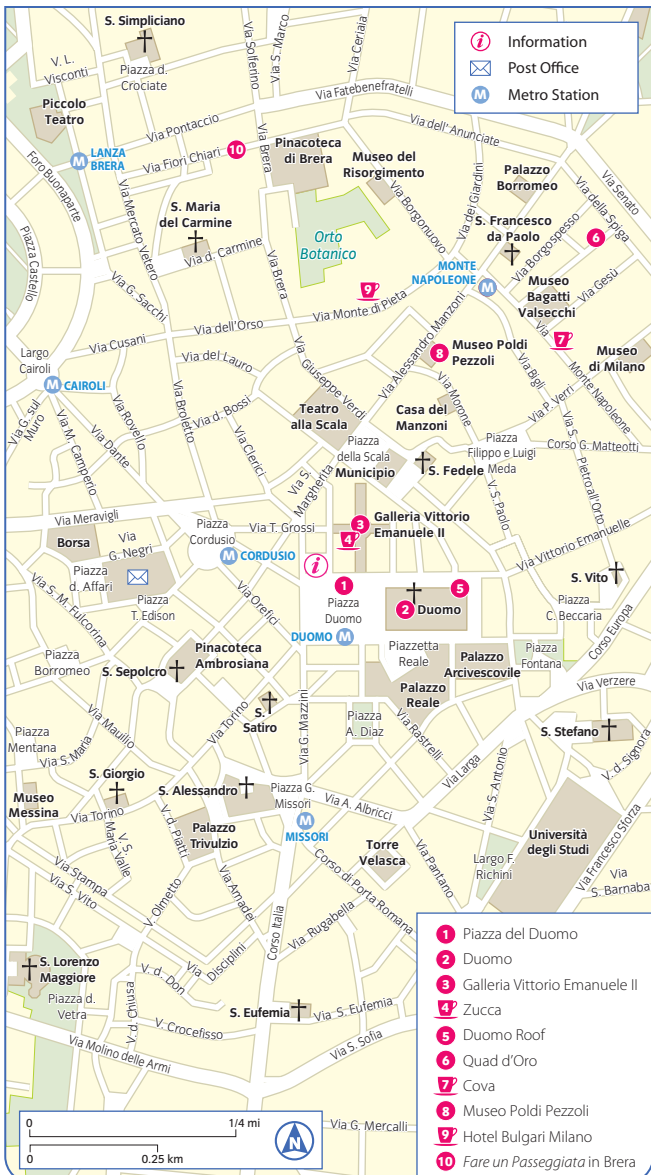


# 1

## The Best **Full-Day** **Tours**



# The Best of Milan in One Day



**M**ilan is elegant, chaotic, fume-ridden, and utterly beguiling in turn. Traffic chokes the streets, it can be bitterly cold in winter and stiflingly hot in summer, and yet its architecture is majestic, the robust Northern Italian cuisine warming, the stores stylish, and the people surprisingly welcoming. Develop a feel for the city on your first day: see the soaring Duomo, sip strong black *espresso* in a traditional café, and window-shop in the opulent streets of the Quadrilatero d'Oro. See the best of its art treasures and eat delicious local dishes in the Milanese style. **START: Metro Lines 1 and 3 to Duomo.**

**1 ★★★ Piazza del Duomo.**

Central to Milanese life since the city was conquered by the Romans in 220BC and known as Mediolanum, this vast traffic-free piazza sees the business of local life passing through it daily, added to by the bustle of tourists peering at the majestic Duomo (see bullet **2**). Early Christian churches were built here, but the square took on its present form following the Unification of Italy in 1861, when medieval buildings were demolished and splendid new ones erected by Giuseppe Mengoni (1829–77), including the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, on your left as you look at the Duomo, as well as the equestrian statue of Vittorio Emanuele II in the middle of the square. 🕒 **30 min.** **Metro: Lines 1 and 3 to Duomo.**

*Piazza del Duomo.*

**2 ★★ Duomo.** Dominating its vast traffic-free piazza, the Gothic Duomo soars majestically over the heart of Milan. The world's third-largest church (behind St Peter's in Rome and Seville Cathedral), its embellished façade is encrusted with some 2,300 statues and gargoyles. Pinnacles bristle on the domed roof, topped by a 5m (16ft) gilded figure of the Virgin Mary.

