Bicycle Tours in Italy: Cycling Italy's Lakes District

OVERVIEW

Italy's Lakes District has always been a transition zone between peninsular Italy and Alpine Europe. This series of lakes created by the melt-water of alpine glaciers enjoys a unique micro-climate that harbors olive and citrus groves, exotic botanic gardens, villas, and extraordinary vistas. Long an attraction for writers and artists, the Lake District provides an incomparable bicycle experience. You'll cycle from Lago Maggiore to Lake Lugano and Lake Como on this tour.

If this sounds great but you'd prefer a longer tour, check out our Cycling Italy's Lakes District Plus! tour.

HIGHLIGHTS

Lake Maggiore, Stresa, Lake Lugano, Lugano, Switzerland, Campione d'Italia, Lake Como, Madonna del Ghisallo Bicycle Museum, Two 2-night stays

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/classic
Includes	7 days, 6 nights accommodation; meals as noted in itinerary; ferry crossings
Countries	Italy
Begin/End	Verbania / Como
Arrive/Depart	Milan Malpensa Airport (MXP)
Total Distance	208 km (128 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	Average distance per riding day 44 km (27 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	
Keep in Mind	We work hard to maintain consistency across all of our tours, but some trips have unique differences. Here are some things to keep in mind about this tour. The currencies on tour will be Euros in Italy and Swiss Francs in Switzerland, though Euros will be accepted in Switzerland as well. Please note that it is not possible to withdraw Euros from ATMs in Switzerland with US-American credit cards.

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the online itinerary for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:
https://dev.experienceplus.com/bike-tours/italy/piedmont/biking-italys-lakes-district

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
Jun 21, 2024	USD$4395	USD$550
Sep 06, 2024	USD$4395	USD$550

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	58km / 887m (36mi / 2909ft)	Hilly		
3	24km / 556m (15mi / 1824ft)	Very hilly		Today's ride is an optional loop ride
4	63km / 979m (39mi / 3211ft)	Mountainous		
5	37km / 962m (23mi / 3155ft)	Very hilly		Today's ride is an optional loop ride
6	47km / 793m (29mi / 2601ft)	Very hilly		
7	Last Day			

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ARRIVAL INFO

Meeting time 2 p.m. - on Day 1, meet your fellow cyclists and Tour Leaders at the Day 1 Hotel specified on the itinerary.

Note:

As you are planning, remember that the hotels listed in our itineraries are our primary hotels and are - in rare cases - subject to change. Before you make arrangements, check with us if your tour departure is guaranteed. If your tour departure is out further than 6 months, please also check with us as there might be slight changes to the itinerary.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio. The fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

We recommend flying into the Milano Malpensa Airport (MXP). If you arrive from within Europe, you will likely arrive at the Milano Linate Airport (LIN).

Arriving at Milano Malpensa and continuing to Intra-Verbania:

1. Airport Shuttle from the Malpensa terminal to Verbania Pallanza (stop is called Piazza Antonio Gramsci) (reservations required but payment in cash only on board) (1.5 hours/EUR 15)
2. Taxi from the bus stop to the hotel (5 min/EUR 10).

Or:

- Taxi from the Malpensa Airport to the Day Hotel (1 hour/EUR 200 minimum)

Look up Italian train schedules at Trenitalia.com or Trainline.eu. Questions? See our information on taking trains in Europe here or ask us.

DEPARTURE INFO

Your trip ends on the final day after breakfast.

The below information will help you plan your departure. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio.

The closest Airport is Milano Malpensa Airport (MXP):

1. Walk from June ending hotel/September ending hotel to the Como Nord Lago train station (5 min)
2. Train from Como Nord Lago to Malpensa Aeroporto (pre-booking not necessary) (1 hour 18 min/fares vary)

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Tour Begins on Lake Maggiore North of Milan

DAY 1: Fri, Jun 23rd

Highlights Italy's most famous Alpine lake, Stresa, the Borromean Islands

Meet this afternoon in Verbania, on the shores of Lake Maggiore, perhaps the most celebrated lake in Italy's lake district. Surrounded by 7,000 foot alpine peaks Lake Maggiore enjoys a warm micro-climate that has attracted vacationers since the Milanese aristocracy began building villas here in the 17th century. Come early and visit the Borromean Islands, including Isola Bella and Isola dei Pescatori (of the "fishermen"), the villas of Stresa, and the botanic gardens of Pallanza. We fit bicycles this afternoon and will suggest a warm up ride for you on a bike path along the lake. Welcome dinner together.

