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Lake Orta

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Nestled among the hills of Piedmont, Lake Orta is a jewel of tranquility and beauty. Its crystal-clear waters reflect ancient villages and the enchanting Island of San Giulio, where art, spirituality, and nature blend in a timeless atmosphere. An unmissable place.

Lake Orta, located in the heart of Piedmont, between the provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, is a small treasure chest of beauty and tranquility. Less well-known than the more famous northern Italian lakes, such as Lake Maggiore or Lake Como, Lake Orta retains an intimate and authentic charm, perfect for those seeking an experience far from mass tourism.
Of glacial origin, the lake stretches for about 13 kilometers in length and 2.5 kilometers in width. Its clear, calm waters are surrounded by gentle hills and wooded slopes that create a harmonious and relaxing landscape. The Mottarone Mountains, which separate it from Lake Maggiore, offer breathtaking views and scenic trails for hikers and cyclists alike.

At the center of the lake lies its only island: San Giulio Island, a place of spirituality and mystery. According to legend, Saint Julius (San Giulio) arrived here in the 4th century, crossing the lake on his cloak and driving away the snakes and dragons that plagued it. Today, the island is home to the Mater Ecclesiae Abbey, a cloistered Benedictine monastery, and the ancient Basilica of San Giulio, a masterpiece of Romanesque art. The island can be reached in just a few minutes by boat from Orta San Giulio, the main village on the lake.
Orta San Giulio is a true gem: a maze of cobbled streets, flower-filled balconies, picturesque corners, and the charming Piazza Motta, directly overlooking the lake. Boats to the island depart from here.

On the hill overlooking the lake stands the Sacro Monte d'Orta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site — a scenic trail immersed in nature, featuring twenty frescoed chapels depicting the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. To the north lies Omegna, a lively town rich in history, famous as the birthplace of Gianni Rodari and for its long-standing tradition of craftsmanship. Other charming villages, such as Pettenasco, Pella, Buccione, and Legro—known as "the painted village" for its colorful murals—complete an itinerary full of charm and authenticity. Lake Orta boasts a culinary tradition that is both genuine and refined.

Typical dishes range from lake fish, such as perch and trout, to tapulone, a traditional donkey meat stew typical of Borgomanero. There is no shortage of mountain cheeses, local cured meats, and traditional

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desserts such as the delicate Orta biscuits.
To accompany these flavors, visitors can enjoy excellent Piedmont wines: Nebbiolo delle Colline Novaresi, Gattinara, Ghemme, and the fresher Erbaluce di Caluso.
Lake Orta is enchanting in every season, but the best time to visit is from April to October, when the climate is mild and the surrounding nature is in full bloom.

Spring offers vibrant colors and rich fragrances, summer provides the chance to swim and enjoy boat trips, while autumn enchants with its golden hues and the tranquility of cooler days.
Visiting Lake Orta means immersing yourself in a place where art, history, spirituality, and nature coexist in perfect harmony. Lake Orta is a true refuge for the soul, a corner of Italy that surprises with its simplicity and discreet charm — a truly unmissable destination for those who wish to rediscover the pleasure of slow living and authenticity.

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