Inside the Duomo, the floors are of complex patterned marble while light streams in through jewel-like stained-glass windows. Rows of marble pillars divide the space into five aisles and the side chapels are dotted with Renaissance and Mannerist tombs. The crypt reveals the star-shaped 10th-century foundations of the original church and showcases a few fragments of



## Building the Duomo

Building started on the exterior of the Duomo in the late 14th century to a design by Gian Galeazzo Visconti (1351–1402); the marble slabs for the Neo-Gothic façade were transported from quarries along Lake Maggiore (see p 142) into the city along the Navigli canals (see p 80, bullet 12), which were specially constructed for this task. Consecrated in 1418, the Duomo was not deemed complete until 1965, when the mammoth cast-bronze doors were finally finished.

mosaic, but what impresses me most is British conceptual artist Mark Wallinger's evocative *Via Dolorosa* (2002) in the Treasury, a flickering video metaphor for Christ's last journey to the cross. Here you will also find the gilded tomb of Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan and leader of the Counter-Reformation, who died in 1584. 🕒 1½ hr. **Piazza del Duomo.** ☎ 02 89 40 41 29. [www.duomomilano.it](http://www.duomomilano.it). Admission 1€ Duomo; 2€ crypt; treasury free; 1€ tomb of Carlo Borromeo. Duomo daily 7am–7pm; baptistery 9am–5pm; treasury and tomb of Carlo Borromeo Mon–Fri 9.30am–1.30pm,

2–6pm; Sat 9.30am–1.30pm, 2–5pm. Metro: Lines 1 and 3 to Duomo.


3 ★★ **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II.** A minute's stroll from the Duomo, Milan's first, and certainly its most exclusive, shopping arcade connects the north side of Piazza del Duomo to Piazza Scala, site of the famous opera house (see p 106). The gallery was designed by Giuseppe Mengoni (see bullet 1), who died in a fall from the scaffolding the day before it opened in 1878. The vast entrance arch leads to a glass arcade with marble floors and four 'arms' lined with smart

*Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Piazza del Duomo.*





shops, cafés, restaurants, and bars—for me the perfect way to soak up the gallery's genteel 19th-century atmosphere. Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Tod's, and Prada share floor space with Zucca (see p 92), Biffi, and Il Savini, some of Milan's finest and oldest eating establishments, where the local elite like to dine and be seen after a night at the opera. Under the 40m (131ft) central glass dome of the gallery, you'll spot giggling crowds dancing on a certain body part of a little mosaic bull. Follow suit and you're supposedly guaranteed a lifetime of happiness.

 **45 min.** *Piazza del Duomo. No phone. Open 24 hr, some shops and cafés close Sun–Mon. Metro: Lines 1 and 3 to Duomo.*

 **★★★★ Zucca.** On the corner of Piazza del Duomo and the Galleria, Milan's grandest of gran caffès serves great coffees and aperitivi at the elaborate wooden counter, which is backed by a wall of elaborate Klimt-like mosaics. Locals stand at the bar while tourists spend much more money to perch at little tables on the covered terrace in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II. *Piazza del Duomo, 21.*  **02 86 46 44 35.** [www.caffemiani.it](http://www.caffemiani.it). **\$\$.**



Zucca.

**5 ★★★★★ kids Duomo Roof.** Back across Piazza del Duomo, to the left of the cathedral, is an elevator whose entrance is craftily hidden on the north (left-hand) exterior wall of the Duomo. Choose a clear day to travel up among the statuary for unrivalled views over mandarin-colored rooftops and even to the mountains in the north. Look out for

## Getting Around Milan

Milan's most famous sights are within walking distance of each other, with Castello Sforzesco (see p 31, bullet **2**), the Duomo (see p 7, bullet **2**), and Via Montenapoleone all 20 minutes apart. However, the public transport system, run by ATM, is a cheap and effective alternative to walking.

Travel tickets cost 1€ and they are valid for 75 minutes on all three systems: metros, trams, and buses (see p 162-163). Metro stations are well signposted and trains frequent and speedy. I found Lines 1 (red, with stops for the Duomo and Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II) and 3 (yellow, with a stop at Via Montenapoleone) the most useful for sightseeing.

the ugly 1950s' proportions of the Torre Velasca (this brash tower sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb among all the church spires) and the Madonnina (see box, *Milan's Favorite Lady*, p 55), a large gilded figure of the Virgin Mary adorning the Duomo spire. I don't have a good head for heights, but the roof is fenced in and it's so fascinating being up among the gargoyles that any nerves I had vanished. ⌚ 45 min. **Piazza del Duomo.** Admission 7€ by elevator, 5€ by stairs. Daily 9am–8.45pm. Metro: Lines 1 and 3 to Duomo.

