

Mandello

del Lario

SMART GUIDE



Lake Como



Going to the mountains Paths on the lake



Municipality of Mandello del Lario



CAI Grigne Mandello

**TE
KA**
EDIZIONI



I

Alpe d'Era

... emerging from a winding path among chestnut, oak and ash trees you find yourself unexpectedly in front of the Alpe d'Era church [832 meters]...

This nucleus of houses is located in a charming basin of the homonymous valley. Until a few decades ago, it was inhabited almost all year. At the beginning of the last century, it experienced a golden age because climbers spent the night here before the ascent to the **Grignone** summit. Currently the huts and the more or less modernized ruins [used mainly for the summer holiday - don't miss the feast of August 15th] are about thirty. The highest point is near **Cà di Angiolitt** [991 meters]. The huts are connected by a capillary network of paths without signposts. The area is very rich in water sources and, close to them, you can admire the milk toll booths. The climb to the alp [signpost 15 or 17 from the hamlet of **Somana**] is accessible to everybody and can

be considered a destination by itself. From the hamlet of **Somana**, there is also the signpost 15B [**Sentiero del Fiume**], which follows the bed of the **Era river**. A suggestive itinerary but only for expert hikers: small waterfalls, pools, "marmitte dei giganti", fords [easy in normal conditions], rocky stretches [often equipped with chains] offer a condensation of images and truly special sensations.

The concatenation with the **Gardata** or the **Zucco of Sileggio** is a valid alternative for a more demanding excursion. From the **Alpe di Era** you can reach the **Rifugi Bietti-Buzzi** and **Elisa**.

Accesses

- **from Somana**, in 1.30 hours along **signposts 15** [church] or **17** [Cà di Angiolitt]
- **from Somana**, river path, in 1.45 hours along the **signpost 15B** [church]
- **from Rongio**, the Sirta path, in 2.00 hours along the **signposts 18/18A** [church]



Next suggestion: **Zucco of Sileggio**



2

Zucco of Sileggio

The **Zucco of Sileggio** [1,368 metres] is an exceptional panoramic point on Lake Como which also offers a wonderful view over the town of Mandello, its water catchment area, and on the main Italian-Swiss peaks that are over 4,000 meters high. At the top there is a steel cross and a nice bell to ring on each ascension. Under the summit, instead, on the north side, there is a fixed bivouac [dedicated to Professor Mario Sforza], useful for hikers in case of bad weather or for those who want a temporary hospitalization.

The relatively low altitude, the numerous paths that lead to the summit from the hamlet of Somana, the possibility of escape routes, as well as the marked and equipped paths, make this itinerary a suitable and safe excursion in almost every season for everyone with a minimum of training. On the south-west side there is an itinerary equipped with a ridge that, passing through the **Zucco of Tura**,

and with the aid of two metal ladders, allows you to get to the top by overcoming a rocky drop of 30 meters.

The Zucco of Sileggio represents an interesting starting point to travel the watershed crest of the municipality of Mandello up to the **Zucco of Manavello** [2/3 days excursion].

Accesses

- **from Somana**, in 2.15 hours along the **signposts 17 / 17A** [very direct route]
- **from Somana**, in 2.30 hours along the **signposts 17/17A** [via Alpe d'Era, Cà di Angiolitt and Bocchetta di Verdascia]
- **from Somana**, in 2.30 hours along the **signposts 17/17B** [via Santa Maria and Zucco of Tura] - the final stretch can be overcome with the help of two metal ladders [30 m] or by a comfortable path
- **from Somana**, in 2.30 hours along the **signposts 17C/17A** [via Saioli]



Next suggestion: **Church of Santa Maria**



3

Church of Santa Maria

...a stone path, modelled by thousands feet, initially accompanied by vines and olive trees, then shaded by thick trees that, at times, show the mountains and the sun. And, every hundred steps, there is a modern and very simple cross. A via Crucis to show the way, to take a walk in the greenery, for those who want, a journey of faith...

