

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?



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By Floriane

If you're planning a trip to Lake Como, you're probably wondering: **how many days do you need to visit Lake Como?** Is one day enough from Milan? Is 2 or 3 days enough? Or would you prefer 4 or 5 days to discover several villages, visit the villas, take the boat and enjoy the views over the lake?

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Rest assured, this is exactly the question we asked ourselves before our stay. On a map, Lake Como looks easy enough to organize. But once you're there, you soon realize that distances can be deceptive. Between the small roads along the lake, the ferries, the villages where you want to stop absolutely everywhere and the villas to visit, the days fill up very quickly.

We've discovered **Lake Como on several occasions**. In this article, we share our tips for choosing the right length of time to suit your desires, each time with a quick overview of what you can do there, depending on the time you have available.

Sommaire détaillé

- [Visit Lake Como in 1 day](#)
- [Visit Lake Como in 2 days](#)

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

- [Visit Lake Como in 3 days](#)
- [Visit Lake Como in 4 or 5 days](#)
- [Distances and travel times around Lake Como](#)
- [How many days do you need, depending on your profile?](#)
- [Car or boat hire: how to get around Lake Como?](#)
- [How long does it take to drive around Lake Como?](#)
- [Where to stay to visit Lake Como?](#)
- [When is the best time to visit Lake Como?](#)
- [Map of good addresses](#)

Visit Lake Como in 1 day

If you only have **1 day to visit Lake Como**, it's short, but quite possible. It's a good option if you're based in Milan and want to take a day trip.

In that case, we advise you not to want to see everything. The lake is big, the trips take time and the aim is not to spend the day running between boats. The easiest thing to do is concentrate on **Como**, or choose an organized tour that combines Como, Bellagio, Varenna and a lake cruise.

- **Morning:** start with the city of **Como**, the ideal gateway if you're arriving from Milan. Take a stroll **along the harbor**, reach **the old town on foot**, then don't miss the **Duomo of Como**, one of the city's must-see monuments. You can also visit the lakeside **Villa Olmo** (a 20-minute walk from the center), whose park is a very pleasant place to take your first break.

Lunch: for a gourmet break in the historic center, we recommend **Pronobis**, an address that may not look like much from the outside, but where you'll find excellent products and a fine selection of wines. And of course, save room for an ice cream at **Guidi**, one of our top addresses in Como.

- **Afternoon:** two options. If you want to stay in Como, take the funicular up to **Brunate**, then continue to the **Faro di Voltiano** for a panoramic view of the lake. If you prefer to see the lake from the water, take a cruise from the port of Como. This is one of the best ways to get your first glimpse of the villas, mountains and villages along the water's edge.

□ **Activity:** we recommend this [shared cruise on Lake Como](#).

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

□ **Organized tour from Milan:** if you only have a day on site, we recommend this [excursion to Lake Como, Bellagio and Varenna from Milan](#). It's convenient if you don't want to deal with trains, boats and connections.

➔ To plan your day in more detail, see our complete guide [to visiting Como in 1 day](#).

□ For an overnight stay, we recommend [Albergo Firenze](#) which we have tested and approved.

The hotel is very well located, close to the port and the center, so you can do everything on foot.

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

Visit Lake Como in 2 days

With **2 days on Lake Como**, your stay already becomes much more complete. You can devote one day to Como and its surroundings, then a second day to the lake's most emblematic villages.

It's a good length for a weekend from [Milan](#), or for a stopover on a road trip in Northern Italy. The pace remains fairly dense, but you really start to feel the atmosphere of the lake.

Day 1: Start in **Como**, with its historic center, Duomo, port and Villa Olmo. In the afternoon, climb to **Brunate** for some height, or book a cruise on the lake. In the evening, enjoy the atmosphere of downtown Como, which is very pleasant once the day-trippers have left.

□ **Activity:** we recommend this [shared cruise on Lake Como](#).

For around 1h30, you can enjoy the lake from the water, with a beautiful view of Como, Villa Olmo, Cernobbio and the surrounding mountains.

Day 2: Head for the heart of the lake, towards **Varenna** and **Bellagio**. If you don't have a car, a boat is the most convenient and enjoyable option. From the piers, you can link up with the main villages and enjoy superb views of the lake.

