



Gastronomic Lombardy

Food from the mountains, lakes and the plains of the Po

7–13 April 2025 (ML 661)

£4,080 • 7 days

Speaker: Christine Smallwood

A spectacular range of geography yields diverse, superb food and wine, from sparkling Franciacorta to the robust reds of the mountainous Valtellina region.

Multiple tastings (of wine, olive oil, local delicacies), lunches in family-run *osterie*, and a 2* Michelin dinner.

Visit the charming, often overlooked northern centres of Cremona, Brescia and Bergamo.

Led by Christine Smallwood, food and wine expert and author of *An Appetite for Lombardy: the people, the places, the food*.

Lombardy – *Lombardia* – is the region of Italian excellence, the place that sets modern standards for much of what Italy is admired for around the world. It is one of the country's most geographically diverse areas and with that comes a remarkable variety of food and wines that make its *cucina* among the most sophisticated in Italy.

The region contains the famous Lake District, including Lake Como, the deep blue jewel that is the most beautiful of them all, as well as the nearby Valtellina, a glorious and undiscovered swath of the Italian Alps that produces the region's best red wines and rustic mountain food. Noble cities such as Brescia, Cremona and Bergamo each have their own rich traditions, and in Lombardy one also finds hill towns and broad fertile plains. Its southern border is the Po, the largest river in Italy.

Such geographic diversity provides a feast of ingredients to cook with. They include wild mushrooms; berries; rice; corn for polenta; wheat for pasta and baking; fish from lakes and rivers; prized cattle; and more cow's milk cheeses than any other region of Italy, including Parmesan, Stracchino, Taleggio, Bitto and Gorgonzola.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 10.30am from London Heathrow to Milan Linate (British Airways). Taste the local sparkling Franciacorta wine, made using a similar process to champagne, in an outstanding winery en route to the hotel. First of three nights in Brescia.



Lake Garda, watercolour by E. Harrison Compton, publ. 1908.

Day 2: Brescia, nr Lake Garda. One of the most overlooked Italian city centres, Brescia has a fascinating historic core, and a rich trove of museums and churches – see the *Averoldi Polyptych* by Titian, and the very good picture collection at the Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo. In the afternoon visit a farm on the shores of Lake Garda, to taste their award-winning olive oil. Dinner is at a 2-star Michelin restaurant on the outskirts of Brescia.

Day 3: Cremona. The birthplace of Monteverdi, Stradivarius and Guarini, Cremona has one of the finest squares in Italy, composed of the cathedral, Italy's tallest medieval campanile, baptistery and Gothic civic buildings. Discover *torrone*, the city's famous nougat, a Cremona speciality.

Day 4: Bergamo. Leave Brescia to travel to an exceptional family-run trattoria near Bergamo. With its own herb garden, vegetables and fruit, this restaurant is beloved for the freshness of its flavours and fidelity to local food traditions. The Upper Town of Bergamo is among the most attractive old city centres in Italy. The Romanesque Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore forms part of the superb architectural complex of the Piazza del Duomo, and the adjacent Cappella Colleoni has frescoes by Tiepolo. Travel on to Bellagio for the first of three nights.

Day 5: Lake Como. Spend the day on land and water, travelling exclusively by boat. Villa Carlotta on the western shore of Lake Como, built as a summer residence for a Milanese aristocrat, combines dramatic terracing, parterre and grottoes with an extensive landscape park and arboretum. The house contains notable collections from the Napoleonic period. Lunch is on the other side of the lake, in a family-run *osteria*.

Day 6: The Valtellina. Just north of the lake is the Valtellina, a valley that opens to Lombardy's alps. Some of Italy's top red wines come from here, and there is a tasting with delicious local cheeses at one of the region's best producers. This zone is famous for numerous local foods, among them *pizzoccheri*, a buckwheat pasta served with cheese, greens, potatoes and garlic – ideal paired with local red wine. The speaker leads a wine tasting in the evening, which sums up the extraordinary breadth and quality encountered on the tour.

Day 7. Fly from Milan Linate, arriving at London Heathrow at c. 3.15pm.

Gastronomic Lombardy
continued

Lecturer

Christine Smallwood. Food and travel writer specializing in Italy, and is the author of a series of books, including *An Appetite for Lombardy: the people, the places, the food* and *World Vegetarian: Italy for Bloomsbury*. A French graduate, Member of the Guild of Food Writers and co-chair of the Abergavenny Food Festival, Christine was appointed the international curator of an Italian food festival for three years. She was awarded the Crest of Puglia by the President of the region in March 2008 in recognition of her knowledge and communication of its gastronomic culture. Twitter: @SmallwoodC | Instagram: @smallwoodcg | Website: appetiteforitaly.com

Practicalities

Price. Two sharing: £4,080 or £3,880 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,940 or £4,740 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 4 lunches and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; 3 wine tastings; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Hotel Vittoria, Brescia (hotelvittoria.com/en): a five-star rating but more four-star in reality; a traditional, very central hotel. **Hotel Belvedere, Bellagio** (belvederebellagio.com/en): a historic family-run four-star hotel with a large garden and newly opened spa. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? Visits require a fair amount of walking and standing around. Some days involve a lot of coach travel. Average distance by coach per day: 59 miles

Group size: between 10 and 23 participants.