



FANTASTICALLY SET AMONG ENCHANTING NATURAL AND ARTISTIC BEAUTY

BELLAGIO: THE PEARL OF LAKE LARIO

The town of Bellagio, whose gentle façade is gilded at sunset, can be wholly taken in at a glance. A long climb and you will be stunned by the magic of the lake below you. On this promontory of Lake Como, the sky, the lake and the woods come together and vary in colours and fragrances according to season, while the trembling profile of the villas are mirrored into the lake and create a magical atmosphere drifting between dream and reality.

LAKE COMO AND ITS TWO ARMS

Lake Como (also called Lario) is one of the features of the area extending from the Alps and the Pianura Padana, close to the Swiss border. The lake is 46 km long, has an area of 146 square km, a maximum depth of 410 m and its width varies from 4,3 km (between Cadenabbia and Fiumelatte) and 0,43 km (from Toriggia and Careno). It is surrounded by a range of steep mountains dropping sheer down to the water, gentle hills, narrow and rough valleys, larger and gentle valleys run by rushing torrents and big rivers, plains densely inhabited and uncontaminated woods, small villages and towns lying along the lakeside or rising on the mountains. The landscape is characterized by a luxuriant and varied vegetation, thanks to the mild climate of the region rich in water and swept by a constant breeze. The salubrious and gentle climate has made the area become famous as the ideal place for spending pleasant holidays, as testified by the various villas of noble families and big hotels. The "Alto Lario" is one of the most charming zones of the region, thanks above all to the link between nature

and the works of man, with excursion tracks and paths through untouched places and various equipped centres to practise aquatic sports. The Lake Centre is rich in monuments that deserve to be visited, such as the Romanesque and Gothic-Renaissance churches and the 16th-century richly frescoed villas. Besides Menaggio and Lenno, whose promontory hosts the splendid Villa del Balbianello, you shouldn't miss a visit to Villa Carlotta that, rising between Tremezzo and Cadenabbia, is a privileged destination both for the Spring blooming of its gardens and for the masterpieces preserved inside its small but rich museum.

The eastern side of the lake, sheltered by the impressive Grigne Mountains and run by the main road SS 36 leading to Stelvio, is rich in ancient and picturesque villages; on the western side, from Cernobbio as far as Island Comacina, the only island of Lake Lario, there are various natural and artistic beauties for tourists to enjoy, especially on one of the many ferry services and trips. The "triangle of Lario" is the territory extending between the two southern arms of the lake, where you can see the small lined up Lakes Briantei, the important town of Erba in the centre and, on the northern tip, in the province of Como, Bellagio "the pearl of Lario", so-called for its position and its enchanting beauty. Visiting the places overlooking Lake Como, you can still be astonished by the beauty of the works of art blended with the beauty of nature: a remarkable cultural heritage as result of the perfect relationship between landscape and man. The territory, today divided into the two provinces of Como and Lecco, lies along the main routes connecting Central Europe to the Mediterranean Sea and has always been travelled by a flow of traders and travellers that has stimulated its development over time. The splendid villas scattered throughout the province of Como and the places of the area of Lecco, reminding you of the famous novel "I Promessi Sposi" by Alessandro Manzoni, one of Italy's most famous writers, are only a few examples of the richness of the territory of Lario. It offers the visitors the indelible signs of the art, history and culture that belonged to the populations that for centuries have lived here, as well as parks and protected oases.

BELLAGIO: A GARDEN IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

Thanks to its enchanting situation, the mild climate and the luxuriant vegetation, Bellagio is like a garden in the heart of Europe and one of the most well-known international resorts. Every epoch has provided it with wonderful gifts and Kings and Queens, Emperors and Empresses, poets and musicians have been here. Inhabited since the prehistory, after the Celts and the Leponti, this area experienced the settlement of the Romans, the medieval fortifications and the rich Renaissance age; in the 18th century, numerous upper class Lombard people built their villas here, from which they could enjoy a breathtaking view. But it is from Punta Spartivento, the farthest point of the town, that you can see one of the best panoramas of the lake. Bellagio rises from the altitude of 229 m up to 1686 m a.s.l. (the peak of Mount San Pietro from which the view ranges from the Alps to the Pianura Padana) and divides into 22 hamlets, among which Borgo is one on the earliest inhabited places, now the historic centre of the town, characterized by narrow streets overlooked by small very colourful houses, one seeming to lean against the other. The sloping alleyways in the heart of Bellagio are flanked with shops and ancient massive walls. At Bellagio there are many churches that deserve careful attention, such as San Giacomo Church, located in the upper part of the town and dating back to the end of the 11th century, one of the best examples of the Romanesque-Lombard art, even proclaimed national monument. The small San Giorgio Church, also dating back to the 11th century, has side walls built with ashlars, small splayed windows and a small graceful portal. The inside statue of the Madonna della Cintura deserves special attention. In the hamlet of San Giovanni it is well worth seeing the church with the same name, certified since the 12th century and in the past considered the focal point of the religious life of Bellagio. The new church of San Giovanni Battista, was built in 1584; by its side rises a campanile of five spans that plays a magnificent "ancient do" concert. The church houses an interesting altar-piece depicting "The Risen Christ among the Saints and the Donors" by Gaudenzio Ferrari of the 16th century. We also recommend a visit to the Romanesque church of Santa Maria, in the hamlet of Loppia, once enriched with a small cloister that now can only be seen from outside the park of Villa Gerli (ex-Villa Poldi Pezzoli). Among the beautiful villas, all perfectly preserved and with a panoramic view, we would like to mention Villa Trotti and Villa Giulia (that unfortunately cannot be visited). Villa Melzi, built on the lakeside at the beginning of 1800 for the Duke Francesco Melzi d'Eril, is surrounded by a wonderful garden, whose grounds have been architected with terraces and steps, enriched with tropical and exotic plants, remarkable sculptures, a Moorish shrine and a small Japanese lake. The garden, the Orangerie, now converted into a small museum, and the family chapel can be visited from March to October (Tel. 031 950204). Villa Serbelloni, rising on the upper side of Bellagio and dating back to 1605, is now a part of the Fondazione Rockefeller and is regularly used for hosting conferences and organizing periods of researches. It is surrounded by a large and scenic park, open to visitors from April to November that, spread on a big part of the promontory, boasts almost 18 kilometres of lanes. The panorama of both the two arms of the lake is stunning. (To book a guided visit, please call 031 951555/ 031 950204).

