

Lago Maggiore le sue Valli, i suoi Fiori.



LAKE MAGGIORE

A MIRROR BETWEEN ART AND NATURE

illagomaggiore.it

Press kit
Lake Maggiore

The activity is financed by the Interreg V-A
Italy Switzerland Co-operation Programme
2014-2020, Project "AMALAKE - Amazing
Maggiore: Active Holiday on the Lake Maggiore"



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Novara



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LAGO MAGGIORE, ON HOLIDAY IN THE MIDST OF ART AND NATURE: A UNIQUE TERRITORY TO DISCOVER 365 DAYS A YEAR

An alpine area between Italy and Switzerland able to enchant with its beauty tourists from all over the world in every season. Here is why Lake Maggiore is worth to be visited and experienced.

Sport and culture, design and landscape, wellness, food and wine: the destination Lake Maggiore is a place of great charm, capable of offering the very best that international tourists are looking for their perfect holiday in every season of the year. This alpine area nestled between Italy and Switzerland is, in fact, a real water mirror between art and nature, reflecting centuries of beauty built by men in harmony with the surrounding landscape: the result is a multitude of views, activities and experiences to try to discover the region and fall in love with it. And the number of tourists arriving here confirms it.

Tourist flows: an international vocation

In 2018, the destination Lake Maggiore has totally recorded 7.47 million tourists, with an average stay of 3.1 days. The international tourists have the majority share with a 57%, compared to a 43% of Italians.

As far as the country of origin is concern, in first place there is Germany with 1.49 million tourists, equal to some 20% of the total. In the second place there is the Netherlands, with 7.2% of the total of tourists, then France (4.8%), United Kingdom (3.1%) and United States of America (1.6%). Numbers that confirm the attractiveness that the territory has been exercising for a long time towards tourists from all over the world, who find here cosy places and friendly people who are, above all, attentive to the needs of travellers.

A destination for all tastes: tips to discover the local excellence

Among those who choose the lake as their destination, we can register a great variety of interests and, as a consequence, a great number of traveller profiles.

Therefore, those who love wine and food have plenty of choice: from mountain cheeses to Gorgonzola PDO, from honey to Brisaula of the Ossola valley, from Paniscia of Novara to the refined local rice as well as the sweet Margheritine of Stresa. And of course, a 0 km meal, eventually in one of the several quality restaurants of the area or in a traditional Ticino grotto, can be paired with the Ticino wines of the Ossola Valley, the hills around Novara or the renowned Grappa from Angera.

For music and theatre lovers there are unique events, such as the Stresa Festival, whose classical music concerts are held from May to September. During summer there is something for everyone: Tones on the Stones, the Locarno Festival in August, Moon and Stars in July, the JazzAscona in late June, the Varese Gospel Festival in July or the Cusiano Festival of Ancient Music in June are just a few examples.

Those who prefer an active and outdoor tourism can rely on the fact that each period of the year is the right one for a journey in this region: in winter people can ski in Bosco Gurin, on Mount Rosa or in the Formazza Valley, or cycle along the lakes taking advantage of the gentle climate; in spring it is possible to hike along one of the many trails with different difficulty levels; in summer it is possible to enjoy an adventure in the Val Grande National Park, practice water sports or visit the Camellia Park in Locarno; and in autumn you can have fun in the golf course of Arona, Stresa, Solbiate Olona, Bogogno or Agrate Conturbia in Italy, besides those on the Swiss side.

Hard choices lie ahead of those who want to discover beauty in all its forms, that in this territory represent at its best the virtuous union between nature and art: the Borromean Islands warm up the heart thanks to Palazzo Borromeo and its amazing gardens, the Islands of Brissago, off the coast of Ronco sopra Ascona, are the only Swiss botanic gardens on an Island. And, of course, a tour in these areas has to include the Sacred Mountains, UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003 and perfect representation of the devotion of local population combined with a taste for beauty.

