

Bellagio

BELLAGGIO



Promobellagio

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Who we are

Promobellagio

Promobellagio was formed in 1986 as a commercial association representing the town's businesses with the aim of making Bellagio better known as a tourist location, working as a meeting point and a link between tourists and the various activities in the Bellagio area.

The association currently has almost 140 active members.

Promobellagio activities are also supported by the Tourist Office of Bellagio Municipality.

This press kit is dedicated to the community of Bellagio, to visitors and journalists. It offers a brief overview of the history and attractions of Bellagio and hopes to intrigue the reader to come and personally discover the beauty of the area.

Where we are

Position

Bellagio's position is truly exceptional, even among the thousands of enchanting Italian locations.

Italy offers a wonderful series of lakes, which have always attracted tourists and visitors. These ancient glacial lakes vary from the great expanses of Lake Garda (370 sq. km) to the tiny lakes of Olginate and Segrino (less than a single square kilometer each).

Lake Como is the richest of Italy's three major lakes in terms of charm and culture. Its unmistakable upturned Y shape was carved out by a glacier that was forced to split into two by the mountain that stood in its path. The lake offers the visitor the longest and most indented coastline of all the Italian lakes (170 km) as well as some of the most delightful natural, architectural gems of the entire peninsular.

Bellagio occupies the most scintillating spot in this earthly paradise; the extreme point of the promontory which divides the two southern branches of the lake.

The result is truly surprising: a delightful little town with its perfectly preserved architectural treasures.

This is Bellagio, "*the Pearl of Lake Como*": just a short drive from Milan, Como, and Bergamo, Varese or the Swiss border. An oasis of beauty, which can be easily reached, but is at the same time protected from the commotion of mass tourism. Bellagio is equipped with all the facilities to receive the most discerning visitors and, at the same time, offers families a serene, relaxing and varied holiday.

Info in brief

Lake Como

(Also known as Lario, from “Larius”, its ancient Latin name)

- ❖ Surface area: 146 km²
- ❖ Breadth (at broadest point): 4.3 km
- ❖ Narrowest point 650 m
- ❖ Max. depth: 410 m (the 5th deepest in Europe after 4 Norwegian lakes)
- ❖ Perimeter: 170 km
- ❖ Altitude: 198 m above sea level
- ❖ Provinces: Como, Lecco

Bellagio - General Information

- ❖ Province: Como, Lombardia, Northern Italy
- ❖ Population 2015: 3.690
- ❖ Average summer temperatures: max. 28°C min 18°C

Accommodation Facilities

- ❖ Hotels (from 1 to 5 stars)
- ❖ Residences
- ❖ Apartments
- ❖ Bed & breakfast

Attractions

- ❖ Historic churches: San Giorgio - Basilica di San Giacomo
- ❖ Churches in the surrounding area: San Giovanni – Chiesa della Madonna del Rosario in San
- ❖ Martino - Santa Maria di Loppia
- ❖ Museum “*Museo degli Strumenti per la navigazione*” Museum of navigation instruments (an exhibition of more than two hundred precious pieces which allow men to find their way towards unknown lands)
- ❖ *Tower of the Arts* – arts exhibition centre

Walking in the area

- ❖ Punta Spartivento *10 minuti*
- ❖ Pescallo *15 minuti*
- ❖ Loppia *25 minuti*
- ❖ San Giovanni *35 minuti*
- ❖ Mulini del Perlo *1 ora*
- ❖ Chevrio-Makallè *1 ora e 30 minuti*
- ❖ Piano Rancio *2 ore e 30 minuti*
- ❖ Monte San Primo *2 ore per arrivare ai 1.686 mt. della vetta partendo dall'Alpe delle Ville, ai piedi della montagna*

Excursions by boat

- ❖ Tour of the Bellagio promontory *20 min*
- ❖ Varenna *20 min*
- ❖ Punta Balbianello *30 min*
- ❖ Bellano *30 min*
- ❖ Isola Comacina *35 min*
- ❖ Piona Abbey *2 h*

