

Untold Italy Episode 75 - Lake Como

Katy

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 75.

Josie

Ciao and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, I'm Josie.

Katy

And I'm Katy, and we're here to help you plan your trip to Italy.

Josie

Between us, we have many years of travel experience and we want to help you uncover your own as yet untold stories and adventures in Italy.

Katy

Each episode, you'll hear practical advice, tips and ideas to help you plan your own trips to the magical land of history, stunning landscapes and a whole lot of pasta.

Josie

We'll have interviews from experts and focus on local destinations and frequently asked questions about travel in Italy.

Katy

Thanks for listening and make sure to subscribe to our show.

Josie

Now let's get started on your regular dose of Bella Italia.

Katy

Ciao everyone! Hope you are keeping your Italian dreams front of mind. I don't know about you but I am loving being on Instagram watching our Italian friends explore their country and and enjoy the weather which is finally becoming sunny and beautiful after such a long winter and lockdown. My favorite was seeing a trip to Venice my friend Liv took over the weekend where she stopped at one of my favorite cicchetti bars overlooking the gondola workshop. Bliss! I was so happy for her. Speaking of our friends, one of my favorite places to be when I can't be in Italy is in our Untold Italy Insiders group. This is our online membership where we do a deep dive into Italian food, wine, culture and of course travel. I'm joined by some of your favorite guests on the podcast including Holly Star from Capri, Giovanni Dagostino in Le Marche and Liv Windsor in Piedmont and guidebook author Corinna Cooke. We help our members plan future trips, reminisce about past ones and learn new recipes and about wine,

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cheese and history. This is the place to be if you crave more Italy when you can't be there. It's ad free, fun and explores beyond the obvious when it comes to Italian culture. This month we're exploring all things pecorino - both cheese and wine, plus learning to make spaghetti vongole and exploring the region of Umbria. It's going to be lots of fun and I'd love you to join us. I've put the link into our show notes so you can check out all the details.

Katy

Are you ready for another trip to the Italian lakes? Today we're going to the shores of beautiful Lake Como with its stunning villas, and pretty towns backed by alpine fields and hills. It's a perfect place that's been a favorite vacation spot since Roman times. I'm joined by Isabella Panzeri who owns Orrizonti Lake Como a company that creates beautiful experiences on Lake Como including boat tours. Isabella traveled the world and had an incredible time doing so, but it wasn't until she returned home to Italy and the shores of Lake Como that she found her true purpose. She's going to tell you all about the lake and what you can do, see, eat and drink there... wait until you hear all about the "real lunch" - it's amazing.

Katy

Benvenuta Isabella and welcome to the Untold Italy podcast.

Isabella

Ciao Katy. Thanks for having me today.

Katy

It's so wonderful to have you on the podcast today, joining us from beautiful Lake Como, which I can see in the background, we're recording the audio here, but Isabella has joined us from this beautiful, beautiful spot overlooking the lake. So I'm getting a real treat and I'll post a picture of a screenshot I did because it's just really beautiful. Now, Isabella, I've told our listeners a little bit about you in our introduction, but I know that they would love to hear all about who you are and your story in your own words.

Isabella

Of course. So, first of all, I want to say sorry if my pronunciation sometimes is not so good. So, yes, my name is Isabella and I'm from Lecco, so from Lake Como, eastern side of Lake Como. I will tell you something more later about my lake. And I created this little business on Lake Como to sell, organize and sell beautiful experiences on the lake and mountains and linked to traditions and culture and food. So I started my little business in 2016 after maybe we can say two or three years of inspirations, because I traveled a lot before that. And the longest time away from my family and from my home was when I went to Australia for a couple of years. And then after Australia, I traveled again before coming back home. And as soon as I came back home and I was driving from the airport to my little town because I live, when not now, but I grew up in a very little town, one thousand six hundred people just at the bottom of a mountain overlooking the lake. So when I was driving from the airport to my home and I was approaching the mountains and the lake and I was like, oh my God, I felt like

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I betrayed my hometown, traveling too much and staying away too much. So this is why step by step, this business was coming to my head. And in 2016 I chose to finally open my business and risk it all and say, OK, let's get the tourists here and make them look at my hometown with new eyes also, because I will tell you later about my side of the lake and the particularity of this site.

