

LAKE COMO TRAVEL GUIDE – LOGISTICS AND ITINERARY



I feel like Lake Como is one of those bucket list destinations for a lot of Americans – probably because of the glamour of it – the movies that have been filmed here, the celebs that have homes here. I just took my first trip to Lake Como in August with some girlfriends for a long weekend. The best way to describe it is like going to your favorite lake in the United States, but make all the homes super old and super beautiful, all the towns super glamorous and luxurious, all the people beautiful Italians, and all the restaurants Italian. So not really anything like your favorite lake... Our trip was pretty laidback as we didn't do much exploring of the towns, and we weren't there very long, but I'll let you know what we did anyways!

Lake Como is in the North of Italy, so it's a good place to stop if you are doing a Northern Italy trip – Venice, Florence, **Cinque Terre**, **Tuscany**, etc. It's also great to add to Switzerland (guide coming soon), or any Southeastern France area like the **French Riviera**, **Provence**, or Burgundy (guide coming soon). The lake is actually very large, so it would be difficult to explore the whole lake without several days there. We were there from Thursday night to Sunday and didn't really venture much beyond our little town.



SHOULD I VISIT LAKE COMO?

Lake Como is not really a “casual” destination – you are coming here for the luxury of it all. It’s similar to the French Riviera in that sense. It’s a vacation destination for wealthy Italians, like Capri or the Amalfi Coast, but also for lots of tourists, like Cinque Terre. If you enjoy Italy and enjoy water, and especially if you enjoy luxury travel, you will love Lake Como.

I would recommend coming and doing as we did – just relaxing. If you come with the “I want to see it all and explore” mindset – that I am sooooo guilty of – you won’t enjoy it as much I don’t think! Of course you should explore, but just taking in the natural beauty is part of the draw. I imagine the towns are all very similar and you won’t get that much by just bouncing around to all the villages (please correct me if I am wrong since I do not know this by experience!)



WHEN SHOULD I VISIT LAKE COMO?

If you are interested in enjoying the water, you can comfortably enjoy it from May to September. The lake is so large that the temperature does not fluctuate that much throughout the year. It also helps to moderate the temperature of the valley meaning the summers are cooler and the winters are warmer. We went in August and it was not too crowded – but we also weren't exploring the towns where I assume most of the tourists are.

Outside of May to September you can still enjoy the surrounding areas of Lake Como – the towns, the restaurants, the shops, the views. There are 200 days of sun a year so chances are good that you'll get nice weather for your stay – and the shoulder months will be much cheaper. Online recommends March – November for the best weather.

HOW DO I GET TO LAKE COMO?

To get to Lake Como, you will need to fly/train into Milan. From there it is about an hour drive to Lake Como, but this depends on your destination. We rented a car from the Milan Airport, and I would highly recommend doing the same. Of course the activities you plan to do and the location you plan to stay will dictate whether you can get away with public transportation – but I would consider the public transportation nearly extinct here. The taxis are very few, Uber does not exist, and the busses are sparse and a little unreliable. We went with another group who used public transportation the whole time and had several times where they were stuck somewhere for hours because of this.

One caveat to this is that if you pick a location close to a ferry dock, you can use the ferries to get around the island quite easily. We had friends do this and they never used their rental car after driving from Milan to their hotel. So just a thought if you hate the idea of driving!

When you get to Milan, you will rent your car and drive to your destination! Make sure that your destination has parking. Because of the mountains, parking is actually not very prevalent.

Book your flight with Google Flights

IS THERE A LANGUAGE BARRIER IN LAKE COMO?

We did not have a language barrier here. Everyone spoke great English because of all the tourists that come to visit.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY IN LAKE COMO?

If you are coming for the luxury of Como, then you can find so many accommodations to match your vibe. Lake Como's hotels are world-renowned for being a celebrity hotspot, with a price to match! Miley Cyrus was just down the road at a boujee hotel while we were there! We had two groups on our trip – the larger group rented a large villa right on the lake that was gorgeous. Our smaller girl group rented an AirBnB nearby with beautiful views over the water, free parking, and plenty of space! I would recommend looking at Tripadvisor for hotels if you are traveling in a small group or as a couple, and especially if you want the luxury amenities that a hotel can bring. I would recommend using AirBnB or any other villa type site you are used to if you have a larger group.

