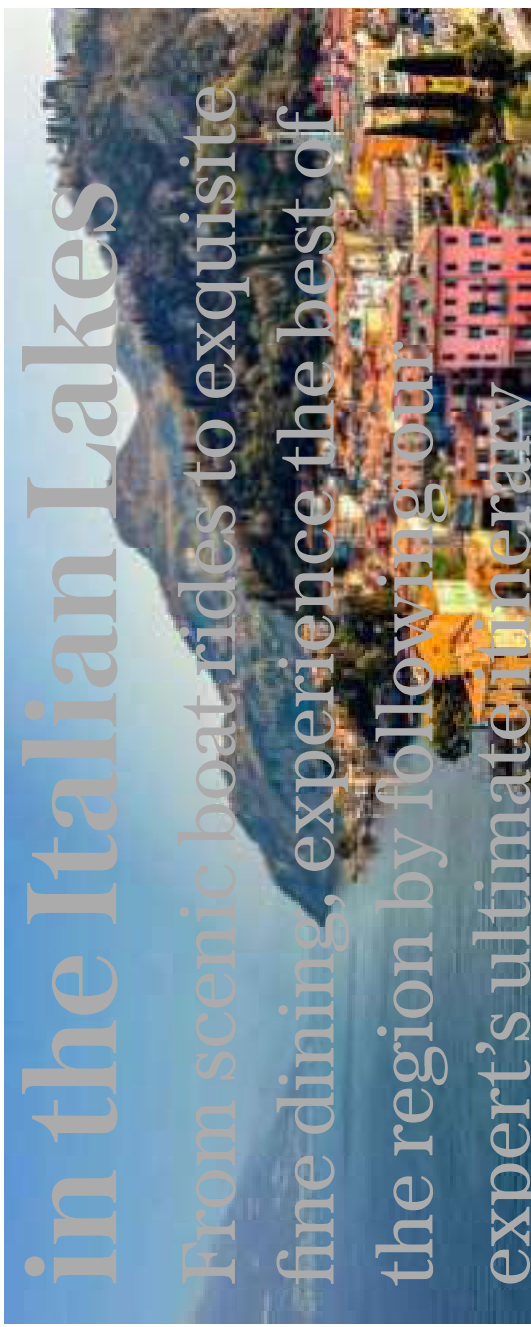


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Hotels	Cruise
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The perfect holiday

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/tours/ultimate-itineraries/perfect-italy-holiday-lake-district-como-garda/

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Kiki Deere, DESTINATION EXPERT

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There's something undeniably special about driving along the lakefront roads that hug the [Italian Lakes](#), snaking along the shore, drifting through charming villages lined with swaying oleanders and lithe palm trees. For many, the Italian Lakes conjure up images of a romantic holiday, zipping across blue waters on a mahogany Riva boat or strolling the lush gardens of elegant lake villas.

While this image is well founded, the Italian Lakes offer much more, especially for outdoor enthusiasts. This is premier territory for water sports, most notably the northern basin of [Lake Garda](#), which this year hosts the Youth Sailing World Championships for the very first time, with a packed programme of events including regattas, live music and street food in mid-July. On higher ground, you'll find climbing, mountain biking and superb hikes in the surrounding mountains.

This being Italy, there's also no shortage of great restaurants, from laidback trattorias serving traditional regional cuisine to sophisticated establishments that have won coveted awards, with Lake Orta's three-Michelin starred restaurant Villa Crespi, headed up by celebrity chef Cannavacciolo, a gastronomic destination in its own right.