The **church of Santa Maria** rises 661 meters on the edge of an ancient communication route that connected **Mandello** to the **Valsassina**. Its existence is documented from 1145 and in 1335 it was the Benedictine Hospice, with annexes spaces built in the Middle Ages too. From 1440 it depends on the **Parish of Olcio**. It has been restored in 1600, and it preserves a beautiful Romanesque bell tower. Seriously damaged by a disastrous fire in 1997, Santa Maria was soon lovingly restored. Along the path that leads to the church, by small deviations, it is possible to

reach two natural rock gyms: the cliffs **Grotta di Mandello** and **Strapiombo di Mandello**. Continuing on the main road you come across the **Chapel of Santa Preda [Santa Brigida]** and then another small detour leads to the famous **Crotto dell'Eremita**.

Just beyond the church, following the signpost 15C, you descend, on a very steep path, to an ancient "calchera", recently brought to its ancient splendour. From here, you can return comfortably to the signpost 15 or 17 near the third cross. The climb to the church is available to everyone and can be considered a destination for half-day excursions. There are numerous occasions for prayers and celebration during the year. At the church there is a refreshment point.

Accesses

- from **Somana**, in 0.30 hours along **signposts 15 or 17**



Next suggestion: **Grotta dell'acqua bianca**



4

Grotta dell'Acqua Bianca

... but the largest one is that of Mandello, which is, at its base, a hole to the lake. It goes under 200 steps and, in every season, it is always windy...

Even Leonardo Da Vinci in the Atlantic Codex mentions the charm of this natural cave, crossed for a short distance by a small stream. Inside, it's still possible to observe traces of the past activity of extraction of iron hydroxides.

The **Grotta dell'Acqua Bianca** ["White water cave", also known as **Ferera** or **Grotta del rame**, "Copper cave"] owes its name to the source which is located at the entrance. It certainly represents one of the main and well-known karst phenomena of the **Grigne**. It is located at an altitude of 590 meters and it is made up of a single very large area [175 meters for 35-40 meters], crossed by a stream that disperses in the fractures of the base. In a remote corner there is a statue of the Virgin.

The cave can be reached from the hamlet of **Rongio** along signposts 14 and 18 and represents an obligatory passage both for the direct ascents to the Rifugio Elisa, and for those towards the Gardata. The interior is easily accessible for all its development. The visit does not require particular speleological skills, but it's good to be adequately equipped.

The absence of moraine pebbles shows that the current entrance would have opened very recently, certainly after the penultimate glaciation. The presence of waterways in the side tunnels and some large springs under the cave, testify an underground circulation of the waters, currently unexplored, below the level of the fossil tunnels which collapsed and created the Ferera.

Accesses

- from **Rongio**, in 0.30 hours along the **signposts 14 or 18**



Next suggestion: **Zucco of Manavello**



5

Zucco of Manavello

The Baitello of Manavello is a small bivouac always open, located on the grassy peak of the **Zucco of Manavello** [1,112 meters] with a beautiful panoramic view of the Grigne group and in particular of the **Sasso Cavallo**, **Sasso dei Carbonari** and **Zucco of Chignoli**.

On the other side, however, the view embraces almost all Lake Lecco and the mountains of the Lario Triangle. The bivouac is managed by the Amici del Manavello Group and someone in charge is usually present on holidays. Equipped with a table and a comfortable bench, it does not include beds.

Reachable along many steep paths that start from the hamlet of **Rongio**, the Zucco of Manavello is often considered a destination in itself. Definitely accessible to everybody, it still requires a minimum of training. Equally interesting can be the connection with the Zucco of the Rocca [not equipped with a

signpost]. The Zucco of Manavello is also the starting point of a beautiful climb that allows you to reach the **Rifugio Rosalba** along the **Cresta of the Pertusio** where you can admire numerous limestone monoliths that emerge like mushrooms from the grass [path for expert hikers]. Continuing along the ridge it is possible to reach the **Zucco of Sileggio** [2/3 days excursion] and complete a great ring on the **Grigne**.

Accesses

- **from Rongio**, in 1.30 hours along the **signpost 13B** [via valle of Portorella]
- **from Rongio**, in 1.30 hours along the **signpost 13B** [via Rossana]
- **from Rongio**, in 1.30 hours along the very direct route that branches off from **signpost 13**



Next suggestion: **Rifugio Elisa**



6

Rifugio Elisa

The Rifugio Elisa, owned by the Cai Grigne, in the Mandello del Lario section, is a historic refuge for the inhabitants of this town and for mountain lovers in general. Located in the upper **Val Meria**, at an altitude of 1,515 meters, it was built and inaugurated in 1927.

