



Provincia di Lecco



Provincia di Como



LARIONTHEROAD
on the road between Lecco and Como

Introduction

*This guide is dedicated
to bikers who have their rides in their hearts,
to bikers who are also tourists
and to bikers who love the feeling of hitting
the road. It is dedicated to bikers who are
not satisfied with just driving to the bar
and those who like riding full throttle while
enjoying the view, breathing in the smells
and savouring the feeling of being on the road.
It is for bikers who do not need to look at
their watches, because it is the sun that sets
the beat to their days,
to bikers who prefer two bends on the road
to a three lane motorway.
It is for those who enjoy biking even without
hugging each curve too tightly
and for those who have understood that
bikes are life, joy and liberty.
It is for bikers who have understood that life
is important and should not be put needlessly at risk
as well as for those who - once home
- cannot wait to be on the road again.
To all of you:*

HAVE A GOOD RIDE!



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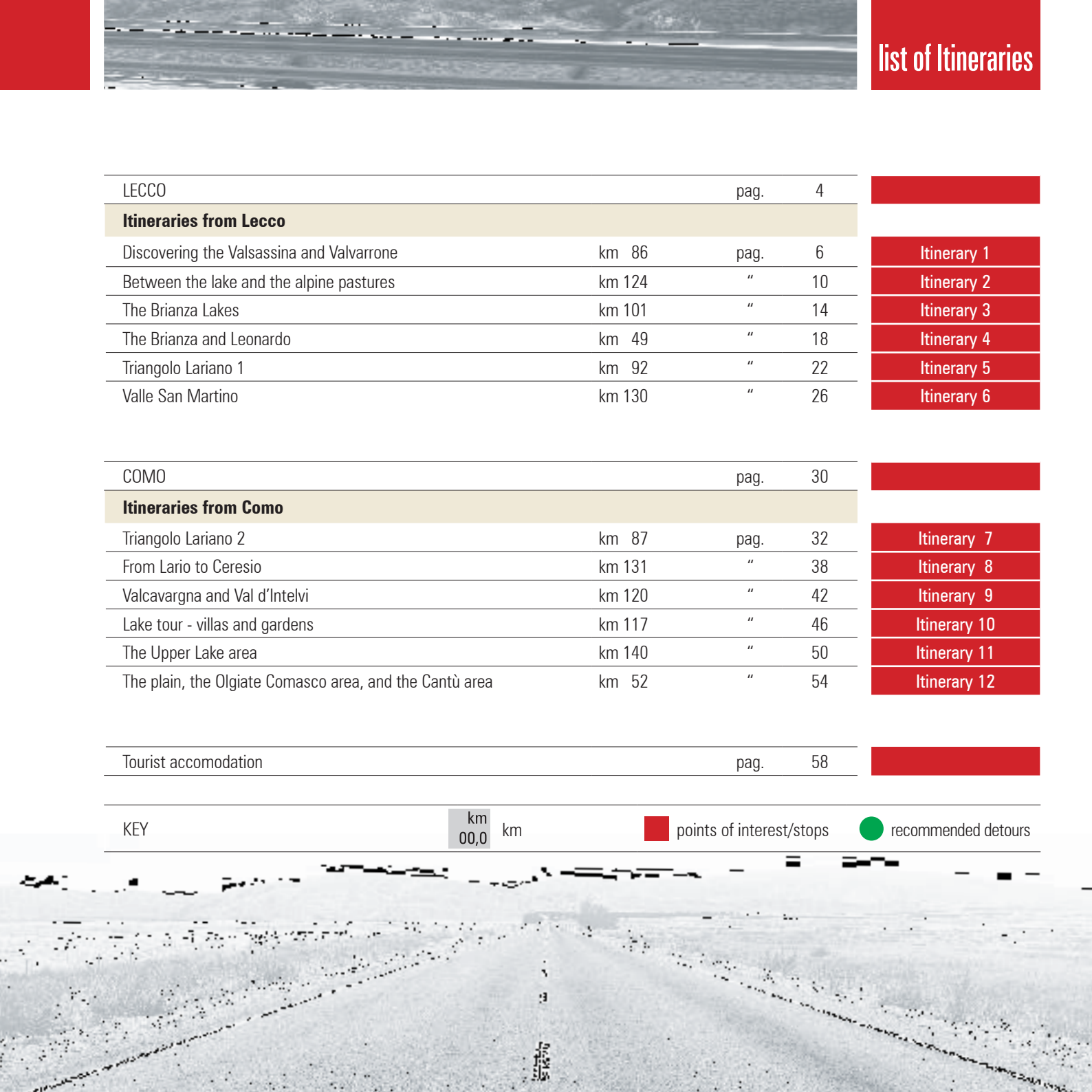
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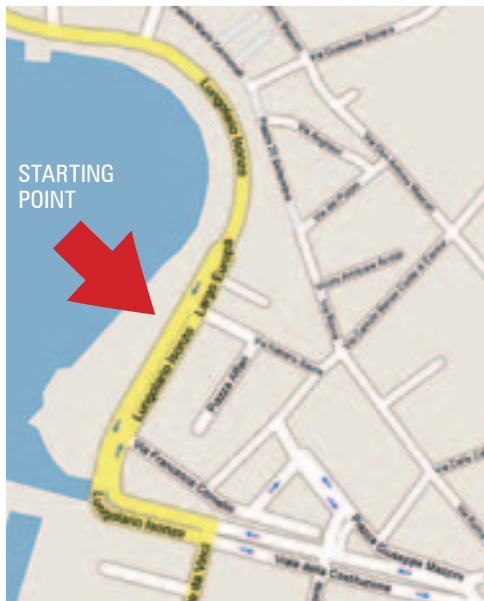
KEY	km 00,0	km	points of interest/stops	recommended detours
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The capital of the province is found south of the eastern arm of Lake Como. Lapped by the Brega and overlooked by Mount Resegone and the Grigne, it is located in a striking natural amphitheatre. Leave your bike on the lakeside promenade (reserved parking) to take a stroll in the small city centre and savour a pleasant break. The city, albeit essentially modern, has nevertheless preserved many of its ancient features, including part of the walls and the ditch which once enclosed the city (Vallo delle Mura), the bridge built by Azzone Visconti in the 14th century and the Torre Viscontea - which was part of a series of more complex fortifications put up in the mid-14th century to defend the town and were later readapted by the Sforza family in the 15th century. However, Lecco's fame is primarily literary in nature and can be traced back to the novel *The Betrothed* (*Promessi Sposi*). Here, you can visit all the places which tradition has appointed to act as the backdrop of various episodes in the book (the

fishing town of Pescarenico, the presumed houses of Lucia in Acquate and Olate, the Don Rodrigo's small castle - now a rationalist building - the castle of the Innominato in Vercurago), following the "Manzoni Itinerary" which has been signposted with a number of signs.

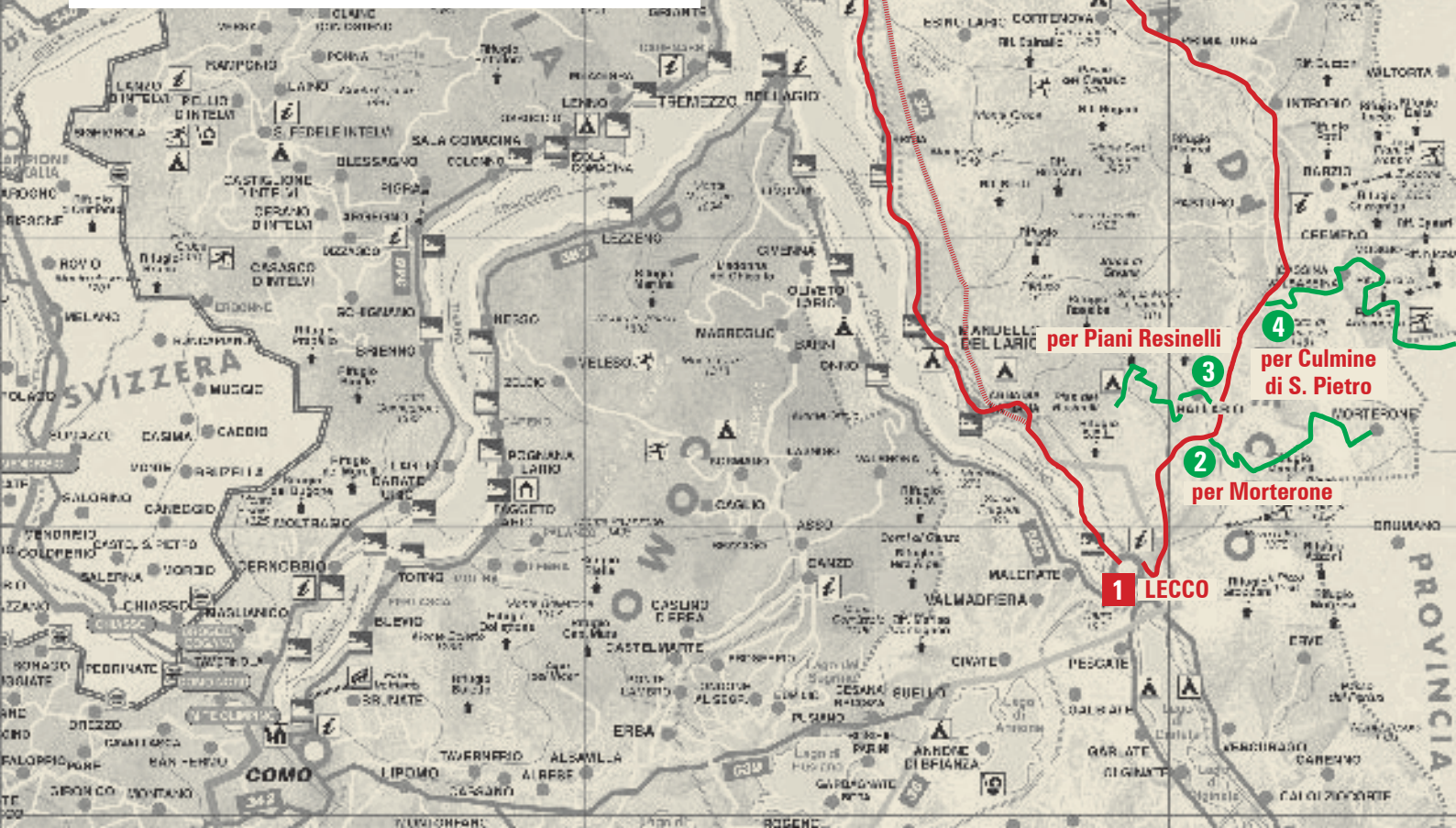
Given its size, visitors are advised to obtain a map from the Tourist Information Office (under the porch a few meters after the motorbike parking area on the lakeside promenade). A visit to the villa that once belonged to the Manzoni family - and is now the seat of the Manzoni Museum (closed on Monday) - is a must for tourists. The villa contains numerous heirlooms and manuscripts which bear witness to the life and works of the author in addition to its original furnishings, lithographs and paintings. However, Lecco is also a synonym for sport, as noted by the mountaineering feats of its Ragni and the world cup and Olympic medals won by its Rowing Club.



Exploring the Valsassina and Valvarrone

LANDSCAPE. This itinerary is particularly suited to mountain-enthusiasts on the lookout for spectacular Alpine views. The route unfolds surrounded by the Grigne and the massifs which divide the valleys of Bergamo - such as the Resegone and Pizzo dei Tre Signori - with the Legnone in the background to the north. It travels through valleys, small towns with great artisanal and dairy industries which take advantage of the ideal climate of the area to age their caprino, taleggio and robiola cheeses.

DESCRIPTION. Bends and uphill climbs, uphill climbs and bends (up to 1254 m on the Peak of San Pietro or up to the 1470 m of the Roccoli Lorla) with a single exception, which is marked by the wonderfully pleasant road from Ballabio to Taceno along the valley floor. Some of the mountains roads, such as the Valvarrone road, are decidedly narrow. The road is well signposted.



1

km
0,0

Lecco

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

Leaving Lecco behind, follow the signs to the Valsassina (we suggest you not to take the tunnel road which starts from the southern part of the city: leave it to cars since it is, "motorcycling terms", free of enjoyable views and it ends after the first detour on our itinerary). Climb up through the old outlying municipal districts of Rancio and Laorca, which still retain a whiff of the iron works that used to be found here, and make your way up to Ballabio's 650 m. There is a fork on the road for Morterone on the right after the top of the hill, before entering Ballabio. Here, 15 km of winding roads full of bends filled with Alpine landscapes under the shadow of the Resegone Massif and through the Val Boazzo await.

2

km
8,8Detour for
Morterone

MORTERONE. Located at 1,070 m and with its 33 inhabitants, the town takes pride in being the smallest town in Italy. The eastern slope of Monte Resegone - with its luxuriant, uncontaminated natural basin surrounded by valleys - acts as a backdrop to the town, which is comprised of a number of outlying municipal districts scattered throughout the territory, bearing witness to the existence of a community in this area since 1100. What is less renowned is its interest in contemporary art, which is curious in such Alpine surroundings. Since the 90s, these artworks are not housed in a close structure, but are displayed along its roads, between its homes and next to the church, making it a true museum town.

Go back to Ballabio and turn right. Once you have reached the town, you will see the sign for Piani Resinelli on the left. Travel a few hundred meters and you will find yourself on the track of the famous Ballabio-Resinelli motorcycle race. This infinite series of hairpin bends have seen bikes of all classes – some even with sidecars - have heard the roar of

3

km
9,8Detour for
Piani Resinelli

their throttles and the smell of burnt castor oil. The road's slippery surface and less than perfect asphalt are a deterrent to any foolish ambitions in terms of speed!

PIANI RESINELLI. You are at 1278 m above sea level at the foot of the Grignetta, the starting point for all climbs up the Southern Grigna. Some of its less tiring attractions include a walk through the woods of Parco Valentino and a visit to the Grigne House-Museum, and the Mining Park.

Back down in Ballabio, turn left. The road now becomes flat and almost straight. After 3 km, when you reach the bottom of the plains of Balisio, turn right and follow the signs to Cremeno/Moggio. 5 km of road with panoramic views will take you to the beginning of Prealpina Orobia SP 64 which will – in turn - take you to the Culmine di San Pietro Pass (1254 m above sea level). There are 7 km of road to be enjoyed here, with striking landscapes and a fascinating history. The route follows the ancient roads that have connected the Valsassina and the Bergamo Valleys for centuries. Retrace your steps and take a right towards Barzio at Cremeno, then either turn left and take the Valsassina SP 62 or continue travelling on the same road you took on the way out. On reaching the SP 62, turn right and travel through the Valsassina and past Pasturo, Introbio, and Primaluna until you reach Taceno, before turning right towards Margno/Casargo/Premana.

Here, the straight road comes to an abrupt end and bend-lovers will find themselves back in their natural element. Once in Premana, park the bike at the bottom of the main road near the church and take a walk amongst its narrow alleys with their mesmerizing views.

PREMANA. Clinging to the foot of Monte Legnone (2,610 m), from a distance the town resembles

4

km
12,8Detour for
Culmine
di San Pietro

5

km
39,1

Premana

a nativity scene. Formerly an ancient - perhaps - pre-roman fort, it became a flourishing iron-working centre between the 14th and 19th centuries. At first, it supplied the Milan arms industry before later supplying the naval shipyards of the Republic of Venice (the “combs” decorating the prow of each gondola used to be made in Premana). Today, it continues to keep its well-known traditions alive by producing rock climbing and agricultural tools, particularly knives and scissors.

Back on your bike again, press “start” and off we go. Travel down Premana’s main road until the fork for Pagnona/Introzzo/Dervio and begin making your way down to the lake through the Valvarrone. The road is sunny, but narrow and the trees grow so close to its edges that their leaves can make it slippery. Once past Pagnona, you will reach Tremenico. On the right, you will see the beginning of the road to the Roccoli Lorla Alpine refuge. An extremely

narrow, but entirely paved 9 km road will take you up from 750 m to 1470 m (careful with the fine gravel over the last 3/4 km).