The two fanciest and most expensive hotels on Lake Como are called **Grand Hotel Tremezzo** and **Il Sereno**. These hotels start at 800 Euros a night during the high season. They are fun to stop at for a drink if you want a taste of the luxury. Our friends stayed at a hotel called **Filario Suites** and they really loved it. Those rates are closer to 400 a night during high season. They said they were also able to walk to dinner and walk to the nearest ferry dock to get all over the lake – that's super convenient!

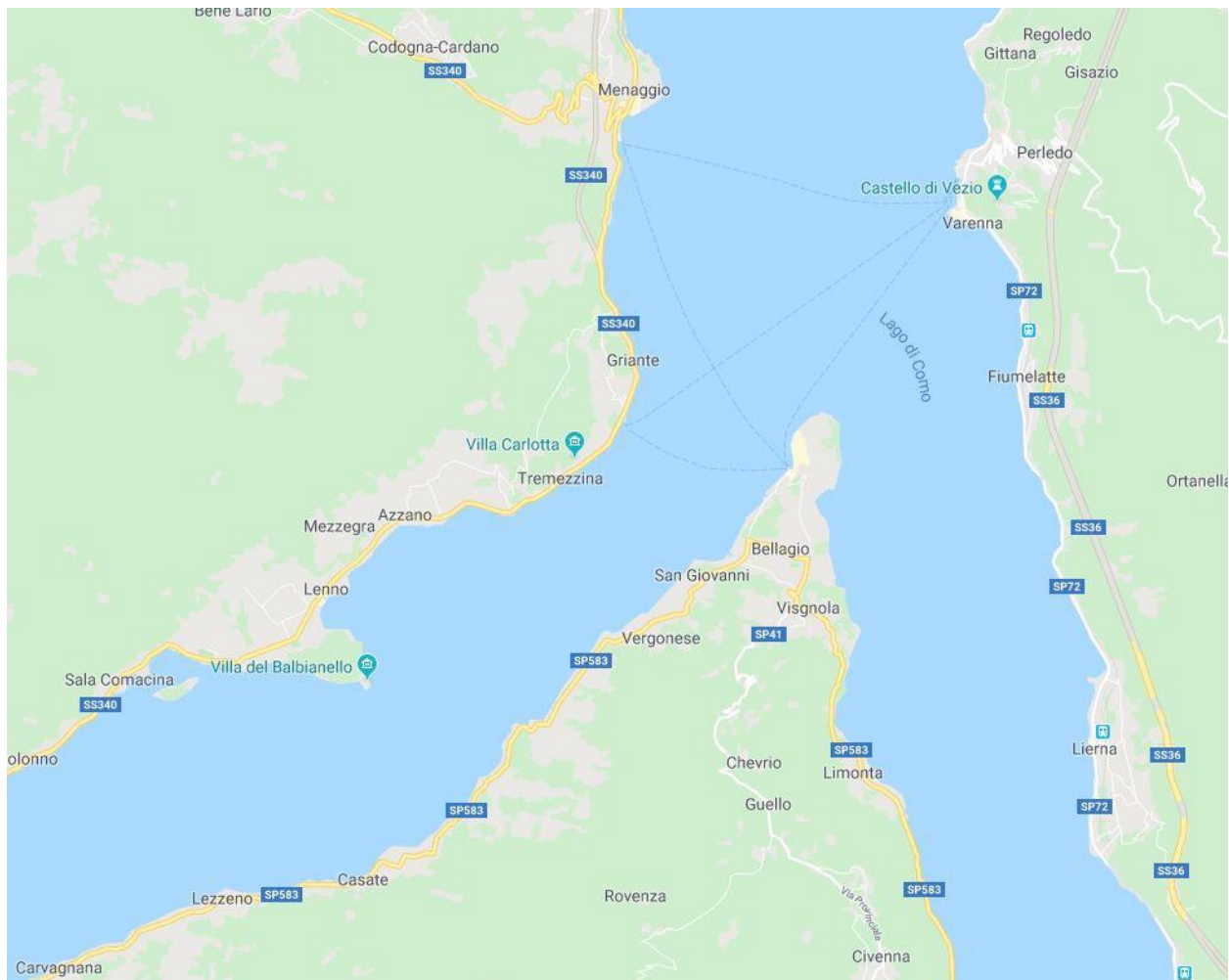
This was our **AirBnB** that we loved. It is not walking distance to anything so you really do need a car, but our morning breakfast views were so magical! And the space we had was great. We had three bedrooms that could fit two people each.