In **Varenna**, stroll through the colorful alleyways, walk along the suspended cornice and, if you have time, climb up to **Veziro Castle**. For lunch, **Varenna Caffè Bistrot** is a good address overlooking the lake. It's not necessarily the most secret spot in the area, but the setting works very well for a waterside break.

In the afternoon, head for **Bellagio**, probably the best-known village on Lake Como. Take a stroll through the narrow, sloping streets, walk along the waterside promenade and, if you prefer a quieter time, push on to the gardens of **Villa Melzi**.

→ To prepare for this day, please consult our articles dedicated to [Varenna](#), [Bellagio](#) and [Lake Como by boat](#).

□ For this weekend format, you can stay at [Albergo Firenze in Como](#) if you're

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

arriving from Milan, or choose [Suite Menaggio](#) to be right on the lake.

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Visit Lake Como in 3 days

In our opinion, **3 days on Lake Como** is the perfect length of time for a first real discovery.

You'll have time to see the most beautiful villages, visit a villa or two, take the boat and enjoy a few breaks without feeling like you're racing.

Day 1: devote your first day to the western shore of the lake. Start at [Villa Balbianello](#) in Lenno, one of Lake Como's most famous villas. Continue on to **Villa Carlotta** in Tremezzio, with its gardens and beautiful views. End the day in **Menaggio**, a convenient village for sleeping and sightseeing.

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

For dinner in Menaggio, we recommend **Osteria Il Pozzo**, a good place to try homemade pasta in a simple, pleasant atmosphere.

☐ To sleep in the center of the lake, our favorite is [Menaggio Suite](#). The location is ideal, right in the center of Menaggio, with a beautiful view of the lake and a practical fully-equipped kitchen.

Day 2: Explore the villages to the north and east of the lake. You can pass through **Gravedona** and **Domaso** if you have a car and like quieter areas. In Domaso, you can stop off at the **DOMA Bistrot**, then enjoy a digestive stroll along the wide pebble beach.

Next, head for **Varenna**, our favorite village around Lake Como. Stroll through the old town, walk along the hanging cornice, visit the **Villa Monastero** or climb up to **Veziro Castle** for the view.

☐ If you want to sleep in Varenna, we recommend [Albergo Del Sole](#) located right in the center of town, in a lovely little square a stone's throw from the lake and Villa Monastero.

Day 3: Save the day for **Bellagio** and **Como**. In the morning, discover Bellagio, its lakeside promenade, sloping streets, San Giacomo church and, if you have time, the gardens of Villa Melzi. In the afternoon, drive back down to Como. On the way, you can stop off at the **faro de Voltiano** in Brunate to admire the lake from above, then finish off with a final stroll through Como's old town.

☐ **Activity:** to round off your stay in style, book a [cruise on Lake Como](#). This is one of the best ways to see the villas and mountains from the water.

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☐ If you dream of sleeping in Bellagio (one of the chicest villages around the lake), check out [Hotel Bellagio](#) right in the center, with an excellent breakfast and a lovely view of the opposite shore.

➔ To help you organize your stay, take a look at our complete guide to [visiting Lake Como](#), as well as our articles on [Como](#), [Bellagio](#), [Varenna](#) and [boats on Lake Como](#).

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Visit Lake Como in 4 or 5 days

With **4 or 5 days on Lake Como**, you really start to enjoy the rhythm of the lake. It's the ideal length if you want to take your time, add some lesser-known villages, swim, take a real boat trip or combine the lake with Milan.

It's also a great option if you're traveling with the family, or if you don't like changing accommodation every night. The days can quickly become tiring, especially with the narrow roads, ferries and sometimes complicated parking in high season.

Day 1: Start in **Como**, with its historic center, Duomo, port, Villa Olmo and Brunate. In the evening, stay overnight in Como or Cernobbio if you prefer a quieter setting.

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

□ **Activity:** a [shared cruise on Lake Como](#) is a great way to get your stay off to a flying start.

Day 2: explore the west shore with **Villa Balbianello**, **Villa Carlotta** and **Menaggio**. This is the perfect day to experience the chic and romantic side of Lake Como.

