

The spectacular paths of Varese Province

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Varese Province is a land of paths and parks. They suit every taste and every level of difficulty. Here, we suggest a few, but in the article, you will find several links that can help you discover others.

THE RING OF SANTA CATERINA DEL SASSO

The ring of Santa Caterina starts and finishes in Cerro di Laveno; it follows about 18 km of roads, paths and cart tracks. It is almost entirely away from danger, and is well signposted (some sections require attention, but if you download **the maps**, you can't go wrong).

On this lovely route, in addition to the spectacular hermitage, you will see places that are still completely surrounded by greenery, that can only be imagined when passing along the road that leads to Laveno, that can be discovered, in all their beauty, on foot.

There are many possibilities around Lake Maggiore, and they can be found on the **website** of Agenda 21, called **Le vie Verdi dei Laghi**.

VALCUVIA, FROM THE VILLA DELLA PORTA BOZZOLO, TO LAKE MAGGIORE, ALONG THE VIA VERDE VARESINA

The Villa della Porta Bozzolo is a jewel of the Valcuvia Valley. In addition to the beautiful house and its park, this property of the Italian National Trust can be considered a true hub for those who love walking. It is a stopping point between two beautiful towns on Lake Maggiore: Laveno and Luino. On this walk, which will provide **a weekend of enchantment, you will discover the Valcuvia Valley** and the nature of Varese Province.

Here we talk about the path from **Laveno to Casalzuigno**. Ten easy kilometres, that can be safely covered. And **here**, you will find the path from **Villa della Porta Bozzolo to Luino**. After 3 kilometres, along secondary roads, you will come to the Valcuvia cycle path, which then joins the Margorabbia path. Twenty km surrounded by greenery.

The two sections of the **Via Verde Varesina (3V)** are a little more demanding. The third section starts on **Sacro Monte and leads to the villa**. The fourth section, also **from Casalzuigno, takes you to Vararo**, almost reaching the top of the mountain, Sasso di Ferro.

THE OLONA VALLEY

For many years, the old Valmorea railway has been a beautiful cycle and pedestrian path, from the Lozza plain to Castellanza. From Castiglione Olona, the distance is seventeen kilometres, on the flat, and in safety. In addition to the beautiful centre of the village, there is always a mixture of nature, art and even examples of industrial history. Along the way, you come to Torba, Cairate, Fagnano Olona, Solbiate Olona and Marnate. It is possible to cover only some of the sections, and there is no problem

for anyone who wants to take little children with them. If you want to leave your car and use public transport, for more information, read [our article](#).

The path is also part of the Via Francisca del Lucomagno, which goes from Lake Constance in Switzerland, to Pavia, and merges with the Via Francigena which leads to Rome.

THE LANZA VALLEY

This spectacular path is entirely surrounded by nature, without a metre of asphalt. A short distance from Malnate and Varese, there is the beginning of the **Lanza valley**, which takes you into what is, at times, unspoilt nature, with interesting encounters with the remnants of human activity in the area. First, there is the Mulino del Trotto watermill, and then the old Valmorea station.

The **Valmorea railway**, which once connected Mendrisio with Castellanza, goes through the park. There are plans to get it running again, for tourist purposes, from Mendrisio to Malnate.

Along the entire course of the river, there is a lovely **path that starts in the Folla di Malnate area and leads to Mendrisio**, that can be covered on foot or mountain bike. Around this main route, there is a network of paths that allow you to walk for hours, surrounded by nature and by silence that is only broken by the sound of water. Walking along the banks of the Lanza River, it is easy to reach one of the most charming places in Varese Province, which, because of its interest, was declared a natural monument in the **Molera di Malnate and Cagno natural quarry system**.

PATH No. 10, IN THE CAMPO DEI FIORI PARK

The Campo dei Fiori Park has an excellent network of paths. The most popular is the one that leads from the observatory to Forte di Orino. An hour of walking on level ground brings you to one of the most spectacular viewpoints in Varese Province. We suggest **Path No. 10**, which starts and ends in Velate, covering 28.5 km at the foot of the mountain area. The first section, of 12 km, takes you to Orino. Then, it continues on to Brinzio, with 9 km of moderate climbs and descents, and finally, in just over 7 km, back to Velate, through Rasa. Walking the whole distance in one go requires a fair amount of training, but the route is also designed to be walked in sections.

THE PARKS AND WAYS

Varese has a great wealth of possibilities, thanks to the many green areas that are now parks.

The Campo dei Fiori Park

The **Campo dei Fiori regional park** dominates the Varese hills and the Po Valley, and is bound to the north-west by the **Valcuvia** valley, to the east by the **Valganna** valley and to the south by the town of **Varese**. It includes two important mountains, the **Campo dei Fiori** and the **Martica**, which are separated by the **Rasa Valley**, where the **Olona River** originates.

The particular geographical location and geological characteristics have favoured the establishment of very varied vegetation, with chestnut and beech woods, areas of rock flora, and wetlands that are rich in fauna. There are also important historical and architectural landmarks, such as the **Sacro Monte**

complex (**a Unesco Heritage site**), the **Grande Albergo**, **Liberty villas**, the **Badia di Ganna** and the **Rocca di Orino**.

All of the paths

The Ticino Park

The Ticino Park has no less than 780 km of paths, 122 km of which are accounted for by the towpaths of the Navigli canals; here, you will be able to enjoy the greenery and the open air, to discover the richness of the natural environments that are not far from Milan.

There are paths of environmental, historical, and cultural interest, which are almost entirely on dirt roads, which will allow you to get to know the park while having fun.

All of the paths

The RTO Park

The **Rile Tenore Olona** Park, which is better known as the **RTO**, and the Natural Monument “Gonfolite e Forre dell’Olona” are located in the middle section of the Olona River Valley, and cover an area of over 2700 hectares, **at the foot of the Varese Prealps**.

All of the paths

The Lura Park

Lura Park is a long green corridor that descends from Como Province to the outskirts of Milan; initially, it extended over the plain, and was a well established feature of it, but then it became a narrow strip between houses, factories and sown fields. The Consortium imagined that the key to how it should be perceived and to a balanced access would be the construction of a network of cycle paths that allow you to go cross the entire park, from north to south, and in several areas, from east to west.

The Via Verde Varesina

The pleasure of walking in greenery and admiring the spectacle of the lakes from above is a feature of many hiking routes, where you can walk along paths that are accessible to all. Some of the routes are indicated here. The **3V, Via Verde Varesina**, is a route that winds among Lake Lugano, Lake Varese and Lake Maggiore, going through areas of particular artistic and natural importance, along a path of 184 km, divided into 10 main stages, with 5 variants.

All of the paths – Some accounts of the stages

The Via Francisca del Lucomagno

The Via Francisca del Lucomagno was an ancient Roman-Longobard route that was historically documented, that led to Pavia from Constance, in the centre of Europe, through Switzerland, via the Lucomagno Pass, and there connected with the Via Francigena, to lead on to Rome. It enters Varese Province in Lavena Ponte Tresa, and runs for about 150 km, to Pavia.

All of the paths – **Some accounts** of the stages

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