Other interesting excursions

- ❖ Como (famous for its silk industry)
- ❖ Bellagio greenhouses
- ❖ The church at Ghisallo Madonna del Ghisallo dedicated to cyclists and the interesting Cycling Museum
- ❖ Museum of boating on the lake (Pianello del Lario - 30 min)
- ❖ Bergamo - 45 km
- ❖ Lugano (Switzerland) – 25 km from Menaggio

Local crafts

- ❖ Glassblowing
- ❖ Wood carving
- ❖ Leatherwork
- ❖ Ceramics
- ❖ Horticulture
- ❖ Wax candles

Events

- ❖ Classic Music Concerts during the summer
- ❖ Old and Classical Sailing Trophy Villa Serbelloni – September
- ❖ International Watercolor Festival – biennial exhibition, April
- ❖ Art exhibitions

Sports facilities

- ❖ Five a side football
- ❖ Soccer
- ❖ Golf: one 18 hole course in Grandola, above Menaggio, 20 minutes from Bellagio.
- ❖ Other golf courses are located in the Como area (32 km) and in Lecco (22 km).
- ❖ Gymnasium
- ❖ Fitness centre
- ❖ Swimming pool with instructors
- ❖ Squash
- ❖ Tennis 5 courts which also offer lessons and racquet hire

Water Sports (lessons and equipment hire)

- ❖ Canoeing
- ❖ Water skiing
- ❖ Canyoning
- ❖ Windsurfing
- ❖ Sailing
- ❖ Fishing
- ❖ Motorboats and water-scooters

Altri sport praticabili:

- ❖ Biking and Mountain biking (bike hire)
- ❖ Downhill park at Monte San Primo
- ❖ Trekking
- ❖ Rock climbing
- ❖ Horse riding
- ❖ Parachuting
- ❖ Paragliding
- ❖ Badminton
- ❖ Skiing

Climate

Bellagio has the most wonderful climate: sunny and temperate, never too hot never too cold.

Despite the fact that it is so close to the mountains, Lake Como enjoys a constant, mild climate thanks to the great mass of water, which mitigates any changes in temperature, just like the Ligurian Riviera. Olive trees grow on the lakeshore and an enormous variety of flowers are cultivated in gardens, which also display palm trees, cypresses and citrus fruits.

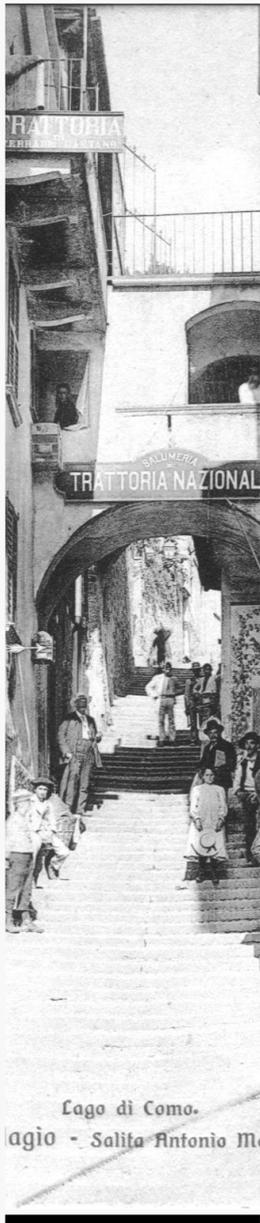
Thanks to these conditions the winters are milder and the summers cooler than regions of the same latitude and altitude. The annual average temperature is higher and the daily range lower (the range is always less than 14 degrees C).

At Bellagio, this fortunate climate is emphasized by the position of the town at the very centre of the lake. It is sufficient to think of the numerous gardens with their exotic tropical plants. This is despite the fact that Bellagio is further north than Milan and Turin, and located on the same latitude as Lyon and Ljubljana.

The climate is particularly indicated for people who need a change of air but who do not easily tolerate the more extreme conditions that one often finds by the sea or in the mountains.

History

*Bellagio was already famous in the Roman era.
Its enchanting and strategic position has written its history.*



Holidays in Bellagio date back to ancient history.

The first person to leave a record of his stays in this spot was Pliny the Younger in the first century A.D. He owned two villas on the lake where he combined studying and writing with hunting and fishing.

