

Tour
Information



Lake Orta by Rail





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to Italy.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Italian Consulate-General: "Harp House", 83/86 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4BL.

Tel: (0)20 7936 5900. Fax: (0)20 7583 9425.

Email: consolato.londra@esteri.it Website:

http://www.conslondra.esteri.it/Consolato_Londra

Open Mon-Fri 0900-1200



Tickets

You will be issued with a return train ticket.

Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by two asterisks in the class type section in the top right hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

TGV tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats

On all legs of the journey you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket.



Baggage

As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trolleys are available at St Pancras and Paris, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called **thebaggageman**, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:

<http://www.thebaggageman.com>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers

Paris – On arrival, transfer by coach to the Mercure Gare de Lyon for a one night stay.

Novara – On arrival, transfer by coach to Lake Orta (approx. 1.5 hours) and the Giardinetto Hotel.

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Mercure Gare de Lyon, Paris

Completely renovated in 2010, this hotel is located at an easy distance from the station and offers comfortable bedrooms with private bathroom with bath, hairdryer, TV, telephone, safe, wi-fi and coffee/tea making facilities.

Giardinetto Hotel, Lake Orta

The charming 3-star Giardinetto Hotel has belonged to the Primatesta family since 1930 and is located in a wonderful, isolated position directly on Lake Orta, about 2km from Orta San Giulio. The terrace restaurant, where we shall enjoy dinner every evening, overlooks the lake and offers lovely views. This friendly, family-run hotel has a heated swimming pool, a bar, a private beach, and modern, comfortable bedrooms with private bath/shower, hairdryer, TV, telephone, and wi-fi. Unfortunately, rooms at the Giardinetto Hotel do not include coffee/tea making facilities, so we recommend you bring a travel kettle if required.

For more information visit their website
<http://www.giardinettohotel.com/en/>



Food

Italian food rivals French in the hearts and taste buds of many gastronomes and the regional cuisine, of which the locals are very proud, wonderfully reflects the climate and local produce. Delicious pizza, pasta and risotto dishes are present everywhere throughout Italy with local specialities and sauces. Birthplace of the most prestigious school of Italian cooking, the Piedmont region offers the most varied and refined cuisine of the peninsula. Try the traditional *agnolotti* (pasta folded over with a beef and vegetable filling), the many excellent cheeses (such as the prized *Castelmango*), locally produced honey, salami and cured meats, such as *mortadella of the Ossola*. Rice dishes are also very popular in this region, the most famous being *Risotto alla Milanese* (rice with saffron and white wine) and *Paniscia* (rice cooked with lard, onions, salami and seasonal vegetables).

Renowned for excellent pastry and chocolate, Piedmont's *marron glace* and *gianduiotto* are famous worldwide. Local specialities include *Crescenzin* (rye loaf stuffed with walnuts, figs and raisins) and *Margheritine of Stresa* (biscuits originally made in honour of Queen Margherita of Savoy). Strong Italian espresso coffee is served after the meal and will be black, in small cups, unless a *cappuccino* is requested.

Table service is common in most restaurants and bars. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, and no further tipping is required.



Drink

The world's largest wine producer, Italy is home to some of the oldest viticulture regions. The wines are named according to their grape variety or after their village or area of origin. Excellent wines are produced throughout Italy and Sicily, with local wines offering great value and quality. With some of the best known, noble, world-appreciated and prize-winning wines, you will be spoilt for choice in the Piedmont region. It is mainly red wines that represent the main grape variety (Nebbiolo) at its finest. *Barolo*, *Barbaresco*, *Gattinara*, *Ghemme* and *Roero DOCs* are excellent.

Apéritifs such as *Campari* and *Punt e Mes* are excellent appetisers, while Italian liqueurs include *Grappa*, *Stregga*, *Galliano*, *Amaretto*, *Sambuca* and *Limoncello*.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Dinner – daily set menu at the Giardinetto Hotel



Destination

Be captivated by the quiet beauty of this small, undiscovered lake – the water is a perfect blue, its little island mysterious, the mountain and lake scenery spectacular, the quaint lakeside villages quintessentially Italian. Enjoy charming boat trips on lakes Orta and Maggiore, take in the flavours and colours at Omegna's lively street market, and discover peaceful and fascinating religious sites.

Places of interest included in the tour:

Lake Orta & Orta San Giulio

One of Italy's least visited lakes, *Lake Orta* is unjustly ignored as it is one of the most beautiful, and delightfully set in the foothills of the Alps. Just 2 or 3 km from your hotel, the lake's main town, *Orta San Giulio*, has a beautiful historic centre containing handsome *palazzi* and pretty houses with decorative wrought-iron balconies. In the main square is the town hall, a frescoed building dating from 1582 standing on arcades and a host of restaurants with outdoor terraces, perfect for a lovely relaxed lunch. Elsewhere, visit the 15th century church of *Santa Maria Assunta* with a richly-decorated interior of 17th century frescoes and (energy permitting, as it sits high above the town) the amazing *Sanctuary of Sacro Monte*, that was built between 1591 to 1770 and contains 21 chapels in which a variety of scenes from the life of St Francis are depicted in life-size statuary.

Another delight is the tiny island *Isola San Giulio* reached from the town by boat (leaving from the Piazza Motta, return fare approx. €3, not included and payable locally), with a pretty church containing a 12th century pulpit.