During the partisan war, the building became a comfortable base for resisters because of its strategical position. They found, in the deep valleys of the **Grigne**, a safe territory from where they could launch their raids.

The signpost 14, that leads from the hamlet of **Rongio** to the Rifugio Elisa, is one of the most interesting paths in the upper Val Meria, one of the wildest and most severe [and romantic] area of the Grigne. From the Rifugio Elisa, you can continue along the signpost 14 to get to the **Buco di Grigna** [point of maximum depression of the **Alta Via** delle Grigne]. You can also opt for two valid alternatives: the signpost 16 that runs through the meadows of the upper Val

Meria in front of the Sassi dei Carbonari and Sasso Cavallo [possibility of descending to **Alpe Cetra** or climbing to the Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi]; or the signpost 16A which climbs the road called "dei Chignoli", that represents the simplest and most immediate route to reach the **Rifugio Brioschi** from Mandello side. The Cai Grigne, section of Mandello del Lario, to enhance the territory of the upper Val Meria, organizes annually [since 1996] a mountain running race called "Trofeo Evangelista Ferrario a.m.", a race that, starting from the hamlet of Molina, along the signpost 14 from Rongio reach the Rifugio Elisa.

Accesses

- **from Rongio**, in 3.00 hours along the **signpost 14**
- **from Gardata** in 1.15 hours along the **signpost 20/16** or the **Sentiero del Giacomo** [not equipped with signpost] which enters in the **signpost 14**



Next suggestion: **Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi**



7

Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi

Situated in the Releccio basin, in the heart of the northern Grigna, the Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi is owned by the Cai Grigne, section of Mandello del Lario. Built in 1886, in the area of a small stable where mountaineers used to stop before starting the climb the top of the Grignone, it still represents an ideal starting point for ascents to the Rifugio Brioschi. From the **Bocchetta of Prada**, the path runs along the panoramic ridge from which you can see Lake Como and several peaks around it. You arrive at the spectacular **Porta of Prada**, arched rock formation under which there is a cross. Continue on scree slopes and downhill bends and then go up again. In the distance you can see the Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi [1,719 meters], in a panoramic position overlooking the lake and with the steep Grignone wall behind it. The area is characterized by wells and cavities, which highlight a developed karst system. After the natural arch of the Porta,

it is possible to observe closely an outcrop of fossils. The route is suitable for children but caution is mandatory. Historic climbing routes are located nearby, such as those of Sasso Cavallo, Sasso of Carbonari, but also the **cliffs** of the **Pancaformia ridge**, just opened and equipped by young mountaineers.

Accesses

- **from Cainallo** [Vo di Moncodeno] in 1.30 hours along the **signpost 24**
- **from the Alpe d'Era** in 2.00 hours along the **signpost 15** [via Alpe Cetra]
- **from Alpe d'Era** in 2.30 hours along the **signpost 17/15A/15** [via Alpe Calivazzo] Alpe Calivazzo can be reached from Cà di Angiolitt via Zucco of Savia or from the church along the Acquafredda valley
- **from Gardata** in 2.00 hours along the **signpost 18/15** [via Alpe Cetra]
- **from the Rifugio Elisa** in 2.00 hours along the **signpost 16**



Next suggestion: **Rifugio Rosalba**



8

Rifugio Rosalba

The Rifugio Rosalba [1,730 meters], owned by Cai Milano, stands at the base of the Segantini ridge on the **southern Grigna**, between **Val Monastero** and **Val Scarettone**. Inaugurated for the first time in 1906 and later in 1955 in its current configuration, it offers numerous ascent routes, mainly from the hamlets of **Rongio** and **Piani Resinelli** and is the starting point for the **Grignetta** summit. The paths that lead up from **Rifugio Porta** [via La Direttissima] and **Zucco of Manavello** [Pertusio ridge] are certainly suggestive [and reserved only for expert hikers]. For the less experienced, we recommend the **Foppe** path, the former **Rifugio Alippi** at Piani Resinelli starting point. Surrounded by curious limestone monoliths and towers with very steep walls [as the **Tower of the Cinquantenario**], the Rifugio Rosalba is certainly a perfect base for more or less demanding climbs and real outdoor rock gyms [here great mountaineers as Riccardo Cassin

moved their first step]. The magnificent panorama of the lake and the entire **Val Meria** contribute to make it one of the most popular destinations in summer.

