

Below are five local walks, which should be undertaken with a map (do not rely on these sketch-maps!) such as Kompass 1:50,000 Number 97 entitled *Omegna-Varallo Lago d'Orta* on sale in e.g. the newsagent in the main square in Orta San Giulio. Numbers (1), (2), etc refer to the sketch maps. *Please pass any comments on these walks to William.*

Walk 0 The Girolago into Omegna

Here's the outline of how to walk into Omegna on the *Girolago* (lake circuit) path, which is mainly on the level. This is 7 km, so about 90 minutes each way. There are now **Girolago** signs which mark the path most of the way.

- Walk up the path opposite the house, into Crabbia
- Bear left in Crabbia and stay more or less on the level to take the *girolago* path north out of Crabbia through the woods. You stay above the railway at all times.
- At Borca, walk through the village.
- The other side of Borca, cross Via Agrano, and take Via Repubblica (asphalted) into Omegna.

You can also walk on the *girolago* the other way, south, past Pizzeria Berimbao. Cross the railway on a level crossing then walk past the old Pettenasco Station (trains don't stop there any more), and down into Pettenasco.

Walk 1 Orta San Giulio and the Orta Peninsula

This short stroll takes you around the Orta peninsula, at times walking right next to the lake, and seeing more of this little gem of a town. The changing views as you walk around the peninsula are unforgettable.

Start and finish from: Orta San Giulio (4km from Bluewater). From Bluewater, drive south along the lake front, and turn right at the roundabout outside Orta San Giulio. Continue into the parking areas, and park in the pay-and-display areas (blue lines) - you will need to buy a ticket. Alternatively, to pay on exit (a good idea as one always needs to stay longer in Orta than planned!), take the last turning on the left into the covered pay-on-exit car park. Descend on foot into the village (more than one way of doing this!).

Walking time: About one hour.

Suitability for children: Restrain toddlers when walking right on the lake front.

Description of the walk

Follow Sketch Map on page 3. From *Piazza Motta* (the main square of Orta San Giulio), turn north, so as to walk north with the lake on your left, through *Piazza Ragazzoni*. Walk past the Hotel San Rocco, keeping as close to the lake shore as possible (26). Walk past a series of villas. The perspective of the lake and island changes as you round the corner (27) with the rushes growing at the edge of the lake.

Keep walking as far along the shore as you can. When the path turns straight inland (28) you can go no further (don't walk through the private garden in front of you) and have to climb back up to the road (29).

At the junction (18), opposite the Villa Crespi, a luxury hotel in this magnificent palace inspired by a rich man's travels in the Middle East, bear right.

At (20), take the cobbled road down to the waters edge and little beach at Ortello (21). (This is a good place to take a dip!). Follow the path (22) along the lake front (it starts behind the first house on the right as you stand at Ortello facing the lake). Eventually (23) the path rejoins the road at (24). Continue walking towards Orta San Giulio on the road, passing various villas, some fully restored, others not yet. Walk towards Orta San Giulio, staying always on the level, and arrive back in *Piazza Motta*.

Walk 2 Giro of Vacciago and Miasino

A wonderful circuit taking in two villages on a high ridge on the east side of the lake, with some great views.

Start and finish from: Piazza Motta, *get there and park as for Walk 1 above.* Alternatively, park just in the parking areas just after point (18), near the Villa Crespi (you will also need a pay-and-display ticket for here!) and pick up the walk from the roundabout (17).

Time: Round trip 2 hours plus stops

Suitability for children: Good.

Description of the walk

Follow Sketch Map on page 3. From *Piazza Motta* walk southwards with the lake on your right (repeat last part of Walk 1 in reverse). Pass the Villa Crespi (19), the junction (18), and continue towards the roundabout (17). Cross over the main road (the *Strada Provinciale 229*) at the roundabout (use the zebra to the left of the roundabout), and walk up the road opposite.

After just a very few yards, at (16), just before the Hotel San Caterina, take the footpath on your right, marked "Prisciola" (pronounced 'PRIsholla' - a corruption of the Latin for the Great Tit bird). Climb up this old *mulattiera* (mule track) (30) which has central blocks of crisp new granite.

Eventually you pass (31) a playing field on your left (at this point there is a nice view of the *Mottarone* with its characteristic antennae between wooded hills) and then bear right and pass under the railway. You then come out (32) on the road from the station (*Stazione Orta-Miasino*), where you turn right. Now walking on the level, pass (33) the *Hotel Villa San Francesco* (in the past a monastery, now temporary accommodation for refugees and immigrants), and a new nursery school on your left, and you begin to climb up through the woods (34) for some distance.

