



The Best Places to Explore, Stay, and Eat in Bellagio, Italy

Why Bellagio is the Best Place to Stay at Lake Como

Bellagio is part of Lake Como's famous "Golden Triangle," along with Varenna and Menaggio. These picturesque towns are located in the heart of the lake where its three branches converge. They can be easily accessed by ferry and offer plenty of accommodation and dining options.

While all three towns are worth visiting, Bellagio was our personal favorite. It has been nicknamed the "Pearl of the Lake", and it perfectly captures the romance and elegance that have made the region famous. In fact, while vacationing at Lake Como, Steve Wynn fell in love with Bellagio, and it was the inspiration for his opulent Bellagio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.

Wandering through Bellagio feels like discovering a hidden treasure, with a rainbow of colorful historic buildings, a maze of narrow cobblestone alleyways, breezy waterfront cafes, blooming gardens, and stunning lake views.

Because Bellagio is one of the most popular destinations on Lake Como, it can become quite busy during the day. That's exactly why we chose to stay here. Once the last ferry departs and the day-trippers leave, it felt like we had the entire town to ourselves. I loved exploring the empty streets at sunrise, and enjoying a quiet late-night, intimate dinner.

We stayed at [Hotel Florence](#), a historic family-run hotel that has been welcoming guests since 1852. They even still use brass room keys!

The waterfront hotel is full of character and has an amazing location. We booked a balcony room overlooking the lake, and I loved waking up to those views each morning. The air-conditioned rooms are reasonably priced for Bellagio, and a complimentary breakfast is included.

If you're celebrating a special occasion or looking for a more luxurious experience, consider booking a room at the iconic [Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni](#). This is the only five-star hotel in Bellagio, and the historic property features elegant rooms, beautiful gardens, exceptional service, and a stunning lakefront swimming pool.

How to Get to Bellagio

To get to Bellagio, we flew into Milan, then took the regional train from Malpensa Airport to Varenna-Esino. The journey was about 2 1/2 hours with a transfer at Milano Centrale Station. Trenitalia is the official site for booking train tickets. I recommend [downloading the app](#) to book your tickets, and avoid booking through a 3rd party vendor.

Once we arrived at the Varenna-Esino station, it was a fairly short walk to the ferry terminal. Ferry tickets can be purchased on-site or [online](#). You can purchase one-way tickets, round-trip tickets, or a day pass if you are planning to visit multiple spots on the lake.

The only advantage to purchasing them ahead of time is that it will save you time from standing in the ticket line. You will still need to stand in the long line to board the ferry, and wait times can be quite long during the summer.

The ferry runs about every 20 minutes, so if it is full, then you'll need to wait for the next one. The only way to avoid a long wait is to take the early morning ferry.

It's a short 15-minute ferry ride to Bellagio, and Hotel Florence is located near the dock. We arrived in the morning and were able to store our luggage at the hotel until our room was ready. The train station also offers luggage storage if you want to drop your bags and explore around Varenna before taking the ferry.

The Best Things to Do in Bellagio

Take a Private Boat Tour

We booked the 1-hour Lake Essentials Tour with [Prestige Boat Tours](#), and it ended up being our favorite thing that we did at Lake Como. It was the perfect combination of beauty, history, and fun.

We explored the lake on an elegant Italian wooden boat and saw some of Lake Como's most iconic spots, as well as a few hidden gems. Our captain, Domenico, was so much fun and full of endless facts and information about Lake Como.

Our first stop was at the famous Nesso Bridge. The current bridge was built in the Middle Ages, but the earliest foundations of the bridge date back to ancient Roman times when it was used as a trade bridge.

The bridge sits at the entrance to the dark and mysterious Orrido di Nesso gorge. We learned that Alfred Hitchcock once lived in an apartment by this bridge and that scenes from his movie, *The Pleasure Garden*, were filmed in this gorge.

Our next stop was at Villa del Balbianello, an elegant 18th-century mansion. This is one of the most famous villas on the lake, and is where Padme and Anakin were married in the movie,

Star Wars: Attack of the Clones. Scenes from James Bond: Casino Royale were also filmed here.