Over the centuries, the strategic position at the centre of the lake made Bellagio important enough to be the object of contention many times.

For a long period during medieval times, the village was dominated by nearby Como, but in 1100, it was already a free commune with its own court. However, in 1154, Frederick Barbarossa brought it under allegiance to Como once more. In the 13th century, Bellagio became part of the Duchy of Milan under the Visconti family. The town was responsible for the surveillance of the lake, and for this reason the Magistrate known as 'Capitano del Lario', was armed with two boats, each with twenty oarsmen and sixty soldiers, which he used to patrol the waters against piracy and smugglers.

Around Bellagio and its Capitano an organization known as the "Lakeland Community" grew up to support the interests of the lakeside villages.

This community remained active for two centuries. During the 16th century, the Spanish took over as rulers of Lombardy and their domination of Bellagio lasted for two hundred years: this period was remembered in Alessandro Manzoni's masterpiece "*I Promessi Sposi*" (The Betrothed).

Suggestive reminders of the Spanish domination are the "Derta" steps, which connect Guggiate to San Primo.

The Bellagio fiefdom was bought in 1535 by the Sfondrati family who remained in charge of the area until 1788 when the last count died without an heir. At this time, the rights to the area were taken over by the Serbelloni family. Bellagio's more recent history, from Napoleonic times to the present day, is linked to its enchanting position and to the growing importance of tourism since the middle of the 18th century. A large number of splendid villas with fabulous parks sprang up on the promontory and the Lombard aristocracy would spend long periods here surrounded by illustrious guests, including many artists and poets.

During the 19th century, Bellagio became a court of considerable importance despite the fact that it was very difficult to reach the town in any way other than by crossing the lake. Towards the end of the century, the first luxury hotels were opened, offering the same levels of elegance and comfort as the finest hotels in Europe. The Bellagio Hotel was the first hotel to be opened in 1825, the result of the transformation of Abbondio Genazzini's old inn, which was then later transformed once again into Lake Como's first real hotel, the

Genazzini Hotel. Following this example several splendid hotels sprang up in a short time, many of which are still open today and several of which are still run by the founding families, such as the Hotel Florence (1858 - now the Hotel Du Lac), the Hotel de la Grande Bretagne (1861), a new Hotel Florence (built in 1870 on the site of what had been the residence of the Capitano del Lario), and the Grand Hotel Bellagio (1872 - now the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni with 200 rooms and 30 lounges). In 1888, the three major hotels (Genazzini, Grande Bretagne and Grande Hotel Bellagio) introduced electric lighting to the town as a substitute for gas. The finest family villas of the area followed only much later.

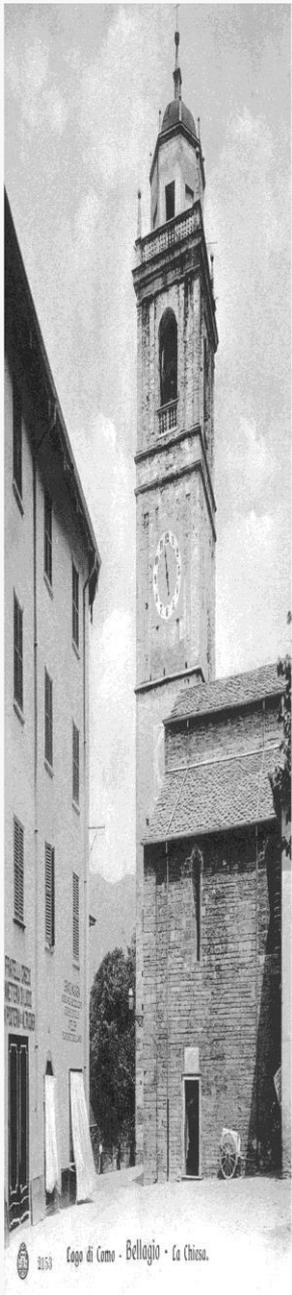
During the Belle Époque Bellagio offered three working theatres, at a time when Milan could only boast two!