On reaching the refuge, park your bike before taking on the next set of bends - on foot this time! This pleasant, shady former military road from Roccoli Lorla takes visitors on a one hour walk up to the peak of the Legnoncino (1,714 m above sea level) where they can enjoy a breathtaking view of the entire western arm of Lake Como and Lake Mezzola.

Invigorated by the walk, climb back down to Tremenico and back on our bike. Follow the main itinerary on the winding Valvarrone road with its wonderful views. A highly unusual view of the iron mines on the opposite bank on the left 1 km after Tremenico can be enjoyed here, and underlines the key role iron plays in the area. Dervio is just a few more bends away, past the hamlet of Vestreno.

▶ **6**
km
46,1

Detour for
Roccoli Lorla



7

km
54,4

Dervio

DERVIO. This graceful town overlooking the lake is particularly renowned among sailing enthusiasts and is dominated by the tower of the Castello di Orezza, built on a rocky outcrop. The tower is first mentioned in 1040, when it was subjected to a long and drawn out siege. The church of Santi Quirico and Giuditta located near the ancient bridge on the River Varrone dates back to the 9th century.

You are faced with a choice in Dervio: either swiftly get back to Lecco on State Road 36 (use the detour near the entry of the town, when making your way down the Valvarrone) or take Provincial Road 72 that follows the eastern arm of the lake and travels through Bellano, Varenna and Mandello (ideal for anyone who is not in a rush and would like to enjoy 30 km of curves and views). In this case, cross Dervio and take a left onto the provincial road to get to the end of your itinerary.

7

km
86,3

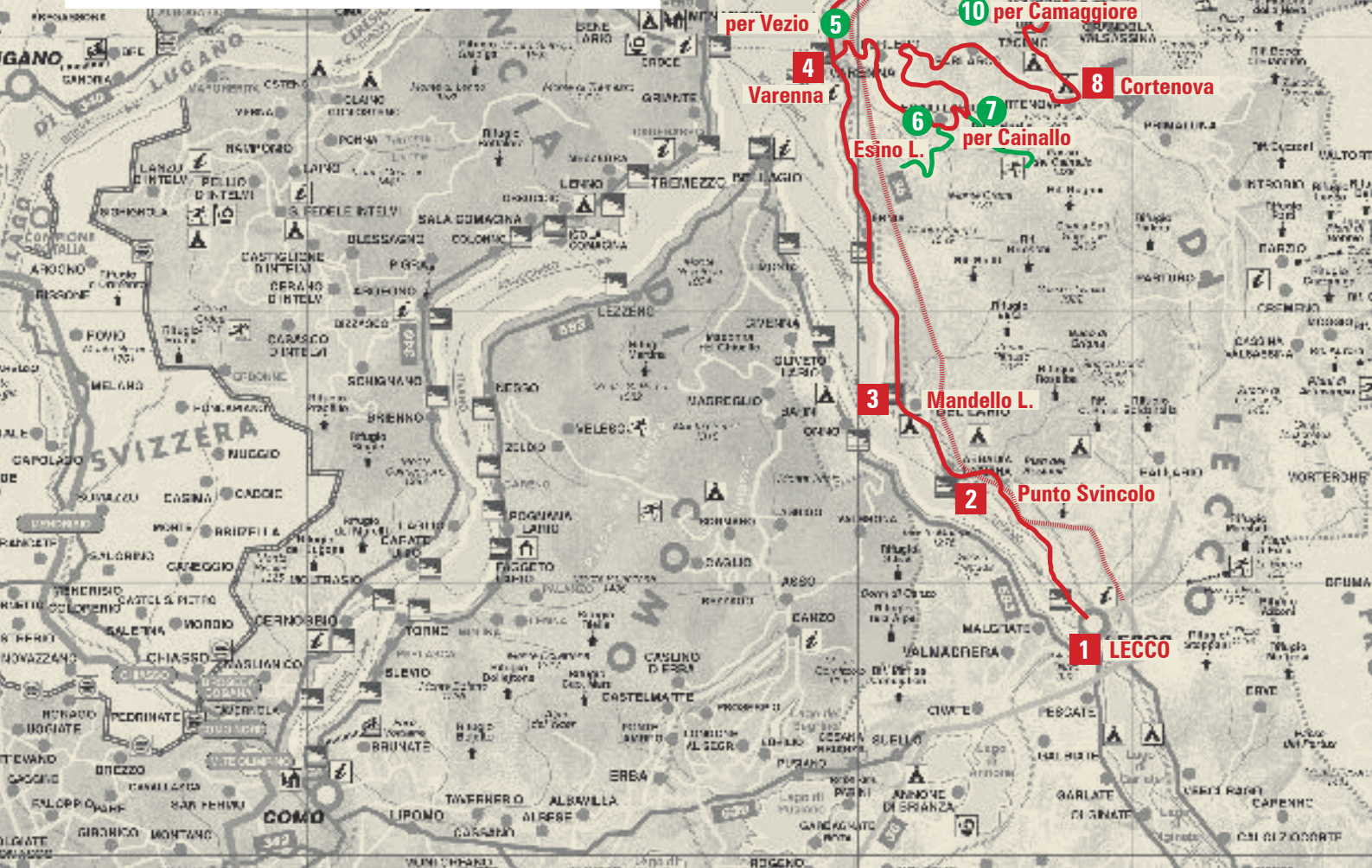
Lecco



Between the Lake and the alpine pastures

LANDSCAPE. This itinerary allows travellers to enjoy the lake and its banks as well as the gorgeous mountains which overlook it, combining cultural and historical sites with a visit to Lecco, wonderful views at 1500 m in altitude, and an interlude at Mandello's legendary Moto Guzzi plant. Lecco is our starting point.

DESCRIPTION. The route has been designed based on an ample coastal road full of medium-range bends (careful: the galleries are not well-lit). The roads climbing up to the mountains are definitely narrower and more demanding. There is a brief unpaved section of road (can be travelled by car as well) to reach Camaggiore.



1

km
0,0

Lecco

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

2

km
6,2

Detour

Leave Lecco on the SS 36 and climb up the north arm of the lake towards Sondrio. Leave the motorway at the first gallery (Abbadia-Mandello-Varenna sign) and drive past Abbadia Lariana. The town features an attractive Silk Museum (open Sunday and holidays) which is located just a few meters away from the Town Hall (after the traffic lights) and can be accessed from the provincial road. Just two quick "bends" and you are in Mandello.

3

km
9,6

Mandello Lario

MANDELLO DEL LARIO. Famed amongst bikers as the site of the legendary Moto Guzzi Plant (visits to the plant and Museum: open 3.00-4.00 pm Monday-Friday, Saturdays and Sundays with prior booking only). The town's port and lakeside promenade are also very pleasant (turn left at the traffic lights on the provincial road). The tower is visible from the charming piazza on the pier overlooking the lake. The lower part of the tower dates back to the Imperial Romanesque period, while the upper part - battlemented up until two centuries ago - is now used as a private dwelling.

If the road has been straight up until here, now it turns into a long series of bends and galleries. You will reach Fiumelatte (the river is not immediately visible, since it is surrounded by houses, so make sure you keep your eyes peeled to catch a glimpse of it) after driving past Lierna (with its famed Riva Bianca, one of the most pleasant beaches on the Lake) and the medieval hamlet of Castello. This is the shortest river in Italy and has given rise to many legends. It bubbles out of a cave and is either rushing or absolutely dry. You will find Varenna two bends further down on the road (turn left before a long tunnel).

4

km
21,6

Varenna

VARENNA. One of the most elegant and attractive towns on the lake, Varenna has many villas and gardens

which are worth a visit. These include Villa Cipressi and, in particular, Villa Monastero - built on the ruins of a Cistercian monastery of the 12th century to create a 17th century villa - which boasts 14 sumptuously furnished rooms that are open to the public. The striking and wonderfully enchanting walk along the lake's banks from the pier (follow the signs to the Ferry) is a must if you want to admire the traditional buildings which overlook the lake. The town also features a wide array of incredibly narrow, steep alleys which are full of charm.

5

km
23,7Detour for
Vezio

Go back to the piazza on the pier, turn left at the bridge and then turn right immediately afterwards, following the signs for Esino Lario. Take the road on the right to Vezio a few hairpin bends later, and carry on until you reach the town's parking area.

6

km
34,0Esino Lario
detour for
Ortenella

VEZIO. Stop the bike and take a leisurely 15 minute stroll across town to the 14th century Castle (closed in January only). Here, visitors can admire one of the most spectacular views of Lake Lario as well as observe hawks and their handlers at work from dawn to dusk during the summer months. Back in the saddle, climb up to Esino Lario at 910 m (the road is rather narrow). **You are faced with two choices here:** the first road on the right will take



▶ **7**
km
36,5

Detour for
Cainallo

you to **Ortanella** - an alpine pasture worth a stop - or, after the town, you can go to **Cainallo**, climbing up to an altitude of 1270 m. This is a good starting point for both beginners and advanced hikers (on foot!) who want to make their way towards the Grigna, an imposing massif much beloved by rock climbers through the centuries.

8
km
51,4

Cortenova

Back down from Cainallo as well as back on our main itinerary, follow the signs for Valsassina and the Agueglio Pass, where you can enjoy some particularly remarkable views. Continuing on to Parlasco and Cortenova, the road will take you to Valsassina.

▶ **9**
km
62,8

Narro
detour for
Giumello

Once in Cortenova, turn left towards Taceno and follow the signs for Margno. On reaching Casargo, turn left again after the Carabinieri station and make your way towards Indovero and Narro. Once past Narro, take the road on the right that climbs up to Giumello (careful, the road is not exactly velvety smooth).

▶ **10**
km
65,2

Sanico
detour for
Camaggiore

Once you have reached the alpine pasture here, you can enjoy a series of walks either to the top of Monte Muggio (according to the legend, the mountain was once a giant who wrapped himself up in an enormous green cloak and laid down to rest for ever) with an enchanting view over the lake, or towards the mountains cabins of Chiario, where you can purchase some of the delicious local cheeses.

Go back to the road you were travelling on previously and, once at the bottom (Narro), turn right towards Sanico. After approximately 3 km of this narrow, winding road, you will see a second road to your right which climbs up towards Camaggiore.

The road will become unpaved (easy peasy) but the view is more than worth it.

From Camaggiore, you will be able to see all of the Lario and a large slice of Lake Lugano as well, with the Monte Rosa towering in the background.

11
km
76,4

Bellano

Back on your bike and on the road, keep right at every crossing as you make your way to Vendrognò. Then, travel down to the lake until



you reach Bellano (where you can take a brief rest to visit the “Orrido” (gorge), that is, a great drop of water on the river trapped between rocks and cliffs and dotted with ladders and walks for visitors), before turning north towards Dervio, leaving the lake on your left. Corenno Plinio is just a few km past Dervio.

12

km
81,8

Corenno Plinio

CORENNO PLINIO with the battlemented walls of its striking 14th century castle - Andreani Castel - its traditional medieval centre and its narrow lanes plunging straight down into the lake the town is trully charming. Next to the castle you find the church unusually dedicated to Thomas Becket of Canterbury.

13

km
86,1

Abbazia di Piona

Carry on to Dorio. Take the turn on the left towards the Abbey of Piona, which rises above the promontory separating Lake Como from the small Lake Piona.

The church has been dated to the 11th century, although older artefacts can be found here, such as the satchel of Santa Faustina stored in its apse - which dates back to the 7th century. Visitors are invited to view the Benedictine cloisters, dating to 1275. Entrusted to the Cistercian monks today, the entire complex is certainly worth a visit. The monks also make and distil outstanding liquors and herbal infusions (which can be purchased directly from them).

Our trip is almost over. Go back to the provincial road and turn left towards Colico/Sondrio. A few downhill bends overlooking Lake Piona and you will find a sign for the Lecco/Milano motorway, which will quickly take you back to your starting point. You can either take the motorway to return to Lecco, or take the coast road and enjoy the bends and the views. If you decide on the latter, turn right instead of left after visiting the Abbey. If you are not very tired, drive on towards Colico instead and take a peek at the Forte di Fuentes and the Forte Montecchio-Lusardi (open to the public)

14

km
89,5Motorway
to Lecco

which was built between 1911 and 1914. Still perfectly intact, it features 4 revolving cannons with a 14 km range.

Why not enjoy a pleasant stop on the lively, entertaining lakeside promenade before hitting the road again? Keep an eye on speed limits on your way back to Lecco. We're back!

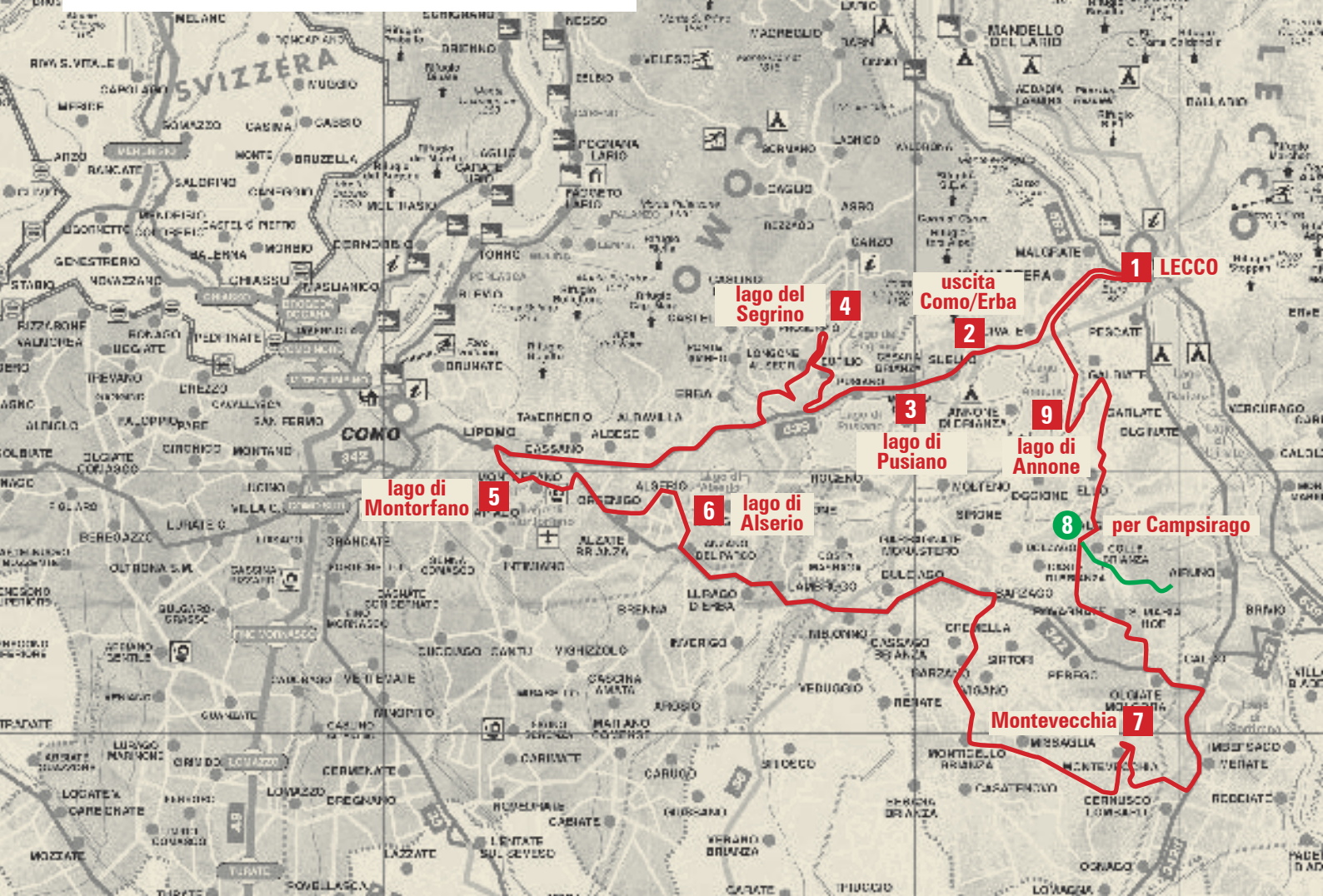
km
123,9
Lecco



The Brianza Lakes

LANDSCAPE. An itinerary which takes travellers through hills and meadows, with visits to the peaceful waters of the five lakes. This trip has been specifically designed for those who want to take it easy and enjoy travelling through reed thickets and country roads, as well as for those who love to stop and think and enjoy taking a break to savour an appetizing dish.