But to fully appreciate a territory, it is necessary to understand all those aspects connected to daily life, therefore a visit to museums that tell the story of local productions becomes mandatory: the Agusta Museum in Varese, the museums of Design and Taps on Lake Orta, the Foundation Museum of Arts and Industry in Omegna where worldwide famous brands like Alessi, Lagostina and Bialetti were established, the hat Museum in Ghiffa and the Museum of umbrellas and sunshades in Gignese.

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The villages and cities to visit, among lakes, valleys and hills

The variety of tourist attractions that this territory can boast is equal to the great number of villages and small towns to discover, maybe taking a stroll among the streets and squares, to get in touch with the daily life of those who have the privilege to live here. On the Piedmontese shores of Lake Maggiore, for example, you cannot miss Stresa, Baveno, Verbania, Arona, Cannero, Cannobio, Lesa and Mergozzo, which overlooks the lake to which it gives its name. On the eastern side, around Varese, there are other stunning places such as Laveno, Angera and Luino.

Orta San Giulio cannot be missed if you are discovering Lake Orta, while in the Ossola Valleys Domodossola, Macugnaga, Santa Maria Maggiore, Bognanco and Premia with its spa are definitely worth a visit.

Descending towards the hills around Novara, you should stop in Novara, the province capital, but also in smaller but equally enchanting municipalities like Galliate, Casalbeltrame, San Nazzaro Sesia, Romagnano Sesia and Ghemme, renowned for the wine Ghemme GCDO production. On Swiss territory, the cities of Locarno, Ascona and Brissago stand out, on one hand for their picturesque and fascinating villages, and on the other for the many activities they offer. Moreover, the entire area around Locarno is extremely rich in rural villages, full of charm and authenticity.

How to arrive: by plane, train and car

The proximity to the international airport of Malpensa makes this territory easily accessible from any part of the world; but also Linate, the other recently reopened airport in Milan, allows to arrive in a very short time.

By train, the best lines are those from Milan to Domodossola, or from Paris via TGV, changing train in Basel or Geneva.

Several are the connection also for those who come by car: the motorway A8 Milano-Laghi and the A26 Genova-Gravellona Toce lead directly to the main destinations, or it is also possible to take the national roads 32 Ticinese, 33 Sempione or 229 Lago d'Orta.

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Culture

Museums, events, shows: the cultural ferment around these lakes is vibrant all year round. You can choose between a visit to a local museum such as the Landscape Museum in Verbania or one of the municipal museum networks of “Borgo della Cultura” in Domodossola. Or why not leaving for an excursion in Lake Maggiore to visit Isola Bella, where there is the wonderful Borromeo Palace with its enchanting gardens, or on the Brissago Islands.

In Gallarate, in the Province of Varese, from 1966 the MA*GA Museum boasts one of the most important collections of Italy, which includes relevant artists such as Renato Guttuso, Lucio Fontana and Carlo Carrà.

From May to September, the Stresa Festival makes the happiness of classical music enthusiasts, while in Luino there is the Theatre Festival every summer.

In the quarries of marble and granite in the Province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, every year, there is Tones on the Stones, international event with shows ranging from opera to performing arts. The same location hosts also the Nextones Festival, aimed at fans of electronic music and digital art. The performing arts are a novelty of the last few years celebrated at the Cross Festival of Verbania.

In June, on the San Giulio Island, the Cusiano Festival of Ancient Music: baroque symphonies, Gregorian chants and traditional ballate invite the public in a medieval atmosphere which tells a lot about the history of these places.

In July, “Tra Sacro e Sacro Monte” is the theatre festival that for ten years, has been bringing on the Pilgrims’ Trail great classical and contemporary authors of the domestic and international scene, as well as great texts both in prose and poetry capable to capture a diverse public, yet, sharing the same passion for theatre.

Remaining in the Varese province, at the feet of the archeological park of Castelseprio, there is the Torba Monastery: its thousand year history began as military outpost of the late Roman Empire and then of Goths and Longobards, to become a place of prayer for the Benedictine nuns; today this is a location for events and meetings. In a short distance and equally ancient there is the Rocca Borromeo of Angera, whose medieval building overlooks Lake Maggiore and hosts the Museum of Dolls and Toys. And, as far as history is concerned, the 18th century Palazzo Estense of Varese, with its Gardens inspired by those in Vienna, is one of the most enchanting places of the area.

