

CULTURAL WALKING TOUR

Italian Lakes

Como, Maggiore & Orta



CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*



TRAVEL + LEISURE

A Retreat to the Lake District

A Renaissance mirage, the villa floats on a mirror-smooth lake. It's morning. The mountains that slide into the water are still hidden in deep blue shadows, except the peaks high above that are tipped in apricot alpenglow. Italy's Lake District always makes us poetic, and this Classic Journey cultural walking tour visits the three most inspiring lakes: Como, Maggiore and Orta. Since the Roman emperors, these gracious waterside resorts have drawn visitors. The climate is mild, loaded with the vibrant colors of Alpine wildflowers and lush semi-tropical gardens. Our footpaths sometimes traverse mountaintop meadows and often hug the crystal clear waters. We spend generous parts of several days on leisurely cruises and visit fine villas, palaces and fishing villages. Nowhere else does stunning scenery, mellow air and rich history come together with such romantic results.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 4 dinners
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to tastings, historic sites and other scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip
- Award-winning boutique hotels that provide you unlimited access to the people and places, culture and history you came to experience

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

→ PERFECT PAIRINGS DINNERS

A special dinner prepared by one of our favorite chefs with a procession of wines tailored to each course.

→ WINE ON US

In many regions, we uncork wonderful local wines at every dinner, compliments of Classic Journeys.

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

Terrain

Moderate on good valley, mountain and lakeside trails, utilizing cable cars and boats as backup support. Vans are used on the days we transfer between lakeside locations. At your option, 2 to 4 hours of walking per day.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Bellagio

Arriving to Lake Como, you immediately understand why Roman royalty built their summer homes here. Carved by glaciers and reflecting the Alps to the north, it's renowned for its deep blue waters and the Art Nouveau, Romanesque, and Neoclassical architecture of the villas that line its banks. From the quaint village of Lenno, follow a trail that meanders along a scenic lakeside promenade, offering panoramic views. Along the way, you'll catch glimpses of elegant villas and ancient churches, as well as a rich diversity of flora and fauna. You'll encounter fragrant citrus trees, colorful flower gardens, and towering cypress trees that cast their reflections on to the tranquil waters below. Birdwatchers can spot herons, swans, and other waterfowl gliding gracefully across the lake, while butterflies flit among the blooming flowers.

Crossing a nearby peninsula leads to a privately guided visit to Villa del Balbianello. The elegant 18th century mansion has served as a residence for noble families, and its grounds have attracted writers, scholars, and even movie directors for years. The setting is truly cinematic... it was even featured in several films, including James Bond's *Casino Royale*. You'll feel like a movie star yourself when you stroll through the manicured gardens and make your way down to the lake.

Later in the afternoon, you'll enjoy a leisurely boat ride to your lakeside hotel in Bellagio, which means "beautiful view" in Italian. You'll be welcomed by our friend, Giulia, whose family has owned the hotel since 1880. Relax poolside or explore the property's terraced gardens and sip a refreshing aperitivo before a dinner of local specialties.

MEALS: D

OVERNIGHT: BELLAGIO

DAY 2 »

Bellagio

Bellagio has a fascinating historical heritage, with roots that trace to Roman times. One of the most significant periods for the village was during the Middle Ages when it served as a strategic outpost for noble families vying for control of the region. Bellagio's strategic location at the intersection of the three branches of Lake Como made it a coveted territory, resulting in the construction of fortified structures such as the Castle of Bellagio and the Villa Serbelloni. Today, join your guide on a scenic lakeside trail that immerses you into that history and culture. Meandering from the cobblestone streets of Bellagio, follow a lakeside footpath to nearby Villa Melzi, whose magnificent gardens boast more than 500 species of exotic plants and 14 acres of flowering azaleas and rhododendrons.

Continue on foot to spectacularly sited Villa Crella. Waiting to welcome you to an 'only with Classic Journeys' experience is our dear friend, Lorenzo, and his family, who have restored the estate. With them, enjoy a wine tasting while learning about wine production in the Lakes. The tasting leads into a homemade lunch served *al fresco* on their terrace overlooking the lake. It goes without saying that there's room for a gelato on your walk back to Bellagio. Then, enjoy the afternoon sunlight on the lake and an evening at your leisure.

MEALS: B, L

OVERNIGHT: BELLAGIO

DAY 3 »

Como

The village of Como is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, particularly in textiles. The city has a centuries-spanning tradition of silk production, dating to the Middle Ages. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Como became one of the leading centers of silk manufacturing in Europe, known for its high-quality fabrics and intricate designs. Today, Como remains a hub for the textile industry, with artisanal workshops producing silk products using traditional techniques. A short boat ride across the lake leads to a

footpath past quaint fishing villages and under palm trees to Como, for a guided tour. If you like, there's also time to explore the shops showcasing Como's famous silk.