As far as what location to choose, this is difficult. We had it easy because we were just trying to pick a location close to the other group we went with. It was really fun to be off the tourist track in our own little village with just our views of the lake to take in, but I can see how it would be nice to be in one of the towns as well. As far as where most of the things I read about were, it was Varenna, Menaggio, Tremezzina, and of course Bellagio. If you look at a map, all of these towns are close to each other, but connected by ferries. I really enjoyed the western side of the lake so can vouch for that.

[Look here for AirBnBs](#)

[Look at hotels on Tripadvisor](#)



HOW DO I GET AROUND LAKE COMO?

As mentioned a little bit above, there are quite a few options in Lake Como – but they all have their downfalls!

OPTION ONE: RENT A CAR

This is the only way to get to your accommodation from Milan unless you get a private driver. Since you already have a rental car, this is a great tool to use around the island. The downfall is that parking is very limited and difficult to find and the roads are quite narrow. I am a comfortable driver and had friends with me to help scout for parking, but you do what you are comfortable with!

[I usually use Kayak to look at my car rental options](#)

OPTION TWO: LOCAL BUS

There is a bus system on the island, but in our experience it was pretty unreliable. If you are really on top of it, it shouldn't be too difficult to use. This [site](#) has loads of information about the stops and the routes.

OPTION THREE: FERRIES

There are ferry docks all over the island. I found this [website](#) with maps and timetables that looks really helpful!

NOT AN OPTION: TAXIS OR UBER

Uber does not exist in Lake Como and the taxis were non-existent. The other group called the taxi company and were told they would have to wait 2 hours for the next one – not ideal.

HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD I SPEND IN LAKE COMO?

Oh gosh. As long as possible. Come to relax!! Since the lake is so huge, you could easily spend like two whole weeks here just exploring the whole region, hopping around towns, having sun/boat days in between, cooking in your villa – you get the picture! We spent three nights and it was just a taste of a tiny area of Como. I would have preferred to stay much, much longer if I could.

Basically, don't just come to Lake Como to check it off your list and "get a picture". I would come for at least three nights, and longer if possible. It's a great long weekend break from London, but also an ideal recharge getaway! It's so beautiful and I promise you won't want to leave.

WHAT IS THERE TO DO IN LAKE COMO?

Enjoy yourself, enjoy the nature, enjoy the food, enjoy your company, enjoy the atmosphere. You get the picture.

ENJOY THE WATER

As you are reading a blog with the word beaches in the title, you should know how much I love the water. So my favorite part of this lake revolved around, well, the lake. One day was dedicated to renting boats and boating around the whole day, and I highly recommend.



We rented our boats from **Nautic Planet**, close to Grand Hotel Tremezzo. They were super nice boats! We had them to ourselves for the day, meaning we had to drive them, after a brief safety talk and lesson. The boat was about 300 to rent for the whole day. We explored the lake, docked at a restaurant on the water for lunch, would stop for water breaks every once in a while – it was perfection! You can also explore things like Villa del Balbianello or different towns by boat. It was a really fun day and I would definitely do this again.

If your hotel has water access, you'll probably want to spend a significant amount of time just lying in the sun and enjoying the water. I highly recommend this too! And if you are interested in this, I would use that to help you select your hotel or AirBnB. I have not looked into if you can go to a fancy hotel and use their pool for the day for a fee, but that could be an option as well.

ENJOY THE TOWNS

Since we only had one full day that wasn't on the boat, we were able to do a few things but not much! My favorite thing ever that I recommend to everyone was visiting **Villa del Balbianello** – a gorgeous villa right on the water that is famous for being featured in several movies (Casino Royale, Star Wars) and for just being so beautiful. You can park in the town nearby, grab a bite to eat, and then take the long walk to the villa to explore. I would definitely recommend paying the 20 Euros for the guided house tour, but just to enter the grounds is 10 Euros each. I could have spent hours here just exploring every nook and cranny and taking beautiful pictures. You will love it! You can arrive by foot like we did (it's a good mile walk from the town to the villa so wear comfortable shoes), or you can be super cool and show up by boat! I don't think you can dock your boat here, but you can probably pay someone to take you??