Accesses

- **from Rongio**, in 3.30 hours
along the **signpost 12** [via Colonghelli]
- **from Rongio**, in 3.30 hours
along the **signpost 13** [via Versarico]
- **from the Zucco of Manavello**, in 2.00 hours
along the **signpost 13B**
- **from Piani Resinelli**, in 2.00 hours
along the **signpost 9** [Foppe]
- **from Piani Resinelli**, in 2.30 hours
along the **signpost 8/10** [La Direttissima]

Excursions / ascents from the Rifugio Rosalba

- **at the Rifugio Elisa** [1,515 meters] in 2.30 hours along the **signpost 10/11/7/14** [Val Scarettone]
- **at the Ferrario bivouac** [2,177 meters] in 1.30 hours along **signpost 10** [Cecilia path]



Next suggestion: **Rifugio Brioschi**



9

Rifugio Brioschi

Accesses

- **from the Rifugio Bogani**, in 2.00 hours along the **signpost 25** [via della Ganda] or in 2.00 hours along the **signpost 37** [via del Nevaio]
- **from Rifugio Riva**, in 4.30 hours along the **signposts 36/37** [via passo Zapel, via of the Ganda]
- **from Rifugio Antonietta**, in 3.00 hours along the **signpost 33/7** or in 3.00 hours along the **via invernale**
- **from Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi**, in 2.00 hours along the **signposts 28/25** [via Guzzi] or in 1.30 hours along the **signposts 15/7** [via del Caminetto] or in 2.30 hours along the **signposts 26/7** [via ferrata Cai Mandello]
- **from Rifugio Elisa**, in 2.30 hours along the **signposts 16A /7** [via dei Chignoli] or in 3.15 hours along the **signposts 14/7** [via Buco of Grigna]
- **from Cainallo** [Vo di Moncodeno], in 3.00 hours along the **signposts 25/19/25** [via Bivacco 89° Brigata Garibaldi, Cresta of Piancaformia]
- **from the bivouac Ferrario**, in 3.00 hours along the **signpost 7** [Traversata Alta]

Inaugurated in 1895 as Capanna Grigna Vetta, the refuge, owned by Cai Milano, was renamed in 1926. Located a few meters below the summit of **Northern Grigna**, open almost all year round, it's one of the most popular destination. The spectacular view that sweeps over the **Po Valley**, the **Alps**, the **Brianza lakes** and the **Grigne** make it the "Italian favourite refuge" a few years ago. Numerous itineraries that lead to the top of Grignone start from three sides of it. The Mandello one, mainly along the **Rifugio Elisa** and the **Rifugio Bietti-Buzzi** is the most demanding and stimulating. **Valsassina** offers the easiest access, along the steep grassy slopes that rise from the **Pialeral**. Finally, from **Esino Lario**, going up the large karst basin of the **Moncodeno**, there are some of the most interesting climbs from a geological point of view. The climb to the refuge requires a minimum of training and experience.



Next suggestion: **Sentiero del Viandante**



10

Sentiero del Viandante

The **eastern shore of Lake Como** has been affected since ancient times by a series of paths that connected Milan to the Alpine passes. In the first decades of the 19th century, the opening of a new military road leading to the **Passo dello Stelvio** [built between 1817 and 1834] caused the progressive abandonment of the previous road system, which only in recent years has been rediscovered, enhanced and called **Sentiero del Viandante** ["Path of the wayfarer"]. The trail begins just before **Abbadia**, near the **church of San Martino**, and stays at a short distance from the lake shore to the **church of San Giorgio** near **Mandello**. Here you go further inland, reaching the ancient hamlets of **Maggiana**, Rongio and **Sonvico**, until you get to **Genico** where the itinerary divides: you can continue towards **Lierna**, following the medieval route, or head towards the interior, passing through the ancient church of **San Pietro of Ortanella**.

