

ITALY

# The Lakes

A Guided Walking Adventure





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## Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been

anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **Milan Pre-tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



## Overview

The long, thin fingers of these three beautiful lakes stretch from Switzerland into Italy, drawing together Alpine and southern scenery in delightful juxtaposition. This walking experience unfolds against the backdrop of sculpted mountain peaks, and beside the reflections of crystal Alpine lakes. The walks in this beautifully varied landscape allow you to wander back through the ages along medieval footpaths, exploring colorful lakeside villages and traditional hillside hamlets.

The itinerary includes three distinct lakes: Lake Orta, the smallest, peaceful and rich with history from many eras; Lake Maggiore, where the rustic way of the fisherman's life contrasts dramatically with formal gardens and sumptuous villas; and Lake Como, the stunningly elegant lake and landscape that has inspired poets, artists, and writers, and has enchanted walkers for centuries. The walking is as varied as the landscape. You wander through forests under arched canopies of chestnut and oak leaves, down narrow cobblestone streets lined with cafés and artisans' shops, along rugged paths laid out in granite steps, through terraced vineyards and olive groves, and across the soft carpets of tended villa lawns.



# Daily Itinerary

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## DAY 1

Meeting in Milan. Lake Orta; 2 miles, easy

Upon meeting in Milan, you transfer by private coach to the idyllic medieval village of Orta San Giulio, nestled on the eastern shore of Lake Orta. At only eight miles long and two miles wide, Lake Orta—known for its serenity, simplicity, and religious devotion—is one of the smallest of Italian lakes. You set off directly on foot, following the lakeside promenade to explore the charming village and its rich architecture.

From the town's waterfront, Piazza Motta, you gently ascend the pilgrims' way, a cobbled path that rises under the shade of pine, beech, and ash trees to the plateau of the Sacro Monte monastic complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site erected primarily in the 17th century. This unique site holds 20 Baroque chapels filled with life-sized terracotta statues and frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis of Assisi. From this tranquil vantage point, you survey the jewel-like lake and the islet of San Giulio, set against the striking backdrop of forests and granite outcroppings. Meandering back towards the village, the cobblestone paths lead to the lakeshore with its colorful fishing boats and narrow streets.

You arrive on foot at your delightful four-star lakeside hotel, set within the ancient walls of a 17th-century stone-cloistered convent. There is time to settle

into your comfortable lakeview room before gathering in town at a cozy 16th-century wine bar for a welcome *aperitivo*—rich mountain cheeses, cured meats, and a sampling of several renowned wines from the neighboring Piedmont region will likely be offered. Dinner, perhaps beef carpaccio or smoked salmon, followed by a delicious lake fish or fillet of veal in white truffle sauce, is at your hotel’s restaurant—an enchanting setting with views of the dramatic medieval basilica of the Isola San Giulio illuminated against the night sky.



### **Hotel San Rocco, Orta San Giulio**

Housed within a former 17th-century convent, this elegant lakeside resort features comfortable, contemporary rooms with lake views. Amenities include an outdoor pool and expansive terrace with views of Lake Orta.

### **DAY 2**

Orta to Pella to Isola San Giulio; 5 miles, moderate, 800-ft. elevation gain and an initial 25-minute steep ascent

The day begins with a boat ride to the picturesque town of Pella, situated directly across the lake on the western shore of Lake Orta. From here, you wind up centuries-old stone pathways under a canopy of chestnut, oak, and large beech trees to a small collection of secluded villages and hamlets. In this mystical setting, you feel as though you have stepped back in time, to when these pathways were main thoroughfares. Looping back down a cobblestone path through apple, pear, and persimmon trees, you arrive at the lakeside, where a boat is waiting to return you to Orta San Giulio in time for an independent lunch in the town’s picturesque central square or along one of the many inviting alleyways—choices range from a lively, local trattoria to a simple pizzeria. Following lunch, there is time to explore the many delights of Orta San Giulio at your own pace.