We just viewed the villa from the water, but the estate and gardens are open for tours. Just be sure to [book tickets in advance](#), as they often sell out. To reach the villa, take the ferry to Lenno, then it is within walking distance of the dock.

I couldn't get over the views from the boat as we cruised by storybook lakefront towns and sprawling private mansions. If you book a longer tour, you'll be able to visit even more spots, like George and Amal Clooney's glamorous lakefront home, Villa Oleandra.

Prestige Boat Tours offers everything from 1-hour to full-day tours, and even sunset tours with a dinner stop. We loved our tour, but I wish we would have booked a 2 or 3-hour tour so that we could have seen more of the lake.

Tour Villa Melzi

Lake Como is known for its gorgeous villas and gardens, and Villa Melzi is one of the most iconic villas in Bellagio.

This Neoclassical estate was built in the early 1800s for the vice president of Napoleon's Italian Republic. The home is closed to self-guided tours, but you can visit the English-style gardens with sweeping lake views, as well as the private chapel and museum.

My favorite spot is the Moorish Kiosk. This lakefront gazebo-type structure is so picturesque with hand-laid Italian tile, 18th-century sculpted busts, and gorgeous lake views.

I also love the small chapel, which was built in 1818 and features intricate moldings, marble mosaic floors, and hand-painted monochrome frescoes.

The property is open for self-guided tours daily from 10 am to 7 pm, with the last entry at 6:30. Tickets do not need to be purchased in advance. Guided tours are available through email reservation.

Visit Orrido di Bellano

Orrido di Bellano is a bit of a Lake Como hidden gem. It is located in Bellano, a short train ride from Varenna. From the train station, you can walk to the entrance of the gorge.

Orrido di Bellano began forming over 15 million years ago and has resulted in a deep, snaking ravine filled with rushing water.

There are raised walkways and platforms attached to the walls of the gorge, and it is incredible to experience the beauty up close.

Orrido di Bellano is open daily from 10 am until 6 pm. Tickets can be purchased at the gate, and no advance reservations are required. Plan for about 25 minutes to walk through the

gorge.

Ride the Tourist Train

We came across this [adorable train](#) near the ferry station offering city tours, and it was an immediate yes.

For 5 euros, you can take a scenic 30-minute ride through the city. It's a fun and inexpensive way to see parts of the city that are too far to explore on foot.

The route will take you up the hill where you'll find spectacular views as you pass through authentic Italian neighborhoods. An audio guide is also available, and headphones can be purchased for an additional 1 euro.

Step Inside Basilica di San Giacomo

The Basilica di San Giacomo stands as one of Bellagio's most beloved historic landmarks.

This church was built between 1075 and 1125 and has withstood the test of time. It has undergone a few renovations and restoration projects, but still maintains its original Romanesque stone facade and notable interior features.

The architecture and interior artwork are so impressive. A few highlights include a 12th-century archaic crucifix, a Renaissance painting from 1432, an ornate 16th-century altar, and the 17th-century "Cristo Morto" wooden statue.

Wander the Streets of Il Borgo (Old Town)

One of my favorite things to do in Bellagio is just wander the streets. Il Borgo, the town's charming and walkable Old Town, is a maze of narrow cobblestone lanes with bustling sidewalk cafes, blooming window boxes, laundry stretched across balconies, colorful shutters, and delightful local shops.

The most iconic (and most Instagrammable) street in Bellagio is Salita Serbelloni. This steep and narrow cobblestone lane is lined with colorful shops and restaurants. From the top, you'll get a postcard-perfect view of the lake peeking through the buildings.

This is one of the most popular streets and is packed with tourists during the day. I woke up at 5:30 am just to wander the streets on my own, and it felt magical to have the quiet town all to myself.

For a similar experience with fewer people, head to Salita Antonio Mella. This equally picturesque cobblestone street offers the same charm and character as Salita Serbelloni but tends to be much quieter.