**6 ★★★ Quad d'Oro.** A 10-minute walk along crowded shopping street Corso Vittorio Emanuele II brings you to the oblong of streets bounded by Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga, which together boast an even higher concentration of exclusive designer shops than London's Bond Street or Hollywood's Rodeo Drive. Interspersed with antique dealers, upmarket cafés, and frighteningly expensive jewelers, the stores make for an intense shopping experience in a series of charming old palazzi. ⌚ 2 hrs. **Quadrilatero d'Oro. Open**

**Tues–Sat, some Mon am. Metro: Line 3 to Montenapoleone.**

**7★★ Cova.** Give the credit cards a rest and join the smart shopping crowd for coffee in this wonderfully old-fashioned Quad d'Oro coffee bar. Prices are outrageous, even to stand at the bar, but it's worth it for the coffee-and-cake experience. **Via Montenapoleone, 8.** ☎ 02 76 00 55 99. [www.pasticceriacova.com](http://www.pasticceriacova.com). \$\$\$.

**8 ★★★ Museo Poldi Pezzoli.** Five minutes along Via Manzoni from the Quad d'Oro, this gem of a museum is often wrongly overlooked. Art lover and aristocrat Gian Giacomo Poldi Pezzoli donated his extraordinary collection of paintings and decorative arts to Milan in 1879, and they are exhibited in his elegant 17th-century palazzo. Later benefactors have added to his collections. Use an audio-guide because information in English is patchy. The highly decorative rooms on the ground floor showcase Oriental and medieval armor, Asian rugs, and rare books. Upstairs the extravagant rooms contain family

*Take the elevator for a closer look at the Duomo roof.*



## Monday Closing

**Don't get caught out:** nearly all museums and churches (including several in this chapter) and roughly half the shops in Milan close on Monday. There's still lots to do, however: explore the Duomo (see p 7, bullet 2), enjoy the landscaped gardens of Parco Sempione (see p 14, bullet 4), and visit the boutiques of the Quad d'Oro (see p 73, bullet 6) when they open at around 2pm. Otherwise head out of town on Monday and spend the day discovering the idyllic villages and grand villas of Lake Como (see p 124).

portraits, one of the world's most important collections of priceless timepieces (see p 41, bullet 7), Limoges enamels, Murano glass, and stained-glass by artist Giuseppe Bertini (1825–98), showing scenes from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Best of all are the paintings *Portrait of an Unknown Man* by Andrea Mantegna (c.1455), and the ethereal *Portrait of a Young Girl* by Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1475), which hang in the gilded Salone Dorata alongside Bellini, Botticelli, and della Francesca. 🕒 1½ hr. **Via Manzoni, 12.** ☎️ 02 79 63 34. [www.museopoldipezzoli.it](http://www.museopoldipezzoli.it). Admission 8€ adults, 5.5€ ages 11–17 and over 60. Tues–Sun 10am–6pm. **Metro:** Line 3 to Montenapoleone.

🍷 ★★ **Hotel Bulgari Milano.** I like to take time for an *aperitivo* in Milan's current hottest glamour spot (see p 116), two streets up from Via Manzoni. Perch at the cool, dark bar or grab a hot seat on the low sofas outside to enjoy exotic cocktails in the softly lit, landscaped gardens. **Via Fratelli Gabba, 7b.** ☎️ 02 80 58 051. [www.bulgarihotels.com](http://www.bulgarihotels.com). \$\$\$.

10 ★★★ **Fare un Passeggiata in Brera.** From the Bulgari, head up Via Brera for some gentle exercise as you join *il tutto* Milano on a nightly stroll (*un passeggiata*) around the inviting cobbled streets of fashionable Brera. Peer into sophisticated design shops and contemporary galleries (many are still open at 10pm), stop off for an *espresso* or glass of *prosecco* (sparkling white wine) at a street-side bar, enjoy the street entertainment, and marvel at the Italians dress sense of style and flair. 🕒 30 min. **Via Fiori Chiari and Via Fiori Oscuri.** **Metro:** Line 2 to Lanza Brera or Line 3 to Montenapoleone.

