

Lombardy

REGIONS
OF
ITALY



Lombardy is the heart of Northern Italy, bordered by Switzerland to the north, Piedmont to the west, Emilia Romagna to the south and Veneto and Trentino Alto Adige to the east. In less than one-tenth of the country's area, we find the most populous of the 20 Italian regions.

Its population of almost 10 million people is primarily concentrated in the industrial cities of the upper plains and foothills with secondary concentrations in the rich farmlands in the south. The region comprises the provinces of Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Cremona, Lecco, Lodi, Mantua, Milan (regional capital), Monza, Brianza, Pavia, Sondrio and Varese. Lombardy's largest city, Lombardy, is the leading industrial and commercial region of Italy. The products manufactured here are varied and include cars, trucks, farm equipment, electrical appliances, textiles, furniture, processed foods, chemicals, and leather. Milan is the hub of northern Italy's rail network and has direct rail links with Switzerland, France, and Germany via passes and tunnels through the Alps. Lombardy is linked to other regions of Italy by an excellent system of railroads, highways, and expressways.

Stretching from the Alps to the lowlands of the Po Valley, Lombardy is home to a wide range of landscapes, including the breathtaking mountain chain that boasts the Valchiavenna, Valtellina and the Camonica Valley. The region has a humid subtropical climate with hot summers that can

reach temperatures of 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 degrees Celsius) and cold winters with temperatures that can fall to 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius).



Did You Know

Famous people from Lombardy include (chronologically): the Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder, the painter Caravaggio, the luthier Antonio Stradivari, the physicist Alessandro Volta (inventor of the battery), the novelist Alessandro Manzoni, the playwright Dario Fo (Nobel Prize), the conductor Claudio Abbado, the media tycoon and former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, the fashion designer Gianfranco Ferré, the fashion designer Mario Prada, and the Prime Minister Mario Monti.

Winter sports enthusiasts will find no lack of state-of-the-art facilities in the extremely popular resorts of Tonale, Bormio, Livigno and Madesimo. Milan is one of the most visited tourist destinations in the European Union with more than 6 million visitors per year. The

city is home to two of Europe's most successful football teams, A.C. Milan and Inter Milan, commonly referred to as Internazionale, and one of Italy's main basketball teams, Olimpia Milano. Milan recently hosted the World's Fair in 2015 and will host the 2026 Winter Olympics.

The charm of the region's lakes is also a great tourist draw. Visitors flock to Lake Garda, while Lake Como (George Clooney and U2's Bono have homes here) and Lake Maggiore are no less beautiful surrounded as they are by stately homes, parks and picturesque small towns.

A Quick History Lesson

Lombardy was inhabited by Celtic people from the 5th century BC and was conquered by Rome after the Second Punic War (218–201 BC) when it became part of Cisalpine Gaul. The region became an important base for the Romans, who founded the cities of Milano, Cremona, Como, Brescia, Lodi and Pavia in their conquest of Europe. The region suffered heavily in the barbarian invasions that ended the western Roman Empire and from 568 to 774 AD, it was the center of the kingdom of the Lombards, a Germanic tribe that settled in northern Italy in the 6th century and ruled Italy for the next 200 years. The Lombard kingdom ended in 774 and Lombardy became part of the empire of Charlemagne, the King of the Franks.

The region's growing prosperity by the 11th century was based on the role of the Po River valley as a transit point for trade between the Mediterranean and the trans-Alpine lands. Milan, Cremona, Brescia and Bergamo became the commercial leaders of Europe at this time.

Milan became the strongest city in Lombardy early in the 14th century and went on to establish its rule over most of the neighboring towns although it had to yield Brescia and Bergamo to Venice and the city of Mantua remained independent. Lombardy lost territory to the Swiss, Venetians, and other neighbors in the early 16th century and in the chaotic wake of the French invasions of Italy, the duchy of Milan came under Spanish Habsburg rule in 1535. Mantua managed to remain independent until 1713, at which time both it and Milan passed to the Austrian Habsburgs. Austrian rule yielded to that of France from 1796 to 1814. In 1815, Lombardy was restored to Austria as part of a newly created Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. In 1859 during the Second War of Italian Independence, the Milanese army revolted against the Austrians in the glorious "Five Days War" and expelled the Austrians from Lombardy which joined newly unified Italy. Milan was chosen to be the capital city of the new Kingdom of Italy.

The end of World War One brought peace to the city but little in the way of prosperity. A noticeable lack of food and increasing unemployment led to social discontent at this time in local history.

The Second World War saw Milan, as an industrial center for Italy, become a major target for bombing raids. Before American troops could arrive to liberate the city, Italian resistance members took over the city and executed Mussolini along with some of his government.

