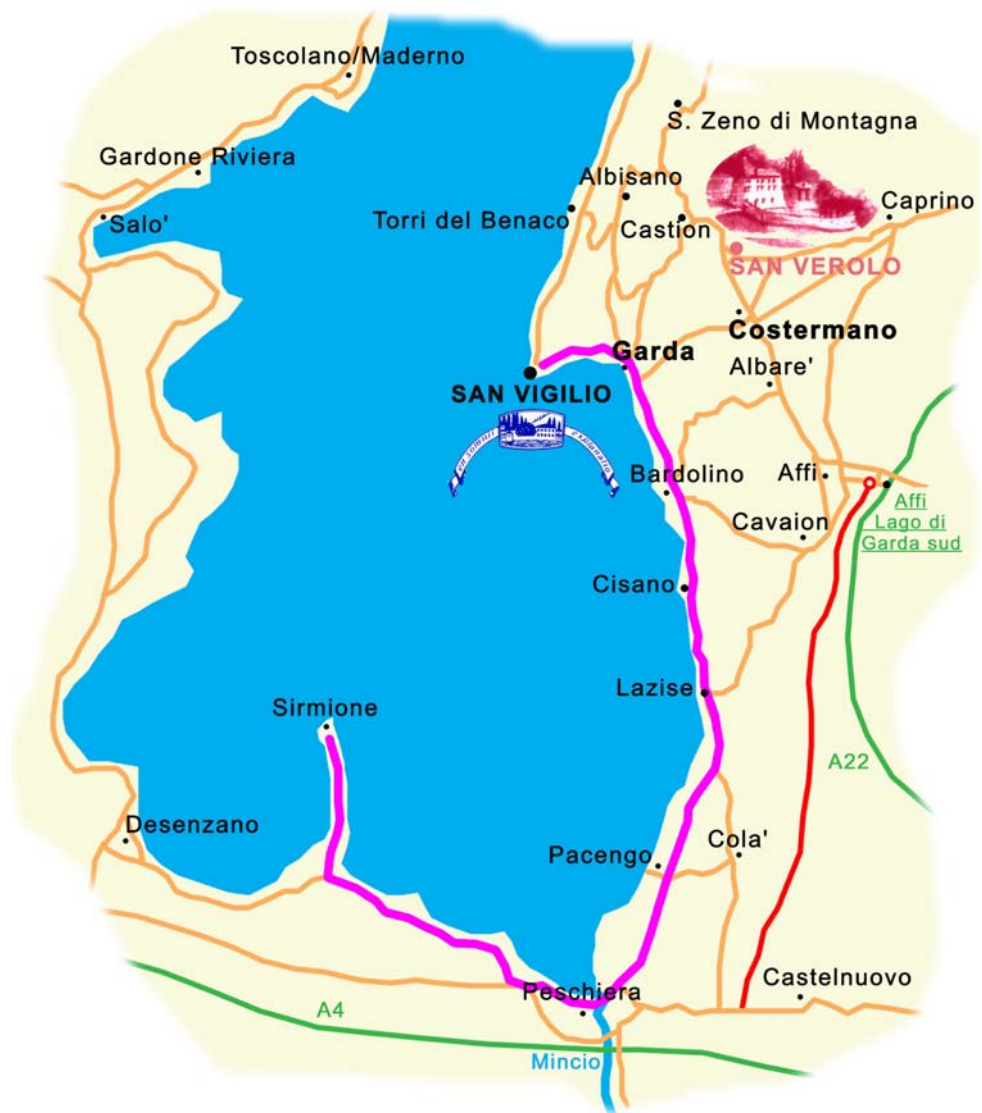




SIRMIONE



itinerary of approximately 32 km altogether

Places to visit:

⇒ SIRMIONE

You can reach Sirmione by taking only of the passenger ferries that leave from the main ports on the Verona shores.

The first impact with [Sirmione](#) is a view of its castle, the imposing [Rocca Scaligera](#) rising from the lake and one of the most accurately preserved fortresses in Italy. There is no documentation to testify its origins although several opinions exist of which the most credited is that the castle was built in three parts, at different times. The original plot would coincide with the central courtyard area, dating from around the XII century and built by the Della Scala family, seigneurs of Verona; shortly afterwards, it is thought, the second round of walls were added. The third addition was the fortified jetty, towards the end of the XIV century, again commissioned by the Della Scalas who, in precisely that period, were strengthening defences in the territory under their control.



The ancient borough was fortified during the same period.