*Window shopping, Quad d'Oro.*



# The Best of Milan **in Two Days**

- 1 Pinacoteca di Brera
- 2 Museo Teatrale alla Scala
- 3 Peck
- 4 Parco Sempione
- 5 *Il Cenacolo* in Santa Maria delle Grazie
- 6 Navigli
- 7 Tabou





**H**ere's your chance to see an immense collection of paintings and sculpture in the very best of Milan's galleries and museums. For a midday break, seek out the best of Italian delicatessens and eat a picnic in the gloriously green Parco Sempione before visiting Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, probably one of the most famous artworks in the world. In the evening, stretch your legs by wandering around the busy canals, and round off the day with delicious pizza in one of the Navigli's favorite *trattorie*. **START: Metro Line 3 to Montenapoleone.**

### 1 ★★★ Pinacoteca di Brera.

Milan's leading art gallery is located on the first floor of a 17th-century palazzo and built around a two-story arcaded courtyard. With 38 (almost) chronological rooms crammed with medieval masterpieces, Renaissance altarpieces, baroque and Venetian paintings, Macchiaioli School (Italian Impressionists), and a few Surrealist images, it's best to cherry-pick among the offerings. There are few signs in English but the major works speak for themselves. The first highlight is in Room 4: Gentile da Fabriano's golden *Valle Romita Polyptych* (c.1410), painted in a spiky Gothic style. Andrea Mantegna's weirdly foreshortened *Cristo Morto* hangs in Room 6 and was painted c.1490 in subdued colors as befits the theme of death. Renaissance landmarks include Raphael's exquisite *Marriage of the Virgin* (1504, currently being restored in Room 18) and Piero della Francesca's sublime *Montefeltro Altarpiece* (1474) in Room 24. Caravaggio leads the way for 17th-century painting in Room 29 with his gloomy *Supper at Emmaus* (1601). Other great names include El Greco, Bellini, Tiepolo, Correggio, Canaletto, Picasso, and Braque. For more information, see p 13, bullet 1. ⌚ 2 hrs. **Via Brera, 28.** ☎ 02 72 26 31. [www.brera.beniculturali.it](http://www.brera.beniculturali.it). Admission 10€ adults, 2.5€ ages 11–14 and over 60. **Tues–Sun 8.30am–7.15pm. Metro: Line 2 to Lanza Brera or Line 3 to Montenapoleone.**

### 2 ★ Museo Teatrale alla Scala.

A short stroll down Via Brera brings you to the opera house La Scala's museum. For me the best part of a visit is peeking into the auditorium of the neighboring La Scala (see p 106), the world's most famous opera house, in all its red velvet and gilded finery. You'll see grand saloons hung with glittering chandeliers where champagne is served during performance intervals to the great and good of Milanese society. In addition, a series of rooms relate the story of La Scala through musical scores, historic

*Museo Teatrale alla Scala.*



## Building the Brera

The Pinacoteca di Brera began life as a palazzo, designed in 1651 by Italian baroque architect Francesco Maria Ricchini (1584–1658) for the Jesuits as a college and botanical garden. The Pinacoteca di Brera was subsequently founded by the Habsburg Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in 1776; Napoleon considerably added to the collection at the turn of the 19th century by stripping monasteries and churches in northern Italy of their treasures and reinstalling them in the Pinacoteca. Small wonder that some of Italy's finest religious art is now on display here. Napoleon's contribution to this collection is acknowledged by a massive equestrian bronze, sculpted by Antonio Canova in 1806, which dominates the courtyard of the gallery.

instruments, marble busts, and documents dedicated to illustrious musicians and singers such as Toscanini, Verdi, and Maria Callas. Temporary exhibitions paying homage to opera stars are on the top floor. 🕒 45 min. *Largo Ghiringhelli, 1.* ☎️ 02 88 79 74 73. [www.teatroallascala.org](http://www.teatroallascala.org). Admission 5€ adults, 4€ ages 4–17 and over 60. Daily 9am–12.30pm; 1.30–5.30pm. Closed public holidays. Bus: 1a, 2a, 10, 12, 14,

Peck.



