



## EXPLORING CIVENNA DI BELLAGIO

Duration: 1½ hours approx.

Departure: Belvedere car park  
Comfortable shoes are recommended.

The starting point is the Belvedere (panoramic view point) in Civenna, at the entrance to the village, a vantage point that offers spectacular views of the Grigne, a range of mountains whose composition is mainly ironstone, that also includes a little dolomite rock and for this reason, they are referred to as “the small Dolomites of Lake Como”. We recommend you climb the steps to visit the monument to the Alpine soldier and the memorials to the Fallen of Nasiriyah and to poet and author Henry Benrath.

Once at the top, even broader panoramic views open up over the Upper Lario area, with the Pre-Alps and Alps crowning it. The metal plaques on the small

balcony, will help visitors identify all the mountains and towns before them.

Here, you'll also find an equipped playground for young children and a picnic area. By following the path that descends to your right, you'll reach a sort of wooden gate. If you continue in a northerly direction, on your left you'll come to Civenna 2 residential complex. Continuing the walk, you'll come to the village of Limontasca and finally, the small hamlet of Chevrio. If, on the other hand, from the wooden gate you descend a little further and cross the woods to your right, you'll still almost reach the centre of Civenna.

Back in Belvedere square, **1** note the beauty of the only Italian monument dedicated to all those who died in motorbike accidents on the roads in 1962. Unveiled to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federazione Motociclisti Italiani (Italian Motorcyclists Federation), it has always been a popular destination for motorcyclists. Commissioned by the IMF, the project was entrusted to Bertoni Medaglie, curated and realised by Milanese sculptor Silvio Gazzaniga.

The monument consists of spiral high-reliefs wound around a cylinder like a long ribbon, symbolising the road and recalling the birth and evolution of motorcycling as a sport. It culminates in a stylised flame that rises to the sky.

Continue walking, keeping the lake on your left, and after the helipad you'll notice **2** the small church of San Rocco on the roadside to your right; it is a shrine to the fallen soldiers of all wars. The small temple has existed here since 1382, as documents in the parish archives testify, but it was extensively refurbished by parish priest Father Antonio Crippa in 1988.

After visiting the small church, take the tarmacked road, Via Stelvio, where, on your right, you'll soon notice the majestic Villa Cassia, a historical residence that has not undergone any structural changes over time, retaining all its charm and whose owner, Antonio Cassia, was podesta (chief magistrate) of the Feudal Lands of Saint Ambrose. A little further, on the right, there is a small wayside shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary's maternity.

At the crossroads, continue straight ahead and shortly afterwards take the stairway that rises gently

to your right - Via degli Archi - which leads to a very characteristic area of this part of Civenna. Known as Castello, because of its tall buildings and because this nucleus is located on a peak, this is where the town's prisons once stood.

At the top of the steps, turn right and, after visiting the small square, continue, turning slightly left to descend to the right. Leave this tiny hamlet, by passing under an imposing granite gate. Before continuing this itinerary, take a look to your right where you'll notice **3** a sepulchral boulder (in other words, an ancient tomb carved from erratic boulders), reused as an aqueduct basin. Dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

Take the road descending to the left (Via Volta) that leads you to another fabulous view of the entire Lecco branch. Pass under the small portico and you'll find yourself on the Ettore Foschi promenade, named after the eponymous architect who built the now crumbling villa to your right.

The villa was originally a five-star hotel, known as Hotel Belle Vue, later in 1922, it was refurbished and purchased by Ettore Foschi, President of the La Rinascente department store.

The wonderful views will fill your eyes and soul. As you follow the road, near the bend to your left, **4** Villa Delfina will appear below you. Its façade is decorated with unusual coloured animals - giant blue snails. The park is also adorned with ancient columns, placed here for decorative purposes. The owners, who are from Milan, are admirers of cracking art, an international art movement known for creating urban installations featuring the presence of giant animals made of recyclable coloured plastic.

Villa Delfina, was built as an inn for the Vassena - Civenna cable car station, which was however never built. In 1920 it was extended by the Saibene family of Lecco and Piero Minotti bought it in 1930.

You've finally reached **5** the tiny 16<sup>th</sup>-century church of Madonna del Grè, which is known as Sancta Maria in agro or Our Lady in the countryside. Small in size, it has a portico with an entrance portal, as well as a quadrangular opening to the right of the entrance itself. Inside, it has a small cross-vaulted chamber and



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a presbytery. Bordered by two steps, the stone altar is set against the curved apse wall, which is marked by pilasters. Furthermore, the altar is topped by a canvas depicting the Madonna del Latte (Our Lady of Milk), which has a stone frame and a small stucco decoration at the top.

