



COMO – PATH 5 – THE MODERN CITY WALK

STAGE 1 – FROM PIAZZA DEL POPOLO TO THE *NOVOCOMUM*

INFORMATION

Point of departure: Como, Piazza del Popolo

Point of arrival: Como, *Novocomum* (viale Sinigaglia)

Path type: urban route

Environment: urban area

Total length: approx. 2400 m

Travel time (on foot): 45 min

Difficulty: tourist

Rise: -

Maximum height: 200 m

Paving: asphalt, porphyry cubes, stone slabs

Public transport to the point of departure: ASF bus service; “Como Lago” Trenord railway station in largo Leopardi; boat

Public transport from the point of arrival: ASF bus service; “Como Lago” Trenord railway station in largo Leopardi; boat

Parking at the point of departure: parking available in the surroundings

Points of interest: Negozio Vitrum (Vitrum Shop), Albergo Posta (Posta Hotel), Monumento ai Caduti di Como (Como War Memorial), Sede della Canottieri Lario (Headquarters of the Lake Como Rowing Club), Hangar, Casa Giuliani-Frigerio (Giuliani-Frigerio House), Casa del Balilla “Giuseppe Sinigaglia” (Headquarters of the Fascist Youth Movement, entitled to Giuseppe Sinigaglia), *Novocomum*

DESCRIPTION

Reach the bottom of the piazza paved with stone slabs in front of the Casa del Fascio and turn right, cross via Pessina on the pedestrian crossing and step onto the asphalt sidewalk of via Manzoni; after about ten metres, cross the road on the zebra crossing at the traffic lights. Turn left and continue along the asphalt pavement. After twenty metres or so cross the “Trenord Rail” level-crossing and railway tracks (the crossties and ballast in this section of the railroad are covered in asphalt). Continue along the porphyry cube pavement for approx. ten metres, then turn left to cross the two lanes of via Pretorio – which are separated by a porphyry cube corridor cut into the traffic island flowerbed - leading you to Piazza Verdi, a square paved with porphyry tiles (please mind the three stone spheres, each having a diameter of 50 cm, placed at the end of the pedestrian crossing). The city centre’s limited traffic zone begins here. From the square you can admire the neoclassical Teatro Sociale (*Municipal Theatre*), built in the early 19th century on the site where the 13th century Castello della Torre Rotonda (*Castle of the Round Tower*) once stood. Turn right, bordering the façade of the theatre, and take via Maestri Comacini, paved with porphyry tiles, with the Cathedral to your right. At the end of the street cross via Vittorio Emanuele and turn left, along the south side of Piazza Duomo, the square overlooked by the Gothic-Renaissance façade of the Cathedral and the adjacent 13th century building of the Broletto, with its 16th century polychrome marble façade. At the bottom of the square continue along via Cinque Giornate, which is paved with porphyry tiles; at the corner with Piazza Duomo stands what once was the **Vitrum Store**, designed by Giuseppe Terragni in 1930 (now a clothes shop).

After about 130 metres, at the end of the block, turn right into via Pietro Boldoni, paved with porphyry tiles. After walking for approx. 120 metres along the street, at the crossroads with via Francesco Ballarini, the paving changes to stone slabs and you reach Piazza Pietro Amato Peretta, overlooked by the imposing building of the Bank of Italy, erected in the nineteen-fifties on the area once occupied by the Cortesella quarter, later demolished. Founded at the time of the Romans, it had been one of the most important economic centres of the old city ever since the Middle Ages (also due to its strategic position near the port); it was literally reduced to rubble by the “urban renewal” intervention brought

about by the Municipality's new Town Plan (1937) and its residents transferred. Giuseppe Terragni and other architects from Como and Milan took part in the competition held in 1934 for the new Town Plan by submitting a project known as CM8, where the Cortesella was to have a special role within the old town in order to "operationally" contribute to the renewal of the city. Terragni had suggested a "comb-like" system of tall porticoed buildings - the ground floor of which to be used as offices and shops - lined between via Bernardino Luini and Piazza Cavour; however, these insights were not to be included in the Plan that was later approved. As you enter Piazza Peretta, turn left into via Francesco Muralto. After about 60 metres the paving once again turns to porphyry tiles; a large ceramic *mural* created in 2002 by Nino Lupica of the "Aldo Galli" Academy of Fine Arts in Como stands out on the side of a building overlooking a very small square on the right of via Muralto. A plaque explains the reason why this mural was created: «*The Curtesela. The red string of remembrance. A memento for a demolished quarter*». Continue along via Muralto, keeping to your right after crossing via Olginati until you reach Piazza Volta. Once inside the square (paved with granulated-concrete slabs and porphyry tile and stone slab inserts), keep to the left and take a short detour to via Garibaldi, where, at number 2 (on the right hand-side of the street) you will find the **Posta Hotel**. Once back into the square, turn left and walk for about forty metres; after reaching the end of the eastern part of Piazza Volta on the pedestrian crossing, take the asphalt sidewalk on the right of via Giulio Rubini. After 140 metres turn right, and step onto the porphyry tile sidewalk of viale Felice Cavallotti. Approximately 70 metres down the road you will find a porphyry paved strip in front of the gate at the entrance of the house at number 8. Two small iron posts precede the strip, thus narrowing the width of the sidewalk, and another two are placed after it, so please be careful. After about 100 metres from turning into viale Cavallotti you end up at the crossroads with Lungo Lario Trieste. At the traffic lights reach the opposite side of the road on the pedestrian crossing (please mind to the two small iron posts located just before the crossing). Turn left, and, after ten metres or so, turn right and take viale Guglielmo Marconi - a pedestrian walkway paved with porphyry cubes - which runs through the public gardens in front of the lake. After about twenty metres you may see to your far left - inside a large flower bed - a model 851 locomotive built in 1909, left here as a reminder of the Italian National Rail yard that stood here, before being dismantled during the nineteen-sixties (for more information on the yard please visit <http://digilander.libero.it/felice/Comoscalilago.htm>). Follow this walkway for another 40 metres, turn right, cross the strip paved with stone slabs, then turn left and take the parallel walkway, which is paved with porphyry cubes, where you will find the Monument to the European Resistance, inaugurated in 1983 by Italy's President at the time, Sandro Pertini. The monument, designed by the Milanese architect Gianni Colombo, was erected by the Municipality of Como following a proposal submitted by the local section of the National Institute for the History of the Liberation Movement in Italy. It holds stones coming from the Nazi death camps and the city of Hiroshima, along with some memorial slabs carrying the writings of members of the Resistance executed during World War II. In the background, on the breakwater completed in 1868 extending into the first basin of Lake Como, stands "The Life Electric", the monument built in 2015 by architect Daniel Libeskind in honour of Alessandro Volta. The 16.5 metre high sculpture has the shape of two sinusoidal waves facing each other and interplaying through curves and movement; in Libeskind's own words, the Life Electric «*is inspired by the electrical tension that occurs between the two poles of a battery, Volta's great gift to humanity. The very shape of this work has arisen from my in-depth research on the architectural representation of energy. The piece combines the natural elements of light, wind and water. An installation, a physical and ideal gateway open to the twenty-first century*».