15, 26, 29, 33, 48, 67, 68, 89, 2A, 5A, 6A, 173E. Metro: Line 1 to Cordusio or Duomo, Line 3 to Duomo or Montenapoleone.

**3 ★★★★★ Peck.** Head along Via Santa Margherita, and Via Mazzini, and then a dog leg off to the right leads to Via Spadari. Here an upmarket deli—the favorite store of the Milanese bourgeoisie—is stuffed to the gunnels with salamis, cheeses, breads, luscious tomatoes, and pastries perfect for picnics on the hoof. Buy whatever you fancy and trek up Via Dante to the Parco Sempione to eat al fresco. *Via Spadari, 9.* ☎️ 02 80 23 161. [www.peck.it](http://www.peck.it). \$\$.

**4 ★★★★★ kids Parco Sempione.** Enjoy a picnic lunch in tranquil meadows dotted with trees providing welcome summertime shade. Milan's biggest green space covers 46 hectares (115 acres) and was landscaped by Emilio Alemagna in the English country-garden style: lawns crossed with paths, copses, follies, and an artificial lake. It is just the place to retreat from the noise of the city and stroll or jog off a



*Parco Sempione.*

heavy lunch. Finished in 1893, the gardens now incorporate the Acquario (see p 33, bullet 4) and the Palazzo del'Arte. The 108m (354ft) steel Torre Branca (see

p 77, bullet 1) houses a trendy bar, the Just Cavalli Café (see p 98), owned by famed fashion designer Roberto Cavalli. Although not an issue during the day, I would not

## Booking for *The Last Supper*

It's a challenge but well worth the effort: tickets to see Leonardo da Vinci's (1452–1519) iconic *The Last Supper* in Santa Maria delle Grazie (see p 16, bullet 5) are as elusive as golden eggs. Try the official website at [www.cenacolovinciano.org](http://www.cenacolovinciano.org), or call ☎ 02 89 42 11 46 (tickets are 8€ from the website). In my experience, tickets are usually booked out for the summer months by early May, but are easier to procure out of the tourist season from September onwards if you can book about three weeks in advance and be as flexible as possible. If you have no luck on the Cenacolo website, try turning up at Santa Marie delle Grazie on the off-chance that someone has cancelled, but otherwise the only assured way to get to see the famous fresco on a set date is by taking a guided tour. Website [www.tickitaly.com](http://www.tickitaly.com) offers expensive (currently 28€) 15-minute viewings of *The Last Supper* with an English-language guide. The tour company **Zani Viaggi** ([www.zaniviaggi.it](http://www.zaniviaggi.it)) runs daily, guided bus or walking tours of the Duomo (see p 25, bullet 1), La Scala (see p 106), and *The Last Supper*, at a cost of around 55€. Finally, remember that Santa Maria delle Grazie is always closed on Mondays.



The Last Supper, 1495–97, Leonardo da Vinci.

advise walking in the park after dark, especially around the Arco della Pace (see p 77, bullet 3) at the northwestern entrance, where a number of unsavory characters like to hang out. ⌚ 1–2 hrs. **Piazza Castello. Admission free. Daily 7am–7pm. Metro: Lines 1 and 2 to Cadorna. See p 31, bullet 1, and p 77, bullet 2.**

**5 ★★★ Il Cenacolo in Santa Maria delle Grazie.** It's a 10-minute walk along Corso Magenta to Milan's greatest art treasure.

Painted for Milanese ruler Ludovico il Moro by Leonardo da Vinci between 1495 and 1497, *The Last Supper* adorns the back wall of the refectory, just off the cloisters in the Dominican convent attached to the Lombard Renaissance church of Santa Maria delle Grazie (see p 29, bullet 7). The famous fresco is climate-controlled for preservation and viewed in pre-allocated periods of 15 minutes. Leonardo's masterpiece depicts Christ revealing to his disciples that one will betray him;

## Aperitivo Time

**At cocktail hour (starting at around 6.30pm and lasting until about 10.30pm),** a tapas-like spread of olives, crudités, cold pasta dishes, rice and green salads, salamis, and breads make an appearance in every Milanese bar worth its salt, often alongside happy hour for wines and cocktails. It's a clever way to induce people in and helps drinkers hold their alcohol as they forage for food. Be warned: as much as locals can be fun-loving and exuberant, drinking too much is generally frowned upon.