When you come to the junction (35) marked by a short length of motorway crash barrier on your right, turn left. Climb up the curves between the first few villas (36) of Vacciago, on the steepest part of the walk. At (37) you come out on the Vacciago – Gozzano road, opposite a clump of bamboo. Turn right, and descend the 50 yards to the junction (38). Just before the junction, at the end of the wall on your left, turn onto the grass along a usually well-worn path to the steps that lead up to San Antonio (39). Enjoy a well-earned rest on this terrace with its fantastic view (restrain children from climbing on the wall) and take consolation from the fact that you are more-or-less at the highest point of the walk...!

Walk up the cobbled path, passing the cemetery on your left (wondering perhaps whether the cemetery of all places really does need such a fantastic view....) and at (40) join the asphalted road that leads into the village of Vacciago. Bear right at (41) with the Fondazione Calderara in front of you (you may wish to go in to see the modern art collection) and pass above the little Piazza, church (42) and shop in the centre of Vacciago. After the church, turn first right and follow the narrow street, bending right, passing under the arch, then bending left, so that you come out (43) on the track behind the village, where you turn left. Continue on the level, with the Bar/Pizzeria Aquila across the field to your right, and passing various villas on your left and then on your right. At the junction (44) with the ornate grey railings on your right (that lead to the road a few yards away), turn left, and descend steeply to point (45) (just above the lower road). Turn right, and walk along the path above various villas.

Ignore the overgrown track at (46) leading down between fences to the road near the beautiful *Santuario della Bocciaola*, the baroque church with the large *piazzale* and wonderful lake view.

Soon (47) you pass a clump of bamboo on your left. Follow the path through the woods on this gently rising and falling path. From the last right hand curve you may catch a glimpse of the castle above the gates on your left.

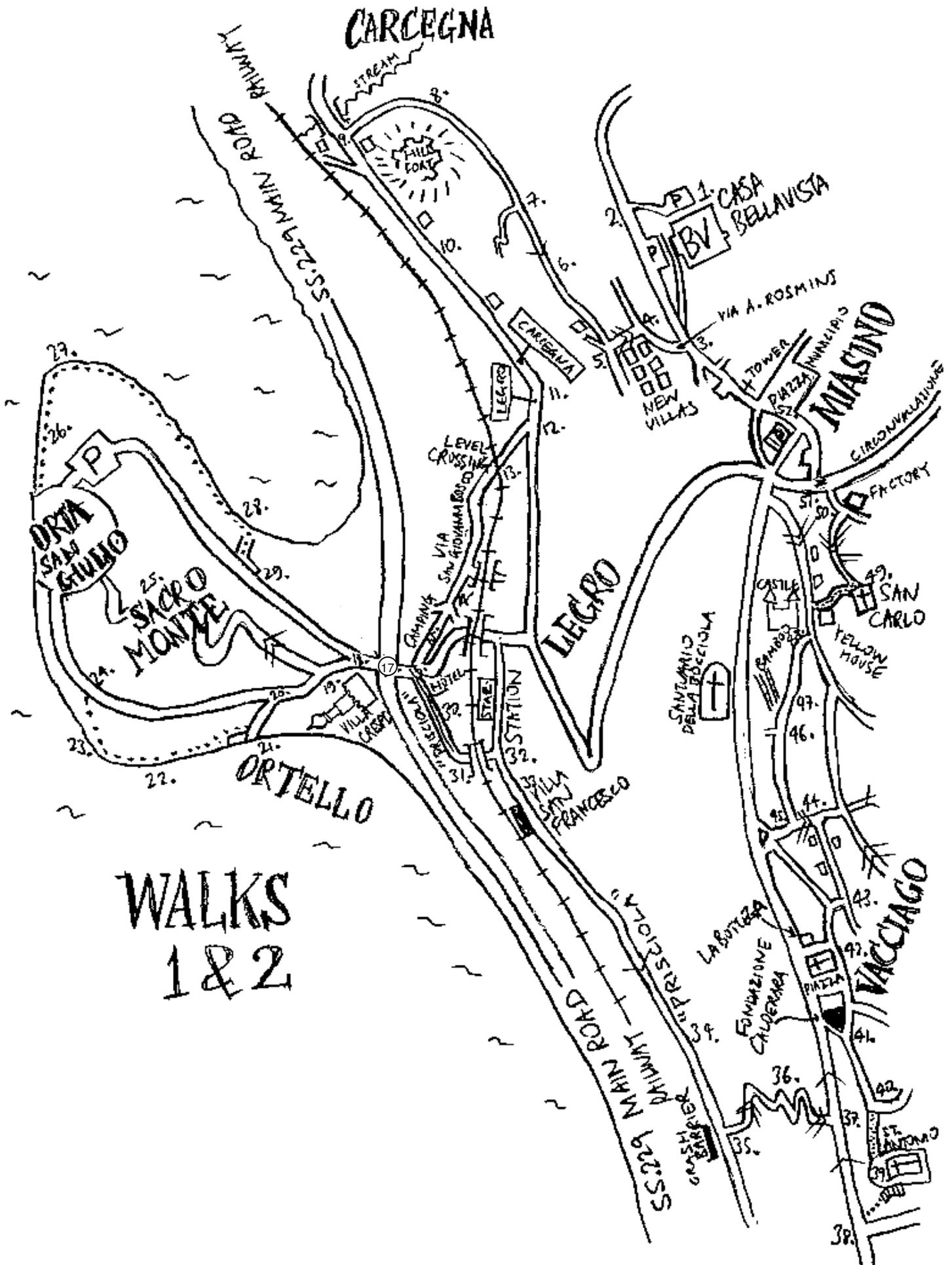
When you come out on the road (48) on a rather dangerous corner, cross over and turn left, then take the first cobbled path on your right (next to the yellow house on the corner) up the stone cobbled path with central slabs to the tiny church (49) of San Carlo (take a well earned rest!). Then bear left and descend the track behind the houses.

