The Italian Lake District

September 21st - 29th 2018

Lake Como

Ringed by alpine peaks, the sparkling waters of the Italian Lake District command a landscape where mountains descend to meet the shores and grand hotels rise up in pretty lakeside towns. Here at the convergence of Italy and Switzerland is an area graced with shocking beauty and extraordinary diversity, where each lake with its own charms and treasures unfolds against a backdrop of semi-tropical gardens, gracious old villas, and vibrant villages and tradition.

The legendary beauty of Italy has enthralled visitors for centuries. Artists have been inspired by its brilliant light, poets and writers have been moved to pen great works, and travellers have come to bask in all that Italy has to offer. From the majesty of Lake Maggiore, the most famous of the Italian Lakes, to the enchanting vistas surrounding Lake Como, we'll explore the Italian Lake District, an area beloved of the Romantic poets as well as writers as diverse as Virgil, Goethe, Stendhal, and Hemingway, not to mention a host of royalty.

This fall join Discover Europe on a journey of discovery to one of the most beautiful regions of Europe. Whether on the jewel-like Borromean Islands, or admiring the panorama from the crystalline waters of Lake Como, this highly scenic tour perfectly captures the romantic charm of the Italian Lakes. And with a balance of guided visits as well as free time on your own to explore the villages and vistas, you'll experience the full flavor of Italy's lakeside majesty.

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Land Only (no airfare included):	**$4980**
Single supplement:	**$1850**

The following services are included:

Hotels:	7 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels All hotel taxes and service charges included
Coaching:	All ground transportation as detailed in day-by-day itinerary
Meals:	Breakfast daily, 2 lunches, 3 dinners
Guides:	Discover Europe tour guide throughout, local guides as specified in the itinerary
Expenses:	Porterage of one large suitcase per person
Entrances:	Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary
Ferries:	All ferry tickets as detailed in the day-by-day itinerary

Please note that travel insurance is not included on this tour. Insurance information will be mailed to each registration on receipt of deposit.

Discover Europe Ltd.
95 Adams Street,
Keene, NH 03431,
USA

e - info@discovereuropeltd.com
w - www.discovereuropeltd.com
t - (toll free) 866-563-7077
f - (fax) 603-563-7137

Friday, September 21st - Departure from your chosen US gateway city. **Overnight: Plane**

Saturday, September 22nd - Your arrival at Milan's Malpensa Airport will be met for the scenic (and short) drive to our hotel in Stresa. After checking in there will be time to unpack and relax in our hotel with stunning waterfront views of Lake Maggiore. This evening we'll gather for drinks and enjoy a welcome dinner. **(D) Overnight: Stresa**

Sunday, September 23rd - We begin our first full day with a boat transfer to Isola Bella for a morning walking tour with a local guide. Literally translated as 'beautiful island' this is one of the Borromean Islands of Lake Maggiore. Scenically divided by a fishing village and the Palace with surrounding Italianate garden, we'll enjoy the setting of historically sumptuous parties and theatrical events for the nobility of Europe. The palace, begun in 1632 by Carlo III, from the influential House of Borromeo, was to be dedicated to his wife Isabella D'Adda (from whom the island takes its name). We'll have time for lunch on Isola Pescatori before heading to Isola Madre. A walking tour with a local guide will acquaint us with the largest of the three islands in the archipelago. We'll wander among the well-known English style gardens – the Giardini Botanici dell'Isola Madre – dating from about 1823, and covering eight hectares on the site of a former citrus orchard. We'll return to our hotel for a free evening. **(B) Overnight: Stresa**

Lake Maggiore

Monday, September 24th - This morning we will take a short ride to Lake Orta, to visit the Isola San Giulio and its Basilica, said to date from the 4th century. Returning to the mainland, we visit the Sacro Monte di Orta – the sacred mountain. Begun in 1590, this series of chapels leads up the hillside overlooking the lake, all of them filled with scenes depicting the life of St. Francis, in frescoes, paintings and life-sized terracotta statues. Erected over a period of 300 years the chapels also provide a fascinating look at the changes in architectural styles over the centuries. The rest of the afternoon will be free to explore in Stresa – those who wish to can be dropped at the station to take the cable car up the Mottarone, the mountain behind the town, for fabulous views over Lake Maggiore. Dinner is included at a local restaurant this evening. **(B, D) Overnight: Stresa**

Tuesday, September 25th - We'll begin our day with a drive through the spectacular countryside to Varese, where we'll visit the Villa Cicogna Mozzoni and enjoy a private tour with the owner of both the house and garden. The residence is a stellar example of Lombard Renaissance architecture and was first built in 1400 as a hunting lodge for the Mozzoni family, Milanese nobility who retired to the Varese area. The gardens, dating back to the 16th century, include a 'stairway' of water featuring a temple at the top and a grotto with tunnels. We'll relax over lunch before continuing to our hotel in Bellagio. After checking in the rest of the day is free to explore the town and sample a local restaurant for dinner. **(B, L) Overnight: Bellagio**

Wednesday, September 26th - This morning a short stroll along the lake brings us to the gardens at Villa Melzi d'Eril on Lake Como with a local guide. Built between 1808 and 1815 for the Duke of Lodi, Vice President of the Italian Republic under Napoleon, and Chancellor of the Empire, Francesco Melzi d'Eril, the neoclassical villa, chapel and orangery occupy a significant position overlooking the lake. It was decorated and furnished by famous artists and sculptors of the period including Appiani, Bossi, Canova and Comolli. The 'English style' gardens include rare exotic plants, camellia hedges, azalea groves and enormous rhododendron, alongside sculptures and artefacts, including two Egyptian statues and a Venetian gondola. We return to the center of Bellagio where the rest of the day is free to enjoy this charming lakeside town. **(B) Overnight: Bellagio**

Thursday, September 27th - This morning we transfer by boat across the lake to the Villa Carlotta. Originally built for the Milanese Marquis Giorgio Clerici in 1690, the villa features an Italian garden with steps, fountains and notable sculptures. We'll stop at a lakeside restaurant for a leisurely lunch (included) at a restaurant overlooking the lake. This afternoon we'll visit the Villa Balbianello with a private guide. Built on the site of a Franciscan monastery in 1787, Villa Balbianello is located on a peninsula overlooking the lake. The villa is famous for its elaborate terraced gardens which form part of the Grandi Giardini Italiani. We continue down the shore of Lake Como to our hotel. **(B, L) Overnight: Como**

Lake Como Villa

Friday, September 28th - A short boat ride along the lake this morning brings us into the city of Como. We'll have a walking tour of the city center, including a visit to the cathedral and then have free time for lunch and to do some last-minute souvenir shopping before we return to our hotel for a farewell dinner. **(B, D) Overnight: Como**

Saturday, September 29th - Morning transfers to Milan's Malpensa Airport for your returning international flights back to the US. **(B)**

Key to included meals: B - breakfast, L - lunch, D - dinner