In the late afternoon, a short boat crossing brings you to Isola San Giulio, named for the 4th-century Saint Julius who legendarily brought Christianity to the region after eradicating the island of a variety of snakes and monsters. Here on this tiny island, known as the “Island of Silence,” you visit the renowned and



beautifully frescoed Basilica di San Giulio, originally founded by Saint Julius in 390 A.D. From here you meander down a single footpath which encircles the island—La Via del Silenzio (“The Way of Silence”—though if you follow it in the other direction it curiously becomes “The Way of Meditation”). As you walk past old greystone buildings clustered around the basilica and elegant

villas framing the shoreline, you come across small plaques in several languages that remind you that you are in a place of reflection: “If you can be yourself, you are everything,” advises one. Dinner this evening is a 15-minute private boat ride away at a lakeside trattoria, where you sample more regional specialties, such as champagne risotto followed by a tender fillet of Fassone, Piedmont’s prized beef.

### Hotel San Rocco, Orta San Giulio

#### DAY 3

Orta to Armeno to Coiromonte to Gignese; 5.5 miles or 10 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,000-ft. to 2,000-ft. elevation gains

Departing from Orta San Giulio on foot and then by bus, your guide(s) may choose one of two walk options, depending upon recent weather conditions. If conditions are dry, the first option begins at the village of Armeno, from where you begin a steady ascent alongside the Ondella River through beech and chestnut forest and across several small streams to the mountain village of Coiromonte. Alternatively, a short bus ride delivers you to the lakeside village of Pettenasco. Ascending through forests and tiered hillside pastures, the trail arrives in the village of Armeno in time for a late-morning coffee. You may opt to be driven to lunch or to continue on foot through this pastoral landscape, climbing up to Coiromonte where you break for a lunch of local cheese and *prosciutto crudo*, *caprese* salad, and pizza.

Following lunch, a beautiful trail through pine and birch forests leads to the open meadows of the Tre Montagnette, which marks the highest point of the day’s walk (45-minute/1,000-foot ascent). The view is superb from this point at 3,600 feet, with Lakes Orta and Maggiore framed below by soaring mountain chains—the most remarkable being the distant snow-covered peak of Monte

Rosa. With a summit just over the border in Switzerland of 15,203 feet, it is the second highest in the Alps and Western Europe. Following a descent in the direction of the town of Gignese on the watershed separating Lake Maggiore and Lake Orta, a short coach transfer then brings you to the resort town of Stresa on the shores of Lake Maggiore.

The setting of Hemingway's *A Farewell to*

*Arms*, Lake Maggiore is a captivating 40-mile-long lake with its western shore in Piedmont, eastern shore in Lombardy, and northern shoreline bordering the Swiss canton of Ticino.



From Stresa you board a boat to Isola dei Pescatori (Fishermen's Island), where you receive a warm welcome at your charming hotel, spectacularly situated in the middle of the lake. Each of the 12 rooms of this historical, green-shuttered hotel is named after a local flower and features views of the Borromeo Gulf and flower-filled balconies. Inhabited since the 16th century, this tiny island still retains its original fishing-village atmosphere.

There is time to relax, have a swim in the lake, or to explore the quiet alleyways of this romantic isle. Weather permitting, a dinner featuring fresh lake fish—perhaps delicately flavored perch, the symbol of Lake Maggiore—is served alfresco on the hotel's terrace overlooking the sparkling lights of nearby islands and passing ferry boats.

### **Hotel Verbano, Isola dei Pescatori**

A small, charming hotel on a tiny island in the middle of Lake Maggiore, with terraced dining overlooking the lake. Guest rooms open onto a large terrace or individual balconies. Please note that this hotel does not have air conditioning.

### **DAY 4**

Lake Maggiore and Isola Bella exploration; 1 mile, easy. Transfer to Bellagio. Villa Melzi to Hotel Belvedere; 1 mile, easy

After breakfast, the morning is spent exploring the Borromeo Isles—specifically the tiny Isola Bella, which is entirely occupied by the Palazzo Borromeo and its Italian garden. Built in the 17th century for the Borromeo family, this splendid summer palace features a wealth of paintings by Lombard



artists, sculptures by Canova, and Flemish tapestries. Mussolini attempted to ward off WWII here at the Conference of Stresa in April of 1935. Following a guided tour of the palace, wander the opulently sculpted gardens rising from the water's edge—a pyramidal succession of 10 terraces culminating in a square. Gravel walkways, shaded by orange and lemon

trees, meander past 17th-century statues, pebble-studded grottoes, white peacocks, and luxuriant vegetation—laurels, cedars, magnolias, cork oaks, sago palms, heliotrope, camellias, and oleanders.

