



From Menaggio to Porlezza along the former railway line



This itinerary follows the traces of the former railway line that ran between Menaggio and Porlezza and connected Lake Como with Lake Lugano. The route runs through the valley Val Menaggio, mainly on paved paths, and touches the Lago di Piano Nature Reserve. It should be noted that some small sections run along roads used by local traffic.

ITINERARY: Menaggio - Grandola ed Uniti - Bene Lario - Carlazzo - Porlezza

STARTING POINT: Menaggio - boat dock in via IV Novembre

LENGHT: 13.5 km

ALTITUDE AT DEPARTURE: 200 m

MAXIMUM ALTITUDE: 377 m

TOTAL ASCENT: 250 m

DIFFICOLTÀ TECNICA: easy



The railway line between Menaggio and Porlezza was opened in 1884 in order to attract more tourists from northern Europe to the area. Arriving by train to Lugano the tourists were then transported by steamboat to Porlezza from where the train brought them to Menaggio. After World War I it became a simple working class transit system that lasted till 1939. After World War II the train line was abandoned.

Route: The former railway station of Menaggio is in **Via IV Novembre**, where today the grocery store called Consorzio Agrario stands, just next to the ferry dock. This is where this itinerary starts. Cross via IV Novembre and from the petrol station follow the indications leading to the Youth Hostel. From here continue straight on and, after 500 m at the fork, turn right and ascend the steep road that leads along the side of Monte Crocetta.

In order to overcome the incline from Menaggio (207 m) to Cardano (377 m), the train would head south for about 600 m and reverse its direction on a siding (where the locomotive, after being separated, was turned on a turntable to be attached to the rear of the train) to continue northwards.

Continue straight on along **Via Privata F.lli Castelli**. Just past a new "residence" the via Privata Fratelli Castelli ends on the main **State road 340** which connects Menaggio with Lugano. Cross it paying attention to the heavy traffic, and follow it to the left, uphill, for just 50m. At the next bend pick up the cycle/pedestrian lane.

The track enters a valley and passes a



The cycle path

90 m long tunnel. At the fork ignore the road to the right leading down to the Agriturismo Barcola and continue left. Shortly ahead the track ends onto the **SP road of Grandola ed Uniti**.

Turn right and then immediately left into Via Roma in the direction of the villages (frazioni) of Grandola ed Uniti (beware of local traffic). After 300 m turn left onto **Via Gonte**. Once at Gonte, turn left onto **Via Cascinello Rosso** that finishes after another 400 m on the state road 340.

Cross it with caution and follow the signs for **Bene Lario / Grona** and after 200 m pick up the cycle path on the right.

You skirt a plain called Binadone flanked by the woody slopes of Monte Crocione (1640 m) and Monte Galbiga. Near the village of Grona the track ends. Continue to the right along **Via Cascine**. When you get to an intersection, take the cycle track right in front of you (sign for Lago di Piano) entering the **Nature Reserve Lago di Piano**. Pass behind the campsite Ranocchio and just past its entrance continue along the little lake called Lago di Piano. Soon you reach the visitor centre **Casa della Riserva** with an information office and a small ecomuseum (for information tel. 0344 74961). In front of the office there are some nice picnic tables with view of the lake.

On the left you notice the hillock called Brione with the **Castel S. Pietro** at its top. We recommend a small detour in order to visit this old settlement with its houses clustered close to each other. The stone wall and the narrow passages give the idea of a fortress, which is what it used to be in the Middle Ages.

Continuing on the track you will cross a wooden bridge over the river Cuccio. Follow the course of the river until you reach the **main road SP14**. Continue to the right for approximately 100 m and then cross the main road and turn into **Via Prati** that leads to the residential complex called "Porto Letizia." On the left side of the main building take the path that skirts Lake Lugano.

After crossing the bridge over the river Val Rezzo, go down some steps to resume the continuation of the lake side promenade that leads to the center of Porlezza. Back the same way.



On the shore of Lake Piano