On a late afternoon leisurely boat ride back to Bellagio, you'll slow down to truly experience *la dolce vita*. Maybe you'll recline in a deck chair with an Aperol Spritz while you gaze at the views of the terraced hillsides, colorful villages and bustling *piazze* that dot the landscape. Like many Italian villages, Bellagio takes pride in its culinary heritage, and dishes have been passed down through generations. Tonight, you might want to try some of the locals' favorites, including risotto alla pescatora (seafood *risotto*), *cotoletta alla milanese* (breaded veal cutlet), and *tortelli di zucca* (pumpkin-filled pasta).

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: BELLAGIO

DAY 4 »

Mount Mottarone / Stresa

After breakfast, you'll say *arrivederci* to Bellagio and ferry over to Cadenabbia. From there, head south to the town of Lenno for an engaging visit to an acclaimed olive mill. Here you'll meet the makers to learn how they cultivate their olive groves, see first-hand their production process, and hear about harvest season traditions that have been passed down for generations. At the end of a stroll through the scenic groves, you'll savor an olive oil tasting of their handpicked favorites to cap off your visit.

So far, the Italian Alps have been an ever-present backdrop to your explorations on the lakes. Now it's time to experience the mountains firsthand. A short drive leads to Mount Mottarone, which separates Lake Orta from Lake Maggiore. On a walk from the pre-alpine village of Levo, you're treated to panoramic views of Lake Maggiore and the surrounding mountains. Wildflowers carpet the mountain meadows in vibrant hues. Keep an eye out for mountain goats, deer, and birds of prey, as well as historic landmarks that offer insights into the region's rich cultural heritage. Your footpath winds past ancient stone ruins, traditional alpine chalets, and rustic mountain villages. Every once in a while, you get a scenic peek of Stresa, your ultimate destination. Arriving in town, there's time for some shopping and exploring independently, relaxing in the hotel's pool, or going full sybaritic with a visit to the hotel's award-winning spa.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: STRESA

DAY 5 »

Lake Orta / San Giulio

Leaving Lake Maggiore this morning, you'll walk into the mountains on a scenic footpath, eventually crossing horse pastures before arriving on foot to our friend, Alfredo, a cheesemaker, and his family. He offers you the opportunity to try the local specialty, *La Toma del Mottarone* ("country cheese"), and get an up-close look at the process of cheesemaking. With your appetite satiated and your senses peaked, make your way to the quaint village of Orta San Giulio, one of the most picturesque corners of Italy.

While the islands of San Giulio and Borromeo look similar from the edges of the lakes, they have strikingly different settlement stories, as you'll find out firsthand in explorations by boat and on foot over the next couple of days. San Giulio Monastery is a tranquil sanctuary that has been a place of pilgrimage and prayer for centuries. And San Giulio Island is a picturesque home to a small community of nuns who maintain a simple and traditional way of life.

Tonight, following dinner, you may want to enjoy a *passeggiata* ("evening stroll") along the lake.

MEALS: B

OVERNIGHT: STRESA

DAY 6 »

Borromean Islands

Few things are as special as being on a boat on a lake as a place comes to life. Start your day that way with a boat ride to the village of Baveno where you'll begin a morning walk. Your shaded footpath follows the ancient mule tracks that connected the numerous small towns along Lake Maggiore. Along the way, your guide shares the agricultural and culinary importance of these locally grown chestnut trees, *castagni*, passing along favorite recipes as well.

This afternoon you'll boat out to Isola Bella ("beautiful island"). The Borromeo family, one of Italy's most influential noble families, transformed the barren island into a magnificent garden paradise and built a splendid palace as their summer residence. Today, the palace is adorned with priceless artworks, intricate tapestries, and ornate furnishings, as you'll see firsthand on your privately guided explorations.

MEALS: B, D

OVERNIGHT: STRESA

DAY 7 »

Lake Maggiore / Milan

Sleep in or use the time this morning to stroll through Stresa's historic center. Enjoy some time on your own to relax and discover last-minute keepsakes before you continue to Milan and part company in the early afternoon.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



[Belvedere Bellagio Hotel](#)

The Belvedere Bellagio is a beautiful hotel on Lake Como that has been family-owned and operated since 1880. Enjoy the breathtaking lake views, stroll the landscaped gardens, and indulge in the spa, sauna, and heated swimming pool during your stay.

NIGHTS: 3 nights



[Grand Hotel Des Iles Borromees](#)

The Grand Hotel des Iles Borromées is a historic and luxurious hotel located on the scenic shores of Lake Maggiore. Decorated in Art Nouveau style, this upscale property has a new spa and wellness center, as well as indoor and outdoor pools.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Lobby of Sina Hotel De La Ville**
START CITY: **Milan**
START TIME: **11:00 AM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Milan Central Train Station**
END CITY: **Milan**
END TIME: **1:00 PM**