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Dine at three-Michelin starred Villa Crespi on Lake Orta | CREDIT: Michelle Park

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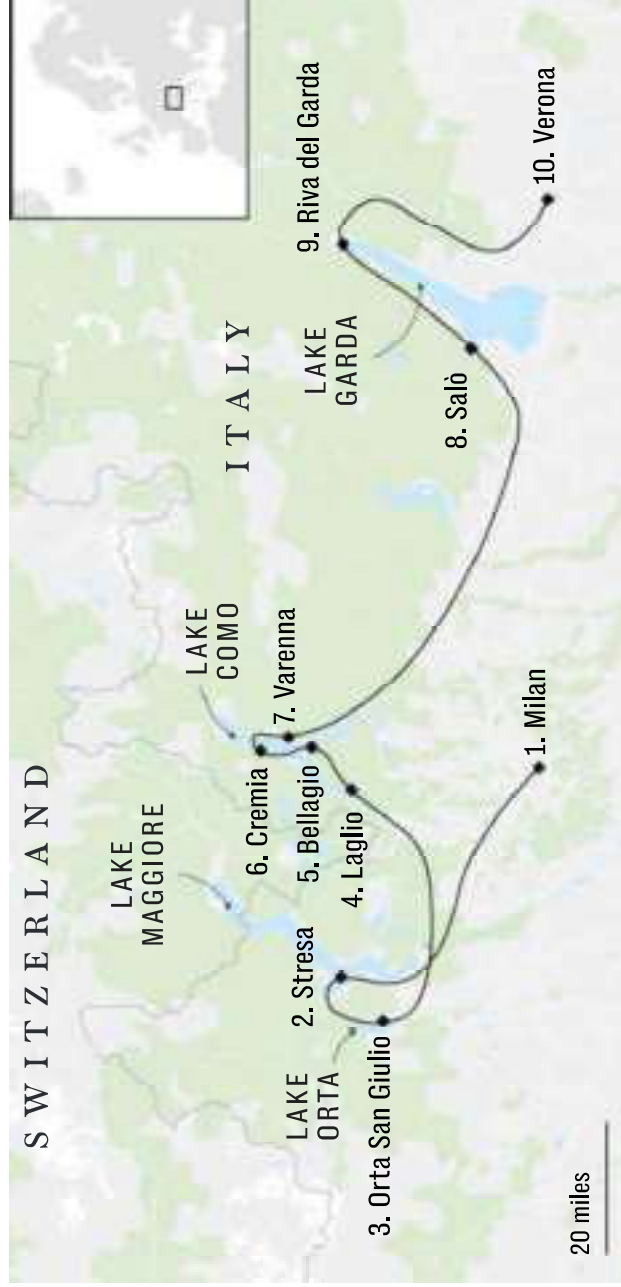
This itinerary is created around spending three nights in three places over the course of 10 days, giving you an overview of what the Italian Lakes district has to offer. Many perhaps don't fully appreciate that the Lakes occupy a vast area, stretching across four of Italy's northern regions – Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto and Trentino – so you'll need more than 10 days to discover their lesser-known pockets. But you can easily add a few days here and there to make the most of all the area has to offer, including sparing some time to discover pretty Lake Iseo. Try to travel slowly, taking your time to discover what makes each lake unique, and make the most of those long waterfront lunches, savouring top-notch local fare and regional wines.

We start at Milan Malpensa as it is the best airport to reach both Lake Maggiore and [Lake Como](#), with plenty of flights serving the city from the UK. The itinerary takes you from Lake Maggiore in the west to Lake Garda in the east, with Verona Airport your closest upon departure.

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The perfect holiday in the Italian Lakes



Lake Maggiore



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The perfect two-week holiday in the Italian Lakes

DAYS 1 & 2

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Borromean Islands of Lake Maggiore in Northern Italy on a sunny day in summer | CREDIT : halbergman / Getty Images

Cobblestone streets and lake views

Catch an early morning flight to Milan Malpensa so that you have the whole afternoon and evening to explore. From the airport, drive north west to Stresa on Lake Maggiore, Italy's second largest lake, stopping off for lunch at [Il Castagneto](#), a delightful restaurant serving flavoursome dishes that make the most of regional ingredients. Belly full, continue to

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The perfect two-week holiday in the Italian Lakes

Stresa and check in at [La Palma](#), a family-run hotel on the lakefront with a fabulous rooftop terrace with swimming pool.