Day 3: Head for **Varenna**, the Villa Monastero, the hanging cornice and Vezio Castle. Take your time in this village, as it deserves more than just a quick visit.

Day 4: Spend the day in **Bellagio** and on the boat. Stroll along the promenade, discover the narrow streets, take a break at the Martiri della Libertà park and leave for a cruise or ferry ride to Menaggio or Varenna.

Day 5: Add another day at your leisure. You can explore [Lecco](#) enjoy the beach, return to your favorite village, or add **Milan** if you haven't visited the city yet. It's also a good day to slow down, have a real Italian lunch and enjoy one last view of the lake.

□ For a stay of several days, you can sleep in two different areas: for example [Albergo Firenze in Como](#) for the start of your stay, then [Suite Menaggio](#), [Albergo Del Sole in Varenna](#) or [Hotel Bellagio](#) to explore the center of the lake.

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Distances and travel times around Lake Como

To help you decide on the length of your stay, here's a quick guide to the routes around Lake Como. Distances aren't huge, but roads can be narrow and journey times can get long in high season.

Route	Approximate time	Ideal for
Milan - Como	About 40 min by train / 1h by car	A day trip
Como - Bellagio	Approximately 1h to 1h30 depending on mode of transport	Full or half day
Bellagio - Varenna	About 15 min by ferry	Combining two must-see villages

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Route	Approximate time	Ideal for
Menaggio - Varenna	About 15 min by ferry	Easy access to the center of the lake
Como - Brunate	About 10 min by funicular	Taking the high road
Como - Lecco	Approximately 45 min to 1 hour by car	Add another lake area
Bellagio - Como	About 1 hour by car	Finish the route on the south side

This picture explains why **3 days at Lake Como** are so comfortable for a first visit. In one day, you can see Como or take an excursion from Milan, but you're only discovering a small part of the lake.

How many days do you need, depending on your profile?

Profile	Ideal duration	Why?
Excursion from Milan	1 day	To discover Como, Bellagio or take a cruise
Weekend on Lake Como	2 days	To combine Como, Varenna and Bellagio
First real discovery	3 days	To see villages, villas and go boating
Romantic getaway	3 to 4 days	Enjoy a leisurely night's sleep by the lake
Family travel	4 to 5 days	To lighten the day and avoid too many journeys
Road trip in Northern Italy	5 days or more	To add Milan, Lecco, bathing and lesser-known villages

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Car or boat hire: how to get around Lake Como?

To visit Lake Como, you have two great options: the car and the boat. The two complement each other very well.

The car makes it easy to stop in villages, reach villas and explore the quieter areas north of the lake. This is what we did on our road trip, and we loved being able to stop whenever we liked a viewpoint.

On the other hand, bear in mind that some roads are narrow, parking can be tricky in high season, and Italian city centers may have **ZTLs**(restricted traffic zones) where you'd be better off avoiding unauthorized ventures.

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Boats are often the most pleasant way to reach emblematic villages such as **Varenna, Bellagio and Menaggio**. What's more, the views from the lake are magnificent. Even if you're travelling by car, we strongly advise you to plan at least one ferry crossing or cruise.

□ To rent a car, you can compare offers from Milan or the region's airports. After testing several comparators, we regularly use [DiscoverCars](#) to compare car rental prices. The site lets you quickly check rates, rental company reviews, deposit amounts and insurance conditions.

□ [Compare car rental deals in Milan on DiscoverCars](#)

How long does it take to drive around Lake Como?

To **drive all the way around Lake Como**, you'll need to allow around **4 hours without a break**. The route is around **170 km** long, but this time is very theoretical: the roads are narrow, the villages make you want to stop often, and traffic can quickly slow down in high season.

In fact, we don't recommend touring Lake Como in a single day by car alone. You risk spending a lot of time behind the wheel, without really enjoying the villages, villas and viewpoints.

For a real tour of Lake Como, with stops in **Como, Menaggio, Varenna, Bellagio, Lenno, Tremezzo** and **Lecco**, plan for **at least 2 to 3 days**. This is the ideal pace for alternating scenic drives, ferry crossings, village strolls and lakeside breaks.