Almost all of the most illustrious names of the last two centuries have signed the guest books of Bellagio: the great composer Franz Listz passed a long and enchanted honeymoon here with the Countess D'Agoult, and it was here that he wrote some of his immortal works. There was also no shortage of crowned heads: Maximilian I, the Empress of Russia Maria Feodorovna, the Emperors of Austria Franz I, Ferdinand and Franz Joseph, Kaiser Wilhelm, the King of Albania, Leopold I of Belgium, Queen Mary of Romania, Umberto and Margherita of Savoy and King Farouk of Egypt.

Many Italian and foreign artists and writers also came to stay, including Giuseppe Parini, Ippolito Pindemonte, Alessandro Manzoni, Tommaso Grossi, Ippolito Nievo, Stendhal, Gustave Flaubert and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. More recently, many famous film stars have fallen under the spell of Bellagio: Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Otto Fischer, Maria Schell, Clark Gable, Robert Mitchum, Romy Schneider and

Philippe Noiret (who came to film "A Woman at the Window"), Al Pacino and Marthe Keller (for "Bobby Deerfield"), Alberto Sordi, George Lucas, Natalie Portman, Ewan McGregor, Hyden Christensen, Robert De Niro and George Clooney. Bellagio was one of the first Italian tourist spots to become truly international, but it has never degenerated into a "tourist machine". The town succeeds in keeping its own reserved character, which allowed it to become aristocratic without being haughty. Like a true lady, Bellagio is simple, refined, and friendly. Moreover, Bellagio offers its visitors a wide range of hotels, restaurants and pizzerias, shops (from handcrafts, to furniture and clothes) and arts events. In particular, a new exhibition centre, the Tower of the Arts, was created for these new arts events. The building is in the heart of Bellagio: an ancient medieval tower, renovated in order to welcome different events.

During the year, local, national and international artists, workshops, press conferences, meetings, and book presentations and many other events are hosted here.



Villas and gardens

The villas and gardens of Bellagio are an exceptional testimony of aristocratic leisure in the nineteenth century.

Bellagio preserves intact the memory of that splendid era - which lasted for over a century – in which the town was one of the most exclusive, elegant and aristocratic resorts in Italy.

The villas of the area are an extraordinary example of fine architecture and landscaping and give a vivid picture of the lifestyle of an entire governing class. Almost all of the villas are in the neo-classical style of the Napoleonic era and, in fact, it was during those years and then throughout the rest of the century that many of the houses we see today were built. Others were conversions of older homes to the new style.

Bellagio was a hive of activity where Italy's best landscape architects displayed their talents.

Giuseppe Balzaretto, who created Milan's public gardens, also designed the gardens of Villa Gerli.

The gardens of Villa Melzi was the work of architects Canonica and Villoresi, who created the park in Monza, while the building was designed by the architect Albertolli, who was responsible for Villa dell'Olmo in Como. Artists like Giuseppe Bossi and Andrea Appiani also created works of art here.

Villa Serbelloni – Fondazione Rockefeller

Villa Serbelloni - Rockefeller Foundation The Villa was built in the 15th century by Marchesino Stanga and rebuilt in the 16th century by the Sfondrati family. It then became the property of the Serbelloni dukes at the end of the 18th century. The new owners left the house intact but renewed and enlarged the grounds. It is said that Duke Alessandro Serbelloni spent 929.62 Euro on the gardens at a time when a workman earned less than 1 Euro cent per day.

The park rises up on the higher part of the Bellagio promontory and contains over 18 kilometers of paths and avenues which allow the visitor to admire the enormous collection of rare and exotic plants growing in the gardens and on the terraces which slope gently down to the lake.

During its history, the villa has played host to an astonishing number of illustrious guests; from Leonardo da Vinci to the Emperor Maximilian I, Ludovico il Moro, Bianca Maria Sforza and Cardinal Borromeo.

More recent guests include the Emperor Franz I, the archdukes of Parma, Queen Victoria, Kaiser Wilhelm, King Umberto I, the Italian prime minister Depretis, the President of the USA Roosevelt and, later, Kennedy and many Italian writers such as Pellico, Manzoni, Grossi, Pindemonte and Parini, who spent long periods at the villa as tutor to the duke's heirs.