Nearing lunchtime, you boat back to the mainland and the lakeshore town of Stresa. Following time for an independent lunch and exploration, you are picked up by a private boat to cross the lake to the town of Laveno, from where you embark on an approximately two-hour coach transfer to the tiny town of Cadenabbia, situated on the western shore of Lake Como. From here you board a ferry to the picturesque town of Bellagio, “the pearl of Lake Como” and your home for the next three nights.

Set magnificently on the promontory where Lake Como and Lake Lecco meet, you are positioned to experience the best these elegant lakes have to offer. Setting off directly from the ferry dock, a short stroll down a scenic waterfront path brings you to the magnificent Villa Melzi, built in 1808 for the Duke Francesco Melzi d'Eril, assistant to Napoleon, and now home to a distinguished Lombardian family. Following a visit to the manicured lawns and luxuriant gardens of this heavenly white villa, you make your way to your hotel on foot.

The elegant Hotel Belvedere, owned and run by five generations of women from the same family since 1880, is tranquilly located a few minutes' walk above the shops, restaurants, and traffic-free waterfront of Bellagio, and overlooks the crystal-blue waters of Lake Como and surrounding mountains. The hotel's private gardens, with a heated outdoor swimming pool and large panoramic Jacuzzi and spa, are yours to enjoy over the next few days. Dinner, at your resort hotel, rounds off an inspiring day.



## Hotel Belvedere, Bellagio

A comfortable, family-run resort hotel comprised of several separate villas. Extensive grounds include an outdoor swimming pool that offers stunning views of Lake Como and the surrounding hills.

### DAY 5

Villa Carlotta and Villa del Balbianello; 4.5 miles, moderate with a 30-minute ascent. Additional option: Madonna del Soccorso; 2 miles, moderate with a 25-minute steep ascent, 300 to 800-ft. elevation gain



The day begins with a ferry ride to the resort town of Tremezzo, situated on the stunning western side of Lake Como. Here you tour the 17th-century Villa Carlotta, whose famous works of art and terraced gardens of rhododendrons, azaleas, and camellias have inspired poets and travelers for centuries. Ascending the gentle hills above the lake, you walk through ancient villages and along terraced footpaths that seem a world away from the elegant lifestyle of the lakeside resort towns. Following a short break, you have the option to descend to the quaint fishing village of Lenno where, after some time to explore the town's narrow, cobblestone streets, you enjoy a leisurely lunch at one of the many fine restaurants or cafés gracing the waterfront promenade. Alternatively, those inspired to walk a little farther, by way of a cobblestone pilgrimage pathway marked with chapels symbolizing the Mysteries of the Rosary, will be graced with a magnificent view of the lake from the vantage point of the Madonna del Soccorso sanctuary. If choosing the latter option, a light lunch, perhaps a tasty *panino*, is served at the sanctuary before you descend to Lenno, where you reunite as a group.

This afternoon, you embark on a private boat ride to Villa del Balbianello, situated at the tip of a small wooded peninsula overlooking Lake Como, almost opposite Bellagio. Built for Cardinal Angelo Maria Durini in 1787, the villa now belongs to the National Trust of Italy. It was here that one of the recent “Star Wars” films was shot, as well as a number of other feature films including “A Month by the Lake” and “Casino Royale.” Following a guided visit to the villa's elegant gardens and interior, you return to Bellagio with time to enjoy your hotel's amenities and appreciate the late-afternoon sun as it casts shadows on the hills over the lake. This evening, your guides provide ideas for dinner on your

own in town; the restaurant or trattoria menu may offer traditional polenta or pasta with porcini mushrooms and the fresh catch of the day—likely the local lake fish, *lavarello* or *missoltin*.