At the T-junction (50) in front of a factory, turn left. Cross with caution over the main road at the zebra (51) and continue straight ahead into Miasino. Leave the *Piazza* (52) just to the left of the tower, and follow the path through *Largo Marconi*. At the turning (3), marked Via A. Rosmini, turn left, and descends below the village.

Descend to the T-junction (4) where you turn left so as to drop down past the new villas on your left. At the bottom (5) turn hard right on a narrow track, so as to descend (6) through the woods. Ignore the track at (7) that descends through the woods on your left.

Before long (8) you see in front of you the first houses of Carcegna, as the track curves to the left. High on your left, you can see the remains of some ancient fortifications. With the stream now close on your right, you soon come out (9) on the Legro-Carcegna Road, where it crosses this stream. Turn left, and walk along the road towards Legro, passing (10) a couple of houses on your left.

Soon after the bend (11) in the road (which is between the signs announcing Carcegna and Legro), turn right (12) down a track marked Via San Giovanni Bosco. At the disused level-crossing (13) take care that no train is coming (there is good visibility, but trains won't stop for you!!) and continue on the other side through the first villas of Legro (14), passing a camp site (15) on your right. At (16) you come out on the road, opposite the Hotel San Caterina. Cross to the other side to descend to the roundabout (17) and cross over the main road using the zebra to the right of the roundabout. Cross back and bear left at (18) following the Arabic-style wall of the Villa Crespi (19). If you feel like a small detour, at (20) descend the cobbled steps down to the little beach at Ortello (21), and then walk along the lake front (22), (23). Follow the road from (24) back into Orta San Giulio.



**WALKS
1 & 2**

Walk 3 The Three Little Mountains and a View of Lake Maggiore

This is one of the most beautiful walks we know of in the area. On a clear day you have great views of Monte Rosa and other Alpine peaks. The view of the full length of Lago Maggiore into Switzerland is more dramatic than from the Mottarone, because you are closer to it! And (unlike the Mottarone!) you may well have the place to yourselves!

<i>Start from:</i>	Coiromonte, <i>finish at:</i> Coiromonte
<i>Time:</i>	About 2 hours walk, plus stops
<i>Altitude:</i>	Climb from 800 metres to 1080 metres, and back again.
<i>Suitability for children:</i>	Good - almost entirely off the road.
<i>Notes:</i>	Choose a good clear day (e.g. the day after it has rained): if it's hazy you won't see <i>Monte Rosa</i> , and the view of Lake Maggiore will be much less impressive.

By Car to Coiromonte

Use *Sketch Map on page 5*. From Bluewater, drive north, and across the roundabout with the tunnel road, towards Omegna. Take the first turning on your right, signposted Agrano, passing under the railway. Pass under the tunnel approach road, do a left hairpin, then a right hairpin, and drive up through the woods to Agrano. Drive through Agrano, and on to Armeno, entering the sketch map (where the map says "To Agrano and Omegna"), and enter the main square of Armeno at (6).

Turn left at (6) up a narrow street, following signs right at (7) to Coiromonte. Pass over a brook (8), the *Ondella*, and after a careful climb up the never-ending hairpin bends (9) you pass a chapel (10) and enter the quiet village of Coiromonte (11). In the village, just before the road curves to the right, there is a small parking area on your right. Park here.

Description of the Walk

Start walking back from where you came, and after 50 metres, at (11), turn up the fork (now on your right), and climb up through the orchards (12) on a long right bend.