Take an afternoon stroll along the cobbled streets of Stresa to get a feel for this holiday resort that was once an important stopover on the Grand Tour. Come aperitivo time, sit back with a cocktail and a few nibbles at [Sky Bar](#), the panoramic rooftop bar of your hotel, and take in the sublime lake vistas. For dinner, try [Lo Stornello](#), a small restaurant in the heart of town serving traditional dishes with a contemporary twist.

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The spectacular gardens at Isola Bella are a must-see | CREDIT: Alamy Stock Photo

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The perfect two-week holiday in the Italian Lakes

Wander island villas

Wake up in reasonable time to set off to explore the Borromean Islands, the lake's leading attraction. It's a short 10-minute boat ride across to Isola Bella, with its 17th-century villa boasting sumptuous interiors and spectacular Baroque gardens with elaborate fountains, statues and terraces, complete with white peacocks strutting about, flaunting their tail feathers in exuberant displays. For lunch, head to the informal [Bistrot Il Fornello](#), which doubles as a deli, or nip across to the pretty Isola dei Pescatori for lunch at [Il Verbano](#), which offers gourmet cuisine on a delightful terrace. On your way back to Stresa, stop off at Isola Madre, less visited than Isola Bella but no less beautiful, with a pretty palazzo and exquisite gardens home to azaleas, rhododendrons and a colony of parrots. For dinner, treat yourself to a two-Michelin-starred meal at [Piccolo Lago](#), where chef Marco Sacco crafts superlative dishes in a panoramic glass dining room on stilts.



Lake Orta



DAY 3

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Lake Orta, the smallest of the Italian Lakes, still holds much to discover | CREDIT: Getty Images

Frescos and fine foods

From Stresa, drive south to Lake Orta, the smallest of the Italian Lakes, yet arguably the prettiest. Spend the morning strolling Orta San Giulio, a gorgeous medieval town with narrow cobbled streets. Take the five-minute boat ride across to Isola San Giulio, a peaceful spot dominated by a convent with a fine basilica adorned with intricate frescoes.

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For lunch in the historical centre, try [La Motta](#), or head to [Il Giardinetto](#), which lies north of town, serving excellent local dishes on a panoramic lakefront terrace. After lunch, walk up to the shaded Sacro Monte di San Francesco, which offers sublime lake views. Enjoy an early evening aperitivo at [Luci sul Lago](#), a delightful little spot that comes with its own private beach, or sip expertly prepared cocktails at Blu Lago Café. Both serve food too. Foodies will want to make a point of trying celebrity chef Antonino Cannavacciuolo's culinary creations at three-Michelin-starred [Villa Crespi](#) (be sure to book at least three months ahead).

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Book well ahead to secure your place at three-Michelin-starred Villa Crespi

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What to eat when visiting the Italian Lakes

Lake cuisine makes the most of local ingredients, marrying produce from the alpine foothills, the lakes, and the Po plain, Italy's major rice producer. You'll find the likes of *risotto con pesce persico* (risotto with perch); *missolini* (dried shad) served with polenta; and *pesce di lago in carpione*, lake fish marinated in a wine and vinegar sauce with vegetables.

In the pre-alpine foothills, there are fabulous cheeses and cold cuts from local farms, with the cuisine becoming heartier the further you travel into the valleys and mountains. In Valtellina in northern Lake Como, for example, you'll find *sciatt*, delicious round buckwheat fritters with a gooey heart oozing cheese, and *pizzoccheri*, buckwheat ribbon pasta served with savoy cabbage, potatoes, butter and melted casera cheese.

The northern basin of Lake Garda, meanwhile, stretches to the foot of the Dolomites, with a speciality here being *carne salada*, lean beef served raw in very thin slices (similar to beef carpaccio).

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Lake Como

DAYS 4, 5 & 6



Take in extraordinary views of Lake Como at Villa del Balbianello | CREDIT: Alamy Stock Photo

Relax in Laglio

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