## **Hotel Belvedere, Bellagio**

### **DAY 6**

Varenna to Vezio; 3 miles, moderate with a 30-minute steep ascent

Following an enticing breakfast of homemade baked goods and preserves, eggs, cured meats and cheeses, you board a local ferry to Varenna, an attractive village on a small promontory. Considered by many to be the most picturesque town on Lake Como, Varenna boasts charming rustic houses, flower-filled balconies, winding alleyways, and a lovely lakeside promenade. The Sentiero del Viandante (Wayfarer Trail) takes you through the rugged hills above Lake Lecco, passing the Fiumelatte, a unique stream that (seasonally) is “the color of milk” as it froths over rocks and descends to the lake. Ascending through the forest, the trail traverses northward and enters the hamlet of Vezio, whose collection of ancient stone homes is inhabited by just 20 families. Cobblestone pathways lead to the ruins of the Castle of Vezio, perched high above the lake in a strategic position, providing views of the lake and the distant Alpine ranges one last time. Descending the steep, cobblestone pathway to Varenna, you arrive at a charming lakeside restaurant in time for a lunch of local delights.

Following a mid-afternoon ferry ride back to Bellagio, there is time for some last-minute shopping, exploration, or relaxing poolside before gathering again for an *aperitivo* on the panoramic terrace of your hotel; peanuts, olives, caper fruit, and savory puff pastries are accompanied by a selection of sparkling, white, and red regional wines. This evening’s farewell feast is at a favorite local restaurant; the menu, based on innovative variations of traditional specialties, features delicious homemade pasta and lake delicacies finished off with creatively presented, sumptuous desserts.

## **Hotel Belvedere, Bellagio**

### **DAY 7**

Departure from Milan

After enjoying a final breakfast, a private coach brings you to the train station in Milan for connections to your next destination.

## ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

## SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

**A Local Touch:** On this unforgettable tour of the Italian Lakes, we've chosen historical accommodations that are all locally owned. Imagine...lifting a glass of renowned Piedmont wine on the outdoor terrace of Hotel Verbano (your home for one night on Isola dei Pescatori) as the moon reflects off the surface of Lake Maggiore. Or dining in the acclaimed restaurant at Hotel Belvedere (run by the same family—and five generations of women—since 1880) and delighting in signature Italian dishes, regional wines, and an unrivaled view of Lake Como below. Throughout the tour, we support the locals working at the hotels—and the small businesses that supply each establishment with goods and provide outsourced services.

# Tour Itinerary Overview

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## TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

### Hotel Cavour (lobby), Milan, Italy, 1:00 p.m.

Via Fatebenefratelli, 21  
Milan, Italy  
Tel 011 39 02620001

## NIGHTS 1 & 2

### Hotel San Rocco

Orta San Giulio, Italy  
Tel 011 39 0322 911977  
Fax 011 39 0322 911964  
Email [info@hotelsanrocco.it](mailto:info@hotelsanrocco.it)

[hotelsanrocco.it](http://hotelsanrocco.it)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHT 3

### Hotel Verbano

Isola dei Pescatore, Italy  
Tel 011 39 0323 30408  
Fax 011 39 0323 33129  
Email [hotelverbano@tin.it](mailto:hotelverbano@tin.it)

[hotelverbano.it](http://hotelverbano.it)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## NIGHTS 4, 5, & 6

### Hotel Belvedere

Bellagio, Italy  
Tel 011 39 031 950410  
Fax 011 39 031 950102  
Email [belveder@tin.it](mailto:belveder@tin.it)

[belvederebellagio.com](http://belvederebellagio.com)

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

## TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

### Milan's Central Train Station, Milan, Italy, 11:00 a.m.

## TRAVEL DELAY AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

**If you are delayed while traveling, or experience any unforeseen situation en route to your tour, assistance is only a few, easy steps away:**

As a Country Walkers guest, you benefit from 24-hour, toll free access to One Call Emergency Hotline and Travel Assistance. Call the numbers below from anywhere in the world to get immediate assistance (regarding everything from lost luggage, to missed connections, to health concerns or notifying your guides or our local partners of a delayed arrival).

To contact One Call, please use one of the following methods:

**By Email:** [mail@oncallinternational.com](mailto:mail@oncallinternational.com)

**By Text:** 603.945.0103

**By Phone:**

**If calling from within the USA:** 800.555.9095

**If calling from outside the USA:** 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Planning and Travel Resources: AT&T International Access Codes. If you receive an automated response, when prompted, you can then enter either of the numbers above; One Call accepts collect calls 24/7.