horror and disbelief are etched on every face, while Jesus remains resigned. Judas sits to the left of Jesus (as we look at the fresco), leaning away from him; the bag of silver is clearly visible in his right hand. Due to da Vinci experimenting with his painting technique by applying tempera straight on to the walls of the refectory, the fresco began to deteriorate virtually on completion and has suffered several ham-fisted restoration attempts. The latest clean-up was in the 1990s; the colors are muted but they do resemble the original fresco. Also see box, *The Forgotten Painting*, p 28. 🕒 30 min. **Piazza Santa Maria delle Grazie, 2.** ☎ 02 89 42 11 46. [www.cenacolovinciano.org](http://www.cenacolovinciano.org). Admission 8€ adults, 4.75€ ages 4–17 and over 60. Tour company prices vary. Tues–Sun 8.15am–6.45pm. Metro: Lines 1 and 2 to Cadorna.

6 ★★ **Navigli.** The 20-minute walk down to Milan's canals can take in a visit to arcaded Sant'Ambrogio (see p 28, bullet 6) or the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Technica

(see p 49, bullet 7). Crowded and full of life, the Navigli canals come into their own in the evening when the young and trendy of Milan come out to play. Bar tables spill out on to the streets, buskers sing, restaurateurs shout their wares, and bohemian types promenade up and down. These few streets are refreshingly casual in ambience, with little of the dressy Milanese *bella figura* (love of dressing well) evident in the city center; it's one of the few places where you will see Italian punks, hippies, and Goths. Navigli is just the place for a relaxed drink and late-night supper.

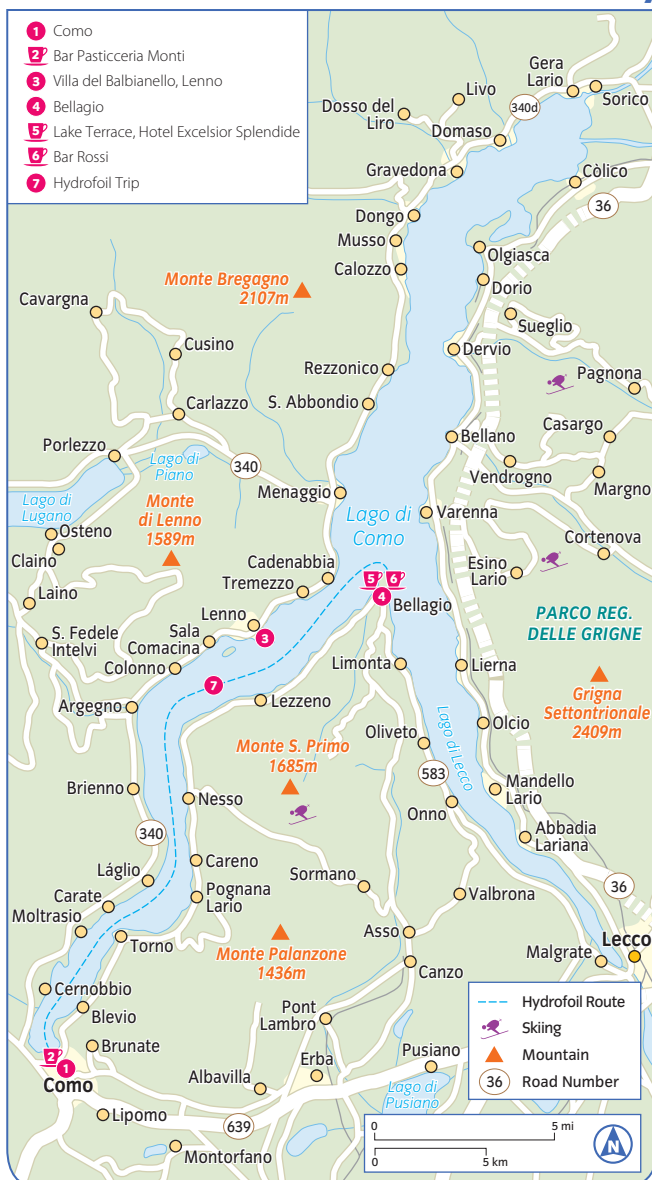
🕒 1–3 hrs. Metro: Line 2 to Porta Genova. See p 80, bullet 12.