Katy

Yeah, because I think many, many people know Lake Como and they've heard of it. And there's lots of famous people and famous villas that are going there. They're very, very popular places. And maybe we should hear a little bit about them first. What makes Como really, really popular. But yeah, we definitely want to hear later about what makes your experiences on the lake so special, because it is a different side and I think it's worth exploring. But let's hear about those popular things first.

Isabella

Yeah, well, of course, so Lake Como is popular mostly for the western side. So Lake Como is kind of upside down Y shape? And so the western side is the Como side. That side is well known because it has a really long history. And we can always say that a Western side started working in tourism like in the 18th century when all the poets or writers or most prestigious people from all over Europe, they were coming to Lake Como during the grand tour. So starting from the 18th century, there was this kind of what we call right now a gap here in the 18th century was called Grand Tour. So all the prestigious people used to take one year, one gap year to travel around Europe and get inspiration. And Como western side was one of the places to go. Absolutely. So this is why now we have so many beautiful villas and histories from poets and writers and politicians also. And so well, Lake Como western side is actually working on tourism since then. And then Como was one stop on the silk market, not market. How can we say that? The Silk Road. Yes, the Silk Road. So it's more popular also because of the history. And now, of course, we have those prestigious and wonderful and luxury villas on the lake that absolutely worth to be visited, but also from the lake. So one thing I used to do every summer, not last year, unfortunately, but every summer, I always take one day to rent a boat to go on the lake of Villa Balbianello and jump on the lake and swim in the lake and pretend it's my villa.

Katy

That is a pretty spectacular villa. And it's been featured in lots of films, hasn't it?

Isabella

Yeah.

Katy

You can go inside, but I think it's really the gardens that it's the most spectacular.

Isabella

Yes. Well, I love it. I absolutely love it from the water. From the water is simply stunning. I mean, it's incredible. It's just I like the shape of the tree, you know, the story of that tree. Why did they cut the tree like that? Like round shape at Villa Balbianello?

Katy

It's a special tree. Maybe you can tell everyone. It's a special tree that's been cut into a certain shape and Isabel is going to tell you why.

Isabella

I remember that it was a politician and American politician who came to Villa Balbianello. And the main/the most beautiful room was over viewing this tree. But these tree was obviously so beautiful. But the man couldn't see out of the window, couldn't see the lake. And he said, How can I see the lake? I cannot watch the lake without cutting the trees. So he start like rounding the top of the tree.

Katy

It's in a beautiful shape isn't it? And it's very distinctive. You can see it. It is a very stunning villa. And it's been in the Star Wars. I think it's been James Bond. It's been in lots of movies that villa.

Isabella

And it's not also too expensive to rent for weddings because it's not a private villa. It's a property of F.A.I - Fai. So it's a public villa and it's not expensive to get married there. Not too expensive. Not like other - all the other private villas are like maybe a hundred thousand Euro. Balbianello is not so expensive.

Katy

I'll bet there's a long waiting list there though. Oh there's another one of - I guess one of the more popular ones is Villa Carlotta and I love that Villa. It's so magical with the gates at the front overlooking the lake.

Isabella

So yeah I always suggest to visit the villas in Spring and early Summer time because of the blossom and flowers and all the gardens. And Villa Carlotta is also a museum inside with sculptures.

Katy

You can go up can't you and you can look out on the balcony like the princess that used to live there. Pretend you're like, daadaaa.

Isabella

Yeah the villas are good for that to pretend you're like 'ooh' and you can call the service like 'hey'.

Katy

Oh goodness, I loved it. It's beautiful. And I think the other interesting thing about like Como is it's a different climate that you might not expect. So Villa Carlotta, they've got some even tropical plants that haven't they, which you would think 'why have they got that?' But it's because of the climate around the lake.