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to **800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710**.

Should there be any problems placing a collect call (as is occasionally the case depending on the country), dial, email, or text One Call directly and ask them to return your call immediately to minimize any out of pocket costs.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

# Tour Facts at a Glance

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## **TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)**

7 days, 6 nights

## **DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE**

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

## **TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME**

Hotel Cavour (lobby), Milan, Italy, 1:00 p.m.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

Milan's Central Train Station, Milan, Italy, 11:00 a.m.

## **ACTIVITY LEVEL**

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate with challenging sections, with an average of 4 to 9 miles per day. There are daily ascents and descents. This tour has a combination of gradual and steep ascents, descents, and a few valleys. The climbing time on the ascents ranges from 15 to 45 minutes. There are very few long, flat stretches of trail. The terrain is a combination of hiking trails, narrow gravel roads, ancient cobblestone ways, and some single-track trails with loose stones or gravel. The pace on this tour is leisurely to allow for stops en route to explore villages, or to visit cultural and historical sites.

## **INCLUSIONS**

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for two lunches and one dinner; local wine included
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

## **LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN**

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

## **GRATUITIES**

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price, but additional tips are always welcome.

# Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

## TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

**Hotel Cavour (lobby), Milan, Italy, 1:00 p.m.**

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for an afternoon walk.

## MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Milan's (Milano) Malpensa Airport (MXP) or Linate Airport (LIN)  
**[sea-aerportimilano.it](http://sea-aerportimilano.it)**

Please refer to the Italian Government Tourist Office website, **[enit.it](http://enit.it)**, for additional information about Italian airports and transportation to and from the airport. You may also wish to visit the Italian Tourism Official Website at **[italia.it](http://italia.it)**.

## GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

**From Milan's Malpensa Airport:**

**By taxi:** A taxi from Milan's Malpensa Airport to the Hotel Cavour costs approximately 95 euros and takes one hour (or more).

**By private transfer:** A private transfer from Milan's Malpensa Airport to the Hotel Cavour may be arranged directly through the hotel for approximately 130 euros.

**By shuttle and taxi:** Airport coach shuttle service from Malpensa to the Milan Central Train Station costs approximately 10 euros and takes about 60 minutes. A taxi from the Central Train Station to the Hotel Cavour costs approximately 10 euros and takes about 10 minutes.

**By train and taxi:** The Malpensa Express Train (**[malpensaexpress.it](http://malpensaexpress.it)**) links Malpensa Airport to Milan's Cadorna (also called North, or Nord) Train Station and to Milan's Central Train Station (Milano Centrale). Trains leave every 20-30 minutes for the 40-60 minute journey. A taxi from either station to the Hotel Cavour costs approximately 10 euros and takes about 10 minutes.



### **From Milan's Linate Airport:**

**By taxi:** A taxi from Milan's Linate Airport costs approximately 40 euros and takes about 45 minutes.

**By shuttle and taxi:** Airport coach shuttle service from Linate to the Milan Central Train Station costs approximately 10 euros and takes about 20-30 minutes. A taxi from the Central Train Station to the Hotel Cavour costs approximately 10 euros and takes about 10 minutes.

### **RAIL INFORMATION**

Approximate travel times for train travel to Milan's Central Train Station from various Italian cities are as follows: from Florence: 1¾-2 hours; from Rome: 3½ hours; from Venice: 2½-3½ hours; from Turin: 1½-2 hours.

Please note: the above travel times are dependent upon train type and speed. Additionally, some of these journeys require station changes. For further rail information including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please contact either Rail Europe at 800.622.8600 or [raileurope.com](http://raileurope.com), or Trenitalia at [trenitalia.com](http://trenitalia.com) (Trenitalia operates most train services in Italy).

### **PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Hotel Cavour, the meeting point for your tour. We suggest making a hotel reservation as soon as possible as this property fills well in advance. Rates vary according to room type and season.