7P ★★ **Tabou.** A great menu of fruity and sticky cocktails and generous plates of stuffed olives, local cheeses, and savory snacks make this little canal-side bar the ideal pit-stop for an early evening aperitivo before heading for pizza at Pizzeria La Tradizionale (see p 89). **Alzaia Naviglio Grande, 62.** ☎ 02 83 23 855. \$.

*The Navigli canals come into their own in the evening.*



# The Best of Lake Como in One Day



**I**t's time for a break from the cheery hum of the city and its innumerable art treasures. Where better to escape the pressure-cooker of Milan than Lake Como, Italy's deepest lake, which sprawls like an inverted 'Y' in the foothills of the Alps. Just an hour north of Milan by train, Como is a peaceful suntrap of a millpond backed by mountains. I had a fantastic day out exploring the genteel town of Como before boarding a ferry to spot some glossily extravagant villas and lunching lakeside in the ridiculously photogenic village of Bellagio. **START: Stazione Nord, Milan.**

**1 ★★ Como.** Arriving in Como Nord, turn left out of the station to see the glittering lake straight ahead across the promenade; the ferries dock here. Despite unprepossessing suburbs, Como is an attractive and sophisticated town, and so spend some time exploring its ancient heart, which maintains the original Roman street plan, cobbled streets, and medieval walls. Start in Piazza Cavour, right opposite the ferry terminal, once the center of silk-making and today backed by expensive hotels and bars. Take a look around the Duomo (see p 7, bullet **1**), a striking mix of Gothic and Renaissance architecture and the 10th-century Romanesque Basilica di San Fedele church (see p 126, bullet **4**) in cobbled Piazza San Fedele, Como's corn market in times long past. If you stay overnight in Como, the neoclassical Villa Olmo (see

p 129, bullet **1**) is worth visiting; it has lakeside formal gardens that are beautifully floodlit at night. 🕒 1½ hr. **Piazza Cavour.** See p 124.

**2? ★★ kids Bar Pasticceria**

**Monti.** Retrace your steps to the ferry terminal. Because this is Italy, the ferry you will catch as part of today's tour will almost definitely be late. Don't waste the glorious sunshine hanging round in the tiny boat terminus; take a seat at Bar Monti on elegant lakefront Piazza Cavour and keep one eye on what's happening across the road. Order a cold birra or indulge a mid-morning sweet tooth with syrupy pastries. When your ferry looms across the lake, pay the bill (il conto) and saunter across the road to catch your ride. **Piazza Cavour, 21, Como.** ☎ 03 13 01 165. \$.

*The Cathedral (Duomo), Como.*




## Getting There

**Buy tickets for Lake Como at Stazione Nord (also called Cadorna):** it is just outside Cadorna FMN Triennale on Metro lines 1 and 2. A return ticket (*andata ritorno*) on FS-run trains costs 7€. Trains run once an hour in winter at 42 minutes past the hour and every 20 minutes in summer. The journey time is one hour. Buy snacks and water at the station because there are no facilities on-board the trains. The journey itself saves the best till last: traveling through Milan's suburbs and then through flat farmland—it's somewhat disappointing, but when you get out of Lago Nord station at Como the sparkling lake views make up for any monotony.

If you're driving, it's around an hour on the autostrada A9 (locally signposted Milano-Laghi) up to Como, usually in heavy traffic. SGEA coaches depart from Autostazione Garibaldi in Piazza Freud in Milan, but cost the same as the train and take much longer.

**3 ★★★ Villa del Balbianello, Lenno.** After 90 minutes and several stops at small villages along the way, hop off the ferry at Lenno to visit Villa del Balbianello; you'll see it standing on the headland on the west of the lake as the ferry rounds the shoreline. Built by Cardinal Durini in the 17th century, its latest claim to fame is that the house and grounds featured prominently in the Bond movie *Casino Royale* (2006).

Inside the villa, endless, priceless French furniture is complemented by South American, Chinese, and African artwork, squirreled away by previous owner, explorer Guido Monzino (1928–88). There is also a small museum showcasing his expeditions. To my mind, the high point of a visit to the villa is the ornate landscaped garden and the three-arched loggia behind the house.

