



# HEDONISTIC HIKING

## The Italian Lakes - 8 Days

### Lakes, Gardens and Majestic Mountains

This tour explores three of the lakes of northern Italy: Lake Como, Lake Maggiore and the lesser-known Lake Orta. All three lakes have a magnificent backdrop of the snow-capped peaks of the Italian Alps. We stay in three hotels, two of which have are located right on the lake and have their own private jetty. The tour passes through Switzerland and we visit, and hike near, the Swiss city of Locarno on the north western shore of Lake Maggiore. In addition to our vehicles we use boats, cable cars and funiculars to transport us to different areas for walking. The tour starts in Milan city centre – with a guided visit to Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting of the Last Supper - and finishes at Milan Malpensa airport.

#### What is included?

- **7 nights’ accommodation** in three wonderful hotels
- **Two experienced and knowledgeable guides** who will look after your every need and bring this stunning area to life
- **All meals** including excellent wines, with the exception of dinner on Day 5 which is at your leisure
- **Gourmet picnic lunches** each day and snacks en route
- **Support vehicle**, enabling you to walk as much or as little as you please
- **Transport** in air-conditioned minibus
- **All museum entries** as per the itinerary
- Comprehensive **pre-trip information**

#### Itinerary

##### Day 1

The tour meeting place will be the [UNA HOTEL CUSANI](#) which is 700 metres from Milano CADORNA train station (also known as Stazione Nord). We would recommend guests to arrive into Milan the night before if possible. This is because we arrange our visit to the Cenacolo Vinciano - **Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Last Supper”** through a registered local guide but the actual entry time for our group on the day is often not confirmed until a few weeks before. Should it be very early in the day we would not want guests to miss it. The visit is an easy walk from the hotel. After a light lunch in a local trattoria a short drive takes us to **Como**. We stay in **Brunate**, a small hamlet above the lake. We stay for three nights in a recently renovated [Liberty-style villa](#) in the centre of the hamlet and, if we have large groups, a gorgeous [B&B](#) close by. This evening we have a welcome drink and dinner in the hotel restaurant.



## Day 2



We depart the hotel on foot and follow quiet shady paths through the woods with glimpses to Lake Como below. Pass through a few hamlets which seem to cling to the hillside and are only accessible by foot. Discover fascinating geological formations before we descend on an old stepped path down to the village of Torno on the lake from where we catch a boat back to Como. In the evening we descend by funicular to dinner in a restaurant on the shores of Lake Como. (12km/7.5 miles)

## Day 3

A challenging yet rewarding hike leads from the hotel and climbs up to the ridge of the “Triangolo Lariano” which rises to 1300m between the two southern arms of the lake. Enjoy wonderful views to the lake, the Alps and south to the plain of Milan. Lunch in a mountain refuge. In the afternoon we continue along the ridge making the most of the spectacular landscape and return to the hotel by van. Dinner this evening in the hotel restaurant once again with views of the lake below. (18km/11 miles)



## Day 4



We depart Lake Como after breakfast and drive via Lake Lugano to Locarno, an elegant Swiss city on the north west shore of Lake Maggiore. We travel by funicular and cable car high above the lake at 1250m. An easy hike on well-graded trails leads up through woods to emerge above the treeline at Cimetta. Descend to an alpine restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon a short walk takes us back to the cable car and we descend to the lake. A pretty drive along the

west side of Lake Maggiore leads to the village of Pallanza where we stay in the luxurious Grand Hotel Majestic on the shores of the lake. Dinner in the hotel restaurant. (7km/4.4 miles)

## Day 5

A relaxing day today, we take a private boat to Isola Bella for a guided visit of the sumptuous seventeenth-century villa and gardens owned by the Borromeo family. Leisurely degustation lunch at a lakeside restaurant on Isola Pescatore, another of the Borromeo islands. We return to the hotel by boat and the rest of the day is completely at leisure. Stroll the gardens of Villa Taranto, a short walk from the hotel, or just relax and absorb the serene atmosphere of the hotel. This evening you are free to stroll into town for an aperitif, enjoy a light dinner in a local trattoria or just unwind over a glass of wine in the gardens of the hotel overlooking the lake.



## Day 6



A short funicular ride takes us from lakeside Stresa to 800m from where we start our hike. Climb up on a well-graded trail to the summit of Monte Mottarone at 1491m from where we are rewarded with 360° views encompassing lakes Orta, Maggiore and beyond. Enjoy a picnic on the slopes of the summit before descending on small trails past remote hamlets and farms to the village of Armeno at 550m. Continue by minibus to Lake Orta where we stay on the lake in the

luxurious four star Hotel San Rocco. Dinner in a delightful local restaurant this evening.  
(16.8km/10.5 miles)

## Day 7

A private boat collects us from the hotel jetty and takes us to the tiny island of San Giulio with its beautiful frescoed basilica. We then start our walk through woods and pretty villages on the west side of the lake before descending to the lake shore at Pella where our boat collects us. We then walk up to Sacro Monte to visit the evocative chapels and have lunch there before a free afternoon to explore Orta. Fabulous final dinner in the hotel restaurant overlooking the lake.  
(11km/6.8 miles)



## Day 8

Return to Milan Malpensa Airport for 10.30am. There are regular train services from here to Milan city centre.

## **Walking**

Shortest Day: 7km/4.4miles

Longest Day: 18km/11miles

There are 5 days of walking on the trip and one free day. We walk on farm and woodland tracks, mountain trails, through vineyards (which are muddy after rain) and along quiet tarmac roads. There are some long hiking days on this tour and it is one of our more challenging itineraries. We climb/descend 300-400m on most days, with an 800m ascent on Day 6. The mountain trails are rocky in places with short sections of exposed terrain on Day 3. Since some of the walking is in the mountains it is important to be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Sturdy walking boots, with good grip and ankle support, are essential. Walking poles are highly recommended, especially on steeper sections.

## **Travel in Milan**

The Malpensa Express train connects Milan Malpensa airport with the train station Cadorna/Stazione Nord. It leaves every 30 minutes from Terminal 1, takes approximately 40 minutes and costs €11 per person. There is a free bus connecting Terminals 1 and 2 at the airport which takes ten minutes. [Click here](#) for more information. A taxi from the airport into the centre of Milan will cost a minimum of €65 depending on traffic.

## **Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper**

We always have been able to visit "The Last Supper" on this tour but the allocated times for entry have varied from year to year. It is for this reason that we have recommended sleeping in Milan the night before the tour starts. Should we, for any reason beyond our control, be unable to visit this famous fresco we would arrange to visit another of Milan's stunning museums in its place.

## **Weather**

Although the weather in spring is generally mild with average temperatures in the mid 20s we hike at altitudes of up to 1500m so it is important to be prepared for sudden changes in temperature and in weather conditions.

**Dates 3rd - 10th May 2017**

**Price per person €2,895 Single Supplement €275**

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