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Lake Como, Italy – My View Of The Lake

By Sharon Stajda

Just a short bus ride, 25 miles north of Milan, is one of the most scenic spots in all of Italy – Lake

Como. Its shores are circled with charming little towns and fabulous century-old villas; one larger, and more ornate than the next. The glistening water beckons one to sit, and take time to enjoy all that the lake and surrounding lush scenery have to offer. Lake Como being the third largest lake in Italy, I found it not only tranquil, but magical. With its lush Mediterranean gardens and spectacular views, it is easy to see why it has earned the reputation as one of the most romantic getaways in Italy.

Traveling with my husband, son and daughter-in-law, we were all pleased to arrive at the hotel we had reserved for our stay. The Hotel Bellevue was our unanimous choice. Built in 1820, it neighbors the stately Villa Carlotta. On arrival we were pleased to see that the hotel was situated just feet from Lake Como. The hotel itself was lovely. It had wonderful charm, gardens, antique furnishings, and an outdoor swimming pool. The lobby was stately with a huge Venetian chandelier and a great sweeping staircase. Art adorned every wall. The rooms were lovely, with antique furniture, and soft Italian linens.

After unpacking and settling into our rooms, it was time to explore. No sooner had we left the hotel when we spotted a charming restaurant called "The Victorian Tea Garden," which sat right on the banks of Lake Como. We were seated at a lovely outdoor table covered in crisp white linen. To our delight, a grapevine-covered pergola hung overhead. But what really stole the scenery was the breathtakingly beautiful view of the Swiss Alps. These majestic mountains circled the shoreline and provided a stunning backdrop to the dark, marine-blue waters of Lake Como. It left us with the impression that we had traveled back in time. The owner - a gentleman who looked in his 80's – was very hospitable and could not have made us feel more welcome. We ordered Champaign, and toasted each other (and our magnificent setting) with tall, chilled glasses. We sat there in appreciation and awe of the spectacular setting for the next two hours, finishing two bottles of Champaign!

With the sun beginning to set, we returned to the Hotel Bellevue for a relaxing, fabulous dinner. Then, to cap off the evening, we ferried over to Bellagio, the famed, picturesque Italian resort village. Narrow, cobblestone streets were lined with old shops, restaurants and churches. My advice? Don't leave Bellagio without visiting the shops, as here you will find some of the most wonderful silk scarves and ties – not to mention leather goods – in all of Italy.

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There was little traffic on Bellagio. This made it ideal for walking and taking the sights in. Bellagio is completely unspoiled, and possesses the grace and charm of "old world living." It was also very clear that the Bellagio residents loved their gardens, and kept them well tended.

The wide area of Lake Como offers inexhaustible things to do for tourists. It is an ideal place to vacation with family. For those who desire relaxation, the tranquil scenery of the lake surroundings is sure to please. Lake Como is also perfect for anyone looking for a more active vacation; swimming, water-skiing, sailing, hiking, mountain-biking, and horseback riding await. Day mountain excursion trips are also worthwhile ventures. These trips offer the most breath-taking views of the lake and surrounding areas.

Boat excursions from Lake Como are a must. Ferry service will take you to local monuments and

exquisite villas, as well as to lovely lakeside towns (I recommend the picturesque town of Varenna.) Or, you may also choose a ferry excursion to neighboring Switzerland. The Swiss town of Lugano offers great shopping, though it is expensive, so bring credit cards.

If spectacular works of art, classical Italian gardens, and elegant, period settings are your interest, I recommend a visit to the famed Villa Carlotta, located in the town of Tremezzo. It offers spectacular landscaped gardens, while the villa is a must-see for antique lovers. The Duomo, better known as the "Renaissance Cathedral", is another spectacular must-see. It's located in the town center of Como.

Shopping adventures (and treasures) await at any one of the lakeside towns, as do epicurean delights. Taste regional products like olive oil, wine, and cheese in the numerous lakeside shops, restaurants, and cafes.

In the evening, enjoy a glass of wine at one of the local wine bars, and relax before eating at one of the many memorable restaurants that the area has to offer. Most restaurants offer regional or modern cuisine. After dinner, treat yourself to a night of music and dance in local discos; most stay open until sunrise. Or, as my family and I enjoy doing, take an evening walk along the lake before retiring to read a good book.

Lake Como is fabulous unlike any other place. It possesses spectacular views, lush, tranquil settings; fine Italian architecture, elegant, by-gone charm, and warm, hospitable people. With its unspoiled grace and charm, Lake Como offers its guests the opportunity to experience an enchanting slice of life which is relaxed, elegant, and breathtakingly beautiful. It is a place where you will be drawn back to time and time again. Perhaps on a sunny day in your own backyard, your daydreams will beckon you to the shores of Lake Como.

Sharon Stajda loves writing about her travels abroad. For further information on the Italian Lakes and Lake Como, please visit our website at:

<http://www.oldandsold.com/articles23/italian-lakes-14.shtml>

Lake Tahoe Luxury Rentals – What to Expect, and Why to get one

By Kevin Rockwell

When you're looking at Lake Tahoe luxury rentals, you're looking for something that's going to be a little more expensive than just a simple rental. After all, that's where the 'luxury' part comes in, otherwise it wouldn't be Lake Tahoe luxury rentals, but rather Lake Tahoe rentals. There are many benefits to having a Lake Tahoe luxury rental, and there are many different things that you can expect.

When you are shopping around for Lake Tahoe luxury rentals, expect to pay anywhere from \$250 a night to, at the highest, \$8800 a night. If you're looking at the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals that feature only two bedrooms and a bathroom, expect to be paying anywhere from \$250 to \$500 a night. Some of those Lake Tahoe luxury rentals will have a hot tub, but most aren't lakefront. If you're looking for three bedroom Lake Tahoe Luxury rentals, you should be in the \$300 to \$800 a night range. Some of these Lake Tahoe luxury rentals will include a hot tub, but once again, most of these Lake Tahoe luxury rentals will not be on the lakefront. Once you start to look specifically for Lake Tahoe luxury rentals that are on the lakefront, and those that have more bedrooms, you're looking into the more expensive Lake Tahoe luxury rentals. For starters, the cheapest five bedroom Lake Tahoe luxury rental you are going to find is \$350 a night, and that's for something that barely compares to the other Lake Tahoe luxury rentals. Generally speaking, you'll find most of these Lake Tahoe luxury rentals in the \$600 to \$1000 range, but they are by far the premiere Lake Tahoe luxury rentals. The very highest of the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals that you're going to see is going to be nearly \$9000 a night, but these Lake Tahoe luxury rentals are on the steep side, and spectacular.

Why would you consider some of the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals? Well, for starters the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals are surrounded by a variety of activities. Some of the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals are close to the ski hills, while other Lake Tahoe luxury rentals are closer to casinos and other night life. All in all, if you choose to go with one of the Lake Tahoe luxury rentals you can't go wrong.

Kevin Rockwell visits and writes about Lake Tahoe and the many wonders of this great area at:

<http://lake-tahoe-fun.com>

Find great mountain vacation ideas, real estate information, and fun vacation attractions at Lake Tahoe Fun!



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