Isabella

We have a lot of humidity here in wintertime, but the last ten years also in summer time. So our summer, our summers right now, maybe more than ten years, actually, it's like fifteen years that we have a tropical climate in the summertime with a lot of humidity and hot, very hot. But then maybe you have like storms just maybe one night, one night storm and then hot again. But yeah, so our climate is very humid. And so this is why all those plants can stay here.

Katy

And so I guess when most people go to Como, they go to a couple of places, don't they? They go to Como and they probably go to the famous Bellagio. People love Bellagio, don't they?

Isabella

Yes. Yes. Well Bellagio also is the pearl of the lake. One of the first is obviously the most popular spot. And absolutely it's worth to be discovered also by themselves, not with a guide. Maybe you can listen to the histories of Bellagio and all the prestigious people who live there, but also by yourself, you can absolutely - you have to walk through all the alleys, you're up and down. and then actually if you start going into, like walking into or through the city center, you can also (and it's a little town), but you can get lost because there are all these little alleys up and down and you're like, OK, let's go there. And then you follow another little alley and then you get lost looking at houses or gardens or also, there's more shops and then and then you're like, oh, my God, what am I? It's a small, little town, but you can get lost because of that.

Katy

It's very beautiful, isn't it? But it's very popular and it can get very, very busy. So we have to let people know that if they want to stay in Bellagio, you need to book very well in advance. And you it may not be the most cost effective place to stay.

Isabella

No, no exactly, exactly. And actually, I'm happy for that because, as usual, when one plays when the most popular place gets too crowded, then people start staying outside and they start discovering the surroundings. So not just Bellagio, but ok Bellagio's too expensive and there is no place. So in the last few years, finally, tourists started to discover the surroundings. Staying a little bit outside Bellagio. Sometimes also far away from Bellagio. And this is good because now Lake Como is becoming popular not only for the western side, but also for other nice places. Bellagio can get very crowded, so also Bellagio maybe if someone

wants to stay one or two weeks in Bellagio, maybe we suggest always spring early summer or maybe September. September is also very nice.

Katy

Oh, yes. That's when we were there for a week, not in Bellagio, actually, but in Como. But I think the one amazing thing about the lake is you don't need to in Bellagio because you could stay - really anyway, because there's so many boats that zip around the lake that join the towns. So you don't need to stay there. You can visit there for the day and you could stay in another town. What are some of your favorite towns that you think people would like to stay in?

Isabella

So, I mean, probably the best area is Varenna. Varenna is almost halfway from Lecco to Colico. Colico is the northernmost town. So it's on the northern side of the lake Varenna or Bellano also. Bellano is pretty cute. I think they are very beautiful places, of course, but they're also very - how can I say comfortable? Because you are in the center of the lake and there are so many ferries that go every day, every single half an hour, every 15 minutes, actually, when it's very high season. And from Varenna, for example, you can reach Mennagio or Bellagio whenever, so you can move from one side to the other in 15 minutes. So it's very easy and Varenna it's becoming popular, but it's not so crowded as Bellagio maybe. So it's a little bit maybe more peaceful. It's a more peaceful place. And Varenna, for example, is also more and more nature than the larger you can. You're surrounded by olive gardens, for example, and it's also well connected through public transport because there's a train from Milano Centrale to Colico - the northern lake and you have all different stops on the way. So Varenna has a train station, which is very useful also.

Katy

I think it's getting a lot more popular. I know when we were there, we didn't actually stay in Varenna, but we said next time we definitely will for all of the reasons that you mentioned, because it is such a beautiful little town. And we did have some excellent gelato there. I like gelato, but I remember this one to be particularly good. And there's a little street and they have cushions on the steps that are going up, colorful cushions. And we sat there and we enjoyed our gelato looking out at the lake. And it's just such a beautiful place now. So people tend to go to Como and then we'll go around and they will go out on the lake, on the ferries. But I know you have got some very special things that you can share that people can do on the lake that they may not have thought of. What are some of your favorite things to do on Lake Como?

