

A glimpse of Lake Como from one of the picturesque streets of Bellagio



Alessandra Piubello

## MY COMO

Long an exclusive destination, this delightful waterside city offers the best of Italian style, accommodation and indulgent days on the water, all surrounded by stunning mountain scenery. **Alessandra Piubello** reports

**L**ess than an hour north of Milan and just 6km from the Swiss border, the charming city of Como sits at the southern tip of its eponymous, inverted Y-shaped lake's western leg, in a narrow bay flanked by wooded morainic hills. This breathtaking natural landscape has been used as a movie location countless times, and many actors and celebrities own villas here: George Clooney and Brad Pitt, among others.

Traces of viticulture at Lake Como date back to the Raetians in the Iron Age, and Leo Tolstoy mentioned it in the 19th century. But vines were abandoned in favour of mulberry cultivation for silk manufacturing – Como is famed for its silk, and its Museo della Seta silk museum ([www.museosetacom.com](http://www.museosetacom.com)) is worth a visit.

Como's recent winemaking revival highlights the characteristic features of a sunny, windy terroir with its own special microclimate. Its savoury,

light-bodied wines pair beautifully with classic lake-fish dishes such as perch risotto or grilled whitefish.

Nestled within the city walls are Como's genteel porticoes, set among Renaissance houses and the fine Duomo. The Tempio Voltiano ([www.alessandrovolta.it](http://www.alessandrovolta.it)) is the museum dedicated to physicist Alessandro Volta, the illustrious Como-born inventor of the electric battery.

But to really feast your eyes, take a romantic stroll along the lakeshore, admiring villa after villa and their beautiful gardens. Also make sure to visit the neo-classical gem Villa Olmo, which hosts exhibitions and events. Wander back to the city centre via the pier that leads to the Life Electric sculpture and stand surrounded by water, admiring the lake in all its glory – sunset is the ideal time.

To truly understand the local saying, 'the lake should be seen from the lake', meander through its least explored corners towards the only

island, Comacina (where spectacular firework displays mark the feast of San Giovanni in late June); or hop over to the 'pearl of the lake', Bellagio, on the tip of the promontory where the lake splits into two legs. The shoreline is dotted with beautiful mansions, such as Villa Erba in Cernobbio and Villa Carlotta (Tremezzo), as well as tiny Romanesque churches and medieval villages. So without further ado, rent a boat from Tasell ([www.tasell.com](http://www.tasell.com)), which has been in the business for more than a century.

Not to be missed is the Como to Brunate funicular: the panorama from the top is unforgettable. Walk through the village, famous for its art nouveau villas, up to the Voltiano lighthouse, and climb to the top to be rewarded with some awe-inspiring views!

**Alessandra Piubello is a widely published journalist, author and editor based in Verona. She reports on many aspects of Italian culture, principally wine and food**

## My top 10 in Como

### 1 Arte Dolce Lyceum

In one of Como's most picturesque spots – an arched facade inside the walled old town – this patisserie, ice cream parlour and delicatessen will satisfy your every craving with its freshly made, whimsical sweet and savoury offerings. Its confectionary delights are a balm for the soul: indulge in some exquisite pastries and a hot chocolate. [www.artedolcelyceum.it](http://www.artedolcelyceum.it)

### 2 Visini

An historic delicatessen near the Duomo, recently transformed into a multifaceted

experience by its second generation of owners. Come here for takeout dishes (classic Italian, vegetarian, healthy or international), artisan gourmet foods,



Arte Dolce Lyceum

café, wine shop, wine bar and bistrot with cookery courses. Fancy a picnic on the lake? They can prepare one for you. [www.visini.it](http://www.visini.it)

### 3 Caffè Milani

With more than 80 years of expertise in importing and roasting coffee, Caffè Milani lies 4km from Como. A coffee-culture discovery experience awaits here. Browse the museum – divided into botanical 'islands' – and the technical training centre, before enjoying a freshly brewed cup of coffee, or buy some to take home. [www.caffemilani.it](http://www.caffemilani.it)

Photographs: iStock/Getty Images Plus; [www.artedolcelyceum.it](http://www.artedolcelyceum.it)



I Tigli in Theoria

#### 4 I Tigli in Theoria

Chef Franco Caffara earned Como's first Michelin star at his restaurant I Tigli al Lago in 2012, achieving the same recognition after he opened I Tigli in Theoria in 2014 at the beautifully renovated 15th-century bishop's palace. It houses an exquisite restaurant with special old-world charm, offering unforgettable contemporary cuisine. The impeccably curated multi-room interior includes one dedicated solely to aperitifs and cocktails, and there's also a delightful garden. [www.theoriagallery.it](http://www.theoriagallery.it)

#### 5 Osteria del Gallo

This storied eatery in Como's centre was once a literary haunt. Today, it serves down-home cooking with a seasonal menu that uses fresh local ingredients. The warm, old-style osteria also sells wines, amaro herbal liqueurs from the Como area (try one called Piz) and regional deli products (sample some Valchiavenna bresaola or local cheeses). [www.osteriadelgallo-como.it](http://www.osteriadelgallo-como.it)

#### 6 Da Gigi

In the old town, Enoteca da Gigi has been passionately run by the same family since 1930. It's where the locals come to enjoy an aperitif of excellent white, red or bubbly. An array of Italian and international bottles is available to buy, or to drink at the chic wine bar or tables outside. [www.enotecagigi.com](http://www.enotecagigi.com)

#### 7 Le Specialità Lariane

This family business was founded by Marco Molli in 1985 in Lenno (on the lake, about a 50-minute drive from Como). It specialises in smoking and dry-curing freshwater fish, particularly the lake's iconic missoltino (shad), as well as lake-fish bottarga (roe) and marinades. You'll find all these delicacies for sale in the shop on the premises. [www.lespecialitalariane.it](http://www.lespecialitalariane.it)

#### 8 Cantine Angelinetta



Map: Maggie Nelson

### GETTING THERE

Fly to Milano Malpensa, and you can rent a car and drive to Como in 45 minutes.

### COMO

**Main appellation** Terre Lariane IGT  
**Planted area** 100ha  
**Main grapes** Merlot, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Nero, Verdesse  
**Climate** Pre-alpine, with lacustrine influences



Le Specialità Lariane

Heading northwards past picturesque lakeside villages, 90 minutes from Como is Domaso. Emanuele Angelinetta's winery is perched in a striking position right above the water. Its vineyards cling to the hillside on steep terraces with drystone walls, and among them is the area's only native variety, the Verdesse: be sure to taste it. [www.cantineangelinetta.com](http://www.cantineangelinetta.com)



Ristorante Mistral

#### 9 Silvio

Set in the gardens of Villa Melzi, 30km from Como, Silvio is a prestigious spot that has been Lake Como's premier fish restaurant for more than a century. Owner Cristian is a fisherman - he can take you on a fishing trip aboard his skiff. The house speciality is missoltini (dried shad). [www.bellagiosilvio.com](http://www.bellagiosilvio.com)

#### 10 Ristorante Mistral

With its tastefully luxurious ambience and scenic terrace overlooking the water, the Michelin-starred Mistral in Bellagio is the restaurant of one of the lake's most elegant hotels, Villa Serbelloni. Chef Ettore Bocchia uses molecular gastronomy to create innovative haute cuisine, alongside more traditional recipes. [www.ristorante-mistral.com](http://www.ristorante-mistral.com)