

Lake Como, Italy

Any vacation in Italy is a kaleidoscope of food, art, fashion and history. Even a golf outing reflects the culture. Well-dressed golfers linger over pinot and risotto. On the course, you may pass a tree with an antique holy-water receptacle.

But there's no need to pray for good weather, which is steadfastly glorious from

May through September in Lake Como, a postcard-scenic region an hour northeast of Milan. Backed by an Alpine canvas, the sapphire blue lake (one of Europe's deepest) is dotted with forests, gardens and villas of the rich and famous of centuries ago and today. When it comes to golf, Italy will never be mistaken for Scotland, but Lake Como's quality courses amid such scenery and style have few peers.

—Ann Cochran



Beautiful Bellagio at dusk

GOLF

There are about 50 courses in the region, but four in particular are *molto bene*. **Menaggio & Cadenabbia Golf Club** is a wooded wonderland. Built in 1907, the club is one of the oldest, and tightest, courses in Italy, with a golf library that rivals the R&A's. **Circolo Golf Villa d'Este** is an old, stately charmer reminiscent of Wentworth with much, much better food. Situated on

Lake Montorfano, the par-69 course is a stern test and host to many international competitions. **Golf Club Monticello**, an Italian Open site, has two distinct 18s, with one longer and more demanding than the other. **La Pinetina Golf Club** boasts a flashy Milanese membership, a newly rebuilt clubhouse complete with guestrooms and slick, well-maintained greens in a beautiful parkland setting.



A meal with a view: caprese on the lake

ACCOMMODATIONS

The most luxurious of Lake Como's hotels include **Grand Hotel Tremezzo** in Tremezzo, **Grand Hotel Villa d'Este** in Cernobbio, and **Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni** in Bellagio. **Albergo Terminus** is a classic but updated hotel located right on the lake in Como. In Varenna, **Hotel Villa Marie** charges modestly for rooms with million-lire views.

DINING

Cernobbio's **Il Gatto Nero** has low prices, great food and movie-star drop-ins. Ask for the balcony and homemade antipasti at **La Fagurida** in Tremezzo. The **Hotel Milano** in Varenna offers fabulous three-course meals. And be sure to check out

the pre-prandial cooking classes at **Salice Blu** in Bellagio.

ACTIVITIES

Bellagio, called the prettiest town in Europe, offers top boutique shopping, great food and the best nightlife around. Highlights of **Como** are its glorious cathedral and the **Museo Didattico della Seta** (Silk Museum). The jewel of **Cernobbio** is legendary neoclassical **Villa d'Este**, built in 1568 and transformed into a hotel in 1873. Panoramic views from **Tremezzo** are a draw, and nearby are the **Villa Carlotta** museum and botanical gardens and **Villa del Balbianello**, seen in *Star Wars: Episode II*. (For more information, log onto Linksmagazine.com.)