You can enter the castle by crossing the bridge that connects it to the mainland. In the first courtyard you can imagine scenes of the past when soldiers were intent on keeping watch through the loopholes. From the 47-metre high keep you can enjoy a scenographic view of Sirmione and the lake, only 150 stone steps take you to the top! (*open: 8.30 / 18.30 - for information, call 030 916468*)

After visiting the castle, keep to the right and follow the alley that runs along the lake then turns into the historical centre. Again on the lakeside, follow the path along the shore and then go up along the tree-lined garden. When you reach the road, continue to the right to reach the end of the peninsula from where you can admire the splendid panorama and, of course, you will find the monumental [Grotte di Catullo](#).

Although archeologists do not agree, popular tradition since the far off XV century is that these imposing Roman ruins were Catullo's residence in ancient times. The only certain thing is that Catullo did have a villa at Sirmione, but that these are its remains still has to be proved. Whatever the truth may be, the monumental complex of this Roman villa at the very tip of the peninsula is an authentic discovery, spreading over an area of more than 20,000 square metres, and overlooking one of the most beautiful scenarios on Lake Garda. The most ancient of the ruins date from the I century BC and reveal porticoes, a swimming pool, corridors, lodges and several rooms which, together, form the most imposing archaeological complex in northern Italy. The wonderful panorama from this hill, surrounded by olive groves and the lake, add to the magnificence of the spot where visitors can learn an important part of Sirmione's history in the midst of luxurious greenery.



In 1999, a **Museum** was opened at the gate to the archaeological site as to explain the visit to the Roman villa and also to relate the history of Sirmione, both before and after the Roman era. Here you can view finds from the submerged lake dwellings along the shores of the peninsula showing that the lake dwellers were fishermen, farmers and weavers. There are also some interesting exhibits from the medieval period when Sirmione, thanks to its strategic position, enjoyed a period of great splendour: on show are swords, remnants of shields, lances and knives, as well as paraments from churches that unfortunately no longer exist.

The main part of the museum is dedicated to finds made in the Catullo Caves during excavations that lasted for almost fifty years. The first piece is a great reconstruction of the villa enabling us to understand just how majestic this complex was at the height of its splendour. You can admire

the architectural decorations documented by fragments of columns, painted plaster and stuccos that show the high quality of wall decorations in the dwellings of that time. Excavations also unearthed many tools of common use and coins, as well as burial ornaments dating from the IV century when the villa had already become derelict. (*open: 1 March to 14 October, h. 8.30-19.00, weekdays, h. 9.00-18.00, public holidays; from 15 October to end February, h. 8.30-16.30, weekdays, h. 9.00-16.30, public holidays; closed on Mondays - photos loaned by Soprintendenza Archeologica della Lombardia*)

Returning towards the historical centre along the paved road, look out to the left for the sign indicating Chiesa di S. Pietro in Mavina. This ancient church was actually founded by the Longobards in the VIII century. Although almost entirely renovated in the XIV century, the church is an exceptional historical monument with a splendid frescoed apse and a 17-metre high Romanesque bell tower dating from the IX century.

Ristorante LA RUCOLA

Vicolo Strentelle 7 - SIRMIONE / tel. 030 916326

(average price, excluding wines: € 60.00; closed on Thursdays and Friday lunch times)

This pretty elegant restaurant is a must for lovers of great cuisine!

Gionata, the chef, and his wife Elena who looks after the tables, welcome guests to three small rooms where you can taste typical Mediterranean cuisine, and an exceptional choice of wines numbering more than 800 national and foreign labels. Impossible to recommend a particular dish because the menu varies according to the season but the strong point is the chef's unlimited fantasy in transforming traditional dishes into something magical.

Trattoria VECCHIA LUGANA

piazzale Vecchia Lugana 1 - LUGANA DI SIRMIONE / tel. 030 919012

(Gardesano menu, € 54.00 - tasters' menu € 65.00; closed on Mondays and Tuesdays)

Traditionally, Vecchia Lugana has always been a meeting point for enthusiasts of the "good table". The trattoria offers a great number of tasters' menus, all based on regional traditions such as the Gardesano which includes whitefish and dill ravioli, and a fish terrine with vegetables. The accurate care in preparing the dishes is accompanied by an equally careful choice of listed wines, with more than a hundred national and regional labels.

In summer you can enjoy the view of the lake by having lunch outside in the beautiful gardens.



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realizzato per LOCANDA SAN VIGILIO, giugno 2003