For more information about Lake Orta:

<http://www.orta.net/>

Omegna

Market day in the lake's other main town, *Omegna*, is a delight too and reached by boat which departs directly from the hotel. For a true slice of Italian life this excursion should not be missed. Omegna's centre is also very pleasant around the *Piazza del Municipio* where a bridge spans the River Nigoglia.

The Lakes – Maggiore and Swiss Lugano

A wonderfully scenic introduction to the area is a full day tour of two of the principal lakes of the region: the relaxing *Lake Maggiore* and the Swiss/Italian *Lake Lugano*. With plenty of refreshment stops at delightful lakeside villages and spectacular lake and mountain views, you will be enchanted at every turn. Each lake has its own character and style whilst both offer wonderful scenery and are lined with elegant villas and pretty villages with typical local architecture.

For more information about Lake Maggiore:

http://www.illagomaggiore.com/en_US/home

For more information about Lake Lugano:

<http://www.lugano-tourism.ch/en/32/tourist-information.aspx>

Varallo

Nestled in the foothills of the Alps, *Varallo* is a small town on the confluence of two rivers – the *Sesia* and the *Mastallone*. Visit the 15th century church of *Santa Maria delle Grazie* that houses a superb collection of beautifully-restored frescoes depicting the life of Christ, painted in the early 16th century by local Gaudenzo Ferrari. The town also boasts an extraordinary religious community founded in the 15th century, *Sacro Monte de Varallo*, set high up at an altitude of 610m reached by a long staircase or cableway. One of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Piedmont, this lovely complex of buildings houses the 19th century *Basilica dell'Assunta* and a series of 50 chapels dotted around it representing the sacred sites of Jerusalem and filled with 800 life-sized religious statues dating back to the 15th century.

Monte Rosa & Macugnaga

The pretty mountain village of *Macugnaga*, founded in the 12th century by the Swiss Walser people, sits at the base of *Monte Rosa*, the second highest mountain in Western Europe, in both Italy and Switzerland, and is dramatically surrounded by a series of high peaks. Its location it is a quiet place makes it perfect to appreciate the wild and spectacular Alpine scenery of the area as well as its charming mountain architecture.

For more information about Macugnaga:

<http://www.macugnaga.it/>

Stresa & the Borromean Islands

On the shores of the Lake Maggiore, the chic town of *Stresa* boasts a wealth of lovely villas, left behind by the aristocracy of Europe, who have chosen it as a holiday spot for centuries. The *Borromean Islands*, a group of three islands in the lake, easily reached from the quayside at Stresa, comprise *Isola Bella*, location of the splendid 17th century *Palazzo Borromeo*, *Isola Madre*, home to a beautiful botanical garden, and *Isola dei Pescatori*, the only inhabited island with its quaint and picturesque fishing village.

For more information about Stresa:

<http://www.stresa.com/>

Reading Suggestions

Bernard Levin, *From the Camargue to the Alps: A Walk Across France in Hannibal's footsteps*.

As the title suggests, English journalist Bernard Levin follows the Carthaginian military commander's path across France to Italy, describing history, landscape and culture on his way.

Henry James, *Italian Hours*, 1909.

Published at the end of his life, Henry James portrays his love of Italy through this series of essays, written over nearly four decades.

Charles Richard Weld, *Auvergne, Piedmont and Savoy: A Summer Ramble*, 1850.

The historian Charles Richard Weld wrote a series of "Vacation Tours", of which the account of his travels to the Piedmont.

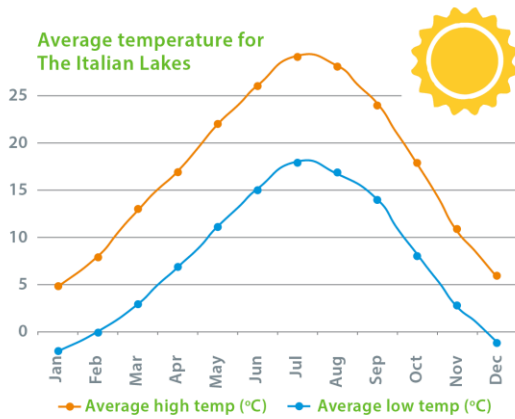
Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.



The Basics

Climate – The weather around Lake Orta at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but evenings can be quite cool and there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.



Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – Italian.

Religion – Roman Catholic.

National holidays – New Year's day (01 Jan); Epiphany (06 Jan); Easter Monday; Liberation day (25 Apr); Labour day (01 May); Republic day (02 Jun); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Immaculate conception (08 Dec); Christmas day (25 Dec); St Stephens day (26 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Switzerland – Franc. 1CHF = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of 1000, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 CHF. Coins are in denominations of 5, 2, 1 CHF and 50, 20, 10, 5 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior

to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Department stores are open 0830-1930 Monday to Saturday. Most shops are closed between 1230-1530. Please note that some museums close on Mondays.

Although very common in tourist towns in Italy, please note that street vendors selling all kinds of designer knockoffs are illegal and could land you with a hefty fine. Care should also be taken when buying antiques since Italy is renowned for skilled imitators.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good flat/grip walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate general Milan

Via S. Paolo, 7

20121 Milan

Italy

Tel: +39 (0)6 4220 2431

Fax: +39 (0)2 8646 5081

Italy.consulate@fco.gov.uk

Open Mon-Fri 0930-1230 and 1400-1600. Phone lines open 0900-1700. Outside these hours a consular Emergency Service is in operation and can be contacted on +39 (0)6 4220 2413.

Travel Editions

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