During the post-war decades, Milan attracted waves of immigrants, mainly from the more rural areas of southern Italy. The city subsequently became part of a boom to the local economy and this enabled factories to be rebuilt, along with modern high rises. During the boom years of the 1950's and 1960's, the city grew into being a wealthy and industrial metropolis but

this was tempered by social unrest and terrorism during the late sixties and seventies. More recently, developments have included a new financial district called Porta Nuova. Today, Milan is widely regarded as a global capital in industrial design, fashion and architecture. It is a major national and international center of the performing arts, most notably opera. The city hosts the Milan Fashion Week twice a year, one of the most important events in the international fashion system. Milan is synonymous with the Italian high fashion industry as many of the most famous Italian brands, such as Valentino, Gucci, Versace, Prada, Armani and Dolce & Gabbana, are headquartered in the city.

Cuisine and Vino

Lombardy is one of Italy's best culinary hubs, famous for San Pellegrino sparkling water, and iconic dishes like saffron risotto, Osso Bucco, polenta, Scaloppini Milanese, Gorgonzola cheese, minestrone panettone and the almond-flavored Amaretto liqueur from Saronno. In addition to Panettone, Lombardy is also known for other traditional Italian sweets such as Mantua's sbrisolona (crumb cake), nougats from Cremona, amaretti cookies and chocolate confections.

Milan is the city that boasts the highest number of Michelin stars in Italy (along with Rome) and the 9th highest of any European city. Bergamo and the Lago di Garda area also rank among the best places to wine and dine in Italy.

Lombardy is also Italy's leading agricultural area. The region's highly productive agriculture is centered on the irrigated plains of the Po River valley, which produce rice, wheat, corn (maize), sugar beets, and fodder crops for beef and dairy cattle. The higher plains produce cereals, vegetables, fruit trees, and mulberries. The foothill region produces fruit and olives and the Alps afford excellent grazing for cattle, pigs, and sheep.

When it comes to cheese, the salty, crumbly Grana Padano DOP is perhaps the most well-known from this area. Some of the region's other celebrated and delicious cheeses are Gorgonzola, from the town of the same

name, Mascarpone, the unpasteurized Lodigiano, Robiola soft cheese and Bel Paese. Lombardy also is the home of the excellent Garda olive oil and asparagus from Rogaro and Drezzo.

Lombardy boasts 27 licensed and protected wine regions, of which bubbly Franciacorta, fresh Lugana white wines made with Turbiana grapes, and elegant Valtellina reds made with Nebbiolo grapes are among some of the most elegant and exciting to taste.



SITES TO SEE

The region has much to offer in terms of its natural, cultural and architectural perspective. There are UNESCO World Heritage Sites at Mantua, once ruled by the powerful Gonzaga family, and Sabbioneta, the defining "ideal city" of the Italian Renaissance; the prehistoric rock paintings (petroglyphs) of the Camonica Valley; the 19th-Century industrial settlement of Crespi d'Adda and, finally, Milan, featuring its stunning white marble Duomo cathedral and the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie which contains the celebrated Leonardo Da Vinci fresco, The Last Supper.

Milan is the hub and center of the Lombard musical scene. It was the workplace of Giuseppe Verdi, one of the most famous and influential opera composers of the 19th century and boasts a variety of acclaimed theatres, such as the Piccolo Teatro and the Teatro Arcimboldi. However, the most famous is the 1778 Teatro alla Scala, one of the most important and prestigious opera houses in the world.

Beyond the large cities, there are hidden treasures throughout Lombardy. In Cremona, visitors will find the Violin Museum (shop of Antonio Stradivari) and over 150 artists crafting violins and other string instruments. Bergamo is the site of the Accademia Carrara, one of the largest Italian painting galleries, the

Colleoni Chapel and the Teatro Donizetti, dedicated to Bergamo's most illustrious citizen and composer, Gaetano Donizetti. Pavia is the "City of 100 Towers," the Visconti Castle and the renowned University Pavia which is one of one of the oldest universities in the world (1361). It was the sole university in the greater Lombardy region until the end of the 19th century.

Monza is where Italy's Formula One Grand Prix races are held at the Autodromo as well as the Villa Reale, a former royal residence and Cathedral, where the ancient Iron Crown is kept reputedly concealing a nail from the True Cross. Mantova boasts a charming historic center, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, and jaw-dropping architectural sites, including the Palazzo Te, a Mannerist-style estate that hosts internationally renowned art exhibitions, and the Palazzo Ducale, home to stunning frescoes by Renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna. The medieval city of Lodi is



characterized by the porticoes in Piazza della Vittoria (home to one of the most beautiful squares in Italia), decorated by the Duomo and the Palazzo Comunale. The Lake Como area is known for its gorgeous villas, such as Villa Olmo, an imposing Neoclassical structure. Lake Garda's (the largest lake in Italy) magnificent scenery was enough to inspire celebrated personages the likes

of Catullus, Dante Alighieri, Volta and the writers Alessandro Manzoni, Goethe, Byron and Stendhal. Valcamonica is the location for the world's richest collection of prehistoric petroglyphs, over 140,000 artworks. Then there is the city of Montova with its famous church featuring a crocodile hanging from the rafters, which ancestors thought was a dragon!