On the other hand, in Switzerland, the Locarno Film Festival is one of the most important rendezvous in Europe for the movie lovers. In August, here they can watch the movies competing for the Golden Leopard in the evocative setting of the piazza Grande of Locarno. From the end of June to the beginning of July, always in the Swiss Confederation, takes place JazzAscona with hundreds of concerts that make the happiness of those who love the sounds of New Orleans for ten days. The Swiss region is also home to many museums, some with artistic traits, other more historical, but each of them capable of telling about the territory with their own style and voice, placing always in the centre the deep relationship between man and territory. Going down to Novara, it is possible to visit the Cupola of architect Antonelli in the Basilica of San Gaudenzio, with a breath-taking view, or visit an exhibition in the renovated halls of the Castle once home to the Visconti and Sforza families.

And for those who are in the city, a not-to-be-missed occasion is to take part in one of the NovaraJazz events, full of concerts and tastings, artist residences, workshops and active listening, exhibitions and installations, literature presentations and discographic initiatives.

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Landscape / Heritage

The harmony between art and nature represents the deepest essence of this territory and its history. Many are, in fact, the architectural signs that show the local population ability to build facilities that perfectly melt with the landscape. The most ancient and representative example of this symbiosis is probably the Hermitage of Santa Caterina del Sasso in Leggiuno, perched on a rock wall overlooking Lake Maggiore and dating back to the 12th century.

Not to be missed are, without any doubt, the Borromean Islands, undisputed symbol of Lake Maggiore, located on the side where Stresa and Pallanza overlook the lake. The name of this little archipelago comes from the Borromeo family, who, in the 14th century became the owner and that still has Isola Bella and Isola Madre: among manicured gardens, enchanting palaces and a great variety of eastern birds such as white peacocks and golden pheasants, visiting these places is like going on a journey back in time.

Two other green gems in the middle of Lake Maggiore are the Islands of Brissago: here grow more than 2000 plants coming from the Mediterranean and from the subtropical regions of all over the world. Thanks to this biodiversity and its uniqueness, the Botanical Garden of the Islands of Brissago is part of the Gardens of Switzerland, which gather the most beautiful gardens of Switzerland.

Famous all over the world are also the Sacred Mountains of the territory, Unesco world heritage since 2003: the one entitled to the Holy Trinity in Ghiffa, the one dedicated to St. Francis on Lake Orta, the Way of the Cross on the hill of Mattarella overlooking the town of Domodossola and, at last, the Sanctuary of the sacred Mountain of Varese, with the 14 chapels that have guided the pilgrims since the 17th century along a cobblestone of about 2 km, surrounded by a large forest of beech, chestnut and hazelnut trees.

On the contrary, in Switzerland the Sacred Mounts of Brissago and Madonna del Sasso will soon become a Unesco world heritage. Both are renowned architectural ensembles; the first is located over Brissago, the second majestically dominates the city of Locarno.

On the San Giulio island, on the Orta Lake, a devotional place of great interest is the Abbey Mater Ecclesiae, a female cloistered Benedictine abbey which hosts groups or single visitors both religious and lay.

At last, the complex of the Castles of Cannero in Cannobio, whose ancient ruins tell the story of the dynasties that have taken place in the area, is also worth a visit.

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Outdoor Nature

There are really many recreational and sport activities to practice outdoors in a territory that for centuries has based its essence on the relationship between man and the surrounding environment: just think that the Val Grande National Park is the largest wilderness in the Alps.

But in this spot between Piedmont, Lombardy and Switzerland there are also protected areas such as the Regional Park of Alpe Veglia and Alpe Devero or the Wildlife Oasis of Macugnaga, located at the feet of Mount Rosa. North of Varese, on the other hand, there is the Regional Park Campo dei Fiori which overlooks the hill area and the many forest reserves of the Locarno region.

Those who love adventure can try their hand at the Trail Park and the Adventure Park of Mount Mottarone, while those who prefer cycling can choose different cycling paths, from Ossola Valley to Verbania, up to the three valleys near the town of Varese, go through the gentle hills around Novara to reach the Ticino Park or even choose the Vallemaggia trail, between Locarno and Caviglioglio, one of the most beautiful cycling paths of Switzerland.