Meals Dinner

Lodging Grand Hotel Majestic

Ferry to Laveno, Bicycle to Lugano

DAY 2: Sat, Jun 24th

Highlights Ferry across Lake Maggiore, Lugano Switzerland, Rail to Trail Bike Path to Ponte Tresa, Swiss chocolate

Enjoy the views across Lake Maggiore and into the high Alps as we ferry across Lake Maggiore to Laveno, the only natural harbor on the east side of the lake. From here you'll pedal into the Cuvia Valley and over a small pass into Val Ganna where we join a rails to trails bike path to Ponte Tresa, where we will cross the border into Switzerland. Your ride continues along Lake Lugano for more great views on the Swiss Alps before arriving in the bustling city of Lugano, your destination for today.

Distance 58 km (36 mi)

Gain 887 m (2909 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging Hotel International au Lac

Rest Day on the shores of Lake Lugano

DAY 3: Sun, Jun 25th

Highlights Explore the bustling city of Lugano, loop ride

This morning you have plenty of options: take a little more time to explore this vibrant city's shopping and museum opportunities; or take the funicular to the top of Monte Bre' for a spectacular view over the lake. For those who want to ride there is the chance to go for a ride along the shores and hills of Lake Lugano your climbing efforts will be rewarded with great views of the lake and surrounding mountains.

Distance 24 km (15 mi)

Gain 556 m (1824 ft)

Terrain Very hilly

Level

Meals Breakfast

Lodging Hotel International au Lac

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Bicycle Lugano to Menaggio, Lake Como

DAY 4: Mon, Jun 26th

Highlights Lake Lugano climbing towards the Swiss/Italian border, or ferry on Lugano Lake back to Italy, Menaggio

Unlike Lake Maggiore and Lake Lugano, which are shared between Italy and Switzerland, Lake Como is strictly Italian. Lake Como (also called Lario) is one of the most beautiful of the Italian lakes. It is famous for its villas, including Villa d'Este in Cernobbio and Villa Carlotta in Tremezzo. There is a shorter (15 km - 10 miles) and easier ride option available. We'll spend the next two nights on the shores of Lake Como.

Distance 63 km (39 mi)
Gain 979 m (3211 ft)
Terrain Mountainous
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Hotel du Lac e La Dependance
Grand Hotel Cadenabbia

Menaggio on Lake Como

DAY 5: Tue, Jun 27th

Highlights Villa Melzi, Villa Serbelloni, Madonna del Ghisallo Bicycle Museum

There are plenty of opportunities to explore today: Visit the lakeside gardens of Villas Melzi and Serbelloni; ferry to Varenna and visit the gardens of Villa Cipressi and Villa Monastero. If you are looking for a cycling challenge you can pedal to the internationally known Madonna del Ghisallo chapel and bicycle museum at the top of the pass near Magréglio, not far from Bellagio.

Distance 37 km (23 mi)
Gain 962 m (3155 ft)
Terrain Very hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Hotel du Lac e La Dependance
Grand Hotel Cadenabbia

Ride to Como

DAY 6: Wed, Jun 28th

Highlights Como, lakeside riding

Our ride today takes us along the Lecco arm of Lake Como and up a short climb to Asso. From here we head downhill towards the plain. Our destination is the famous city of Como at the southern-most end of Lake Como.

Distance 47 km (29 mi)
Gain 793 m (2601 ft)
Terrain Very hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Albergo Firenze

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Tour ends in Como

DAY 7: Thu, Jun 29th

Highlights Como

Meals Breakfast

Stick around and explore this lovely city or head to Venice or Milan both well-connected by train. Whatever you do enjoy!

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include the three most important aspects of a guided bike tour.

- Superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing ExperiencePlus!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer Tours excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: https://ep-2023.localhost/what-to-expect/our-bikes/. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer tours we include a GPS device on all bikes. We ask that you bring your own helmet to ensure the best fit. If you would like us to provide you with a used helmet, please contact us.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

Each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information also includes Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks. On tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths.

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Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options.

Need Fewer Miles? If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM:

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5% of the tour cost per traveler — this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

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OUR TOUR STYLES

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers. No matter what you are looking for in a cycling vacation, we have a tour with just the right pace for you.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? then our Classic style bike tours are for you! Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars, most itineraries include at least one two-night stay at the same hotel.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars, occasional multi-night stays at the same hotel.
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Group riding and GPS
- Price: $$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars, typically there is a 2-night hotel stay every 5-7 days.
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

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Bike Tour Levels

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 — 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

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TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- ☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- ☐ Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- ☐ Complete the Customer Information Form: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/customer-information-form/
- ☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/travel-insurance/
- ☐ Choose a bicycle training program: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/
- ☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- ☐ Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- ☐ Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- ☐ Begin your chosen training program
- ☐ Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/.
- ☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/packing/.
- ☐ We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!

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