Isabella

So maybe what I do since I was kid... So well, it depends on the season, first of all, the cause Lake Como changes a lot from wintertime and summertime. Wintertime is more peaceful, of course, and it's more mountains is more discovered in the mountains from very easy hikes from the most extreme hikes. But wintertime is more like mountains and maybe having a hike to reach a hut - at a restaurant. And you can have lunch at the hut. And with a view, of

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course, because we have so many wonderful views. And so that is absolutely something we love to do. Local people loves to do. So like Sundays - a typical Sunday on Lake Como in winter time is sailing for people passionate of sailing and mountains - like, OK, let's go to that hut and have lunch. And so we start hiking and then we go and we have lunch at the hut. We have a seat with a view and we eat a lot and we drink a lot!! We wait for, you know, like the wine level to go down a little bit and we have to walk back. So that is absolutely something we do. Summertime is more lake. A typical Sunday, I always use the Sunday because obviously it's a day off - a typical Sunday on Lake Como in Spring/Summertime/September is visiting, of course, visiting Varenna, visiting Bellagio - Northern Lake also, there are a couple of beautiful towns to visit. For example, Gravedona is a nice city or Como. So it's more visiting also. We have many religious shrines in the mountains or live in the lake - like lake activities, so we go on the beach and we have fun on the beach. We swim, we do sailing or wakeboard. Yeah, the one with the sail.

Katy

Wind-surfing?

Isabella

Yeah, of course. Summertime is more lake, more water because it's too hot to go to the mountains. And there are crazy people - they go to the mountains every single day and they run also. Now it's like three years, we have people running in the mountains.

Katy

Yeah - that's not for me. And so are their hikes for all different types of levels of fitness and activity because, you know, I think a lot of people really like the sound of doing a nice, gentle walk for a lunch and then relaxing. Is that possible, too?

Isabella

Yeah, of course. So the good thing about Lake Como and well, mostly my side, but more of Lake Como is like that - is that there are activities for any level. So there are some beautiful and very yummy huts and restaurants where you can drive with your car and maybe then park your car and then it's like maybe 10, 15 minutes walk and like flat and nice in the woods or there are medium hikes. So it's good because it's for any level, any level. So like, for example, for me, when I when I was a little kid, I used to go to the mountains but high mountains. But right now I'm more a lake person. And the same for me. My friends, they like "so let's go to that hut and have lunch." I'm like "OK, can you give me the distance in height first?" And then "how in the world am I going to" So we have so many beautiful places you can reach by car and maybe just ten minutes walk. Very easy.

Katy

Do you have an example of one of those that you can share with our listeners - one of your favorites?

Isabella

There is this place, which is a place I also use for one of my experiences on the Wayfarer trail, because we have a trail in the mountains. It's not mountains, actually, because it's like where we are right now. It's not so high level. So there is this path Sentiero del Viandante, which starts from Lecco to Colico - to the northern lake. And that trail is not - is like medium easy level. It depends on the on..

Katy

The section?

Isabella

The section, right. And you can find so many little places where you can have lunch or dinner also. And there is this place that that I use in Mandello del Lario. Your name is La Selvaggia, which is a place that you can reach obviously just by walking, but it's not a long walk. So you can park the car at the top of Mandello, also over Mandello - over the city center. And then it's like a twenty minute walk on a mule track. So it's not even a mountain trek, but it's a mule trek very easy and they are a little agriturismo. So they have this little house like in stone and wood and a wonderful view and they cook like homemade dishes. And you come - you don't have a menu to choose from because they have like the cost is always 25 Euros. So you pay 25 Euro and the menu is decided by them day by day, depending on the season, depending on what they have and they produce. You go there, you have to book absolutely in advance and you go there and then 25 Euro and you eat like for... for you maybe it will be like having a Christmas - for us it's like having a Sunday lunch.

Katy

All right. You've got me now on the food, so you better tell us what sort of things they cook I think. What's the specialties around Lake Como.