There is also a great variety of possibilities for those who love hiking and slow tourism, from the trail that joins Lake Orta and Lake Maggiore to that around the Lake Ispra, up to those on peaks, the so called “vie alte”, mountain tracks in the Swiss territory. In winter, the ski lovers can enjoy the ski facilities of San Domenico, in the Viguzzo valley, or of the Mottarone, up to reach international renowned destinations on Mount Rosa or in Macugnaga.

Many are also the golf courses, from Arona to Stresa, from Varese to Solbiate Olona, from Bogogno to Agrate Conturbia and, in Switzerland, in Ascona, Locarno and Losone.

Of course, we cannot forget the sports to practice on the lake, starting from the Liberty-style piers of Lake Maggiore, or sailing on the waters of Lake Orta around the gracious San Giulio island. In Switzerland, on the shores of Gambarogno up to Ascona, the water sport choice is huge and includes sailing, diving, water-skiing, wakeboard, wake-surf or stand up paddle.

Many are also the experiences for the runners: the Lake Maggiore Marathon, which takes place in November, in the most beautiful Italian landscape, the UTLO along Lake Orta, among the most important running trails, and the races on the mountains like the BUT in Val Formazza, the VEIA Sky Race in the Bognanco valley and the MEHT in Macugnaga. Those who love canoeing, sailing, diving, windsurfing and canyoning have many opportunities to choose from in the valleys of the Ossola area. In this territory, active tourism, sport and outdoor activities plunged in this beautiful landscape, represent a rich tourist offer, accessible to everyone.

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Food and wine

The food and wine tradition of this area is closely linked to the combination of man and nature.

From the mountain cheeses to Gorgonzola PDO, the excellent local cheeses are extraordinary. Therefore, we cannot forget the Bettelmatt, symbol of the Ossola gastronomy, with its unique flavour and the colour of hay, or Formaggella del Luinese, the first goat cheese to have obtained the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) in Italy.

The PDO honey of Ossola, produced in the Valleys around Lake Maggiore, is perfect for pairings with cheeses, but also with local cold cuts, such as the smoked ham of the Vigizzo Valley, the Brisaula of the Ossola valley or even the flavoured lard of Macugnaga, without forgetting in the province of Novara, the Salam d'la Duja and the Fidighina, a little liver mortadella.

Moreover, the Swiss region boasts two products of Slow Food presidia: the cicitt, long and thin goat sausages coming from Vallemaggia, and the bóna lour, a special roasted corn flour of the Onsernone Valley.

Rise is another extraordinary example of the virtuous relationship between the territory resources and the people who live in it: for more than 500 years, in fact, the farming industry of Novara – as much as its landscape – has been marked by this traditional production. From the well-known Baldo, Roma and Carnaroli to the black rice varieties such as Venere, Nerone and Artemide, the use of this cereal is essential to prepare traditional dishes like Paniscia, paired with local cold cuts and spices. Once a luxury dish for holidays, today Paniscia is a real delicacy to taste in the several restaurants as well as the local farm houses.

And then let's move to the sweet side of the lake: in Mergozzo it is possible to taste the Fugascine while in Stresa there are some special biscuits created in honour of Queen Margherita of Savoy and named Margheritine. Another preparation is the Crescenzin of the Ossola Valley: raisin, figs and walnuts are added to the brown bread dough in order to create a delicious sweet loaf. Simple and light are the biscuits of Novara, which are prepared with eggs, sugar and flour, according to the recipe conceived in the ancient 16th century convents of the city.

Dolce Varese, Brutti e Buoni Amaretti are the traditional sweets of the Lombard and Varese shores of Lake Maggiore, while on the Swiss side you have to try the bread cake and the delicious Panettone.

All these delicacies can be paired with native wines, like a good DOCG Ghemme or other Nebbiolo varieties of the Novara hills, that with their ancient hamlets, castles, fortified villages, vineyards are among the oldest wine regions in Piedmont. As an alternative, there are also the DOC Ossola Valleys wines, which have now a solid reputation, or those from Ticino, perfect to be matched with meat preparations.