After our time there, we kind of gave up exploring and went to Grand Hotel Tremezzo for a cocktail at their **T-Bar** and to feel fancy before dinner! The drinks were like \$30 each, but it was still fun. They also have some “ladies who lunch” lunch dishes.



On the way out of town, we stopped in a little town called Cernobbio to do some last minute shopping for silk scarves before heading to the airport. Via Regina is their high street and everyone got the prettiest scarves! The town was also super cute which made me realize that probably every single small town on that entire lake is super cute. You really can't go wrong just exploring any town at random and enjoying the charm of Lake Como.

Here some other places and things that I had starred that we didn't get to:

- Villa Carlotta in Tremezzina: supposed to be another beautiful villa with gardens
- Chiesa di Santa Marta in Menaggio is supposed to be a really pretty area to walk around and see some dreamy views and architecture
- Varenna's Walk of Lovers is supposed to be a really pretty promenade to stroll along the lake
 - Villa Monastero in Varenna: another pretty villa to explore

WHERE DO I EAT IN LAKE COMO?

This is also another reason why I love this place – the food! We only had one dinner that I would highly recommend, and it was quite the experience. So I'll just talk about that. But for the most part, just eat somewhere that's nearby to not have to deal with drinking and driving or public transportation. All Italian food is delicious, so use Google Maps and the ratings of places to pick somewhere nearby.

LOCANDA DELL'ISOLA COMACINA

This place was just the best. So on Lake Como there is only one, very small island. Our AirBnB looked out over it. On this island, there is a restaurant – this one! The setting is just the most beautiful thing you've ever seen. You arrive via boat (more on that in a bit), you sit overlooking the water, and you have a five course meal of the freshest food you've tasted in a while.

Reserve ahead! And prepare to spend 80 Euros a head cash only, but this includes **unlimited food, wine, and entertainment**. You can choose to go for lunch or dinner.

To get there, you have to take the ferry from Sala Comacina. When you get to Sala Comacina, look for signs for the dock/ferry/Locanda dell'Isola Comacina. The boat runs back and forth between the restaurant and the dock and costs 8 or 9 Euros a person round trip. Factor 30 minutes in for this so that you don't miss your reservation.



WHAT SHOULD I PACK FOR LAKE COMO?

Your cutest outfits, duh! This place is seriously cute, and of course Italians dress so well. No need to go super fancy, and no need for heels, but this is definitely the place to wear your cute sundresses! Just don't forget comfy shoes for Villa del Balbianello. And your bathing suit! And I highly recommend you buy some floaties on Amazon for your boat day.



MY PERFECT LAKE COMO ITINERARY

DAY 1

Arrive via rental car from Milan and check into your accommodation. Figure out the nearest spot for a drink/snack/gelato on the water and head there right away! Tremezzino? Grand Hotel Tremezzo? Just make sure you go somewhere on the water or somewhere with beautiful views of the water. Eat somewhere closeby or at your hotel and rest up for tomorrow.

DAY 2

Breakfast at your AirBnB or your hotel with views over the lake. Relax and enjoy the water today either by the pool at your hotel or on a boat exploring the water. If you don't do either, then make sure you check the ferry schedule and take the ferry across the lake to enjoy the lake via the ferry at least. Maybe take the ferry to Varenna and enjoy the promenade. After your exhausting day in the sun, eat at another restaurant near your accommodation or in the town that you ferried to.

DAY 3

Go enjoy Villa del Balbianello in the morning before it gets too hot. Do the guided tour. Estimate that you'll spend 2 to 3 hours here. Go get a late lunch on the water nearby and grab gelato after. Depending on your mood, either go explore Menaggio (or another village near your accommodation), go get a drink at Grand Hotel Tremezzo, or just find a spot to enjoy the water / enjoy a drink by the water. Get ready for your dinner reservation at Locanda dell'Isola Comacina.