Isabella

So when we say "Oh we'll have a quick lunch" our quick lunch is like OK, we can have a little antipasto and maybe pasta or a second dish. So that for us is a quick lunch. When we say "oh, let's have a real lunch" it's like, OK, we start from antipasto. And for example, at that place or there are many other little Agriturismo or Osteria antipasto means having many different kinds of cold cuts, like meat, like affettato - so different kind of prosciutto, wild prosciutto, sometimes like Bresaola. Bresaola is very, very popular here. And then you have some lake fish as antipasto like Pesce in carpione. Pesce means a fish. Carpione is the way it is marinated with vinegar and veggies and the little fish, agoni - little agoni fish. And they're marinated with vinegar and cloves. So vinegar.

Katy

Oh, that's interesting.

Isabella

Very interesting. It has a very, very tasty. Not everyone actually is used to that taste. And then we have the veggies, of course, also cheese. Sometimes we have cheese also as antipasto. And we have many different kinds of cheese because Lake Como actually is a good producer of cheese - mountain cheese. Goat cheese.

Katy

Mmm. Delicious.

Isabella

Then after antipasto, we have that place La Selvaggia on the 25 Euro menu, they have two different kinds of pasta. You can't choose. You - well, I mean, you start with the first kind of pasta and generally can be like pasta with lake fish again. Or it can be like a pasta with Ragù di Cinghiale with wild, wild, big ragu and you have all of them or you have ravioli - ravioli with sage like just simple with some butter and sage so you have two dishes of pasta.

Katy

2?

Isabella

Yes. And then dishes of all like main like meat or fish. And it's 2. You can't say "oh I don't want the meat, I want the fish". No, no, no - they come and they put everything on the table and you have.. So maybe you have the fish like Lavarello or maybe you have wild meat like stew dishes with polenta. So wild pig or pork meat with polenta. Cassoulet. cassoulet is a very traditional dish here, mostly in Wintertime. Wintertime and Autumn. Summertime is a little bit heavy. And so you have two, two main dishes with sides. Sides actually well they're simple like veggies and potatoes. And then you have dessert. Dessert, which is homemade cakes from them. And then you start with digestives with Grappa or Amaro. Amaro, like for example, maybe, you know, DiSarrano or Montenegro. Then here we have so many. We have some local digestives made of wild herbs and then wine is also included. Everything is included - water, coffee, wine. But generally when you go and have lunch in these kind of places, like La Selvaggia, or in a hut mountain at the top of a mountain. General places like that, hey give you.... they say, OK, it's a 20 Euro, it's 25 Euro and everything is included. And you eat like it's Christmas and you can't move. You need like 4 grappas before walking back.

Katy

I love it. That is absolutely a real lunch. I don't think anyone can argue with.

Isabella

That is what we call a real lunch. Our quick lunch is like antipasto, antipasto and pasta or antipasto and meat. So that is our quick lunch.

Katy

I love it. I love it. It's actually amazing food. And I mentioned to Isabella when we were talking about this during this podcast, that I had been to a food festival, a Sagre, on the lake. And it actually is one of the big highlights of my life, actually, because it was a very special time when we just stumbled upon it by accident and it was just mind-blowing to me. All these different foods and just the generosity of the people and the kindness of people and just the tastiness of the food. I had never really experienced that extremely local experience outside of a restaurant. And if you're going to the lake or anywhere in Italy, actually you should really seek out these agriturismos, because I think it's a really special and unique experience that you can't have at home actually. So yes, definitely seek them out. I've just had my dinner Isabella and I am now hungry again! So that is definitely one of the experiences you should have when you're there. Now, is there any other experiences that you absolutely must have when you're in Lake Como?

Isabella

Maybe one of the things I also love is having a local morning in a city center. Like if you're staying in Como if you're staying in Lecco or maybe Bellagio or Varrenna - maybe the most touristy places - maybe not so much. But waking up in the morning and walking in the city center of Como or Lecco and buy food in the small shops because it's something we do. And you can see the 80 year old lady buying bread or meat at the butcher, the butchery and speaking our dialect. I say that because I remember also with my mom, she has a relationship, but no relationship - not relationship maybe. But there's a real, real life.... I don't know how to explain that - between the local person and the owner of the small shop. Because maybe you can find the 80 years old lady that buys bread or meat at the same shop, same shop as since she was a little girl. So if you're staying in an apartment, for example, Lecco or Como, I always suggest people to wake up early in the morning and to walk in the city center to buy food for lunch. And they can actually see these beautiful moments of real life in our town on Lake Como. So ladies and kids and small shops and they know each other and then they ask about their neighbor. how are you you? How is your neighbor? How was your weekend? And then they speak dialect, of course. So I don't know, it's like watching a movie for me, something very, very nice.