Both paths meet at **Castle of Vezio**, one of the main fortified centres of the Eastern Lario: from here we continue towards Gittana and then towards **Bellano** where, after passing the **Pioverna stream** and the famous **Orrido**, you meet the **Sanctuary of Lezzeno**. To the north of Bellano you first reach the **Castle of Dervio**, then **Corenno Plinio**, and along the **Piona lake** until you reach, near **Piantedo**, almost at the mouth of the Valtellina, the **Madonna di Val Pozzo**. The path, characterized by the skilful balance between nature, culture and human activity is 40 km long [now indicated by orange signs] with differences in altitude between 400 and 1,000 meters: you can walk it in one go, staying overnight along the way, or divide it into different sections to be travelled separately: in this case it is important to know that the railway line that runs close and parallel to the path allows you to start and stop the excursion to the desired station [Lecco-Colico-Sondrio line].



Sentiero del Viandante: from Abbadia to Lierna



II

From Abbadia to Lierna

The first part of the route starts from the **Church of San Martino**, about 400 meters from Abbadia Lariana railway station. Originally from the 13th century, it is of simple workmanship and has high single lancet windows on the sides, some of which are occluded. From here, following the path that runs alongside **Borbino** and **Robianico**, hamlets of Abbadia, you get to the **Church of San Bartolomeo** [which today shows the forms that were given to it in the 17th century] and to the walls of uncertain dating, which perhaps can be attributed to a feudal palace. After passing the building, you will come across the hamlet of **Novegolo** and, on a rocky spur between the plains of Abbadia and Mandello, there is the Romanesque church of San Giorgio: its current structure dates back before the 13th century. The interior frescoes date back to the 15th century and depict images of the underworld. From here

the route of the Via dei Viandanti descends towards Mandello del Lario and first touches the town of Maggiana, a hamlet in which it is interesting to observe the famous Tower [also known as Torre del Babarossa].

After ten minutes in the woods you come to a narrow valley and then to a first crossroads. Here you need to turn right, uphill. Under an isolated house, take the left and the path to Rongio. From here, follow the signs for the **Al Verde Restaurant** and, just before reaching it, turn right onto a dirt road and then left to take a path that descends to the **Meria stream** on a natural bridge.

After passing the Valle Meria the path goes up towards Sonvico, the highest hamlet of Mandello and continue to **Galdano**. Here you can enjoy the view of **Olcio** and of the lake. Run along the highway for a few meters and then head towards **Sornico** and **Olgianico** and, therefore, **Lierna**.



Sentiero del Viandante: from Lierna to Vezio



Da Lierna a Vezio

In Lierna, at the height of the **Claretian Seminary**, there are two possibilities: the first is to go down to the lake and follow the “**Low variant**” [the ancient Via Ducale]; the second is to climb the mountain to the “**High variant**”. The two paths join next to Varenna.

High variant

This first street climbs from the open space in front of the Seminary to the vault of Genico, a picturesque nucleus beyond which you reach an uphill path to a panoramic point. Here the route becomes more flat up to **Alpe Mezzedo**, where you can see an ancient icehouse. You can continue the journey until the **church of San Pietro**, where you can enjoy one of the most beautiful views of the lake. From this point continue, keep at altitude, towards **Ortanella**. Go around **Monte Fopp** and descend the mountain ridge towards Colle di Vezio, first on a driveway and then

on a path. This leads to the **Castle of Vezio**, where the route joins the Low variant. A mule track leads to the village of Varenna.

Low variant

If you prefer to stay closer to the lake, from Lierna station, continue towards the village of **Castello**. From Castello follow **Riva Bianca** and, after crossing the provincial road again, take the stepped mule track that climbs to **Ronco**, where the path to **Coria** begins: it's the highest point of this part of the route. From here you enter the impervious **Valle Vacchera** before descending towards the lake. Entering the woods to overcome the **Valle Pietfer**, you reach the highway, then continue following the coast until you reach the sources of the **Fiumelatte** and then finally Varenna.



