

WINTER 2008

DV

DESTINATION: VACATION

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TOWN-HOPPING ON ITALY'S
LAKE COMO

Navigate your day trips to charming Old World villages
by ferry, hydrofoil, or private yacht

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Dear Friends,

Every new year begins with new dreams, which often turn to travel. To help fulfill those dreams and guide you toward your next vacation, our agency has assembled this collection of wanderlust-inducing destinations and ideas.

Our agency's trained professionals are ready to assist you in planning the vacation experience you deserve. We've included some of the best deals for each destination in the "Book It Now" boxes following each article. Also, look on the last page of the magazine for some Exclusive Escapes that you can find only through our agency and nowhere else.

Where will your travel dreams take you this year? Do you envision yourself waking up in a private villa in the Caribbean? Walking along the manicured gardens of Italy's Lake Como, or becoming mesmerized by India's exotic landscapes? Maybe a cruise adventure to Alaska or the Mediterranean is in your future?

Wherever you choose to go, look to our agency to get you there. With incredible deals to these destinations and many others, we can save you both time and money, resulting in a travel experience that's guaranteed to make your dreams come true.

Bon voyage!

Your friends at
Air N Light Travel

Check out these special offers from our agency:

10-Day Tulips & Windmills Cruise April 25, 2008, from \$2,299 pp

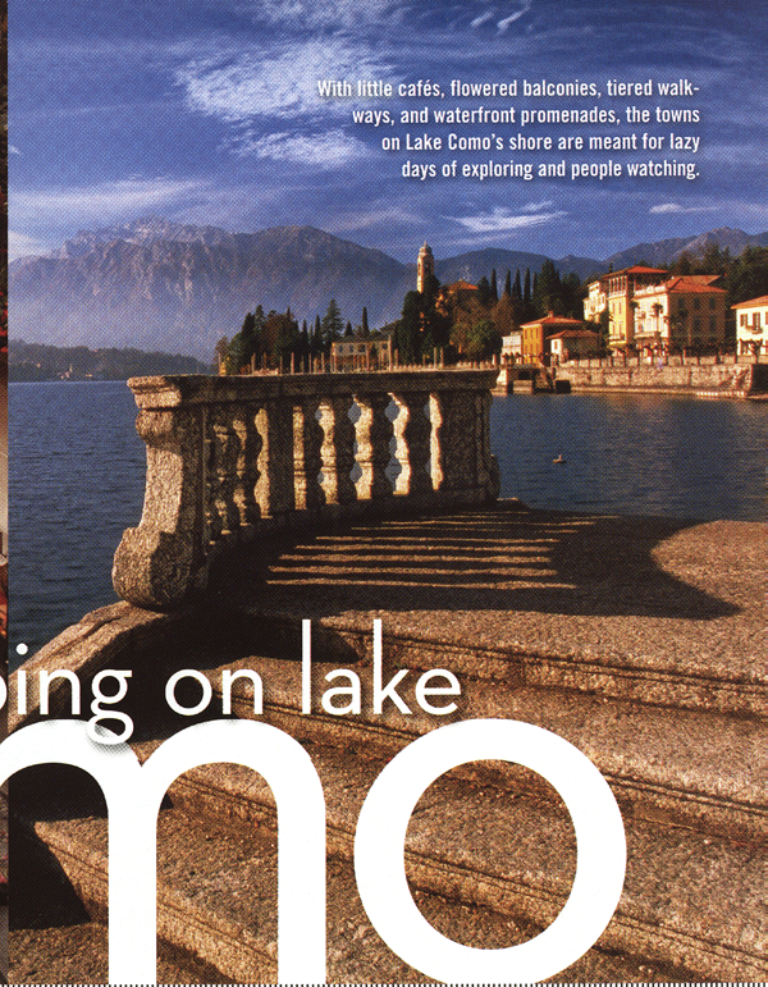
r/t Amsterdam aboard Viking Pride
Explore Holland and Belgium in the background of the colorful spring-time landscapes. Combine culture and cuisine plus a complimentary visit to the Anne Frank House

13-Day Alaska Cruise Tour May 25, 2008, from \$2,049 pp

On Holland America's ms Zaandam
Combine a spectacular 7-day glacier cruise with tours to some of Alaska's most beautiful attractions. Enjoy a complimentary covered wagon ride in Denali courtesy of our agency.

12-Day German Heritage Tour From \$2,189 pp, land only

By Globus. Experience truly authentic German culture on this trip to Munich, Nuremberg, Dresden, Erfurt, Hamburg, and Berlin. Departures: January through October, 2008



With little cafés, flowered balconies, tiered walkways, and waterfront promenades, the towns on Lake Como's shore are meant for lazy days of exploring and people watching.

town-hopping on lake como

Take it free and easy on this Italian gem, soaking up the romantic vibe, Mediterranean style, and Alpine views **By Ann Cochran**



Italy's exclusive Lake Como has something to offer everyone: shopping along cobblestone streets, stunning lake views, and Old World architecture. Wandering around one town after another is the reason for being around Lake Como. But you don't need to flag a taxi to reach the next stop. Just board a ferry, hydrofoil, or private yacht and start exploring the lakefront towns to experience this gem the way the Italians do. Here are just a few favorites:

