



MENAGGIO – PATH 1 – A VILLAGE AND A CASTLE, UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE MAGI

STAGE 1 – FROM THE JETTY TO VIA CALVI

INFORMATION

Point of departure Menaggio, jetty

Point of arrival Menaggio, via Calvi

Path type urban route

Total length approx. 500 m

Travel time on foot 10 min

Difficulty Tourist

Rise 10 m

Maximum height 212 m asl

Paving asphalt, porphyry setts, stone slabs, cobbles

Public transport to the point of departure bus service nearby; boat, ferry, hydrofoil

Public transport from the point of arrival bus service nearby

Parking at the point of departure parking spaces available nearby

DESCRIPTION

The itinerary starts from the asphalted square in front of Menaggio's Wharf, the landing stage for boats, ferries and hydrofoils. After leaving the ticket office on the back keep to the right hand-side, After a few metres you will find a sign illustrating the **Parco Locale di Interesse Sovracomunale (PLIS) della Val Sanagra (Sanagra Valley Inter-Municipal Park)**, established in 2005 by the Municipalities of Grandola ed Uniti and Menaggio to protect the valley crossed by the stream of the same name, full of interesting naturalistic and ethnographic features. After approx. 40 metres you enter via IV Novembre, leaving on the left a large brick-red three floor building, the plan whereof is in the shape of a horizontal V with a smoothed point. The building was constructed in 1903, and, before hosting the Farmers' Cooperative, was the terminal station of the **Menaggio–Porlezza Railway**. Service on this railroad, which was 12.241 kilometres long, and reached a gradient of approx. 180 metres, with a track gauge of 850 mm (quite unique for government owned railroads), started in November 1884 and ended in October 1939. On the background wall of the widening occupied by the petrol station on the opposite side of via IV Novembre, under the "UTA" sign, the water inlet for steam trains is still visible. Turn right on the porphyry cube pavement along via IV Novembre, bordering the hedge of the "Grand Hotel Menaggio", an historic Menaggio hotel (after approx. 30 metres you will find the driveway giving access the hotel; an ASF C10 Como-Menaggio-Colico bus stop is nearby). After about 60 metres the pavement narrows to 20 centimetres due to the presence of a building on the right. On the other side of via IV Novembre, at a portico entrance, there is a coloured enamelled terracotta oval with the *Madonna and Child*, walled in by Teofilo Patroni in 1924. After approx. 10 metres the pavement widens again; after a further 20 metres it stops for 10 metres, then starts again. At the crossroads with via Como, keep to the right, enter via Mazzini and continue along the porphyry cube pavement. After about 50 metres the pavement turns into porphyry tiles and borders the "Hotel Bellavista", another historic Menaggio hotel. The northern section of its boundary wall carries an interesting stone water gauge, a scale allowing the measurement of the lake's height on the occasion of floods: an inscription remembers the maximum level that was reached in 1829. Immediately after there is a bus shelter for the following bus services: ASF C14 Menaggio-Cavargna; C13 Menaggio-Plesio; C12 Menaggio-Lugano; C10 Como-Menaggio-Colico and the Swiss operated Lugano-Menaggio-Chiavenna-St. Moritz bus service. Continue on the porphyry cube pavement, while keeping to the right, for 15 metres, cross the entrance of a small parking lot, then a waste separation and recycling area with underground containers, and finally enter the actual lake promenade, an elegant showcase for the village of Menaggio. Here you may stroll peacefully making the most of the matchless view of the lake and mountains that overlook the eastern shore, and walk by the alleys of the old fortified village whilst enjoying the comfort of the amenities available on the lakeside (cafes, restaurants, shops). In this section the lake promenade borders on the harbour for about 60 metres