DESCRIPTION. Mostly level, with few bends. Wide, well-kept roads. Some heavy traffic at times. Some trafficked parts towards the end of the itinerary.



1

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

km
0,0

Lecco

Leave Lecco and cross the Ponte Kennedy which separates the lake from the River Adda. Turn right at the roundabout towards Milan. After a few km, take motorway 36 which borders the shores of Lake Annone. After a small section of straight road, take the first exit for Como/Erba. You are now entering the territories of Suello and Cesana Brianza at the foot of Monte Cornizzolo, which are famed and much beloved amongst hang gliding-enthusiasts (the international championships are held here), before reaching Pusiano.

2

km
9,8

Motorway exit
Como/Erba

3

LAGO DI PUSIANO. Also known as Eupili, the lake is fed by the River Lambro which - in the area immediately north of the lake - takes on the name of Lambrone. The beauties of the lake are sung by Vincenzo Monti and Giuseppe Parini, who were born in the town of Bosisio along its banks. This is most probably the most attractive of the five lakes of the region. With its glacial origins, it has a depth of approximately 30 meters. The entire basin is part of the Valle del Lambro Natural Park and is therefore protected. The small Isola dei Cipressi (private property) is reflected in the waters just a short distance from the bank. Once densely populated by wild rabbits, once saw the presence of a lake-dwelling village from the Neolithic period (a few piles from the lake-dwellings can be admired in the Erba's Museum). Towards the end of the 18th century, the painter Giovanni Segantini moved to Pusiano for long periods of time, drawing his inspiration for some of his works here. The lake is also renowned for its specialty dish: perch fillet risotto (unmissable!!).

km
13,6

Lake Pusiano

Continue on your journey towards Erba. After a few hundred meters, turn right towards Eupilio/Canzo/Lake Segrino.

4

km
18,9

Lake Segrino

LAKE SEGRINO. Less than 2 km in length, it is considered to be the least polluted lake in Europe,

thanks to its completely underground sources. Leave your bike and take a stroll on the 5 km walking and cycle path surrounding it, immersed amidst the peace and greenery of the area. Many artists have remained fascinated by this small lake - from Parini who compared it to an emerald because of the colour of its waters, to Ippolito Nievo, Antonio Fogazzaro and Carlo Emilio Gadda, who used to stay at Villa Gadda in Longone al Segrino and who endowed it with the original name of See grün, or "Green sea" in German.

It is now time to switch on your engine again. Make your way towards Erba, either passing through Longone al Segrino or taking the road to Eupilio again. On reaching state road 639, turn right and follow the signs to Como. Travel past Albese con Cassano and keep going until the first roundabout in Lipomo. Here, take the exit on your left onto provincial road 28 to Montorfano.

5

km
33,3

Lake
Montorfano

LAKE MONTORFANO. This is the smallest lake on our itinerary and has a perimeter of approximately 2.5 km. Less than 7 m in depth, the lake is fed by a number of underground springs and shares its emissary with the Roggia Molinara. Surrounded by luxuriant vegetation, it is adorned with beautiful water lilies during the summer. The nearby town has, unfortunately, lost the vast majority of its medieval features. However, a number of villas remain and are endowed with a certain degree of artistic value, such as Villa Barbavara (only visible from the lake) in addition to its 16th century piazza and the small church of S. Giovanni Evangelista.

Back on your bike, leave Montorfano and take the Como-Bergamo state road 342 on your right towards Bergamo. Turn left after a few hundred meters and travel towards Orsenigo/Alserio.

6

km
38,8

Lake Alserio

LAKE ALSERIO. The lake has a perimeter of 5.4 km and a depth of 8 meters. Rich in perches, pikeperches, bleaks and tenches, the lake has been subject to a noticeable proliferation of algae which prevent other

aquatic life forms from obtaining enough oxygen. With its striking views, the lake is dominated by the town of Alserio, where the church of S. Clemente with its 16th century facade and slender bell tower and villa Adelaide (now known as Villa Cramer) are found.

From Alserio, take the road to Anzano del Parco. The origins of this town can be traced back to the year 920, although all that is left of its fortified castle is the tower found at the entrance of the town. Special mention must be made of the Chapel of the Lazzaretto built during the plague of 1575 near the spot where plague victims were buried. Back on state road 342 to Bergamo, keep going until you pass the crossing with Milan-Lecco motorway 36. After 6 km and once you have passed the underpass for Bevera, turn right towards Milan/Barzanò on provincial road 51. 800 m after the roundabout, take the road for Monticello/Casatenovo/Milan. This is a wonderful drive, taking bikers past the beautiful hills of the

Brianza (on the right you can see the tomb of Luciano Manara - hero of the Risorgimento). Once in Monticello, take the exit for Missaglia/Merate at the roundabout (provincial road 54). You will find a set of traffic lights after driving for approximately 5.5 km immersed in the green countryside. Turn left for Montev ecchia/Sirtori and take the steep uphill road to reach the hill where you can park your bike.

7

km
66,3

Montev ecchia

MONTEVECCHIA. Seat of the Regional Park of Montev ecchia and the Valle del Curone. The view from its altitude of 479 m is breathtaking, and a walk on the path which runs around the top of the wooded hill is well worth it. The path takes visitors to the 17th century aedicules on the Via Crucis and up to the Shrine of the Beata Vergine del Carmelo, where you can admire a number of beautiful 16th century frescos, dating back to the same period as the wood intaglio - known as the Throne of the Madonna - kept in the sacristy. Continuing on your



stroll around the top of the hill, you will find Villa Alberoni, with its wonderful views (on clear days you can see the Madonnina on top of the Duomo in Milan!). The hill of Montev ecchia is chiefly famous for the production of traditional cold meats and salamis as well as “robiolini” cheese, local red and white wines and - something which is less well known - excellent rosemary.

Unfortunately, we cannot leave Montev ecchia through the park because the road to Sirtori is closed. Therefore, turn back for 800 m and take the downhill road on your left at the Church of S. Giovanni Battista. After 1.5 km, take a left onto the provincial road. Keep going until the traffic lights. Then, turn left towards Como/Lecco/Bergamo and continue travelling in the direction of Lecco until you reach Calco. At the roundabout, turn left again towards Como (you are on the Como-Bergamo 342). After 2 km, turn right at the roundabout for Colle Brianza/S. Maria Hoè. Ride up this gorgeous road with its many bends (careful: some are tight!) As soon as you get past the hill in Colle Brianza in the outlying municipal district of Piecastello, take a right and make your way to Campsirago. A 4/5 km ride on this road with its beautiful views amidst the woods will take you to this ancient and attractive rural hamlet located at 670 m above sea level, at the foot of Monte Genesio. Once back from Campsirago to Piecastello, turn right to Nava/Ravellino you'll see in front of you the Resegone and the Grigna, on the left far away the Monte Rosa Massif and the Brianza Lakes in the background. Keep going until you reach Galbiate, where you will find the Monte Barro nature path. In exchange for a few hours walk, it gifts visitors with striking views of Lake Annone and the Corni di Canzo peaks. At the Galbiate roundabout (near the cemetery), take the road down to Oggiono/Civate/Milan. After another 3.5 km, you will find another roundabout. This time, turn right towards Civate/Lecco. You will reach Lake Annone after 1.5 km (entrance on the left).

8

km
81,0

Detour for
Campsirago

9

km
93,3

Lake Annone

ANNONE LAKE. Actually, the lake is made up of two basins (Oggiono and Annone) joined together by a small passage at the end of the Isella peninsula. The lake is fed by small, underground sources and a few little torrents. Its only emissary is the River Torto, which flows into Lake Lecco. The lake perimeter is partly surrounded by a pleasant path through woods and reed thickets. Annone Brianza overlooks the lake. The town was destroyed by Gian Giacomo Medici (known as Medeghino) in 1527. It overthrew the yolk of Spanish dominion in the 17th by the strength of its own inhabitants. The town is currently the subject of a pilot study for the renaturalization of part of the Province of Lecco. The town of Oggiono, with the parish church of Santa Eufemia and the Battistero of San Giovanni Battista are also worth a visit. The church has a single nave, and was first constructed in the 11th century. It was then completely refurbished in the 17th century, but still contains a number of paintings from different historical periods, such as a fresco by Andrea Appiani and a polyptych of ten panels by Marco D'Oggiono - a famous painter from the Leonardo School. This work is considered to be one of the most important pieces of art in the Brianza area. The nearby baptistery was not touched by the 17th century refurbishment, and remains one of the most significant Romanesque monuments of its kind in Lombardy, as well as being one of the best preserved.

km

100,8

Lecco

Leaving Lake Annone behind, take the provincial road to Lecco, 7.5 km away.



The Brianza area and Leonardo

LANDSCAPE. An itinerary amidst plains and hills, with striking views of the Brianza area and glimpses of the River Adda, endowing travellers with the feeling of always being hover between nature expression and man signs while travelling on an ideal route for all those who want to enjoy both bike rides and strolls on foot.

DESCRIPTION. Short route. The road is almost completely, level, straight, wide and fairly well-trafficked. A few bends and an uphill climb of a few km are found at the beginning, while the rest of the route travels downhill.



1

km
0,0

Lecco

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

Leave Lecco and cross Ponte Kennedy which separates the lake from the River Adda before turning left towards Milan on road 56. After the traffic light on Ponte Azzone Visconti, take a left onto the opposite bank to enjoy the first, picturesque view of the itinerary. This landscape was a favourite amongst 19th century painters in the area. The town of Pescarenico, with its houses and fishing boats, was renowned for its convent of Franciscan Friars which inspired Alessandro Manzoni. At the second roundabout, turn right for Galbiate. The road climbs quickly uphill, with a view of Lake Garlate - a natural subdivision of the Lecco arm of Lake Como.

2

km
6,1

Galbiate

GALBIATE. "Terra lieta di cortesi abitatori e ricca di memorie" [Merry land of courteous inhabitants and rich memories] (Cesare Cantù). Galbiate can

trace its roots back to prehistoric times, as can be seen by the cupelliform holes on a number of erratic rocks on Monte Barro. Inhabited during Romanesque times, it was later taken over by the Ostrogoths and Lombards, although news on the inhabitants of the area remains extremely vague and fragmented. Visitors are provided with a number of interesting sights such as Villa Bertarelli in the middle of the town, with its monumental entry way, the clock tower, the park (a terrace overlooking the Brianza lakes) and, above all, the Park of Monte Barro. Leave your bike in the parking lot and take a stroll. The whole of the nature path - with its outstanding views over Lake Annone, the Brianza and the peaks of the Corni di Canzo - takes approximately two and a half hours. The park is recognised at an EU level. That is, it is one of the European areas deemed to be of the greatest importance to safeguarding nature. A number of archaeological sites are also located here and include a Gothic castle. The remains of its walls and towers can be glimpsed on the last part



of the path which takes visitors to the Hermitage of Monte Barro, where the only road through the park ends. Its outer wall, known locally as the “muraiö”, surrounds the entire site and boasts three towers on three different hills. The cliffs on the rocky walls are particularly popular amongst free-climbers.

After this nature-archaeological stop, it is time to hop on your bike again and move off towards Colle Brianza. This is the most beautiful part of the itinerary (in biking terms): a gorgeous road surrounded by greenery with a few bends and a spellbinding view of Lake Annone on your right, with the Monte Rosa massif towering in the background. Once in Colle Brianza in the outlying municipal district of Piecastello, take a left to Campsirago. A 4/5 km ride on this road with its wonderful views amidst the woods will take you to this ancient, yet attractive rural hamlet at 670 m above sea level at the foot of Monte Genesio. Once back in Piecastello from

Campsirago, turn left and start making your way down this road full of bends (careful: some are tight!) with its magical views. Once in S. Maria Hoè, turn left towards Bergamo and take the Como-Bergamo 342. You will come across the Calco roundabout after 2 km. Turn left towards Lecco and follow the signs on the right for Imbersago/Madonna del Bosco.

3

km
28,8

Santuario
della Madonna
del Bosco

SANTUARIO DELLA MADONNA DEL BOSCO.

This is one of the most popular and celebrated shrines of the Brianza area. Built on an octagonal plan, this solemn shrine was inaugurated in 1646, before later being expanded and decorated. In 1755, the area in front of the Shrine was decorated with a beautiful stone statue of the Virgin Mary (a curious fact about the area at the foot of the statue: it features a small rose bush which flowers all year around). The Scala Santa (349 steps) dates back to 1824 and was completely rebuilt after being destroyed by a landslide in 1977 and 1981. The majestic 4 m tall statue of the Virgin is a gift bearing



witness to Pope John XXIII's devotion. Thanks to him the Shrine is a Romanesque Basilica.

Back on your bike, make sure you snap down your visor quickly, because you will be in Imbersago before you know it.

4

km
30,1

Imbersago

IMBERSAGO. Overlooking the banks of the River Adda, the town is like a 500 year journey back in time. It contains the only fully functioning example of a ferry build based on one of Leonardo's designs. This ferry connects the town to Villa d'Adda, joining the Province of Lecco and the Province of Bergamo. Leonardo da Vinci, taking advantage of parallelogram law, decided he could build ferries which did not need to be powered by either man or beast, but which could travel the river on their own. He developed his model on the Adda, where he lived during part of his life. Supported by a steel cable, the ferry can carry up to 100 people and 5 cars (even bikes) from one bank to the other, and is manoeuvred by a single person. However, it is Imbersago itself which is the focus point of a wonderful walk on the western bank of the Adda. Here, you can decide whether to turn north (Lecco) and perhaps carry on until Garlate, 15 km further down (you can turn back before if you want!) or go south as far as your legs can carry you. The scenery is absolutely splendid, alternating wild landscapes - such as the rocky massifs known as the "Tre Corni", which can be seen in Leonardo's painting of the Virgin of the Rocks - with manmade works such as the Naviglio di Paderno (another of Leonardo's creations) or the old, and monumental hydroelectric power plants and the bridge of Paderno-Ponte San Michele. Designed employing the same technology used to build the Eiffel Tower, it was constructed in 1889 using a parabolic arch with a height of 80 m and a length of 266 m.

km
49,4

Lecco

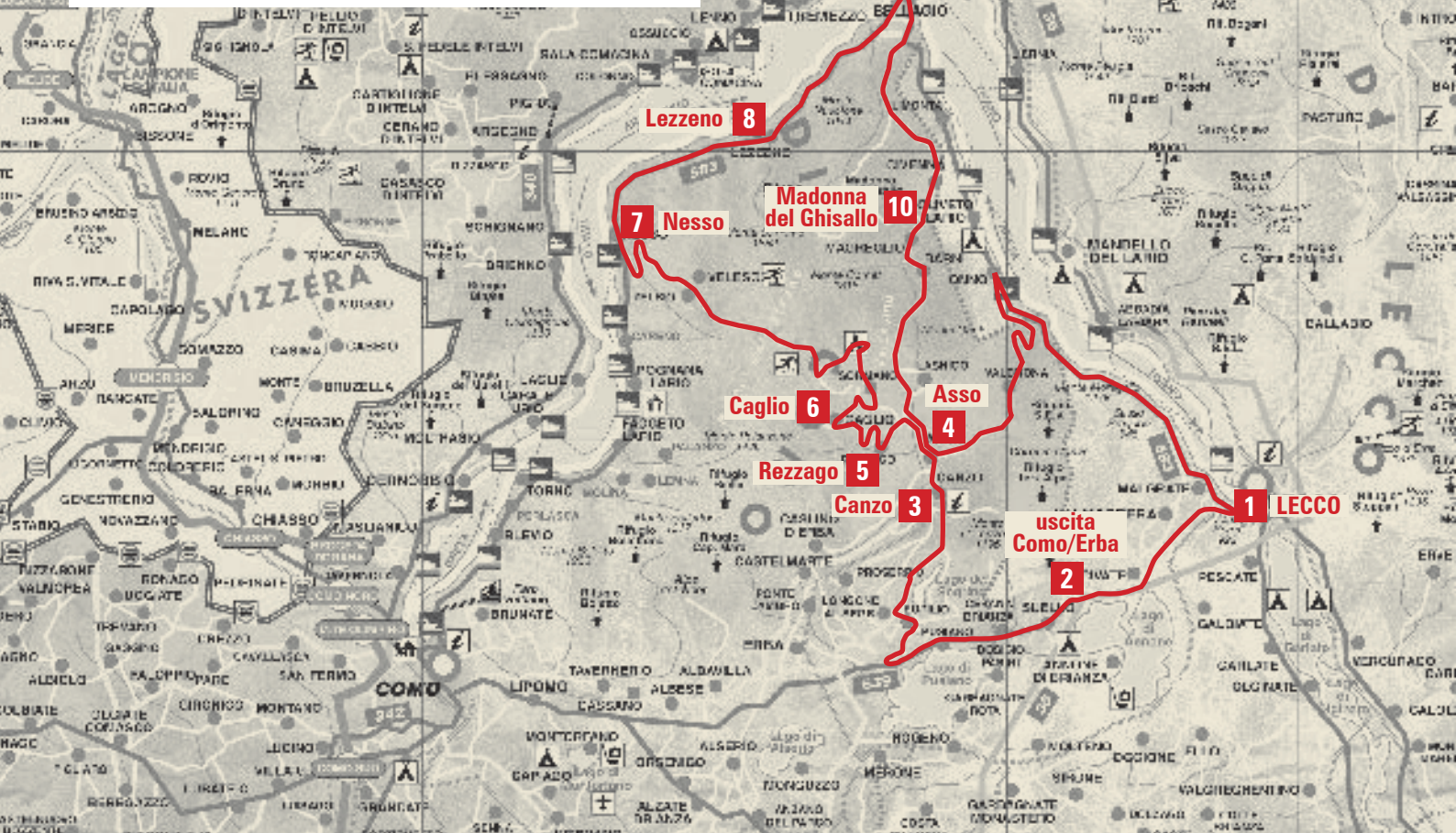
Now for some well-deserved rest on your bike! Leave Imbersago and head towards Brivio/Airuno, following the signs for Lecco (better than the Calco, Airuno, and Lecco route).