At the heart of Il Borgo is Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini, Bellagio's lively storybook town square. This is where you'll find the ferry dock, boutique hotels, waterfront restaurants, and historic

porticos housing local shops and cafes. In the evenings, the piazza comes alive as visitors gather for dinner by the water and local musicians fill the square with music.

Just steps away, Via Lungo Lario Manzoni stretches along the waterfront as Bellagio's scenic lakeside promenade. With sweeping views across Lake Como, it's the perfect place for a leisurely stroll. I especially loved walking here each evening and watching the sun set over the water. It was a simple but unforgettable way to end the day!

Explore Nearby Towns

With frequent ferry service connecting the towns around the lake, it's well worth setting aside time to explore beyond Bellagio.

We spent an afternoon wandering the charming streets of Varenna, one of the most picturesque villages on Lake Como. One of the town's highlights is the Passeggiata degli Innamorati, or "Walk of Lovers," a scenic lakeside promenade that hugs the shoreline and offers beautiful views across the water.

Another must-see is Villa Monastero, a former monastery famous for its stunning botanical gardens and spectacular lakefront setting. Be sure to also stop by the Church of San Giorgio, a beautiful 14th-century church located in the heart of the historic center.

If you're hungry, Bar Il Molo is one of the best places to enjoy lunch or an aperitivo with views of the lake. There are also countless gelato shops by the water.

The Best Places to Eat in Bellagio

Bistrot Antichi Sapori

When we researched the best places to eat in Bellagio, Bistrot Antichi Sapori kept popping up. We ate our first meal here, and it did not disappoint! My husband said it was his favorite meal of the trip.

He ordered the Bistrot Pizza, and I ordered the Burrata Pesto Tagliatelle. They were both amazing, and we loved the ambiance of the outdoor patio on a warm summer evening.

La Grotta Pizzeria Ristorante

My favorite meal of our trip was at La Grotta. This cute restaurant is tucked into a hidden alley with a handful of tables scattered on the steps.

My husband ordered a simple pomodoro pasta dish, which he liked, but I ordered the calzone, and it was to die for!

It was essentially a pizza folded in half, and it was huge. The crust was perfectly thin and chewy, and the calzone was filled with a rich sauce and fresh mozzarella. It's making me hungry just thinking about it!

Mr. Panino

Mr. Panino also came highly recommended, and it lived up to the hype!

They offer a wide variety of paninis served with focaccia bread, and they are amazing! The paninis are soft and chewy on the inside and perfectly crusty outside, and are filled with fresh and flavorful ingredients.

The shop is small and only offers to-go orders, but you can take your sandwiches down to the waterfront and enjoy your lunch on one of the benches overlooking the water.

Piadineria Panatteria da Franco

My favorite sandwich was from Mr. Panino, but my husband's favorite was from Piadineria Panatteria da Franco.

They specialize in traditional piadinas, or flat bread sandwiches, as well as focaccia sandwiches, pastries, and pizza. I always order the caprese, while my husband stuffs his with meat. We both loved what we orderd!

Gelateria del Borgo

There are quite a few gelato shops in Bellagio, but Gelateria del Borgo has a reputation for being the best.

You can tell a good gelato shop if the gelato is kept flat in metal tins, like at Gelateria del Borgo. You'll see many gelato shops where the gelato is whipped high and fluffy. That is because it is whipped with additives, and you'll want to steer clear.

My favorite flavors are always some type of berry or a salted caramel, while my husband prefers cookies and cream. We always order cones with 2-3 scoops so that we can try a variety of flavors.

Final Thoughts

I hope this guide will help as you plan your trip to Bellagio. It truly is such a beautiful and special place.

I hope this guide helps you plan your own trip to Bellagio. It truly is such a beautiful destination, and is the type of place that makes you want to slow down and savor every moment.

For the best experience, consider visiting during the shoulder seasons of April through May or September through October. The weather is still pleasant, but there are fewer crowds.

I recommend spending at least three days exploring Bellagio and the surrounding towns of Lake Como before continuing on to other regions of Italy. With convenient train and flight connections from Milan, it's easy to add Lake Como to your Italy itinerary.