Katy

And I have to say, if anyone's listening that travels with kids, if you are traveling with kids, you often get pulled into these movies because you have people going, "Oh bella familia!" And like giving your kids sweets and chocolate.

Isabella

Yes always, always. Have this chocolate, have this candy!!

Katy

It's really nice.

Isabella

Something normal for us - when I was a little girl and my mom, she was like- when I was living in a little town, so nobody cares if I was five years old and I was walking to the bakery shop to buy bread. But every single time I remember that, I walked there at the big bakery shop (and like right now there is still the same person working there) and to buy bread for my mom and every single time walking came back, maybe with a little Panino with Nutella inside or candies or chocolate.

Katy

Oh yeah, it's beautiful. And I think these are some of the experiences that you have and you don't have to do much. You just sit there and just watch what's happening. But, you know, there is one experience that I would love to have just because I do like a bit of glamor and you do get quite a bit of glamor on Lake Como - is I would love... I love the boats, the wooden boats, the speedboats. I just think they so I just love them and they are everywhere. So can you describe for us what they look like? Because they're not like your average speed boat. They like extra.

Isabella

They're very beautiful boat and all the owners of those boats, they have to take care of them because most of them, they're wooden boats. And I don't know actually, if you imagine like VIP people or like American actors coming to Italy in Venice for the movie festival.

Katy

The film festival?

Isabella

So, you know you know that all those VIP people, they travel in Venice on those beautiful and very luxury motor boat. So we have the same boat here on Lake Como. So those are the boats. So we have the most luxury ones that you can find - the riverboat. It's actually a building site. They build these very luxury boat. But there are other like normal and they do tours to villas or they're used for weddings for taking pictures. So, yes, on Sunday, Sunday afternoon, I was talking with my partner, who's now - he brought the boat from home to the lake. So we're opening the season this weekend and I was looking at the boat and he was like, working the whole wintertime to fix, to clean. I don't know - they are so particular and they - all the drivers, they really take a lot of care of their boats, like they're jewels.

Katy

And they are. They're beautiful. They're all polished up and just stunning. And so really, at this point, if you're going to be going on that boat, I think you need to wear your Gucci scarf or whatever, or you just like to look fabulous when you're in the boat because it is really a movie star moment.

Isabella

It's actually, yes, a VIP experience. But you can like, on a tour, on a Venetian style boat, on a tour, you can see the best of Lake Como in half a day or if you want in one day because there are so many different kinds of tours. Me, for example, I have some already made product, but if someone wants to visit something else - there are so many tailor made tours you can do. Like, "oh, I want to take a Venetian style boat, but I want to visit there, there, there" Whatever! Maybe they're a little bit expensive!

Katy

But it's one of those once in a lifetime experiences, I think.

Isabella

Yes. And I know what's behind the scenes of those boats. And gosh, it's a lot of work for them.

Katy

Yeah, and I think it's worth it. I really believe in thinking of those moments that you're going to have. You know, not that you can create moments, but you can help them along a bit, I think, you know. And just make sure that you make the most of your time and, you know, the ferries can be a little bit slow and crowded. So.

Isabella

Yeah, during high season, I never, never suggest to use the ferry, actually. They're too crowded. And maybe you have to wait because if at a time it's too full, then you have to wait. Maybe in high season, I suggest to move in a Venetian style boat. Because also you are in Varenna and you want to go to Bellagio - you can go down the lake and talk with Luca, with Taxi Boat Varenna. And you can say, can you please take me to Bellagio? Can you please take me to Mennagio? Can you please take me to visit the villas. Visiting the villas - oh I always ask people to use Venetian style boat, not the ferry, because, I mean as what you said, Katy - visiting the villa also maybe just from the water. It's something like stunning and beautiful. And it's like actually it's a kind of VIP feeling and you have to complete the experience with the Venetian style boat.