Triangolo Lariano 1

LANDSCAPE. The area between Lecco, Como and Bellagio is known as the Triangolo Lariano. It is run through by three tourist roads: the Lariana (coastal road 583 between Como and Bellagio), the Valassina (which cuts across the triangle between Bellagio and the Brianza lakes) and provincial road 583 (which joins Lecco and Bellagio). Our itinerary takes us on each of these roads, through charming resorts on the hills, which overlook the lake from wonderful lookout points. Take a plunge into the exclusive town of Bellagio, the pearl of Lake Como.

DESCRIPTION. Mostly narrow and almost always “bendy,” this itinerary features some highly challenging roads, particularly the inner mountain roads that can climb up to quite a height. Good road conditions overall. Take special care while on the 583 (Lecco-Bellagio).



1

km
0,0

Lecco

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

Leave Lecco and travel across the Ponte Kennedy which separates the lake from the River Adda. Turn right at the roundabout in the direction of Milan. Travel a few km before taking motorway 36 which runs along the shores of Lake Annone. After a small tract of straight road, take the first exit for Como/Erba. You are now entering the territories of Cesana Brianza at the foot of Monte Cornizzolo, renowned and much beloved amongst hang gliding-enthusiasts (international championships are held here). Pusiano is just a short hop, skip and jump away. At the traffic lights in front of the town, turn right and follow the signs for Canzo as the road starts climbing uphill providing travellers with great views of the morainic lakes of the area. A truly tiny lake is hidden behind the next few bends: Lake Segrino. Follow its left shore to reach Canzo.

3

km
17,3

Canzo

CANZO. This renowned tourist destination is characterized by a number of noble villas from the 18th and 19th century. Tourists to the area are invited to admire the neoclassical Teatro Sociale built in the 19th century to entertain the wealthy Milanese families that used to come and spend their summer in Canzo, and the parish church of S. Stefano, which is one of the best example of late-Baroque architecture in the territory. One of the specialties of the area are the "noccolini". Similar in shape to little amarettos, they have a completely different flavour. After leaving Canzo, take the Valassina to Asso.

4

km
19,1

Asso

ASSO. The town is characterized by traditional winding lanes and porticoed houses. The 17th century parish church of S. Giovanni Battista, the medieval tower and the Vallategna waterfall - with a drop of approximately 30 m created by the River Foce as it falls into the River Lambro - are all worth a visit.

Leave Asso and take the Valassina state road 41 in the direction of Bellagio. Turn left at Maglio di Asso and follow the signs to Rezzago/Caglio/Sormano.

5

km
22,2

Rezzago

REZZAGO. Surrounded by chestnut trees, this town is the ideal starting point for hikes (on foot!) to admire the "funghi di terra" (erosion pyramids). These natural monuments made of compact earth supporting ancient erratic rocks truly resemble giant mushrooms.

Continue travelling in the direction of Caglio on the uphill road, climbing up to 803 m in altitude.

6

km
23,6

Caglio

CAGLIO. Traditional mountain town and home to a real gem of Romanesquesque art: the church of Santa Valeria with a greek-cross plan (in the Municipality of Sormano). Special mention must also be made of the Shrine of the Madonna di Campo just a few minute drive outside the town. With Sormano and Rezzago, Caglio is part of the region of the Monti di Sera.

Once you have reached Sormano, we recommend taking a trip to the Colma (relax... by bike!) to the Capanna Stoppani (1100 m



above sea level), an astronomical observatory which is particularly renowned for its position). Back down to the Earth, straddle your bike and make your down towards Nesso through the relaxing Pian del Tivano - a green basin caressed by the breezes of the lake that have given it its name and which, in the past, contributed to the legends of castles and queens in the area. You will see Veleso after passing Zellbio. Both of these small, traditional mountain towns are good starting points for hikes in the area (on foot!). A series of gorgeous bends will take you to Nesso.

7

km
40,7

Nesso

NESSO. Is a picturesque town at the mouth of the homonym valley overlooking the lake. The River Nosé and the River Tuf meet here, to form a waterfall that tumbles down into the gorge. An ancient bridge crosses the waterfall. The boat which takes tourists to visit the gorge passes right under this bridge. This awe-inspiring landscape has been the subject of several ancient prints.

8

km
47,0

Lezzeno

Take the 583 towards Bellagio, cutting across the town of Lezzeno.

LEZZENO. It is a pity that bikes are not “amphibious”. In fact, with its many waterways, the territory provides wonderful views on boating trips, where the white cliffs of Grosgalle and the cave of the Bulberi can be admired. Lezzeno is famed for its “missultitt” as well. This is made by drying a river fish (twaite shad) in the sun and pressing it with salt in so-called “missolte” before barbecuing them.

The coastal road is filled with medium and wide bends and takes travellers to the pearl of Lake Como: Bellagio.

9

km
54,4

Bellagio

BELLAGIO. The town awaits us, fully aware of its beauty with its tourism, shopping, gardens, villas and more. Riding on a wave of emotions, explore the alleys and byways of the city, savouring an ice-cream, taking a relaxing break and feasting your



senses on its colours and perfumes. The gardens of the majestic Villa Serbelloni and Villa Melzi are open to the public. Or, if you prefer, take a rest on one of the benches and watch the tourists, dazzled by the beauty of this ancient town while they get off boats and fall in love with it, much like Pliny the Younger and – later - the Gothic kings, Theodoric, Ludovico il Moro, Leonardo, the Empress of Russia, Francis I Emperor of Austria, Stendhal and Liszt.

Take the Valassina from Bellagio and climb up the mountain (careful, make sure you are not following the signs for Lecco!). Turn left at Guello towards the town of Civenna, which stretches out on an enchanting plain overlooking the Lecco arm of the Lario. You will find Magreglio and the Shrine of the Madonna del Ghisallo just a few km further on.

10

km
65,3

Magreglio-
Madonna
del Ghisallo

MADONNA DEL GHISALLO. Turn off your engine and pay tribute to another type of bike. In fact, this shrine is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, patron saint and protector of cyclists. The small church here contains imposing gifts and donations, made by some of the greatest cycling champions in the world. The Museo del Ciclismo (Cycling Museum) with its rich historical archives, features a collection of jerseys and bicycles owned by some of the greatest champions of the sport (Bartali, Coppi, Mercks, Moser) as well as an electronic system which provides simulated cycling race routes. On 31 May 2006, Pope Benedict the XVI blessed its last rock - which can be seen in the main hall of the museum - from the Vatican, with the message "Omnia Vincit Amore" (Love conquers all). A superb view over the Lecco arm of the lake, the Grigne and the central part of the lake can be enjoyed from the Romeo lookout point. Some bikers may also be interested in the hike from Magreglio to Monte Forcella (left fork near the Madonna del Ghisallo).

Back on the Valassina, travel through Barni (small town located in a stunning basin dominated by a medieval castle which is almost completely

hidden from view, even for bikers) and carry on towards Asso. At this point, turn left on the Valbrona road and climb down to Onno. Now, take provincial road 583 - narrow and winding at this point, almost as if it were carved into the rocks straight above the lake. Careful on the bends!! Malgrate with its old town centre fanning out along the banks of the lake and narrow roads towards the overhanging rock is found approximately 11 km further down the road. Just a few more km and the trip is over.

km
92,3
Lecco



Valle San Martino

LANDSCAPE. Working its way from the bottom, the itinerary climbs up and down the Provinces of Lecco and Bergamo. In fact, most of the road we travel is mountainous, and takes visitors to the striking hill terraces which climb up the Peaks of Resegone and Tesoro amidst a succession of valleys and plateaus dotted with old farm houses.

DESCRIPTION. There are an abundance of bends once you leave provincial road 639 (even on narrow roads, however, the roadbed here is good and is rarely damaged), before climbing up to 1254 m above sea level at the Culmine di San Pietro and making your way back down to the valley on another road full of... bends.



1

km
0,0

Lecco

LECCO. Starting point: motorbike parking area on the Lungolaro Isonzo at the start of the promenade.

From the starting point in Lecco overlooking the lake, turn left towards Bergamo. Drive up Corso Martiri at the 3rd set of traffic lights. The road will change name and become Corso C. Alberto. After the Carabinieri station turn right at this point, and then turn right again. Then, turn left at the second crossing to reach Pescarenico.

2

km
2,5

Pescarenico

PESCARENICO. This time, break your journey here to explore this area of Lecco. This former fishing village became famous for its convent of Franciscan Friars, which was the home of Manzoni's Fra' Cristoforo. Moreover, the view of the village from the lake was a favoured subject amongst artists during of the 19th century. Literature and art aside, the streets of the town are wonderful for a quick stroll, allowing visitors to catch glimpses of the Adda from the sides of its charming piazza.

Back on your bike, it is time to leave Pescarenico. Take Corso Carlo Alberto towards Bergamo (keep going straight ahead at each roundabout) and you will reach Maggianico.

3

km
4,5

Maggianico

MAGGIANICO. In the 19th century this area of the city was a much favoured summer destination amongst writers of the Scapigliatura wave, and particularly amongst musicians such as Ponchielli, Catalani and Gomes. The latter's villa is found on provincial road 639. Built by the architect Bolla, the villa is now owned by the city and is surrounded by a large garden which is open to the public.

Leaving Maggianico behind, continue travelling on the 639 to Vercurago.

4

km
7,6

Vercurago

VERCURAGO. Immerse yourself once again in the tale of The Betrothed. In fact, Vercurago is identified as the Innominato's town. That is, it is the town of

Bernardino Visconti, scoundrel and villain, who was rendered immortal by Manzoni. His palace - or better - the remains of the "towered manor house," is not in Vercurago, but in its outlying municipal district of Somasca (detour for the "Manzoni Itinerary" at km 7.6) straight above the Lake Garlate and enjoys a spellbinding view of Lake Lecco. Here, tourists can also admire the Shrine of San Girolamo (which contains his sepulchre), the Scala Santa and, after a brief walk, the Shrine of Valletta, a small church which presbytery wall rests directly against the rock.

Once in Calolziocorte, take the road to the Shrine of Santa Maria del Lavello (provincial road on the right towards the Adda). The shrine was most probably built over the ruins of a church next to a castle dating back to the year 1000. Consecrated in 1490, it was used as a lazaret house during the plague.

Turn left at the traffic lights in the centre of town (8.6 km) and head towards Rossino, which is approximately 2 km away. Another of the Innominato's hypothetical castles stands here. This was a fortified tower which has now been incorporated into a manor house. The villa was slowly amplified and extended through the centuries, and is now one of the most attractive buildings in town. From Rossino - with its curves and hairpin bends - climb up to Carenno (640 m), nestled amidst a circle of mountains. Carry on to Sopracornola (a true panoramic terrace over Lake Garlate, the Adda and the plains) and make your way down, following the signs to Calolziocorte.

Drive past Lorentino and Favirano; then, take a left on provincial road 177.

After S. Gottardo, turn left on road 179 to Torre de' Busi. Once past the town, climb up to its outlying municipal districts on road 179. Valcava is a popular tourist destination both during the summer and winter (a wonderful starting point for hikes), where visitors can

enjoy great views over the Brianza, the Pianura Padana and the Bergamo area. Now, take provincial road 22 to Valsecca, the ancient seat of the Venetian gendarmerie in this boarder area with the Dukedom of Milan. Continue travelling on the provincial road until you reach the town, which is often named as the capital of the valley: Sant'Omobono. Take the exit for the town and turn right approximately 500 m after the AGIP petrol station to reach the Shrine of the Madonna della Cornabusa.

5

km
54,4

Santuario
Madonna
della Cornabusa

Santuario Madonna della Cornabusa. Over the centuries, the cave and its shrine have been one of the most popular destinations amongst pilgrims. The shrine is certainly striking. A stream runs inside the cave, and the air is permeated with great spiritualism.

After visiting the Shrine, get back on your bike to Sant'Omobono, then turn right to Ponte Giurino. On leaving the town, take the road which climbs up (with a hairpin bend) the mountain to the left to reach Berbenno and Laxolo. Following a series of bends on provincial road 24, turn left towards Brembilla, before taking provincial road 24 towards Gerosa. The road and its many curves and hairpin bends travels through the wonderful Val Taleggio, taking you to Vedeseta at its westernmost point. The valley has lent its name to one of the most famous cheese produced in these meadows. The taleggio cheese was once known as the "stracchino quadrato" (square soft cheese) because of its shape.

After leaving Vedeseta, take road 64-Prealpi Orobiche (careful: the road is narrow) to reach



6

km

104,6

Culmine di
San Pietro

the Passo della Culmine di San Pietro at 1254 m above sea level. Now, start making your way down the many bends, leaving the Province of Bergamo behind as you enter the Lecco area.

You have now reached Moggio (starting point of the cable railway for the Piani di Artavaggio at 1650 m above sea level, a popular summer hiking base and winter skiing destination). Carry on making your way down hill following the signs to Lecco, until you reach Cremeno. The town was the ancient capital of one of the four groups of villages the Valsassina was divided into, as can be seen by the fact the main piazza is still called Piazza del Consiglio. On leaving the town, take a left at the stop sign. You will find the road at the bottom of the valley (provincial road 62) after the Ponte della Vittoria, at the end of the downhill climb. Take this road, turning left towards Lecco. The town of Ballabio is located after the plateau (Piani di Balisio).

7

km

120,2

Ballabio

BALLABIO. One of the most important towns of the Valsassina, Ballabio is located in a level basin enclosed by the lower Grigna at the foot of Monte Due Mani. The town is home of a number of traditional industries which produce top quality dairy products, such as the famed Robiola cheese. Bikers can enjoy two (motorcycle) excursions from here: one to the Pian dei Resinelli and one to Morterone (see itinerary no. 1 "Exploring the Valsassina and Valvarrone").