BELLAGIO ~ The most famous of Lake Como's towns, Bellagio exudes Old World elegance with its centuries-old lakefront villas, window boxes overflowing with geraniums, narrow winding streets, and an arcaded piazza for strolling, enjoying the scenery, and shopping at the same time. Along Via Garibaldi, you can buy beautiful handmade olive wood toys, salad bowls, ship models, and jewelry boxes at Luigi Tacchi, and fine leather goods as well as bargains on silk ties and scarves at Pelletteria Prevedonia. Make a point to dine at the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni's glass-

enclosed formal restaurant that seems to sit on the lake. For what some claim is the best cappuccino in Italy, find Pasticceria Sport on Piazza della Chiesa. In the arcade in front of the ferry dock, Bar Café Rossi is one place where you'll want to sit indoors to enjoy the incredible Art Nouveau dining room. For other great views, tour the gardens at Villa Serbelloni (an early 17th-century mansion now owned by the Rockefeller Foundation) and Villa Melzi, a magnificent neoclassical residence with Egyptian and Roman statuary throughout the gardens as well as the museum. ➤

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GEORGE SIMONIMASTERFILE; CHARLIE WAITE/GETTY; C. GASCOIGNE/GETTY



CERNOBBIO ~ Many come to Cernobbio to see or stay at its claim to fame — the legendary Grand Hotel Villa d'Este, built in 1568. Its 10 acres of meticulously maintained gardens are rivaled only by the antique furnishings Napoleon might have brushed by. Pick up breakfast at Polletti (just outside the gates of Villa d'Este), where they start baking each day at 4 a.m. The smells waft through the air until the morning rush that starts around 9:30 a.m. Behind the hotel's tennis courts, there's a great hiking trail. Climb slowly up the steep mountainside and take in absorbing views of the lake and Alps all along the way. For

great family-style dinners, go to La Posta in Moltrasio, a bit north along the shore — Armando and Rosella are wonderful hosts, and the food is truly homemade. If pizza is your thing, the best pies in northern Italy are said to come out of the oven at Pizzeria Tennis Club Tre Vigne in Tavernola, an inland town between Cernobbio and Como.

COMO ~ The largest city on the lake, Como is the first arrival point for many travelers. Characterized as commercial and industrial, in the past, the town was recently scrubbed clean for its 700th birthday. All the major designers from Armani to Versace come to Como for their silks, and you can score some great finds at the manufacturing outlets of Moretti, Monero, and Ratti. From the main square, Piazza Cavour, you can look across the lake to Cernobbio. Walk along the water under shade trees to reach the public gardens at Villa Olmo. Il Gatto Nero has been named as Lake Como's great restaurant for celebrity spotting, and it can be. But for a truly special dining experience, dine at Il Navedano, which is run by a couple that pays as much attention to the food as they do to the floral decorations — you'll think you're dining in a botanical garden. If you don't have the energy to climb up the mountain but want the best view, ride the Brunate Funicular Railway from Como to the 2,200-foot-high village of Brunate — from the station on top, a sign points the way to Brunate's most spectacular overlook.

TREMEZZO ~ The sunniest spot on the lake is the town of Tremezzo, where the views are simply spectacular.

Getting Around Como

Only thrill-seekers attempt to drive the narrow cliffside roads, so town-hopping is best done by boat. But watch your timing because this is no small lake. The ferry from Como to Bellagio takes four hours round-trip. Even by hydrofoil, it takes 45 minutes each way. Bellagio to Varenna is a 20-minute ride, and boats don't run constantly, so check the schedule.

But the town is best known for Villa Carlotta, built for a Milanese marquis in the 18th century. Inside, there are beautiful ceiling frescoes and an impressive art collection. However, it's the gardens that draw the crowds. More than 500 species of flowers, plants, and trees from around the globe thrive here including a surprising mix of cedar and sequoia trees, azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons, ferns, and bamboo.

COMACINA ~ For a nice day trip from Como or Bellagio, head to Comacina — the only island on the lake. There are no permanent residents,

shops, or roads on the wild wooded island, just walking paths, and that's part of its charm. But the best reason to come is the isle's one restaurant, Locanda dell'Isola Comacina. The menu (a set menu served six days a week) has been the same for 50 years. At the end of the meal, you get a history lesson from the owner, who rings a cowbell to get everyone's attention.

Lake Como and all its towns have their beauty, so wherever you end up, take a walk, sip some vino or espresso, and enjoy the view. **DV**

{ BOOK IT NOW }

Experience the Charm of Como

If you are interested in a guided tour of the area, choose the 11-day **Lake Como, Dolomites & Venice tour** by Globus. Spend three full days in the Lake Como area and continue on to Lake Maggiore and Lake Lugano, Bolzano, the famous ski resort of Cortina D'Ampezzo, Venice, and Milan.

■ From \$2,249 per person, land only, for departures April–October, 2008.

If you prefer to explore the area on your own, choose the 4-star **Metropole Suisse Hotel**, located on Como's main square and directly on the lake. Designated as a historic hotel, it provides the perfect headquarters for your lake-hopping.

■ 7 nights from \$1,669 per room through Travel Bound. Restrictions apply.

To book, contact our travel agency — the number is on the back cover.