The French writer Gustave Flaubert mentions Villa Serbelloni in his traveler's notes of 1845 where he calls it, "...a spectacle created to delight the eyes. Here one would like to live and die".

In 1959, upon the death of Princess Ella Walker della Torre Tasso, Villa Serbelloni was donated to the Rockefeller Foundation, New York, which uses it to bring together artists and scientists from all over the world in an atmosphere that allows them to work in complete tranquility. Many works of international importance have been composed and produced thanks to the study grants offered at Villa Serbelloni.

Tours of the park at 11 am and 3.30 pm, every day except Mondays. Tickets must be reserved in advance with Promobellagio.

Villa Melzi stands on the lakeshore. It was built between 1808 and 1812 by the architect Giocondo Albertolli for Francesco Melzi d'Eril, who was vice president of the Cisalpine Republic and later became Grand Chancellor of the Italian Kingdom. He was a friend of Napoleon who bestowed him with the title of Duke of Lodi.

The villa with its neo-classical forms is surrounded by splendid grounds, which were the first example of an English garden in the Como area. The grounds were laid out between 1811 and 1815 by Canonica and Villoresi who, in order to give a feeling of space and emphasize perspectives, undertook colossal earthwork to level some areas and create artificial hills in others. Even the distribution of the vegetation, which seems natural, is the fruit of long and careful studies aimed at increasing the optical illusion of distant backdrops.

Among the plants in the park there is an enormous Cedar of Lebanon, magnolias, azaleas, rhododendrons and many tropical plants. The chapel is shaded by a sequoia semper virens.

The park is also adorned with several columns and portals from the ancient Lazzaretto in Milan created by Lazzaro Palazzi in the 15th century.

In front of the Kaffehaus, an unusual kiosk in Moorish style, stands the statue of Dante and Beatrice by Comolli which inspired Listz's "*Sonata fantasia dopo la lettura di Dante*".

Around the small artificial Japanese lake stand Japanese cedars, maples, ilex and camellias, creating an extremely atmospheric scene.

The illustrious guests of this villa include Napoleon, Eugene Beauharnais, Franz Joseph and Ferdinand of Austria and Umberto and Margherita di Savoy. The current owner is Duke Gallarati Scotti, a descendant of the Melzi family.

Gardens open to the public from the end of March to the end of October.



Other splendid villas grace the area surrounding Bellagio and can be reached in a few minutes by car or, better still, by ferry.

Tremezzo - Villa Carlotta - (Tremezzo) was built in 1690 by Marquis Giorgio Clerici, and took on its current name a century later when, in 1848, the Prussian Princess received it as a wedding gift on her marriage to the Duke of Saxony-Meiningen.

The magnificent park and its rare plants attract visitors from all over the world, and is particularly famous for the spring flowering of azaleas and rhododendrons. Some of the flowering plants reach the exceptional height of 22 meters.

Visits: from March to November

Varenna - Villa Monastero - This ex-Cistercian convent dates from 1200 and was transformed into a splendid residence in the seventeenth century. The park was enlarged at the end of the last century by the new owners, a wealthy family from Hamburg, and was completed in 1904, when the Art Nouveau movement was at its height. Since 1936 the villa has played host to international scientific and cultural meetings.

Frequent visitors to Villa Monastero included Fogazzaro, who was inspired by the garden to write

“Nadejde”, which tells the story of the Princess de La Roche Plessys

Visits: from March to October. dell'alpinismo

Lenno - Villa Balbianello - This house is located at the end of the Lavedo promontory and was built in 1787 for Cardinal Angelo Maria Durini, who set out to create the most beautiful garden on the Tremezzo riviera. In the 19th century it became the summer home of Costanza Arconati Visconti who played host to Alessandro Manzoni, Giusti and Berchet. In 1976 the property was bought by the famous explorer Count Guido Monzino who dedicated much effort to restoring the house and its grounds.

A peculiar characteristic of the gardens are the creepers, which have been sculpted over the years to decorate the villa, the plane trees and the garden walls. A winding, shaded path leads up to a terrace from which one can admire a splendid view of the lake. Further up, the loggia exhibits a rich collection covering the history of alpine and polar exploration.