We are on the home stretch. Avoid the new tunnel that takes you directly to Lecco - but which is nothing more than a series of galleries - and take the wide road instead, since it allows you to enjoy a view of the city and the lake. Once in Lecco, take the main road down, past the AGIP petrol pump on the left and follow the signs to the centre. After the third roundabout, turn right at the second set of traffic lights and follow the signs to Sondrio/Lago which will take you back to your starting point.

km

130,0

Lecco

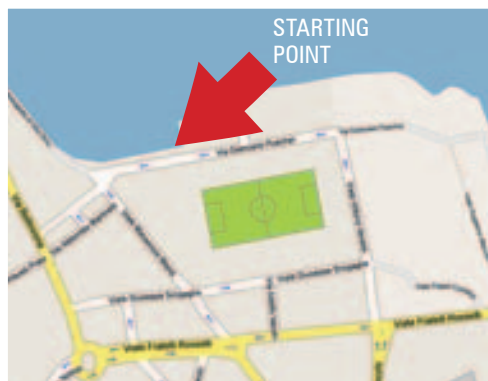




Seen from above - for example from Brunate - the city still shows obvious signs of its Romanesque "Castrum" plan even if the walls which still protect it today were rebuilt during the middle ages. This frontier town (Switzerland is just next door) plays a key role in international exchanges and enjoys a highly vivacious, cosmopolitan form of tourism. The city of silk, it is still visited by leading designers who come here to purchase fabrics for their creations. The lake promenade, Piazza Cavour, the lively streets in the centre of town which are contained in one of the largest pedestrian areas in Europe offer visitors a unique occasion to get to know the city. Piazza del Duomo solemnly overlooks the majestic complex containing the Torre Civica, the Broletto and the Cathedral - a true masterpiece by the Maestri Comacini. Not too far you can also see the neo-classical Teatro Sociale as well as Giuseppe Terragni's rationalist masterpiece, the former Casa del Fascio. Walk up Via Vittorio Emanuele to reach the Basilica di San Fedele, dedicated to Saint Fidelis martyr. The Basilica was built on the foundations of a paleo-christian church dating back to the 6th century, dedicated to Saint Euphemia. This important example of Romanesque architecture in the Lombardy region still preserves

its 10th century apse (can be seen from Via Vittorio Emanuele). Porta Torre - grandiose piece of defensive work from the 12th century - is found in piazza Vittoria. The Basilica of Sant'Abbondio is a masterpiece of the Lombard Romanesque style and is located outside the city's walls. The Basilica contains a prized cycle of frescoes from the 14th century. Alessandro Volta was born in Como, and the Tempio Voltiano found in the public gardens was dedicated to him. Before undertaking our biking itinerary, take one last stroll in the Borgo Vico (near the stadium). This walk was a great tourist attraction amongst the aristocracy from Milan in the 18th century, and as such became a "training field" for some of the most popular architects of the times. A number of awe-inspiring villas were designed during that period, including Villa Carminati Scacchi, Villa Saporiti also known as the Rotonda - a true neoclassical palace in the Lombard style - Villa Parravicini, Villa Gallia and Villa Gallietta, although the latter were built in the 17th century. Villa Olmo completes the landscape, and is the most sumptuous home in the city of Como, with its immense park, open to the public.

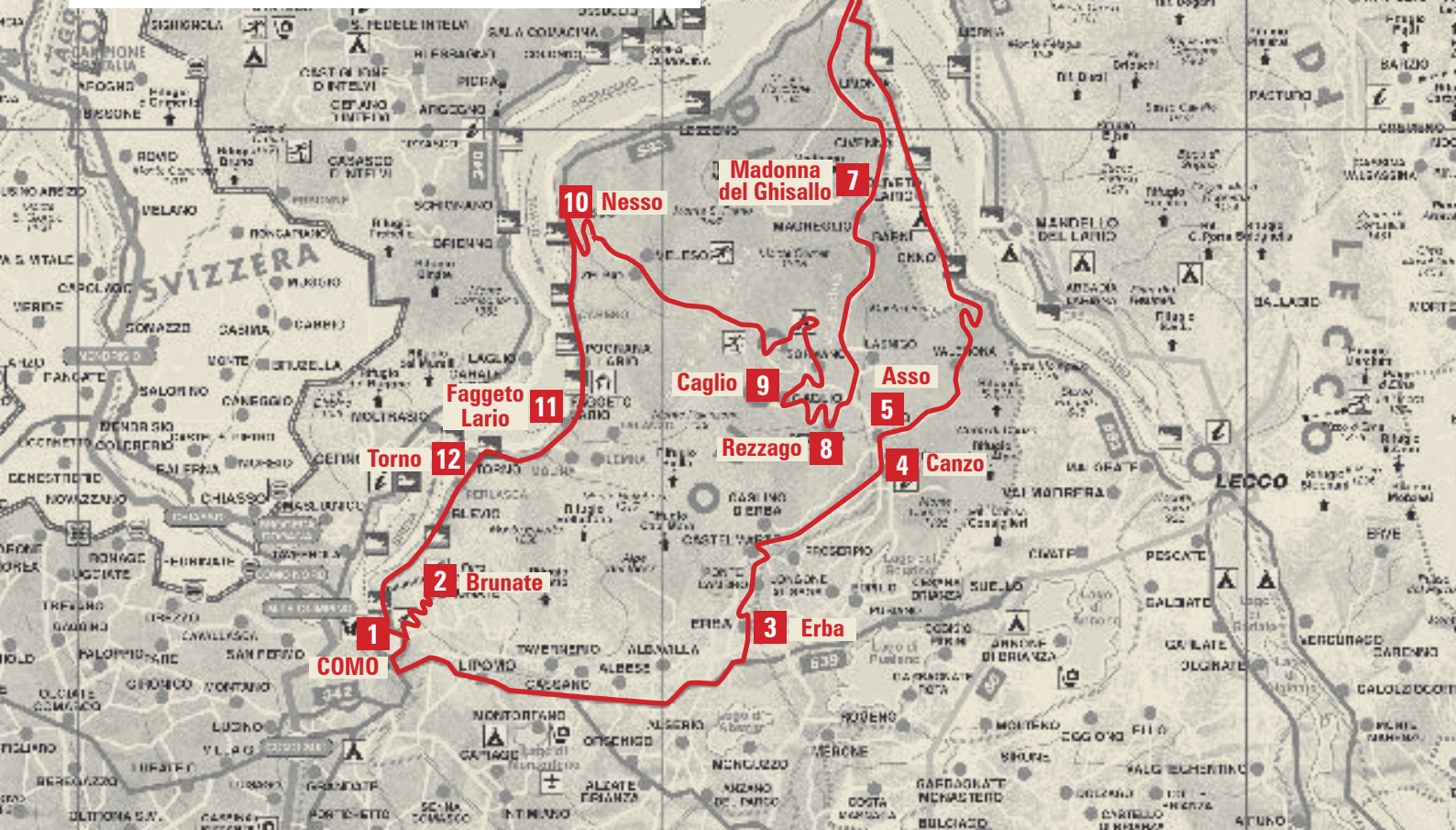
A whole day in Como is probably not enough to get to know it but the thrill of the road... calls and we have to take off for on rest of our tour.



Triangolo Lariano 2

LANDSCAPE. The area between Lecco, Como and Bellagio is known as the Triangolo Lariano. It is bisected by three tourist roads: the Lariana (coastal road 583 between Como and Bellagio), the Valassina (which cuts across the triangle and travels between Bellagio and the Brianza Lakes) and provincial road 583 (which joins Lecco and Bellagio). Our itinerary takes us on each of these roads, amidst elegant resting points halfway through the itinerary overlooking the lake from wonderful lookout points. Take a plunge into the exclusive countryside of Bellagio, the pearl of Lake Como.

DESCRIPTION. Mostly narrow and almost always “bendy,” the roads here are highly challenging, particularly the inner mountain roads that can climb up to quite a height. Good road conditions overall. Take special care while on the 583 (Lecco-Bellagio).



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia Stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

Drive away from the lake, leaving it behind and make your way up Viale Innocenzo XI. Keep left and follow the signs to Lecco. At the lights at the bottom of Via Castelnuovo, take a left towards Brunate and sink your teeth into this uphill climb. The road is winding and steep - with an average gradient of 9.5% (with peaks of 14%) but has beautiful views and takes visitors to a breathtaking lookout point after approximately 5 km.

2

km
8,1

Brunate

BRUNATE is known as the balcony of the Prealps. The town is located at over 700 m in altitude and connected to Como by cable railway with a drop of approximately 500 m and a maximum gradient of 55%! The whole of the city of Como can be seen from here: its basin surrounded by hills, the western arm of the Lario and, towards north, the Alps dominated by Monte Rosa and Monte Monviso. The Volta lighthouse above the city, flashing its lights up to 60 km away.

After feasting our eyes on the spectacular views from Brunate, take the road to Como and turn onto state road 639 in the direction of Lecco. A shopping centre is found at the bottom of a downhill road, after Lipomo and Albavilla. Drive by the shopping centre and turn left at the second roundabout towards Erba, following the banks of the River Lambro.

3

km
22,9

Erba

ERBA. The city was built in a fortuitous position. Its territory - between the mountains and the plains - reaches down to the edge of Lake Pusiano and Lake Alserio before climbing up again. The territory burrows its way into small valleys and gorges until it becomes a mountain area. A famous road - from the faraway Aquileia - used to pass once through here, taking

travellers to Rezia (Switzerland) "via Como". The area has always been a summer holiday destination and is full of elegant villas built in the neoclassical and Baroque style. Furthermore, special mention must also be made of the Romanesque church of Sant'Eufemia with its 11th century bell tower, the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial) designed by Giuseppe Terragni and the breathtaking "Licinium" open-air theatre. The Castle of Pomerio and the Castel of Casiglio are found nearby. Both of these ancient fortresses have been completely transformed today. The Hermitage of San Salvatore is located on a plateau overlooking the outlying municipal district of Crevenna. An ancient convent, it was later transformed into a villa during the Napoleonic period when all religious orders were disbanded. The building was later returned to its original shape and function.

Leave Erba taking the road towards Canzo. Turn onto the Valassina, following the flow of the River Lambro. You will reach Canzo in just a few km.

4

km
29,3

Canzo

CANZO. This renowned tourist destination contains a number of regal villas from the 18th and 19th centuries. Tourists to the area are invited to admire the neoclassical Teatro Sociale built in the 19th century to entertain the wealthy Milanese families that used to come and spend their summer in Canzo in addition to the parish church of S. Stefano, which is one of the best example of late-Baroque architecture in the territory.

One of the specialties of the area are the "nocciolini". Similar in shape to little amarettos, they have a completely different flavour. After leaving Canzo, take the Valassina to Asso.

5

km
31,1

Asso

ASSO. The town is festooned with traditional winding lanes and porticoed houses. The 17th century parish church of S. Giovanni Battista, the medieval tower and the Vallategna waterfall - with a drop of approximately 30 m created by the River Foce as it falls into the River Lambro - are all worth a visit.

Back on your bike leave the Valassina and take the Valbrona road that - with its wide bends - makes its way down to the Lecco arm of the Lake until you reach Onno.

Now, take the 583 towards Bellagio. Take care on this attractive, but narrow road full of blind bends! On arriving in Bellagio, park your bike near the Municipal Building. The building faces a staircase which takes visitors up and down a set of stairs for 15 minutes before reaching Pescallo. This lovely little former fishing village is a great place to stop and enjoy a view of the Grigna (2409 m) and the town of Varenna, dominated by the Tower of the Castello di Vezio.

6

km
50,3

Bellagio

BELLAGIO. The town awaits us, fully aware of its beauty with its tourism, shopping, gardens, villas

and more. Riding on a wave of emotions, explore the alleys and byways of the city, savouring an ice-cream, taking a relaxing break and feasting your senses on its colours and perfumes. The gardens of the majestic Villa Serbelloni and Villa Melzi are open to the public. Or, if you prefer, take a rest on one of the benches and watch the tourists, dazzled by the beauty of this ancient town while they clamber off their boats and fall in love with it, much like Pliny the Younger and – later - the Gothic Kings, Theodoric, Ludovico il Moro, Leonardo, the Empress of Russia, Francis I Emperor of Austria, Stendhal and Liszt.

Take the Valassina from Bellagio and climb up the mountain (careful, make sure you are not following the signs to Lecco!!). Turn left at Guello towards the town of Civenna, which opens out on an enchanting plain overlooking the Lecco arm of the lake. You will find



Magreglio and the Shrine of the Madonna del Ghisallo just a few km further on.

7

km
61,2

Madonna
del Ghisallo

MADONNA DEL GHISALLO. Turn off your engine and pay tribute to another type of bike. In fact, this shrine is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, patron saint and protector of cyclists. The small church here contains imposing gifts and donations, made by some of the greatest cycling champions in the world. The Museo del Ciclismo (Cycling Museum) with its rich historical archives, features a collection of jerseys and bicycles owned by some of the greatest champions of the sport (Bartali, Coppi, Mercks, Moser) as well as an electronic system which provides simulated cycling race routes. On 31 May 2006, Pope Benedict the XVI blessed its last rock - which can be seen in the main hall of the museum - from the Vatican, with the message "Omnia Vincit Amore" (Love conquers all). A superb view over the Lecco arm of the lake, the

Grigne and the lake can be enjoyed from the Romeo lookout point. Some bikers may also be interested in the hike from Magreglio to Monte Forcella (left fork near the Madonna del Ghisallo).

Back on the Valassina, travel through Barni (small town located in a handsome basin dominated by a medieval castle which is almost completely hidden from view, even for bikers), before turning right towards Rezzago/Caglio/Sormano. Then, turn left towards Rezzago.

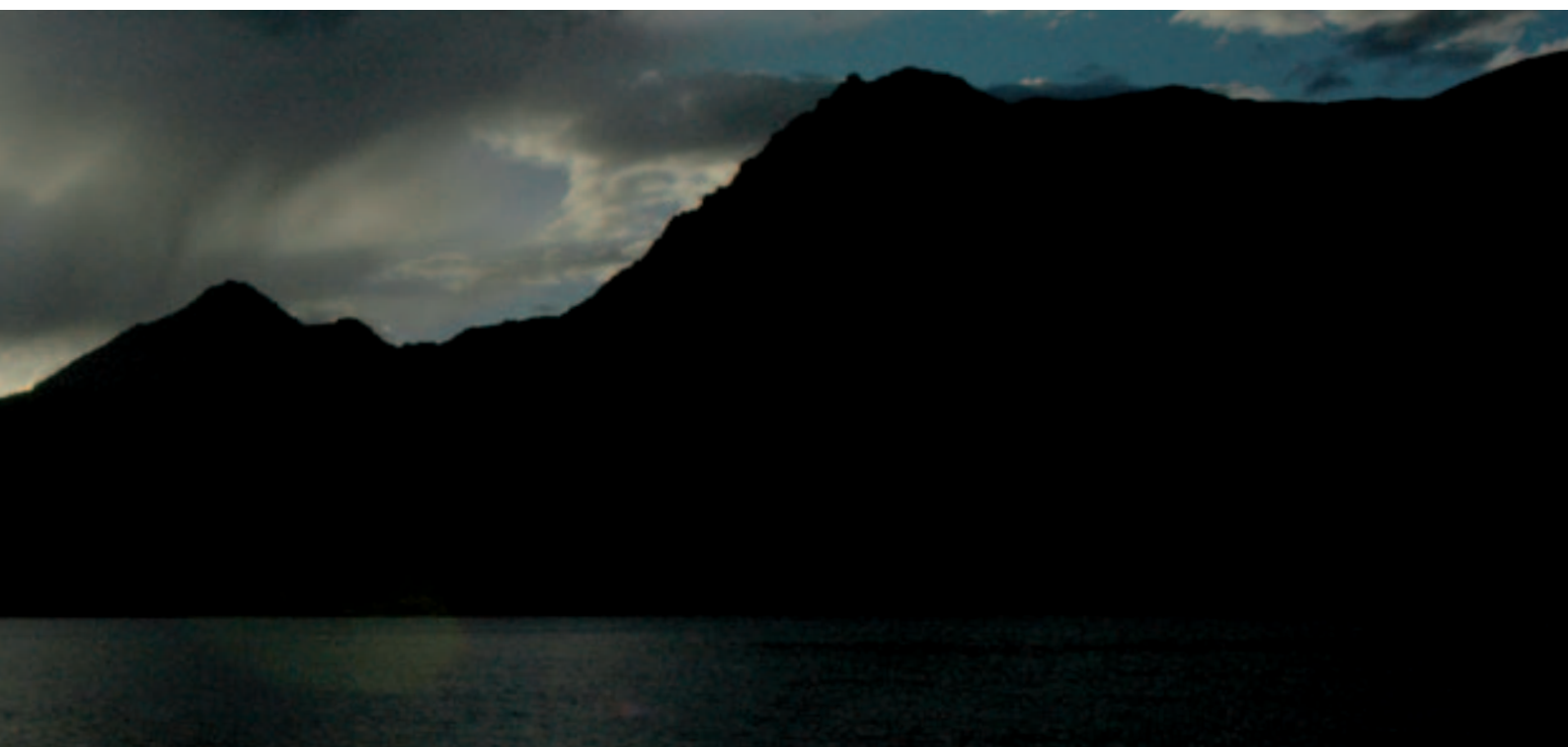
8

km
69,5

Rezzago

REZZAGO. Surrounded by chestnut trees, this town is the ideal starting point for hikes (on foot!) to admire the "funghi di terra" (erosion pyramids). These natural monuments made of compact earth supporting ancient erratic rocks truly resemble giant mushrooms.