and is limited on the right by an elegant wrought iron railing, approximately one metre high, which holds a number of iron flower holders at variable distances between each other. You can observe the remains of one of two towers built in past ages to protect Menaggio from attacks coming from the lake, which was demolished in the 19th century and came to light during the pier construction work in 1956. After about 20 metres there is a widening with a few parking places. After a further 30 metres, following a slight bend, the lake promenade turns to the right. Having passed two flowerbeds, respectively before and after a boat rental kiosk, continue for another 10 metres, and, in correspondence of the point where the promenade pavement widens, minding the 2 metres high yellow taxi column, descend the low step connecting to the road surface and cross the street on the zebra crossing. After climbing a low step you reach Allevard les Bain, a small porphyry tile paved square named after the French town in the Rhône-Alpes region twinned with Menaggio. Keep to your left, passing a 10 centimetres high and 2 metres wide flowerbed with a small sculpture of a *Male figure riding a dolphin*, placed here in 2001 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the twinship between Menaggio and Allevard les Bain. By continuing to walk in this direction, you border an orange coloured four floor building, which hosts a fishmonger's. The façade at ground level presents a low arch, a typical feature of buildings overlooking the lake, which in the past acted as berths for boats. Above the arch hangs a 20th century painting by Menaggio artist Bruno Azimonti, depicting *The miraculous catch of fish*, a tribute to one of the most important activities on Lake Como. Once you pass by this building you turn into a paved street called via delle Rose (please mind the 1 metre high flower holder at the corner), thus entering the "historic centre", characterized by narrow streets running between old massive buildings. Continue for approx. 25 metres; at number 16 you will find the entrance (the arch is underlined by terracotta bricks) the complex called *La Fortezza (The Fortress)*, once part of Menaggio's lakeside fortifications. It is possible to visit the small Medieval internal yard by calling the phone number indicated on the gate's plate. Bend right and turn into the picturesque via Pesce, a paved 2 metres wide and 20 metres long street; by walking its entire length, and crossing the covered underpass, you reach piazza Garibaldi. It is advisable to note the light post located approx. 10 metres beyond the street's exit and the low curved wall (which can be handy for sitting down and having a small rest) one metre further along. Piazza Garibaldi is L-shaped; paving is by geometrical figures made with different type of stones and some cobbled sections. Walk to the 19th century four floor building located at the centre of the square, which at ground level hosts the "Cafè del pess" cafeteria: the building is yellow, decorated with ochre ornamental friezes around the ground floor openings, between the ground floor and the first floor, under the roof, and along the edges. In the summer it is surrounded east and south by tables and chairs for the customers. On the area occupied by this building there once stood the old **Baptistry of St. John the Baptist** flanked by the former **Praetorium***; as they were mere ruins, at some time between the end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th these buildings were sold to private owners who built a single new building. At about a third of the way along the south side wall, at a height of approx. 2 metres, a marble 14th century slab in high-relief, probably from the old Praetorium, which celebrates the Visconti's domination over Cremona, is walled in. The Visconti are represented by their coat of arms: a large grass snake holding a man in its mouth, topped by a helmet dexter and crest. The helmet is chained to another one sinister, which represents Cremona. Cross Piazza Garibaldi (at number 3 you will find the Menaggio Tourist Information Office) keeping to the left; worthy of note, at number 1 of piazza Garibaldi, at the corner with via Porta, a three floor dark red building, with a narrow façade transversal to the street, almost as if it were part of a polygonal plan building, opened by a portal and two arch windows. Right at the beginning of via Porta, on the left, at number 1, you find a three floor yellow coloured building preceded by a small yard, the ground floor whereof hosts the "Osteria il Pozzo" restaurant. Originally this building was the **Hospice of the Three Kings**, a pilgrim shelter, believed to have been established in the second half of the 12th century. According to tradition, the procession that was taking to Cologne the relics of the three Wise Men, stolen from the city of Milan after the city was destroyed by Frederick Barbarossa, stopped here. At the third floor you can still spot a wall painting of *The visit of the Magi*. By retracing your footsteps you turn into the large porphyry paved via Calvi, a pedestrian road dedicated to an important Menaggio family (keep to the centre). After approximately 25 metres, on the right hand-side, you come to the neo-Gothic façade (rebuilt in 1885) of the **church of St. Martha**, mentioned in documents as the oratory of the Confraternity devoted to the Saint. A number of interesting stone finds have been walled into the façade. From the bottom: a 16th century funeral stone of Paolo Paoli, the personal doctor of French kings Francis I and Henry II; an inscription remembering the restoration of the parental home after it was destroyed by the "Raeti"; a fragment of a Roman funeral stone of Lucius Minicius Exoratus, an important officer under emperor Vespasian (1st century), which was found in the first half of the 16th century in the lake near the village of Santa Maria Rezzonico, and transported here by Menaggio humanist Francesco Calvi, who believed that in the Minicius lay the origin of the name Menaggio; a 14th century keystone with a bas-relief of Menaggio castle, which has become the emblem of the town (the word «Menasy» has been added under it) and a frieze with *Heads of Saints*, unfortunately not very visible. After covering via Calvi in its entirety for approx. 60 metres, the crossroads with via IV Novembre is signalled by two central iron posts, approx. 80 cm high, holding a 4 metre chain. After moving to the right hand-side, enter via IV Novembre (a very busy road), and cross at the pedestrian crossing.