#### **Hotel Cavour**

Via Fatebenefratelli, 21  
20121 Milan, Italy  
Tel 011 39 02 620001  
Fax 011 39 02 6592263  
Email [info@hotelcavour.it](mailto:info@hotelcavour.it)  
[hotelcavour.it](http://hotelcavour.it)

An elegant four-star hotel in Milan's historic center, Hotel Cavour is within walking distance of the Duomo and La Scala and the city's main pedestrian and shopping areas. Family run for four generations, attention to detail is evident in every aspect of the hotel's classic decor from its gracious entrance hall, bar, and fine dining restaurant, to the comfortable soundproof guestrooms.

## **DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS**

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

## **TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME**

**Milan's Central Train Station, Milan, Italy, 11:00 a.m.**

Please note: Depending on traffic, we cannot guarantee arrival at Milan's Central Train Station prior to 11:00 a.m. If your travel plans necessitate an earlier departure, you may choose to arrange a private transfer (at your own expense) or taxi from the last hotel in Bellagio to Milan. A taxi from Bellagio to Milan's Malpensa Airport takes approximately 1½ hours and costs about 165 euros.

# Information & Policies

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## **GUARANTEED DEPARTURES**

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour\*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

*\*except in cases of force majeure*

## **GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

## **SCHEDULED GROUP INDIVIDUAL RESERVATIONS**

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255 and providing a \$350 per person deposit. The Balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date.

## **SCHEDULED GROUP CANCELLATION POLICY**

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost\*. Please notify us in writing.

*\*One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

## PRIVATE ADVENTURE RESERVATION & CANCELLATION POLICIES

If you are booking a Private Adventure, a \$500 nonrefundable group deposit is required to secure hotel reservations and guides. Once these arrangements are confirmed, the deposit will be applied as the provider's deposit for the trip. If we are unable to secure the hotel and/or guides for your requested dates, this deposit will be refunded.

Once your Private Adventure is confirmed, your individual \$350 per person deposit is required within 14 days. The balance of your payment (final tour cost) is due 90 days prior to the tour departure date. Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150 (plus the nonrefundable group deposit of \$500); cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. **Please note that Private Adventure tour pricing is based on a guarantee of a specified number of guests. Should the group decrease in size, we reserve the right to alter the per person price, if necessary.**

# Italy at a Glance

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## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS



**U.S. citizens:** Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

## CURRENCY

Italy uses the euro (EUR). For current exchange rates, visit [oanda.com](http://oanda.com).

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

### Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

## TIME ZONE

Italy is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus 6 hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see: [worldtimezone.com](http://worldtimezone.com).

## PHONE & INTERNET

Italy country code: +39

Cell phone coverage throughout Italy is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to [countrywalkers.com/phones](http://countrywalkers.com/phones).



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

## LANGUAGE

Italian is Italy's official language.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see [bbc.co.uk/languages/italian](http://bbc.co.uk/languages/italian) or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

### Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

## ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 220V and 50Hz is used in Italy. Plugs have two round prongs. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see [electricaloutlet.org](http://electricaloutlet.org)

## WEATHER

Italy has a range of climates, depending on the region. In general, spring and fall are ideal for an active vacation, with daytime temperatures in the 60s to low 70s, evenings in the 50s, and occasional

short rain showers.

In the northern Alpine areas, summer through early fall is an optimal time to travel. Springtime brings wildflowers, long days, and, on the table, early tender vegetables such as asparagus and artichokes. By late summer and fall, the warm days continue with highs in the low 80s, landscapes take on a golden hue as the grape harvest gets underway, and autumn specialties appear, such as mushrooms and truffles.

For up-to-date forecasts, see [qwikcast.com](http://qwikcast.com). For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see [weatherbase.com](http://weatherbase.com).

## ITALIAN CUISINE & WINE



Considered one of the world's finest cuisines, Italian food is undoubtedly one of the best things about traveling in Italy. Based on fresh local ingredients, Italian cooking is consequently very regional.

Northern Italy is the home of risotto, polenta, and slow-cooked meat dishes such as *osso bucco*. The cuisine of Tuscany and Umbria in central Italy also features meat and game dishes, such as *bistecca alla fiorentina* (Florentine steak),

sausages, and roast pork, as well as vegetable- and bread-based dishes such as savory bruschetta, *ribollita* (vegetable soup), and *panzanella* (bread salad).

Southern Italy and Sicily are justly known for fresh seafood—spaghetti with tiny clams, or a main course of swordfish braised in a light tomato sauce—and fresh vegetables are also prominent—spaghetti with zucchini, or the well-known *insalata caprese* of tomatoes, basil, and fresh mozzarella cheese.