SPORT FACILITIES AT BELLAGIO

Enjoyng your spare time! The area is the ideal setting for practising every kind of sport. At Bellagio and its surroundings, within easy reach, you can enjoy hiking or free-climbing along the slopes of the Alpi and Prealpi as well as practise winter sports thanks to the various ski-lifts spread around. You can also practise rafting and canoeing on the rivers or go sailing and windsurfing on the lake. There are tracks for mountain-bikes while the most adventurous will opt for paragliding and hang-gliding. The region is also famous for its smaller lakes,

whose waters reflect the sky of Lombardy and are pleasant destinations for spending relaxing week-ends among reeds, woods and small beaches: Montorfano (a Natural Reserve), Alserio, Pusiano (that reminds you of the poet Parini), Annone and Segrino. Both hiking or riding a bike are not only pleasant activities but can give you the opportunity to visit the splendid villas and their magnificent parks, residence of noble families. Also to be found here are various equestrian centres and golf courses, a paradise for sportsmen!

NAVIGATION ON THE LAKE

Enjoy sailing on the lake. As you can see on most Italian lakes, a public company - Gestione Navigazione Laghi - has been responsible since 1952 for the navigation for the passengers sailing on Lake Como, that on the map looks like an inverted "Y" between Lake Maggiore and Lake Garda. Today the crafts run incessantly, along the coastal perimeter of Lake Como, about 180 km long, from South to North, from one beach to another. Besides Como and Lecco, the two southern provinces of the territory of Lario, about 40 communes, lying along the lakeside or on the slopes of the area, avail themselves of the shuttle service, ferryboat, hydrofoils and catamarans. It consists of a fleet, always renewed, that offers a valuable sailing service to both inhabitants and tourists. You can go on a cruise on the lake and choose among about 30 kinds of crafts, from the old steamer to the modern motorships and the latest catamarans. One of the main purposes of Gestione Navigazione is to increase the hydrofoil services, even if today from the piers of Piazza Cavour in Como, the super-hydrofoils, that can carry up to 200 people, offer a frequent and regular service. Besides, the big motorships named Manzoni and Milano, and, on Sundays the Concordia steamer, take people on cruises from April to September, even offering lunch on board, and reach the main villages of the lake up to the Abbey of Piona, along the lakeshore where the magnificent villas, churches and abbeys, picturesque villages, castles and towers appear. For information about the timetable, the sail and berth places of ferries and hydrofoils, please contact: **Navigazione Lago di Como**.

CUISINE

The Italian cuisine offers the most at Bellagio, to satisfy every palette, a simple but savoured and varied way of cooking. Here gastronomy is important also because it intends to make people appreciate local products, such as cheese, salami, wine, rice, honey, etc. Typical dishes can be tasted in the restaurants as well as in the rustic trattorias. Dishes with lake fish, game and polenta, deriving from ancient recipes and local traditions. Fish will delight your palette, according to season and even to the daytime: bleak, perch and trout. The "carpione di pesce", for instance, is firstly fried and then pickled with aromas. On the occasion of celebrations, religious feasts, festivals dedicated to cinema, jazz, blues and classical music, you will have the chance to discover inns, osterias, and "crotti" offering simple but tasty dishes along with selected local wine.

GETTING TO BELLAGIO

By car: A9 Motorway Milano-Chiasso, exit Como. Then follow the road signs for SS 583.

By plane: Airports of Milano/Linate, Milano/Malpensa, Bergamo/Orio al Serio.

By train: Ferrovie Nord from Milano to Canzo-Asso or FS. Bus services from Como and Lecco.

By ferry: Hydrofoils and ferryboats from and towards Como. Connections to Lecco only in Summer. Shuttle Ferries also loading cars to Bellagio-Cadenabbia-Menaggio and Varenna.

INFORMAZIONI TURISTICHE:

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