The villa now belongs to the FAI, the Italian Foundation National Trust, which maintains it in all its splendor.

Various movies, like *007 Casino Royale* and *Star Wars* were shot at the villas.

Visits: from March to November.



Bellagio's own little "Guinness book of records"

- ❖ The highest point: Monte San Primo (1686 m)
- ❖ The longest path: 11 km from Guggiate to San Primo
- ❖ The oldest remains: The erratic masses of the glacial moraines that covered this area during the ice age.
- ❖ The most famous: The Sasso Lentina rock at Prà Filippo (10 km from the centre of Bellagio on the road to San Primo).

Famous visitors

- ❖ **The first holidaymaker:** *the Pliny the Younger (1st century AD)*
- ❖ **The first royal ball:** *the ball held to celebrate the wedding of Bianca Maria Sforza (niece of Ludovico il Moro) and the Emperor Maximilian I (1493)*
- ❖ **The most famous Italian artist:** *Leonardo da Vinci*
- ❖ **The most important prelate:** *Cardinal Carlo Borromeo*
- ❖ **The most famous French guest:** *Napoleon Bonaparte*
- ❖ **The most famous musician:** *Franz Liszt*
- ❖ **American presidents:** *Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy*
- ❖ **Kings and Emperors:** The Longobard King Liutprando, Maximilian I, the Empress of Russia Maria Feodorovna, The Emperors of Austria Franz I, Ferdinand and Franz Josef, Kaiser Wilhelm, the King of Albania, Leopold I of Belgium, Queen Mary of Romania, Italian royals Umberto and Margherita of Savoy and King Farouk of Egypt.
- ❖ **Artists, writers and scientists:** Giuseppe Parini, Ippolito Pindemonte, Alessandro Manzoni, Alessandro Volta, Tommaso Grossi, Ippolito Nievo, Stendhal, Gustave Flaubert, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
- ❖ **Movie stars:** Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Otto Fischer, Maria Schell, Clark Gable, Robert Mitchum, Romy Schneider and Philippe Noiret (who came to film "A Woman at the Window"), Al Pacino and Marthe Keller (for "Bobby Deerfield"), George Lucas, Natalie Portman, Ewan McGregor, Hyden Christensen, Robert De Niro and George Clooney

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT BELLAGIO

- ❖ To transport all the guests to the festivities for the marriage of Bianca Maria Sforza to the
- ❖ Emperor Maximilian, on 6th December 1493, 30 highly decorated boats and 2 brigs were used.
- ❖ At the end of the eighteenth century Alessandro Serbelloni spent 929.62 Euro on improvements to his grounds (at a time when the daily pay of a worker was less than 1 cent per day).
- ❖ During the 19th century, when many nobles used to stay in the hotels of Bellagio, they often rented entire floors and used some rooms just to lay out their clothes on the beds.
- ❖ Senator Gary Hart was so struck by his stay in Bellagio that he used the setting for a spystory in which a secret agent holed up in a Bellagio hotel.
- ❖ After his visit to Bellagio, Steve Wynn, the president of Mirage Resort, decided to build an enormous Hotel Bellagio in Las Vegas. He declared that the hotel is “the most romantic hotel in the world”. It has 37 floors, 3,421 rooms and 8,000 staff. The entire complex occupies 83 hectares and has an artificial lake with fountains, dozens of gardens and a “village” with small boutiques and shops, which resemble those in the town on Lake Como.
- ❖ Some scenes of 007 Casino Royale and Star Wars were shot in Villa del Balbianello.

Bellagio is the birthplace of:

- ❖ 6 World Canoeing Champions: Alberto Belgeri, Enrico Gandola, Igor Pescialli, Franco Sancassani, Daniele Gilardoni, Elisabetta Sancassani. The latter took part at the Olympic Games in Athens 2004.
- ❖ 1 European Water-skiing Champion: David Conti
- ❖ 1 European Champion in American Football: Giacomo Cranchi (“Pacio”)
- ❖ 1 Beach Volleyball Champion: Laura Bruschini

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