Continue travelling in the direction of Caglio on



the uphill road, climbing up to 803 m in altitude.

9

km
71,0

Caglio

CAGLIO. This traditional mountain town is home to a true gem of Romanesque art: the church of Santa Valeria with its greek-cross plan (in the village of Sormano). Special mention must also be made of the Shrine of the Madonna di Campo, just a few minute's drive outside the town.

With Sormano and Rezzago, Caglio is part of the region of the Monti di Sera.

Once you have reached Sormano, we recommend taking a trip to the Colma (relax... by bike!) and the Capanna Stoppani (1100 m above sea level), an astronomical observatory which is particularly renowned for its beautiful setting and surroundings). After you take your head back out of the clouds, straddle your bike and make your down to Nesso through the relaxing Pian del Tivano - a green basin carressed by the breezes of the lake that have given it its name and which, in

the past, contributed to the legends of castles and queens in the area. You will see Veleso after passing Zelbio. Both of these small, traditional mountain towns are good starting points for hikes in the area (on foot!). A series of gorgeous bends will take you to Nesso.

10

km
86,9

Nesso

NESSO is a picturesque town at the mouth of the homonym valley overlooking the lake. The River Nosé and the River Tuf meet here, to form a waterfall that tumbles down into the gorge. An ancient bridge crosses the waterfall. To visit the gorge, the boats pass right under this bridge. This awe-inspiring landscape has been the subject of several ancient prints.

Now, take the 583 to Como. You will travel past Careno and Pognana Lario before reaching Faggeto Lario.

11

km
94,8

Faggeto Lario

FAGGETO LARIO. A famous ancient wine press - dating back to 1572 - is found in the outlying municipal district of Palanzo. Made from a 12 m long walnut trunk with a circumference of 3 m, legend has it that it was used on the very same site on which the tree had grown. Once the press was completed, the building which contains it was erected around it.

Leaving Faggeto, continue travelling on road 583 in the direction of Como to reach Torno.

12

km
97,5

Torno

TORNO. Torno is located in one of the most delightful spots on Lake Como and is famed for its villas. Of these, the most important is probably Villa Pliniana (1573), whose waters were once fed by the famous "Intermittent Source of Pliny". Its name is based on the fact that both Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger described the source in their writings.

From Torno, continue travelling and make your way to Blevio, the last town on our itinerary before heading back. As you drive past the peak of Geno you will find yourself back on the outskirts of Como.

km

104,0

Como



IL CIRCUITO DEL LARIO



The Circuito del Lario (Lario Circuit) was the epitome of a pioneering, adventurous and heroic period of Italian motorcycle racing as well as of its great pilots - who were starting to become renowned - and Italy's burgeoning motorcycling Industry - which was attempting to compete against British superiority. The race had a number of unique features, such as its beautiful scenery and extremely difficult route. 15 editions of the Circuito del Lario were held between 1921 and 1939, achieving widespread consensus and enjoying a vast public. It soon became the most important date on the Italian motorcycle racing calendar. In fact, an estimated 80-100,000 people watched its final editions.

The track was 36.5 km long, with approximately 300 bends, 20 or more hairpin bends and a difference in height between Onno and Ghisallo of 550 m. At the beginning of the 1920s, the track was in beaten earth with a few gravel

parts. The race itself was almost four hours long. Competitors at the time used bikes without rear shock absorbers and with semi-rigid front forks, highly filled tyres as well as engines with strong vibrations.

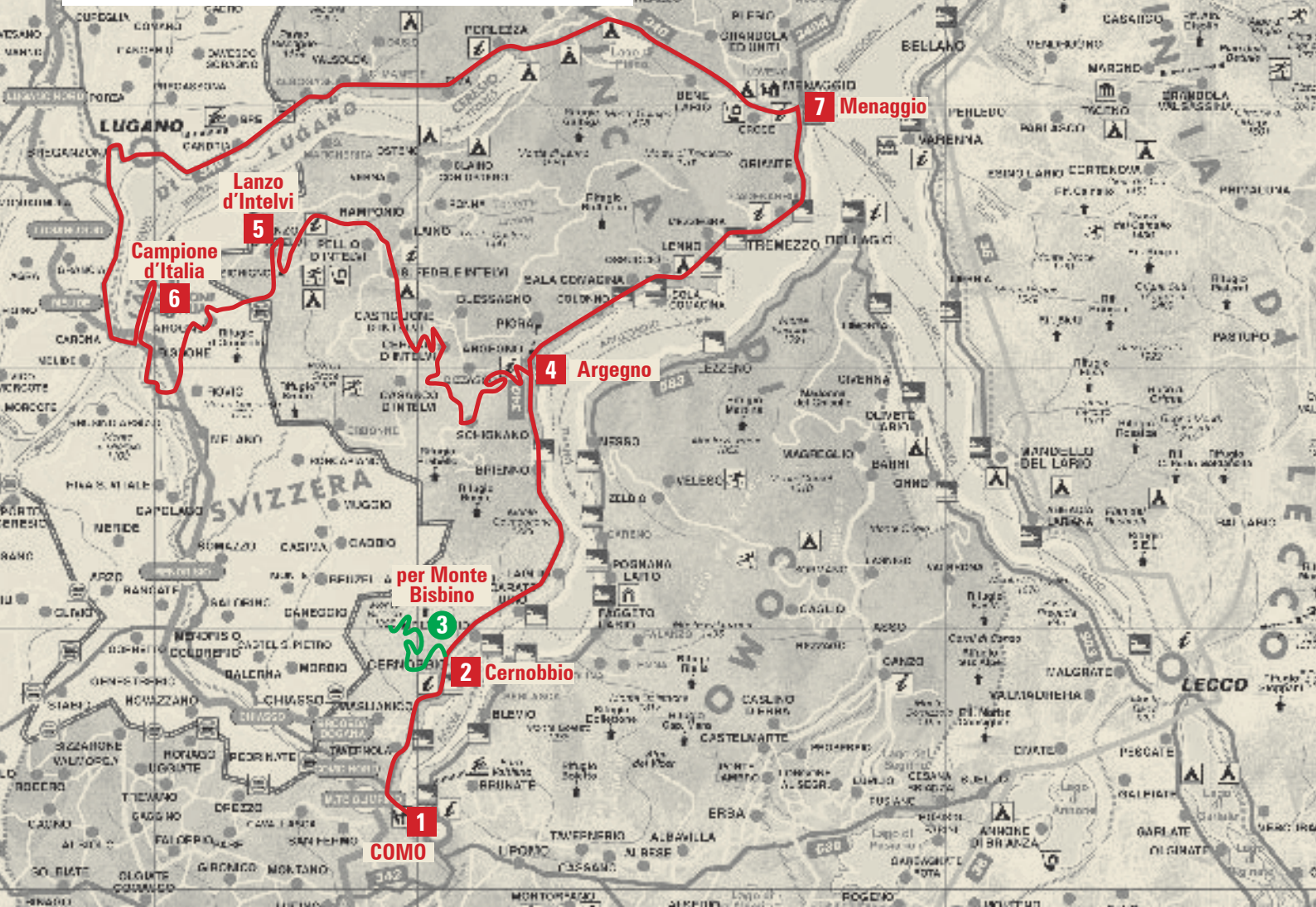
A number of great champions took part in the race such as Nuvolari, Varzi, the Gherzi brothers, Arcangeli, Ruggeri, Omobono Tenni, Dorino Serafini, Alberto Ascari and Nello Pagani. The outbreak of the war brought all sports events to an end, including this particular race, which had been known as the Italian Tourist Trophy for many years.

Since 2003, the Comitato Triangolo Lariano Motociclismo (Triangolo Lariano Motorcycling Committee) together with the local municipalities and the support of Provincia di Como and Lecco and Regione Lombardia (Provincial and Regional Administration), organizes a Historical Re-enactment of the Circuito del Lario race for period bikes which is held once every two years. This "revival" is much appreciated by bikers and enthusiasts, who enjoy hitting the "old circuit" and following in the footsteps of those who have written Italian motorcycling history.

From Lario to Ceresio

LANDSCAPE. Lake and mountains, beech and walnut trees with blooming azaleas and flowering rhododendrons amidst splendid villas; from Romanesque buildings to Liberty villas and from a view on the promenade on the banks of the lake to striking landscapes while out hiking.

DESCRIPTION. Fairly “smooth” roads (apart from a few parts of the Val d’Intelvi), but with constant traffic. In particular, the Regina 340 is highly trafficked, and it is easy to become



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia Stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

Travel along the banks of the lake on your right, following the signs for Cernobbio. Keep right at the roundabout after the stadium. You will see Villa Olmo on your right after the road becomes narrower. This magnificent 18th century building is famed for its highly decorated rooms with their stuccos and frescos as well as its vast gardens. Continue travelling to Cernobbio, following the western bank of the lake until you reach your first destination.

2

km
3,9

Cernobbio

CERNOBBIO. Located in a splendid position, its medieval heart stretches towards the lake and its Liberty style pier. Above all however, the town is famous for its villas. Villa Erba was built in 1899 and is truly extraordinary, both because of its mannerist looks and the size of its park. An aristocratic summer holiday destination (and much beloved by the director Luchino Visconti), the villa was sold to a public consortium in 1986, who built an internationally renowned conference centre in its park where they hold leading conferences as well as political, scientific and society events. Another treasure is found just a bit further on: Villa d' Este. Today, the villa is one of the most famous hotels in the world. The villa was built in 1570 from an old farm hold and was turned into a hotel in 1863. The villa has always been famous for its unique artistic heritage. On 25 May 2005, the President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi conferred the title of city on Cernobbio.

It's now time to leave. Go back to Villa Erba and turn right at the crossing, climbing up to 1325 m on Monte Bisbino, on the border between the province of Como and the Canton Ticino. There are 17 km of curves and hairpin bends (33, some still on a gravel road) here. The road is rather narrow, but the roadbed is in fairly good condition, except for a few short sections of road after Rovenna. Great views are guaranteed throughout the

3

km
65,2Detour to
Monte Bisbino

uphill climb, and particularly on the peak, which endows visitors with great views of the lake and its mountains (up to Monviso and the Apennines). A shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary and a weather forecasting station are found at the top of the peak. It is also surrounded by trenches, artillery posts and large, inaccessible galleries; the legacy of what was once an important outpost on the Cadorna Line. Back in Cernobbio (careful going downhill!) turn left on the Regina 340 as it follows the bank of the lake (a gorgeous road, full of bends and traffic). 15 km of small towns and charming lake promenades with well-kept centres and striking villas - some only visible from the lake - which have enchanted illustrious Italian and foreign dignitaries - await. Travel past Carate Uriò, Laglio, and Brienno to reach Argegno.

4

km
28,7

Argegno

ARREGNO. A small and charming tourist destination, the town stands at the mouth of the Valle d'Intelvi. Its historical city centre is bisected by the River Telo. The town is made up of an interesting crisscrossing of alleys and paths and features a traditional stone bridge. A comfortable cable car is found just a few hundred meters away from the centre of the village. In just a few minutes, it takes visitors up to the hamlet of Pigra, which was built on a plateau at 880 m in altitude. From here, tourists can enjoy outstanding views of the lake and the hills which surround it.

Leave the Regina 340 at the beginning of Argegno (travelling towards Como) and take provincial road 13 on your left going up to the outlying municipal district of Schignano on the road you'll find the Shrine of Sant'Anna. Once in Retegno, you are faced with a choice: either take a nice hike (on foot!) which will take you to the Alpine refuge of Binatte (1300 m) under the Sasso Gordona in about an hour or continue travelling by bike towards Cerano, where you can visit the Church of San Tommaso - with its 12th century bell tower - and the Oratorio di Veglio - which contains a number of 14th century frescoes

(the oldest in the valley). From Veglio, take the provincial road 13 of the Val d'Intelvi (see Itinerary no. 3 from Como) and turn left to reach Lanzo d'Intelvi. Alternatively, take provincial road 13 at Argegno. It will also take you to Lanzo d'Intelvi, but it travels across the valley floor instead and has much fewer bends, apart from a few hairpin bends right at the beginning.

5

km
44,0

Lanzo d'Intelvi

LANZO D'INTELV. The main town of the eponymous valley, it rests on a plateau rich in meadows and rivers. Once much less important than its outlying municipal district of Scària, it grew in relevance at the start of the 18th century as it turned into a tourist attraction. The Parish Church of San Siro has Romanesque origins while the Shrine of the Madonna di Loreto dates back to 1670. The town contains ancient homes with frescoed walls and stone portals which stand side-by-side next to elegant, Liberty style villas from the end of the 19th century. Hikers will enjoy the two trails found here with their enchanting views: the first is to the Belvedere Alpine refuge (885 m) under Monte Caslè, while the second is a much tougher hike up to 1701 m to Monte Generoso.

Back on your bike, head towards Switzerland and - after you have crossed the border (you must have and ID card or passport with you) - make your way down towards the Lake Lugano. Once in Maroggia, turn right towards Lugano (keep your eye on the

6

km
57,2

Campione d'Italia

speed limit and make sure you have paid the road tax, which is mandatory if you are using the motorway). After a few km, you will find a roundabout pointing you in the direction of Campione d'Italia. Enter the town through its charming entry archway.

CAMPIONE D' ITALIA. Originally known by the name of "Campilionum", this Romanesque castrum from the 1st century BC was once an advanced guard post against the Rezi and Elvezi. Today, this Italian enclave on Swiss territory is the result of a decision made by the population, which voted to remain a part of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venice while the rest of the Ticino instead decided to join the Swiss Confederation in 1798. The town is also home to the Maestri Campionesi, famous sculptors and architects who worked mostly between the 12th and the 14th century. The most famous architectural attraction in town is the Shrine to the Madonna dei Ghirli (swallows in the local dialect) whose interior is entirely covered with frescoes dating from 1350. Tourists are also invited to visit the tiny Oratory of San Pietro found in a quiet corner of the town. However, Campione's largest tourist attraction is indubitably its Casino. Founded in 1933, it is one of the most prestigious and renowned gambling houses in Europe, both for the wide array of games on offer, and for the elegant atmospheres which permeate every room. In particular, its Salone delle Feste is used to host gala evenings, exhibitions and events.

Back on your bike, double back on your steps to the roundabout and turn right towards Lugano. Cross the lake, then turn right again and carry on along the banks of the river (you will enjoy a nice view of Campione d'Italia on the other side of the lake). Travel past this elegant and exclusive town of Switzerland and follow the signs towards Italy and Porlezza in order to cross the border in Gandria. The atmosphere immediately changes here, as palaces and gardens are replaced with piazzas, stone roofs and villas hidden amidst the greenery of the lakeside towns. 8 km after the border, at the top of the lake, you will reach Porlezza – the lively tourist capital of the Italian Ceresio – which boasts a number of



ancient silk mills in addition to several 17th century churches and a gem of the Romanesque style of Como area: the church of San Maurizio. Take the 340 towards Menaggio and cut across the Lago di Piano Nature Park. After 12 km, start making your way back down towards Lake Como.