Sentiero del Viandante: from Vezio to Dervio



13

From Vezio to Dervio

From the picturesque village of Vezio in Varenna, take the path that goes towards **Esino stream**, near which the suggestive ruins of a bridge and a mill remain. Then cross the ancient bridge and, just before a factory, take some steps that lead to the rustic porticoed chapel of the **Madonna of Campalli**. Continue then, between lawns and terraces, towards **Regolo** where, after the square in which the **church of San Giovanni Battista** stands, a road begins, paved in the first stretch and then unpaved. Proceed towards **Valle Masna**, passing through an area that bears the mysterious and disturbing name of **Bosco delle Streghe** and continue towards the **Fabbrica**.

Here the path descends in the direction of **Bellano**, after having flanked the solitary **Chapel of Madonna Addolorata** which precedes the entrance on the provincial road 62. Follow this road for a few meters, and

then continue towards the bridge over the **Pioverna**, the **Orrido** and the **church of San Rocco**, from which you can reach Bellano. The historic core of the town of Bellano is closed to the north by the delta of the Pioverna river and is therefore narrowed between mountains and lake. Its importance in the Lario area is due to the fact that during the medieval era it was the summer residence of the bishop's court of Milan: it had its own statutes, a Praetorian palace, grammar schools and a parish church. You then come close to the Orrido, a natural gorge created by the Pioverna river which waters, over time, have shaped huge potholes and fascinating caverns.

Cross a bridge over the disturbing gorge and continue uphill towards **Ombriaco**, then reach the **Sanctuary of Lezzeno**, from which you can continue towards **Oro** [formerly known for the production of good wine] and then Dervio.



Sentiero del Viandante: from Dervio to Piantedo



14

From Dervio to Piantedo

You can reach the town of Dervio from via Duca d'Aosta, that is a long straight road that arrives next to the **church of Saints Quirico and Giulitta** and the bridge over the **Varrone stream**. The last part of the Sentiero del Viandante begins by crossing this bridge to reach the village of **Castello** and continues on the asphalted road. This inhabited area has remained practically unchanged from the Middle Ages: paths, dark corners between massive buildings, rustic wooden doors, stone walls and a huge square tower that stands out above the other houses. Then go past an old monastery and descend towards **Corenno Plinio**, a picturesque village on the shores of the lake. A visit to the small medieval village is definitely recommended, in particular to the **church dedicated to San Tommaso of Canterbury**. Another unmissable place is the **Castle of Corenno**, privately owned and open to visitors only for

exceptional events. The road continues next to the coast and leads to **Torchiedo** and then to **Mandonico**, an agricultural village, now abandoned, with rustic characteristic houses that follow the irregular course of the land. It gradually ascends towards **San Rocco**, an unmissable panoramic point. The climb continues alongside **Monte Legnone** towards **Monte Perdonasco**, **Monte Sparese** and the **Church of Madonna dei Monti**, and then heads towards **Posallo**, on a dirt road. Pass **Rio Perlino** and go up to another religious building dedicated to **San Rocco** and go down to the **Inganna Stream**. From here you can go up and visit the **Torre of Fontanedo** or go down in the direction of the hamlets of **Chiario**, **Chiarello**, **Curcio**. After crossing the border between the provinces of Lecco and Sondrio, the Sentiero del Viandante ends in the square of the **Sanctuary of the Madonna di Valpozzo**, built in the 19th century.



● **Piantedo**
Sanctuary of Madonna Valpizzo

● **Colico**
Towers of Fontanedo / Posallo

● **Piona**
Lake

● **Mondonico**
Church of San Giorgio

● **Dorio**
Torchiedo

● **Corenno Plinio**
Castle

● **Dervio**
Church of San Tommaso
of Canterbury / Castle

● **Bellano**
Oro / Sanctuary of Madonna Lezzeno
Ombriaco / Orrido

● **Perledo**
Gittana / Regolo

● **Vezio**
Castle

● **Varenna**
Church of San Giovanni Battista /
Fiumelatte

● **Esino**
Monte Fopp / Ortanella /
Church of San Pietro

● **Lierna**
Riva Bianca / Sornico

● **MANDELLO**
Maggiana /
Church of San Giorgio

● **Abbadia Lariana**
Church of San Bartolomeo /
Church of San Martino



**Municipality of
Mandello del Lario**
Department of tourism



www.visitmandello.it