Meals in Italy typically have several courses, starting with an *antipasto* (an appetizer); then a *primo* (first course), which is usually pasta or risotto; a *secondo* (main course), which is a meat or fish dish; and *dolce* (dessert).

Wine has been produced in Italy for millennia, and the country's climate and geography of coastline, foothills, and mountains allow grape growing in 20 regions from the Alps in the north to southernmost Sicily. Restaurants feature their regions' local wine.

Please see the detailed itinerary for region-specific sample menus, local delicacies, and wines.

### Travel Tip

Coffee is served throughout the day in its many different ways. Italians tend to drink *caffè latte* or cappuccino until about 11:00 a.m. (a *latte* is a cup of hot milk). After 11:00 a.m., they usually drink *un caffè* (espresso). If you'd like it with a little milk you should order a *macchiato*. You'll need to specify if you want it *con latte caldo* (with hot milk), or *con latte freddo* (with cold milk), or *con schiuma* (with foam). Lastly, there's no charge to stand at the bar with a drink, but a small fee is added to the bill when you sit at a café table.

## LIFE IN ITALY



### Shopping hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., and from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; department stores and supermarkets are open all day from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Open-air markets generally open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., although in larger cities such as Florence, open-air markets are typically open all day, even on Sundays.

### Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. Lunch is served in restaurants from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. (Restaurant meal times may vary by region, trending from earlier to later as you travel from north to south.)

### Travel Tip

Most restaurants have a “cover charge” or *il coperto*, a per-person fee of one to three euros that is added to your final bill. It is a legitimate practice and it is considered the “fee” for the place setting, the bread, tap water (which is fine to drink), and breadsticks.

### Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is not compulsory in Italy. In restaurants the menu or bill indicates *servizio incluso*, meaning “service is included.” However, locals tend to leave a small amount in coins after a meal or a coffee—roughly one to two percent of the total, or one to two euros for a meal of up to 50 euros. For a coffee or a drink in a bar or café, 20 to 50 euro cents is appropriate.

Taxi drivers aren’t generally tipped, but you could round up the total, letting the driver keep the change. For luggage assistance, a small tip of one to three euros is appropriate.

## TRAVEL RESOURCES

### National Italian tourist board official sites

[italia.it](http://italia.it) and [enit.it](http://enit.it)

### Italian public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Italian public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Italian tourist board’s website noted above, then click on Useful Information, More Information, and National Public Holidays. For local events, visit the regional tourism websites (links can be found on the region’s page on [italia.it](http://italia.it), in the Discover Italy section).

### Travel Tip

Be aware that you may need to validate your train ticket by “punching” it before boarding, using a small machine located on the train platform, which stamps the time and date on it.

## TRAVEL IN ITALY

### Trains

**Trenitalia:** [trenitalia.it](http://trenitalia.it) (Italy’s national train company)

**Raileurope:** [raileurope.com](http://raileurope.com) or 800.622.8600, a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and

convenient choice for European train travel.)





### **Other local transportation**

In addition to its excellent rail network, Italy also has several regional airlines, many regional bus lines, and, in coastal and lake regions, local ferries. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance).

Most major car rental agencies are available at Italian airports and train stations. For more information contact Country Walkers, or go to [italia.it](http://italia.it), and click on “Useful Information.” For driving, you can further navigate to “Rules to drive in Italy.”

### **Museum information and online reservations**

[tickitaly.com](http://tickitaly.com)

# Packing List

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## PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

## FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 4-9 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes for evening strolls on uneven, cobblestone streets
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

## CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)

- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » Light jacket or sweater for evening strolls and alfresco dining

## **OUTERWEAR**

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

## **EQUIPMENT**

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of one liter)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)

## **OPTIONAL**

- » Telescopic walking sticks. (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are highly recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars
- » Bathing suit for optional swimming in the lakes or hotel pools
- » Flip flops or water sandals
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen

- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not provide them)
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Motion sickness bracelets or other non-sleep-inducing remedy if prone to motion sickness on bus or boat rides
- » Alarm clock (hotels do provide wake-up calls)