To conclude a meal, there is nothing better than a Grappa from Angera, already appreciated by the Italian royal family between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a Swiss grappa or a nocino.

For the wellbeing of body and mind, it is a true pleasure to enjoy all these delicacies in the restaurants of the territory: from the most familiar ones, to the traditional Ticino grottos, up to the Michelin-starred, romantic restaurants: there is plenty of choice!

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Made in Italy

Design and fashion are sectors of primary importance for the local economy of a territory intensely devoted to beauty. In order to better understand the historic importance for its social fabric, it is possible to enjoy the industrial tourism with a wide choice of company visits – from the most prestigious brands to small local artisanal producers – and in the many factory outlets.

The “local made in Italy” itinerary includes the Museum of Design and the Museum of Taps on Lake Orta, the Hat Museum in Ghiffa and... for rainy days, the Museum of Umbrellas and Sunshades in Gignese.

The lovers of industrial tourism can also visit the Agusta Museum, which gathers memorabilia and prototypes of this famous company of Varese, where there is also the Museum of Textiles and Industry which witnesses the exceptional hard work of the local population. Remaining in the Province of Varese, Volandia in Somma Lombardo is also worth a visit, with its park and flight museum, and Birrificio Angelo Poretti, renowned brewery inside an enchanting Liberty building dating back to the beginning of the 20th century in Induno Olona.

And speaking of important brands, this is an extremely fertile soil for design; in Omegna, in fact, were founded worldwide famous brands like Alessi, Lagostina and Bialetti and in the same place there is the Foundation Museum of Arts and Industry.

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The events of 2020 on Lake Maggiore

2020 is a year packed with cultural, artistic and sports events in every area facing on Lake Maggiore.

In **Switzerland** the protagonist is Ascona, with Settimane Musicali (Musical Weeks) that from 2 September to 15 October will celebrate 75 years of the renowned festival of classical music; the same location will also host **JazzAscona** from 25 June to 4 July.

In spring there will be important news for bicycle tourists, with the **Vallemaglia cycling trail from Locarno to Caviglioglio** which will be open on a separate lane, without interruptions. For those preferring the railway charm, this year on the **Centovalli Express** trains there will be the opportunity to travel with new audio guides.

Moving on the Italian side, that of **Verbania Cusio Ossola** is a calendar full of events. For those who love sports, on 5 April there will be the **14th edition of the Ossola Trail**, with two itineraries: the 27 km itinerary, with an altitude difference of 1900 metres, and the Ossola Bech Trail of 17.5 km and an altitude difference of 1200 metres. The **Half Marathon of Lake Maggiore**, scheduled on 19 April 2020, will see athletes facing the 21 km that separate Verbania Pallanza from Stresa.

In Verbania, from 12 March to 1 November, Villa Taranto will open its enchanting gardens where, on 12 April there will be the **Tulip Festival**; while from July to October they will host the **Dahlias Exhibition**. On the contrary, in November there will be the **15th Camellia Exhibition**.

Summer is a hot season also for the music lovers, which will have the opportunity to enjoy the **Orta Jazz Festival**, on Lake d'Orta.

In the Varese area, on the Lombardy shore of Lake Maggiore, from 20 March to 4 April there will be the **Busto Arsizio Film Festival**, a movie festival that in the years has seen the participation of important artists such as Carlo Verdone, Laura Morante, Sergio Castellitto, Valeria Solarino and many others. The Lake of Varese, from 1 to 3 May, will host **Varese Rowing**, a rowing competition that in 2020 will also be a qualifying event for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

In October the cycling enthusiasts will have the opportunity to attend and take part in the **100th edition of the Tre Valli Varesine competition**, which will be preceded, in the same area, by the **Gran Fondo competition** on 3 and 4 October.

Until 5 April, for the art lovers, the Castello Visconteo Sforzesco of Novara will host the exhibition entitled **"Divisionismo – La rivoluzione della luce"** (Divisionism. The revolution of Light), with seventy works by important artists such as Gaetano Previati and Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo.

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