Our advice: use the car to explore the quieter shores, but keep at least one boat crossing between **Bellagio, Varenna and Menaggio**. It's simpler, faster and, above all, much more pleasant to enjoy the lake without looking for a parking space at every stop.

Where to stay to visit Lake Como?

The choice of accommodation has a big influence on the organization of your stay.

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

The lake is big, and depending on where you sleep, you won't experience the same trip at all.

- **In Como :** [Albergo Firenze](#) Ideally located near the port and historic center. Very convenient for a first night or an excursion from Milan.
- **In Menaggio :** [Suite Menaggio](#) Our favorite for the center of the lake, with a beautiful view and a very comfortable apartment.
- **In Varenna :** [Albergo Del Sole](#) The Albergo Del Sole is the perfect place to stay in a charming village, right in the center and a stone's throw from the lake.
- **In Bellagio :** [Hotel Bellagio](#) Hotel Bellagio is a good place to stay if you want to stay in the best-known village on the lake.

→ For more details, see our full article on [where to stay on Lake Como](#).

[Albergo Firenze - Mid-range - Our favorite](#)

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Tested and approved during our stay in Como

- **Clean and pleasant** room
- **Ideal** location **near the port**
- Parking 10€ / day
- Rated 8.5/10 on Booking

[Info and booking from €105](#)

♥ [Bello! Lake Como Suites - upscale with jacuzzi](#)

- Sublime terrace with **jacuzzi**
- Right in the center
- **rooms are superb** and tastefully decorated
- Rated 8.8/10 on Booking

How many days should I allow to visit Lake Como?

[Information and booking for Hotel Bello](#)

When is the best time to visit Lake Como?

In our opinion, the **best time to visit Lake Como** is between **April and June**, and **September and October**. The temperatures are pleasant, the villages are livelier than in winter and there are generally fewer crowds than in midsummer.

- ☐ **In spring**, the villa gardens start to bloom, the terraces slowly fill up and the colors around the lake are magnificent. It's a perfect time of year if you want to visit **Bellagio, Varenna, Menaggio, Como** or the villas without suffering the extreme heat.
- ✱ In summer, Lake Como remains superb, of course, but it's also the busiest time of the year. Accommodation prices rise, parking lots fill up fast and boats can be in high demand. If you're going in July or August, we really advise you to book your accommodation, tours and crossings in advance.
- ☐ Autumn is also a great time to discover the lake. In September and early October, the atmosphere is calmer, the light is softer and temperatures are often pleasant for a stroll. It's a period we particularly recommend for a couple's holiday or a road trip in Northern Italy.
- ✱ In winter, Lake Como is much quieter, but some hotels, restaurants and activities may be slow. It's a good option if you're looking for peace and quiet, but not the best time to enjoy the lake, gardens and boat trips.

To sum up, for your first visit, we recommend **May, June, September or early October**. You'll enjoy a good balance between pleasant weather, lively villages and more reasonable visitor numbers.

Map of good addresses

To help you organize your stay, we've put together an interactive map of the villages, villas, viewpoints, restaurants, hotels and landing stages featured in our itinerary.

You can save it to your favorites or download it for offline use during your trip. It's great for viewing distances between Como, Bellagio, Varenna, Menaggio, Lenno,

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Tremezzio and Brunate.

In our opinion, **3 days on Lake Como is the ideal length of time** for a first discovery. **1 day is enough** to get an overview from Milan or to visit Como, **2 days already allow you to add Bellagio or Varenna**, and **4 to 5 days are perfect** for exploring the lake more leisurely, sleeping in several villages and adding Milan or Lecco.

We've tried to give you a **quick overview of the main things to do on Lake Como**. For more details, we invite you to consult our articles dedicated to each location.

To help you plan your stay, read our guides to [Como](#), [Bellagio](#), [Varenna](#), [Lecco](#), [boating on Lake Como](#) and [where to stay on Lake Como](#).

Feel free to leave us a **quick note** or **5 stars** below to let us know if you're planning this trip, ask any questions here or on [Instagram](#), we'll get back to you with great pleasure.

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