 **1 hr. Via Comoedia, Balbianello,**

*Villa del Balbianello, Lenno.*





**Lenno.** ☎ 03 44 56 110. [www.fondoambiente.it/en/beni/villa-del-balbianello-fai-proprietes.asp](http://www.fondoambiente.it/en/beni/villa-del-balbianello-fai-proprietes.asp). Admission (garden only) 5€ adults, 2.5€ children aged 4–12; garden and villa (compulsory tour) without reservation 11€ adults, 6€ children aged 4–12; with reservation 8€ adults, 4€ children aged 4–12. Mid-Mar–mid-Nov Tues, Thurs–Sun 10am–6pm. Closed: late Nov–early Mar.

**4 ★★★ Bellagio.** Just across the lake from Lenno and lying scenically on the promontory of Como's inverted 'Y', adorable Bellagio has just about managed to avoid selling out to the tourist euro. The shady promenade along the lakefront is bordered by a scattering of chic hotels, bars, and cafés, while pretty alleyways straggle uphill in steps, unchanged since medieval times. Classy souvenir shops line the streets; best buys include leather bags, belts, and shoes as well as traditionally painted wooden trays in shades of turquoise, burnt orange, and gold. Just don't expect too many bargains. Still, this is a lovely place to linger, have lunch overlooking the lake, and if you have time, inspect a couple of the fine villas that surround the village (see p 131, bullets **8** and **9**). ⌚ 3–4 hrs.

**5 ★★★ Lake Terrace, Hotel Excelsior Splendide.** Treat yourself to an informal lunch under a vine-covered trellis with far-reaching views over Lake Como to Lenno on the far bank. Sit at one of the tables, jauntily covered with checked cloths, and enjoy a light lunch from the menu of fluffy omelets, simply cooked pastas with delicious tomato sauces, and tiramisu. Choose a light rosé, sit back, and revel in the beauty of the shoreline. I like this restaurant for its lovely position, unpretentious service, and unbelievably good



*Souvenir shop in Bellagio.*

value—a rare find on pricey Lake Como. **Via Lungo Lario Manzoni, 28, Bellagio.** ☎ 03 19 50 225. [www.hsplendide.com](http://www.hsplendide.com). \$.

**6 ★★ Bar Rossi.** Just missed the boat back to Como? Pass the time until the next ferry over an enormous gelato or a thick espresso under Bar Rossi's elegant lakefront arcades, conveniently opposite the ferry dock so you can see the boats coming in. If you choose to stay in Bellagio overnight, eat decent pasta and pizza here in the wondrously tiled Art Nouveau dining room. **Piazza Mazzini, 22, Bellagio.** ☎ 03 19 50 196. \$.

**7 ★★★ kids Hydrofoil Trip.** See the magical sunlight playing on the mountains as you zip down the lake on the return leg to Como. The sense of speed as the hydrofoil rises on its front legs out of the water brings out the child in everyone.

## Swimming Around Bellagio

Oddly enough for such a popular holiday destination, there is no longer a public pool at Bellagio: the Lido now stands empty and forlorn on the southern edge of the town. There are several ways to get your dip in the lake, however. Splash out an extortionate 60€ for a day's languishing by the pool at opulent Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni (see p 140) on the tip of the promontory, or alternatively take a five-minute taxi-ride from the rank by the ferry dock to the pebble-strewn public beach at Guggiate, just southwest of Bellagio. Be warned: It's free entry but there are no facilities, and so take a towel with you. Arrange a pick-up time when you're dropped off or you will face the same hot and thirsty 25-minute walk back into Bellagio that I had. Many visitors make the 10-minute ferry hop across to Menaggio (see p 134, bullet 5) and swim at the luxurious Lido Giardino, Via Roma 11, ☎ 03 44 32 007, [www.lidogiardino.com](http://www.lidogiardino.com). Admission is 10€ for the day.

Look out for the attractive lakeside villages of **Lezzeno** and **Torno** on the eastern shoreline, **Tremezzo** (see p 133, bullet 3) and **Brienno** to the west, and the splendid Palladian villas of Melzi (see p 131, bullet 9), Cipressi, and Monastero near Bellagio. There are at least

four hydrofoil services per day in the summer months. From Como, take the train back to Milan. ⌚ 50 min. to Como, including one stop at Tremezzo. Cost one-way 11€ adult, 5.60€ under-15s. [www.navigazionezaghi.it](http://www.navigazionezaghi.it). ●

*Look out for the village of Brienno during your hydrofoil trip.*