7

km
94,3

Menaggio

MENAGGIO. The climate in the area is particularly mild, and the town is kissed by the “brega” and “tivano” breezes. The town’s wonderful position in terms of exposure to the sun allowed one-of-a-kind flora to bloom and thrive on the lake promenade - designed at the beginning of the 20th century - as well as in the parks of its numerous villas. Menaggio was

much beloved by its famous guests, such as the Grand Duchess Olga Nicolajevna, daughter of Tsar Nicolas II, who lived here for many years and was most probably buried under the false name of Marga Boodts. Menaggio holds a wide array of concerts in its many piazzas, villas and churches, in addition to exhibitions, fairs, sports events and international conferences.

Leaving Menaggio, take the road back to Como to enjoy 30 km of ever-changing landscapes: Cadenabbia, Villa Carlotta, Villa Balbianello, the Isola Comacina, and Ossuccio, which are all so beautiful they deserve their own itinerary (see Itinerary no 10 from Como).

km
130,8

Como



Valcavargna and Val d'Intelvi

LANDSCAPE. A pleasant itinerary enjoying lovely views of the lake and its prestigious villas and unique glimpses of the valleys, dotted with medieval churches and ample landscapes, taking visitors from the Lake to the Ceresio in a single day.

DESCRIPTION. Narrow roads which are rarely straight. They are certainly never boring as they make their way repeatedly up and down hills between the two lakes, climbing to an altitude of over 1000 m. Be very careful, in particular when travelling on the Regina 340 coastal road.



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia Stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

Travel along the banks of the lake on your right, following the signs for Cernobbio. Keep right at the roundabout after the stadium. You will see Villa Olmo on your right after the road becomes narrower. This magnificent 18th century building is famed for its highly decorated rooms with their stuccoes and frescoes as well as for its vast gardens. Continue travelling to Cernobbio/Argegno/Menaggio, following the edge of the western bank of the lake until you reach your first destination. 30 km of road await, together with their beautiful landscapes: Ossuccio, l'Isola Comacina, Villa Balbianello, Villa Carlotta, Cadenabbia, so gorgeous that they deserve an excursion of their own (see Itinerary no. 10 from Como).

2

km
33,6

Menaggio

MENAGGIO. The climate in the area is particularly mild, and the town is kissed by the "brevia" and "tivano" breezes. The town's wonderful position and exposure to the sun have allowed one-of-a-kind flora to bloom and thrive on the lake promenade - designed at the beginning of the 20th century - as well as in the parks of its numerous villas. Menaggio was much beloved by its famous guests, such as the Gran Duchess Olga Nicolajevna, daughter of Tsar Nicolas II, who lived here for many years and was most probably buried under the false name of Marga Boodts. Menaggio holds a wide array of concerts in its many piazzas, villas and churches, in addition to exhibitions, fairs, sports events and international conferences.

Leave Menaggio, travelling in the direction Grandola/Porlezza and start making your way up the series of hairpin bends in front of you. The road will straighten out until Cardano (one of the outlying municipal districts which make up Grandola and Uniti). Apart from its church with its Baroque decorations, the town is also home to Villa Bagatti Valsecchi and its magnificent park,

perched on a cliff dug by the River Sanagra. Take a right onto the Val Sanagra and follow the river as it flows amidst the picturesque cliffs. It only takes a few minutes to reach Codogna from here (this is another outlying municipal district of Grandola). The town contains the remains of a watchtower which bear witness to its medieval history and the conquest of Gian Giacomo de' Medici, known as Medeghino. Take a break on the grassy lay-by in the outlying municipal district of Velzo, from where you can admire the "Rogolone". This age-old durmast is 25 m tall and has a circumference of over 7 m. Legend has it that public gatherings where once held under its armes. Keep climbing and you will reach Carlazzo in just a few km.

3

km
43,5

Carlazzo

CARLAZZO. This old, formerly fortified town, once equipped with a signal tower (hence its name, which derives from "Castrum rati," or fire castle), has ancient origins. The remains of the walls of the castle (Castel San Pietro) are still standing, proof of the decades-long war which waged between Como and Milan as its home-tower with an arched underpass. Lake Piano is found nearby. In winter, a sheet of over 30 cm of ice forms over it. The ice was once used to supply the "ghiacciaie" (ice houses) of Como and Tremezzo, where it was kept until the following summer. Apart from its churches with their lavishly frescoed interiors, special mention must also be made of the outlying municipal district of Bilate. Its "Pretura" or "Prigione" (prison) was built in the 16th century and contains the only fresco depicting a knightly subject in the whole of the Lake Como area (A duel fought by the great hero, Orlando).

Back on your bike, take a right towards Cusino/Cavargna and, following the course of the River Cuccio, make your way into the untouched Val Carvagna as it fans out amidst a background of charming views. This uphill road is full of bends and leads to Cusino. Here, the parish church of San Giovanni Battista contains a number of interesting frescoes. Make sure you also take the time to visit San Bartolomeo (surrounded by traditional mountain

towns and old stone houses) before continuing your climb to 1070 m above sea level and Cavargna.

4

km
57,8

Cavargna

CAVARGNA. Surrounded by the Lepontine Alps and protected from landslides by a thick forest of venerable beeches, Cavargna is the highest town in the province of Como (1071 m). Perhaps the most traditional local activity in town is carried out by the stagnini (tin workers), also called calderai, ramai and magnani who used to coat the inner walls of copper containers with tin and who used to climb down towards Brianza and Bergamo with their wooden "trida" on their back, carrying all their tools. Their activities probably developed in order to take advantage of the iron provided by the mines in the area. Visitors are also invited to take a stroll in the Museo della Valle (Valley Museum). Cavargna is the starting point for a number of different hikes (on foot!), including those to Monte Stabiello (2115 m) and the San Lucio Pass (1542 m) on the border with Switzerland, with its eponymous oratory from the 14th century. The outlying municipal district of Vegna can also be reached by bike.

Leaving Cavargna, keep travelling towards Porlezza on the Val Rezzo road. The road to Lake Lugano is winding and narrow, but filled with breathtaking views. Once past Buggiolo and Corrido (an old town enjoying view over Lake Ceresio and Lake Piano), two more bends will take you to Porlezza.

5

km
75,3

Porlezza

PORLEZZA. Has adopted all the features of a frontier town, developing its commerce and tourism to its fullest potential. It is also the starting point for a number of interesting hikes, such as those to the Valsolda and the stunning Lake Lugano, or to the Rescia caves (which we will catch a glimpse of as we make our way out of Porlezza and travel towards San Fedele d'Intelvi), with their striking stalactites and stalagmites. Between 1885 and 1939, Porlezza was the last stop on the railway which puffed its way here from Menaggio, organised to coincide with the steamboat. Special mention must be made of the outlying municipal district of Cima, which has maintained its traditional medieval structure, complete with the remains of its ancient walls and fortifications.

Straddle your bike and take off, following the bank of the lake towards Osteno. When you reach the crotti, get off the state road and take the path on the left to the Oratorio di San Maruizio (10-12th century). The oratory was buried by a landslide six centuries ago and was only brought back to light in 1966. It once used to overlook the woods only the top part of the bell tower. You will soon reach Claino con Osteno. This municipality is comprised of two towns: Osteno, located on the delta of the River Telo and on the banks of the lake, and the higher Claino, which is located at 389 m and filled with stunning medieval and renaissance homes. The "Orrido" or "Pescara" (gorge) of Osteno is found right before town, and can only be visited by boat. A road - with striking views and many bends - will take you up to 750 m to San Fedele d'Intelvi in 7.5 km.

6

km
88,6

S. Fedele
d'Intelvi

San Fedele d'Intelvi is a large, lively tourist centre whose advantageous position offers wonderful views over the entire valley. Up until a few years ago, it teemed with stories of the "spalloni" and of cigarette smugglers who humped their wares between Italy and Switzerland. Long ago - when it was known as Valle Antelama - this was a land of artists. Starting from the 13th century - but particularly in the 17th and 18th century - the town was famed for exporting its superb decorations



throughout Europe. San Fedele has two centres, a lower one containing the parish church of Sant'Antonio and the hotels and a higher, more ancient one, located at the foot of Monte Luria. Taking a 6 km detour from S. Fedele you can reach Pigra (or you can take the cable car from Argegno). This striking balcony provides great views over Punta Balbianello and Bellagio from its 880 m height.

A bit more road and ... a few more bends await. So, get back on your bike and take off towards Argegno. Enjoy the drive and the view. You will see Dizzasco with the Romanesquesque bell tower and the painted facade of its church from a distance. This town was one of Winston Churchill's favourite spots after the war, and was immortalised in several of his paintings. A few hairpin bends as you make your

way downhill and you are back at Argegno.

7

km
97,5

Argegno

ARREGNO. A small and charming tourist destination, the town stands at the mouth of the Valle d'Intelvi. Its historical city centre is bisected by the River Telo. The town is made up of an interesting crisscrossing of alleys and paths and features a picturesque stone bridge. If you did not stop in San Fedele but would nevertheless like to enjoy the charming view from Pigra, climb up the mountain on the cable car just a few hundred meters from the centre of town.

km
119,8

Como

Leave Argegno to return to Como. There are still 20 km of trafficked road to face before reaching the city. However, they are well worth it for their wonderful views, and then... Como.



The Lake Tour - Villas and Gardens

LANDSCAPE. This is the most prestigious of our itineraries in terms of architecture and landscapes. It takes visitors on a journey of discovery among some of the most exclusive villas of the area and their enchanting gardens. Many privately owned villas cannot be visited. Nevertheless, their facades alone are worth the trip, since they are true works of art.

DESCRIPTION. An almost complete journey around the lake with bends, galleries and a passage... over water using the Varenna-Bellagio ferry (www.navigazonelaghi.it). Take special care when travelling on the Regina 340 from Como to the top of the lake.



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

Drive along the bank of the lake on your right, following the signs to Cernobbio. Keep left at the roundabout after the stadium, and start following the edge of the lake until you reach its western bank, where you can take your first stop.

2

km
3,9

Cernobbio

CERNOBBIO. Located in a splendid position, its medieval heart reaches out towards the lake and its Liberty style pier. Above all however, the town is famous for its villas. Villa Erba was built in 1899 and is truly extraordinary, both because of its mannerist looks and the size of its park. An aristocratic summer holiday destination (and much beloved by the director Luchino Visconti), the villa was sold to a public consortium in 1986. It built an internationally renowned conference centre in the park of the villa, which is used to hold leading conferences as well as political, scientific and society events. Another treasure is found just a bit further on: Villa d' Este. Today, the villa is one of the most famous hotels in the world. The villa was first built in 1570 under the orders of Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio on what used to be a country holding.

On 24 May 2005, the President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi conferred the title of city on Cernobbio.

It is time to set off again. Following the Vecchia Regina road which borders the lake, carry on until you reach Moltrasio. More than a bike, what you would really need here is a boat, since many of the beautiful villas in the area are not visible from the road, but only from the lake. From this point, you should be able to see Villa Erker Hocevar where Vincenzo Bellini stayed, Villa Fasola and Villa Fontanelle (home to the Versace family until 2007). Laglio is located right after Moltrasio. The town has become famous over the past few years because it has been chosen as a "buen retiro" by Gorge Clooney, who spends approximately 4 months of the year in Villa Oleandra. A quick

glimpse at the gates of his home and we're off again, climbing up the Nuova Regina until Lenno.

3

km
26,0

Lenno

LENNO. On reaching Lenno, park your bike and walk - or take a taxi-boat - to Villa Balbianello (open to the public). Built in 1700 on the remains of a small Franciscan convent, the villa is owned by the National Trust for Italy (FAI) today. From the loggia, you can admire the gulf of the Tremezzina as well as the basin of the Isola Comacina. Pellico, Berchet, Giusti, Manzoni, but also Queen Amidala of Naboo, the Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker (Star Wars) and Bond, James Bond (Casino Royal) all stood on this spot.

Retrace your steps by boat and hop onto your bike, you still have a lot of road left to travel. Tremezzo is just a short hop, skip and jump away.

4

km
29,4

Tremezzo

TREMEZZO. As you drive along you will see Villa La Quiete, one of the most luxurious residences belonging to the Serbelloni family. Right next to it, you will also be able to admire the enchanting Villa Carlotta (open to the public) - a triumph of architecture, harmony, and airy sculptures embellished with flowers and leaves (it is absolutely breathtaking when the rhododendrons and azaleas are in bloom). Villa Carlotta was built on a terrace overlooking Lake Como. Its garden was created thanks to Gianbattista Sommariva at the beginning of the 19th century, when he purchased the villa and brought it to the apex of its splendour. In 1847 Marianna of Nassau gave the villa to her daughter Carlotta (hence the name) - future wife of George of Saxony - as a wedding gift. The villa contains several remarkable works of art, such as paintings by Hayez and statues by Canova.

Leaving Villa Carlotta behind, carry on down the road. After Menaggio (see Itinerary no. 8 from Como), you will reach Acquaseria, an outlying municipal district of San Siro. The medieval charms of Villa La Gaeta are reflected in the lake here, even though the house was actually

built in 1921.

Gravedona with its majestic Villa Gallio is just a short distance away from the centre of the lake. Just like Villa d'Este in Cernobbio, it was built by Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio. The building is so imposing that it is often called a palace, if not even a Castle. **Back on your bike, make your way up to the top of the lake. After crossing the River Mera and River Adda (influent and only affluent), cross onto the other bank to reach Colico (see itinerary no. 11 from Como). From here, make your way past the many elegant towns and hamlets on the road to reach Varenna. As you head towards the town, make sure to take a break at Corenno Plinio.** This time, it is not a villa we are visiting, but the remains of a 14th century castle set amidst the picturesque attractions of a medieval town. **Once past Dervio and Bellano, take the gallery on the right towards Varenna. At the stop sign, turn right again towards the ferry's pier, and park you bike.**

5

km
86,6

Varenna

VARENNA. Take the charming lake walk and make your way to the centre of the town, with its many staircases and sloping neighbourhoods, before carrying on to the main piazza. Here, you can admire the Romanesque church of San Giorgio, dominated by the Tower of Castello di Vezio (open to the public), which is one of the most panoramic points on the lake (see Itinerary no. 2 from Lecco). The grandiose gardens of Villa Monastero (www.villamonastero.org) await. Originally a Cistercian monastery, the villa was renovated in the liberty style during the 19th century and later went on to host international physics conferences - which included the participation of Enrico Fermi amongst its many guests. While still in Varenna, make sure you take a look at the neoclassical Villa Cipressi, now a hotel, with its gardens and steps overlooking the lake as well as the Church of San Giorgio. This stunning building was erected in the 14th century and was later modified during the Baroque period. It features a large fresco on its facade and contains number of valuable



artworks. Following the banks of the lake, take a stroll on the Romanesquetic “Passeggiata degli Innamorati” (Lover’s Walk) which connects the centre of Varenna and Olivedo – point of departure for ferries, boats and motorboats belonging to Navigazione Lago di Como – as well as a lively, entertaining beach.

Take the ferry-boat (www.navigazione.laghi.it) with your bike to leave Varenna and feast your eyes on the enthralling views. Bellagio is just 15 minutes away.

6

km
86,6

Bellagio

BELLAGIO. Before reaching the shore, you will be able to see the magnificent and sumptuous Villa Frizzoni (now the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni) as well as the picturesque hamlet with its ancient stairways. Once down from the ferry, take the road on the right of the pier and make your way to the gardens of Villa Melzi (open to the public). These were designed with great care to act as a frame for the neoclassical villa. Moving further on you will see Villa Trivulzio-Taverna. Built in the same style, it overlooks the waters of the lake. Its gardens contain a charming little Romanesque church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Leaving Bellagio, take the “Lariana” towards Como (31 km near the banks of the western arm of the river) and travel past Lezzeno, Nesso, Pognana to reach Torno.