At the very bottom, after 190 metres, the paving of the walkway turns into porphyry tiles as you come to the Volta Temple, funded by entrepreneur Francesco Somaini and built in 1927 according to a plan drafted by Federico Frigerio, on the occasion of the celebrations for the centenary of the death of Alessandro Volta. The Temple contains busts, bas-reliefs, relics and instruments of the great physicist from Como. Turn left into viale Giancarlo Puecher (please note that the asphalt on this stretch is uneven), and, after about 100 metres, turn right and step onto the large piazza paved with stone slabs surrounding the **War Memorial**, erected in 1933 by the brothers Giuseppe and Attilio Terragni using a plan sketched by the futurist architect Antonio Sant'Elia.

You are now entering the area comprised between viale Puecher and viale Sinigaglia that is known as the "rationalist quarter" due to the high concentration of buildings and monuments in this architectural style. This lakeside area, which had always been a natural borderline between land and water, changed radically between the 1920s and '30s. With its new settlements and innovative residential, sports, and celebratory purposes, the entire neighbourhood acquired a "new" appearance and "soul", perfectly in line with the "modern city" envisaged by the rationalist movement, so much so that this part of town is still of great interest within the contemporary urban fabric of Como.

Turn left (when facing the War Memorial) and walk along the asphalted sidewalk on the right hand-side of viale Puecher. After about 50 metres, at number 6, past a "Bike & Co" bike-sharing docking station, you will find the headquarters of the **Lake Como Rowing Club**, designed and built by Gianni Mantero between 1930 and 1931. A little further on, at number 8, stands the Sailing and Powerboat Club building, currently used as the headquarters for the Mila Yacht Club, built between 1931 and 1932 by engineer Balsamo with the aid of Attilio Terragni. Across the road you can see the north side of the football stadium dedicated to Giuseppe Sinigaglia. Approximately forty metres after the Sailing and Powerboat Club you will reach Piazzale Francesco Somaini, overlooked by the **Hangar**, a type of building like no other in Italy, built between 1930 and 1931 according to a plan drawn by Carlo Ponci, with the adjoining headquarters of the Aero Club Como (1935). After a further fifty meters follow the pedestrian signs and turn left to cross viale Massenzio Masia (there is no pedestrian crossing); turn left again, and continue along the asphalted sidewalk lined with trees on the left hand-side of the street. After crossing via Abbondio Martinelli (there is no pedestrian crossing), continue for another 40 metres and turn right into viale Sinigaglia. Walk along the street for 50 metres, cross at the

zebra crossing and take the narrow via Campo Garibaldi, almost entirely occupied by parking spaces. At the bottom of the street turn left into viale Rosselli, where you will find yourself at number 24, exactly at the entrance of **Casa Giuliani-Frigerio**, the last building to be designed by Giuseppe Terragni between 1939 and 1940. Continue for approximately ninety metres along the tree-lined walkway paved with porphyry cubes which borders viale Rosselli; cross the asphalted viale Masia (there is no zebra crossing) and continue for about sixty metres. By turning left you may reach viale Sinigaglia through an asphalted parking area followed by a small four-sided piazza paved with stone tiles and equipped with four concrete benches. Please keep to the centre and mind the three lines of 40 cm high iron posts on the right, left and far end of the parking area.

On the opposite side of the street you can see the entrance of the **former Casa del Balilla “Giuseppe Sinigaglia”**, built around the pre-existing structure of the Sinigaglia stadium between 1932 and 1936, and designed by Gianni Mantero. In addition to the headquarters of the Fascist Youth Movement, the plan included spaces to be used as offices, a gym and a swimming-pool. A bas relief plaque on the façade remembers the champion oarsman from Como (1884-1916), who lost his life during the First World War and was granted the Silver Medal for Military Valor. Turn right and continue along the sidewalk on the right hand-side of viale Sinigaglia, where, at number 1, you will find the *Novocomum*, a controversial complex designed in 1927 by a very young Giuseppe Terragni. The building was dubbed the “transatlantic” at the time, due to its shape and size.