Follow the road downhill, which is dedicated to Angelo Menozzi (1854-1947), a scientist who used to spend his summer holidays here in Civenna.

Continuing downhill, you'll reach the scenic location of San Vincenzo, as the small wayside shrine depicting Saint Vincent Ferrer recalls; he was the Church's only saint to have been canonised after the recognition of over eighty miracles, witnessed by thousands of depositions at his canonisation process.

A stop here is a must to admire **6** the Big Bench (the 137th on Chris Bangle's Big Bench Community Project circuit).

Go back on the same road and take Via Grée uphill on your left, continue past the Civenna Municipal Sports Centre and a little further on, the town hall and cinema-theatre. On the wall of the cinema-theatre you'll notice **7** a striking mural, visible from as far away as Ghisallo, which is linked precisely to cycling. In fact, it represents the competitive gaze of a cyclist. It is by a young artist known as Neve, pseudonym of Danilo Pistone (Turin, 17 October 1986), considered one of the leading exponents of neo-muralism and street art in Italy; the piece was created using the freehand spray technique on a black background, with strong chiaroscuro in the style of Caravaggio.

Next to the entrance to the cinema-theatre you can reach the terrace known as the "Balcony of the Grigne", which affords truly breath-taking views.

In the small square opposite the provincial road, on the left you'll notice a white building with a series of graceful arches. This is home to various associations, including the Proloco, the Alpini and the Civil Protection, as well as an oratory. When you reach the provincial road, on the left a few metres further on you'll find the home of the Tertiary Carmelite Sisters of Saint Teresa, a community that's open all year round and hosts spiritual meetings.

Just beyond the residence you'll notice a small sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin Mary; **8** Divae Mariae Sacrum, better known as the Sanctuary of Sommaguggio; its name comes from the Latin summum jugum, the summit of the yoke, or in other words, the hump.

Take the opportunity to visit the **9** parish church, which in this point is on your right. Dedicated to Saints Maternus and Ambrose, you'll find it houses an extremely interesting work of art: a 14<sup>th</sup>-century, tunic-wearing crucified Christ, one of the real treasures of Civenna.

On the north façade of the church, you'll notice a monument dedicated to the Fallen of World War I, whose original location was on the main façade. It's a bronze plaque depicting the church of Sommaguggio, which is not far from here, and is by the Milanese artist Eugenio Bellosio. After visiting the parish church, as you cross the pedestrian zebra crossing, you'll notice a dip in the road due to an old bridge that once crossed the now-filled in valley. You have now reached **10** this small town's multifunctional centre, which includes the civic library, dedicated to Luigi Santucci (writer, winner of the Campiello Prize in 1967 and "in love" with Civenna), pharmacy, surgery and post office. Another building of historical importance overlooks the small square and on which the architectural features typical of Italian rationalism can be seen.

In the small garden adjacent to the building, you'll notice, to your left, the monolithic lid of a tombstone with a worked edge, dating from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD. Climb the steps, turn right and walk past an old Enel electricity cabin.

Follow the road passing next to a house with unusual stone mask decorations on its façade. Then take Via Formicosa, a road on your left, that leads uphill and walk among the characteristic houses, turn right making a loop that will lead you in a few minutes back to Via Roma. Possible extension: If you want to climb for about twenty minutes to reach the Cross above the town of Civenna, which affords incredible panoramic views, you should follow Via Formicosa and then Via Olivella to the end. Then, a path to the left, will take you through the wood to this exceptional panoramic spot.

You can then either descend along the same path or leave the Cross behind you and take a steep path to the right that leads back to Via Formicosa.

But let's return to our itinerary and once you are again on Via Roma take Via Portichetti, passing under a charming portico, to reach a tiny, characteristic courtyard. Through a second portico, this leads back out onto Via Roma and a **11** beautiful tombstone boulder, dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and nowadays used as aqueduct basin. Walk downhill and at the traffic lights cross the provincial road, which on your right will lead you to Piazza Milano, the village's main square, where you'll find the parish church, a newsstand (where you can get your Big Bench passport stamped), a couple of bars and a patisserie.

Here you'll find the stop for bus line C36, which connects the railway station Asso-Canzo with Bellagio (mainly available in summer).

Opposite the patisserie, a private villa, Villa Malacrida, is a real curiosity. In fact, its garden boasts a huge model railway with trains. Unsurprisingly, the owner of the villa was a real model railway enthusiast. To return to your starting point take the provincial road direction Bellagio, and immediately after Galli butcher's shop, take Via Castello until you cross Via San Rocco on your left. This takes you back to Bellavista. You'll find another bus stop just after the cemetery, heading in the direction of Bellagio.