Katy

I think so too. I want to do that. I was looking at these boats going across the lake and I just looked at my husband and I said, we're going/we're doing that when we come back, and these kids are grown up. We are going on that boat. They're so beautiful. Now, the other thing, when you have a guide, then they can tell you some of the stories of the customs of the lake can't they and some of the interesting things. Have you got any special stories that you personally love to share about Lake Como?

Isabella

Yeah, a couple . Yeah I love to talk about fishing on Lake Como because we have so many different kind of fish and we have like a fishing history also. We have so many fishermen and that they sell their fish at restaurants or the other small shops. So I always talk about fish and

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then I always talk about outdoor activities. What we said before about - there are so many different kind of activities for any level and mostly on the lake. Also, I like to talk about, about how eclectic is this lake. What I love the most - so there is a kind of competition on Lake Como between the eastern side and western side.

Katy
Ahh!

Isabella

In Italy, we have a competition for everything, but it's like in soccer championship, so Como and Lecco is like looking at Inta and Juventus - like something like that.

Katy
Oh big rivalry.

Isabella

Yeah. So what I always say to my customers when I'm with them and obviously we talk about the difference between Como and Lecco. I love the whole lake obviously. I also love the Northern Lake, which is wider than the eastern side. But I'm always like, ah but in Como, they're may be more VIP because of the villas and you know luxury and maybe here we are a little bit more wild and still like - for the common people, we are farmers, you know, something like that. So there is competition. But what I say is always like, yeah, but they don't know that. They they don't know what they actually know. That the Lake Como is close in Lecco, it's not close because we have a river starting from Lecco or so in Lecco we have three bridges and then the lake becomes river becomes the other river and this river goes then to our main river in Italy and there is a dam that controls the level of the lake. Then they open or they close the dam depending on the water level on the lake or the water for agriculture and close to Milan and then down. So we always say that if we close the dam, Como gets flooded!!!! So then when it rains a lot, when it rains a lot or we have a lot of snow in springtime or early summer time and we have lot of rain, the level in Como gets higher and higher and higher. And we're like "hey guys, if you don't be quiet, we don't open the dam!" This is what we love to say - is just a curiosity about this kind of competition.

Katy

I love it. Everywhere around the world, everyone has their own little ways that they compete with their neighbors, don't they? You guys just going to close the dam? You're not going to close the dam on Como.

Isabella

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. But it's so funny. It's so funny because it's like there are also 2 different soccer teams. There's a soccer team in Como and there's a soccer team in Lecco. So there is competition for everything, for soccer, for food. Therefore... we love each other, but there is always this competition between Como and Lecco, Como and Lecco!

Katy

It's like brothers and sisters. I love it. OK, now there's one thing that I need to know before we go. Where I found Isabella was actually I was looking for experiences to do on Lake Como and one thing really stood out to me. It's because if listeners to this podcast know that I love aperitivo and I love sunsets and Isabella's got an amazing experience that she offers with part of her tours, which is to have aperitivo on a boat, a sailing boat on Lake Como. And to me, that just sounds perfect. I don't know. I'm sure you know, with the best sunsets are too, don't you?

Isabella

Yeah, of course. And actually, it's also good- obviously aperitivo on a sailboat in wintertime is not really suggested.

Katy

I'd do it.