7

km
110,7

Torno

TORNO. Villa Pliniana was once owned by the Count Giovanni Anguissola. A famous tyrannicide from Piacenza, he later became the governor of the city of Como. The count purchased Fonte Pliniana and its surrounding lands in 1573 in order to build his villa. All of the literature, up until the end of the 18th century, describes the Pliniana as a charming place full of delights.

Back on your bike, make your way to Blevio and then on to Como. We have indubitably glossed over many charming villas on our tour. The lake is like a treasure chest, which sometimes conceals its best works of art.

km
117,2

Como



The Upper Lake

LANDSCAPE. A journey into history and nature, as the landscape opens up towards the mountains of the Valtellina, with its ever-changing natural. This itinerary will take you to a paradise of surfers and sailors, who share your passion for feeling the wind whip across your face.

DESCRIPTION. A truly pleasant tour: designed to ensure that it is relaxing without however becoming tedious, since most of it is on level ground. Take care on the Regina 340 road from Como to the top of the lake and in the galleries on the western bank (if not, take the motorway from Colico to Lecco).



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia Stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

With the banks of the lake on your right, follow the signs to Cernobbio. As you travel north, keep right at the roundabout after the stadium and start following the edge of the lake until you reach its western bank on the 340-Regina. You will find Mezzegra after driving past Moltrasio, Laglio, Brienzo, Argegno, Ossuccio and Lenno, with their stunning views (see Itinerary no. 10 from Como). Mezzegra is firmly entrenched in the history of Fascism. Mussolini and Claretta Petacci were executed here on 28 April 1945. Driving your bike, continue on your way past Tremezzo, Griante, Menaggio and Pianello del Lario. As you exit the Musso bottleneck, you will see a commemorative plaque reminding visitors that the column escorting Mussolini was stopped in this point. This is where the Duce was captured, marking the end of Fascism. Give your bike a bit of throttle and roar off to Dongo.

2

km
47,7

Dongo

DONGO. Apart from being renowned for historical reasons and for the fruitless search for the "Gold of Dongo", this town has also enjoyed a certain degree of religious and economic notoriety as well. Together with Gravedona and Sorico, it was part of the Tre Pievi administrative district which was once held by the Dukedom of Milan. One of the factors which made Dongo famous was the road to the San Jorio Pass, which connected the lake area with the Grigioni (Switzerland), and therefore with Germany as well. The Municipal offices are found in the neoclassical Palazzo Manzi. Its main hall - also known as the Sala d'Oro - is two stories high and decorated with stuccoes, gildings, a frescoed vault ceiling and a mosaic floor.

3

km
47,7Detour to
Valle dell'Albano

The Valle dell'Albano offers a peaceful interlude after Dongo. Make your way up to Garzeno and Germasino as you enter a territory which - since the 19th century - has been the symbol of innovation in technical metalworking in Lombardy.

The remains of the walls of the melting furnaces and their circulation systems can still be seen beneath the outlying municipal district of **Catasco** together with part of the gravelled donkey path which connected the furnaces to the mines above them. If you feel up for a walk, all you have to do is choose between the **Germasino** nature walk (Giovio Pass at the bottom of the Valle dell'Albano), or travelling down at least a part of the "Sentiero Italia" (5000 km over 350 stops throughout the whole of the country).

For those who do not particularly enjoy walking, we recommend a small, 5 km circuit - which can be travelled by bike as well - around the towns of Dongo-Stazzona-Brenzio-Consiglio di Rumo, before climbing down to Gravedona. Make your way back to Dongo, then take the 4 km road to Gravedona.

4

km
50,4

Gravedona

GRAVEDONA. This is the most important city of the Upper Lake area and stretches from the lake up until its top, known as the Castello. Its rock was used as a base to build fortifications in pre-Romanesque times, since it afforded great views over the centre of the lake and the Valtellina, with the Legnone (2610 m) towering in the background. Age-old, elegant alleys with a smattering of 13th century facades, tiny windows and portals overlook the streets of the town. The town also contains the church of Santa Maria del Tiglio - a Romanesquesque building in black and white marble dating back to the 13th century - which is unique amongst its kind. The 16th century Villa Gallio is so imposing that it is often called a Palace, if not even a Castle.

This detour has been specifically included in the itinerary for all those who want to admire views of the valley without getting off their bikes. At Gravedona, take the winding road up to Peglio and the fascinating complex of S. Eusebio. From there, make your way to Livo - a traditional mountain village - before returning to Gravedona on the same road (6 km in total). For hikers (on foot) in Livo: park your bike on its stand in

5

km
50,4Detour to
Valle di Livo

the parking lot in front of the church of San Giacomo (697 m) and ... get a move on. A 30 minute walk will take you to the plain of Crotto Dangri and its picturesque timber bridge. For the more sports-minded, we recommend a further 90 minute walk to the panoramic lookout point of Baggio (892 m) and its rural dwellings.

Reinvigorated by the fresh air (or at least the break), it is time to make our way back down to Gravedona and take a left towards the Valtellina. Follow the edge of the lake until Gera Lario, drive past Sorico (special mention must be made of the Oasis of Pian di Spagna and Lake Mezzola, which are full of attractions for nature lovers and birdwatchers), cross the River Mera and the River Adda and make your way to Colico.

6
km
66,5
Colico

COLICO. This highly interesting area in terms of both nature and landscapes is located in the northernmost point of Lake Como. The Protected Oasis of Pian di Spagna is found between the mouths of the River Mera and the River Adda. This bit of swampland is an important stopping and nesting point for a wide number of bird species, who take advantage of the natural habitat provided by its silent reed thickets. In the past, the area was considered highly important because of its strategic position. It was first drained by the Romanesques, and later played host to a Spanish army camp throughout all of the 16th century - hence the name, Pian di Spagna. The Fort of Fuentes (open to the public) was the lynchpin of the Spanish defence system and was located on an isolated ridge, controlling



the last part of the River Adda. Built at the start of the 17th century by the Count of Fuentes - governor of Milan - it was demolished by Napoleon during his First Italian Campaign. Only its husk remains. A century later - in 1912 - at the dawn of the Great War, the high command of the Italian Royal Army ordered a new fort to be built on the hill of Montecchio (open to the public), using the tiny bit of coastland found between Colico and the mouth of the River Adda. The fort was completed in 1914 and is the most technological Italian installation from WWI. It contains four cannons which are the largest in Italy and are still working today. They are highly precise even at great distances.

On leaving Colico, do not take the motorway to Lecco/Milan, but take the coastal road for Dervio/Bellano instead. You will reach the Abbazia di Piona (Abbey of Piona) after 5.5 km (detour on your right).

7

km
73,5

Abbazia
di Piona

ABBZIA DI PIONA. The abbey was built in a splendid position on the outermost point of the Olgiasca peninsula, overlooking the eponymous lake. The building itself dates back to the 11th century, even if some elements bearing proof of even earlier beginnings exist. One such case is the satchel of Santa Faustina – kept in the apse – which is dated to the 7th century. The Benedictine cloisters of 1275 are particularly worth a visit. The complex has been entrusted to the Cistercian monks, who make excellent liquors and herbal infusions.

Back on your bike, get ready for the last leg of your itinerary and savour the bends on the road (be very careful when travelling through the galleries) as you drive past Dorio, and Corenno Plinio.

8

km
76,7

Corenno Plinio

CORENNO PLINIO. Picturesquely perched on a rocky outcrop as it stretches towards the lake, the town of Corenno Plinio in the municipality of Dervio plays host to the beautiful 13th century Castello degli Adreani. The city's walls are reinforced with two towers, located near the parish church of San Tommaso di Canterbury, which features a number of medieval and renaissance frescoes. Three funerary arches belonging to the Counts Andreani - feudal lords of the area – are also found outside the

church. This traditional town has preserved its peaceful medieval look, with narrow roads plunging straight down towards its small pier and beach on the lake.

Moving on after a brief rest, drive past Bellano to reach Varenna (turn right before the gallery). At the stop sign, turn right again for the pier and the ferry. Park your bike here.

9

km
87,3

Varenna

VARENNA. Take the charming lake walk and make your way to the centre of the town, with its many staircases and sloping neighbourhoods, before carrying on to the main piazza. Here, you can admire the Romanesquesque church of San Giorgio, dominated by the Tower of Castello di Vezio (open to the public), which is one of the most panoramic points on the lake (see Itinerary no. 2 from Lecco). The grandiose gardens of Villa Monastero (www.villamonastero.org) await. Originally a Cistercian monastery, the villa was renovated in the liberty style during the 19th century and later went on to host international physics conferences - which included the participation of Enrico Fermi amongst its many guests. While still in Varenna, make sure you take a look at the neoclassical Villa Cipressi, now a hotel, with its gardens and steps overlooking the lake as well as the Church of San Giorgio. This stunning building was erected in the 14th century and was later modified during the Baroque period. It features a large fresco on its facade and contains number of valuable artworks. Following the banks of the lake, take a stroll on the Romanesquetic "Passeggiata degli Innamorati" (Lover's Walk) which connects the centre of Varenna and Olivedo – point of departure for ferries, boats and motorboats belonging to Navigazione Lago di Como – as well as a lively, entertaining beach.

Our trip has now come to an end. To leave Varenna, take the road to Mandello del Lario and Abbadia Lariana (see Itinerary no. 2 from Lecco) before getting on the motorway to Lecco. At this point you have a choice: either take the exit to Lecco for a brief visit (see Itineraries no. 1-6 from Lecco) of the city and take a breather, or continue on the motorway to Como to finish the itinerary.

km
140,0

Como

The Plain, the Olgiate Comasco and the Cantù area

LANDSCAPE. Starting in Como, it makes its way up a gently rolling set of hills towards the Spina Verde Regional Park before moving back down towards the Brianza.

DESCRIPTION. Calm, hilly roads alternate with trafficked arteries (but on a bike... traffic is nothing). The itinerary meanders - sometimes aimlessly - between one town and the next (keep a sharp eye out for road signs).



1

km
0,0

Como

COMO. Starting point: Sinigaglia stadium, Viale Puecher, in front of the Monumento ai Caduti (War Memorial).

Drive along the banks of the lake on your right and follow the signs for Chiasso/Swiss border. Then, climb up the hill until you reach the crossing for San Fermo della Battaglia.

2

km
5,0

San Fermo della Battaglia

SAN FERMO DELLA BATTAGLIA. The town owes its name to the battle fought between the Austrians and the Cacciatori delle Alpi (Hunters of the Alps) commanded by Garibaldi which - at the end of the Second War of Independence - allowed King Vittorio Emanuele, to annex Lombardy. This vivacious artisanal and tourist town is located within the borders of the Spina Verde Park. The church of Santa Maria Nulata in town was built over a Celtic site and is particularly worth a visit.

Leaving San Fermo, Cavallasca is just around the corner.

3

km
6,7

Cavallasca

CAVALLASCA. The town unfolds along the southern foot of Monte Sasso, which is still dotted by the many trenches and forts used during WWI. This town was also chosen as a place of residence by noble Milanese families, including the Imbonati, who built the magnificent villa which is now the Municipal Building. A musical instrument industry was moved here during the war and gave rise to a number of artisanal activities. This is rather curious, since the Como area does not have a particularly long instrument-making tradition.

Leave Cavallasca and make your way to Parè.

4

km
8,9

Parè

PARE'. The town overlooks the Val Mulini next to the Swiss border. For 28 years, Parè, Cavallasca and Drezzo were a single municipality called Lieto Colle. The municipality was maintained up until 1956, when the three towns were returned to their original names, becoming autonomous. Since the beginning, this border area has always been theatre to a form of contraband

which has been described as "Romanesque" by a number of local authors. For the inhabitants of the place, it was often the only alternative to starving or immigrating. Smugglers ("Spalloni" [Shoulder-bearers] - since they used to carry their goods on their backs) and the border guards often dined at the same hostelry before "going to work". In both cases, they were strong, quick, brave men who could make their way easily around the area.

It is time to get back on your bike and swiftly make your way towards Drezzo, which shelters against one of the many morainic hills shaped by the large glaciers here. The terrace dips at the foot of the hill, almost encircling the town, and forms the valley of the River Faloppia, called Val Mulini. As you leave the Spina Verde Park, take the road towards Ugiate-Trevano. From here, you will be able to see the Monte Rosa, the hills of the Val d'Intelvi, the Generoso, the Bisbino and the peak of Brunate. Already a parish church in the Middle Ages, the town was an important stopping point for travellers on the way to Switzerland. Follow the signs to Faloppia and make your way to Olgiate Comasco.

5

km
14,1

Olgiate Comasco

OLGIATE COMASCO. Located halfway between Como and Varese on state road 342, this town is very interesting from an artistic point of view. In particular, Palazzo Volta (where the great physicist lived) - which is now the municipal building - has a beautiful loggia overlooking its inner courtyard. The Villa Camilla was built during the 19th century and is also worth a mention, as is the "Medioevo" complex, which is now the civic centre. The history of the church of Sant'Ippolito and Cassiano is equally fascinating. The church was once famed for the presence of a fig tree, which grew on its bell tower up until 1929. For centuries, it remained the symbol of the city, until it died during a particularly harsh winter. The tree was replaced with a new one, which did not survive. Nonetheless, the fig tree has become

part of the town's folklore and news from the town today is still described as coming from "under the bell tower with the fig".

Leave Olgiate Comasco and take provincial road 23 to Appiano Gentile (where the Inter football team trains). Here, take a left towards on the road to Bulgarograsso to reach Cassina Rizzardi.

6

km
22,6

Cassina
Rizzardi

CASSINA RIZZARDI. The town's name derives from the noble family who were once the feudal lords of the town: the Rizzardi. Ownership of the town later passed to the Lucini family, before being owned by the Marchesi Porro Lambertenghi, who built a beautiful

villa in the 18th century where Silvio Pellico stayed as a tutor. The Centro di Gelsibachicoltura (Silkworm breeding Centre) is open to visitors from May to September. Visitors are shown how silkworms are raised and cared for at the centre. It also is worth travelling a few extra kilometres from Cassina Rizzardi to Vertemate con Minoprio. Here, we recommend a stop at Villa Raimondi, the seat of the Minoprio Foundation. The park of this famous gardening school is open to the public (www.fondazioneminoprio.it).

Carry on towards Cantù, taking state road 35 to Cermenate. At the roundabout, turn left on provincial road 34 to Cantù.



7

km

36,8

Cantù

CANTU'. The city specialises furniture-making, elevating the woodworking activities it carried out at the beginning of the 20th century to the level of industrial production. Woodworking was a traditional winter occupation for local men, while the women perfected lace and bobbin lace making. Of the 100 towers which used to be its main feature, a single Romanesqueesque bell tower belonging to the Basilica di San Paolo remains standing today. However, proof of its elegant architectural style and the city's ancient faith has left its mark in the curves of the age-old Galliano complex, which includes the Basilica of San Vincenzo and the Baptistry. Located on a hill on the outskirts of the town, these are amongst the most significant Romanesqueesque buildings found in Lombardy. Visitors are also welcome and encouraged to take stroll around the design and furnishing gallery known as the CLAC (www.clacsr.it) and the Museo del Legno (Wood Museum) "Riva 1920 Centre" (www.riva1920.it).

Leaving Cantù, follow the signs for Capiago/Intimiano to reach Montorfano.

8

km

44,7

Montorfano

MONTORFANO. The town is located southeast of Como and overlooks its charming homonym lake. Surrounded by morainic hills, this is the smallest lake of the Brianza region and is fed by underground sources. The beautiful water lilies which bloom on its surface during the summer make it highly unique in botanical terms. However, the most unusual feature in Montorfano is indubitably the hill (554 m) which rises like a solitary peak - completely detached and separate from the rest - known as the "Mons Orphanus". The town's piazza is highly striking. Rectangular in shape and with the charm of the 16th century, it plays host to the small church of San Giovanni Evangelista at its bottom. The prestigious Golf Club Villa d'Este is found near the lake.

km

52,1

Como

From Montorfano, make your way to Lipomo before heading down to Como. And you back to where you started.