Isabella

Aperitivo it's always at sunset. For example, if in wintertime I have the opportunity to have a beer at sunset on the top of the mountain, but aperitivo on a sailboat is actually one of my best sellers because you are actually in a very peaceful atmosphere. So you are on a sailboat, not on a motorboat. So there is no noise and you are in the middle of the lake. And at sunset there are not too many people on the lake, like doing activities or many motorboats. So you are on a sailboat in the middle of the lake like 7/8 p.m. with a sunset going down, really relaxing. We do it for little groups, obviously, because our sailboats can have from 6 to 8 people on board. But we also do it and mostly we do it for couples. So we organized a romantic experience on a sailboat. Sometimes we also have proposals. Wedding proposals. Also because my great friend and co-operator - she's a gastronomy expert and she's the one who helped me organizing the finger food to put on board and the little finger food like seasonal and very particular, gourmet and not - it's sometimes unusual actually. So maybe like you can have some our affettato - normal affettato, affettato with the wild herbs. So not only the atmosphere, the place. But also, the food is really magical. It's new, it's suggestive, it's romantic is wow, I love it. I love tour guiding with people. I'm always on board when I have a dinner because then I also I have a lot of experience in hospitality and I also wear and I'm like serving people. It's wonderful.

Katy

It sounds just perfect. I can't imagine a better way to spend the end of the day on Lake Como to be honest. Now, this has been delightful. I don't know if anyone has been hearing the birds tweeting in the background, but it's just absolutely beautiful. Isabella, we would love to know how we can stay in touch with you. So can you let our listeners know how they can reach out to you on the Internet or on social media?

Isabella

Yeah, of course. So I have a website, which is orizzontilakecomo.com. And I have like I use Instagram and Facebook as social media and pages are under [orizzontilakecomo](http://orizzontilakecomo.com). I'm not the one that posts a lot on social media. But yes, sometimes I love to share moments and pictures and also experiences from other tourists. So yeah, they can visit my website, follow me on Facebook and Instagram and I'm always open to any kind of request, so on my website they can see I have some organized product already, but what we love to do most and it's also more exciting for us - is creating tailor-made experience, so there are so many people, maybe they contact us and they're like "oh we're seeing one week in Lecco, in Varenna, in Beallogio, what can we do in one week?" And then we start sending questions like, how old are you? Which is your level for thi? What would you like to do? And then we love to also create helping them in having the best out of a week or three days or five days.

Katy

Well, I would just love to be there with you right now. I just feel like, you know, it's the magic of the Internet. You can actually I can see the lake and I can see the trees and hear the birds. I feel like I'm there. So it's absolutely beautiful. And it's all calling to me, especially that real lunch.

Speaker 2

So about that real lunch - I remember when there was a couple from Malta, Malta, the little island, south of Italy. And so I think it was the first time, the very first time I was doing that tour with someone. And they were a young couple. And we went there and it all started with antipasto and then they were like "we're full already". And I was like, "what? You can't be full already, you know, we still have 2 pasta, 2 main dishes". They were like "nooo"

Katy

You should have just told them to go for a walk or something, walk it off!!

Isabella

No, no, no, so now every single time they book that tour, I'm like, please have a very light dinner. Don't have a heavy breakfasty - you have to be very hungry.

Katy

It sounds amazing. Oh, Isabella, I really hope we can be there soon. And I know that everyone is just itching to get to Lake Como and just experience that beautiful, wild nature as well as the more VIP experiences too. Thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy today.

Isabella

Thank you, Ciao, Ciao.

Katy

Are you ready for a "real lunch" on Lake Como? Bring it on I say. So much fun. I just love the way Italians appreciate food and company. When I think back on the past year, it is actually

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those moments that I've craved the most. May there be many many long real lunches in our future. Followed by aperitivo on a sailing boat on Lake Como! Can you imagine? I can because I have my photos of sunsets there to remind me just how special it is. And I can't wait to get back there just as soon as I can.

Isabella mentioned many places and things to do on Lake Como in our interview and I've made sure they are all up on our website at untolditaly.com/75 for you. This is also where you can find information on that real lunch and how you can follow Orrizonti and Isabella's days on Lake Como for yourself.

If you enjoyed today's show, it would be wonderful if you could give us a rating or review either on your favorite podcast app or on our Facebook page @untolditalytravel That helps the people of the internet know our podcast is worth listening too and I'll be honest we do a little happy dance when we read them.

Coming up next week, we're going back to Prosecco country with my friends - wine experts and food lovers Chantelle and Giovanni - to explore some of the villages and wineries. Ciao for now!