At the highest point (13), the road bends to the right. Follow the track on your left (signposted to *Le Tre Montagnette*) to the right of a house (14).

The track curves to the right and starts to climb up through the pine woods (15) for some distance. Ignore tracks which descend to your left. Eventually (16) you come out through the yellow broom onto open ground, with pleasant views of Lake Orta and the mountains.

Follow this track for some distance.

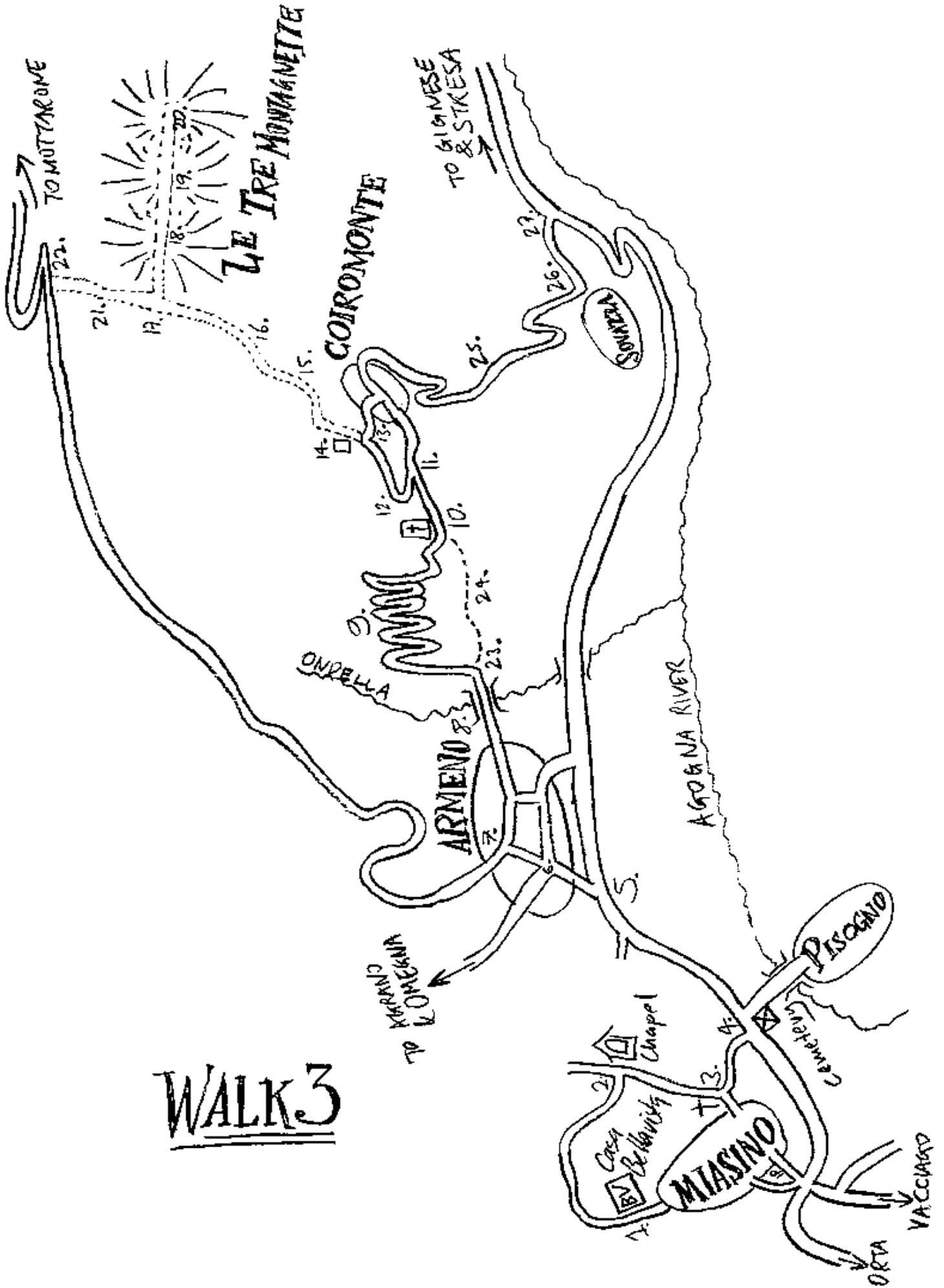
At the highest point (17) of the track, turn right up the grass and climb straight up the first mountain (18). Although the second (19) is the highest, the keenest will want to go the whole hog for the best view of *Lago Maggiore* from the third (20)!

On a clear day *Monte Rosa*, at over 4600 metres the second highest Alpine Peak, will have been visible for much of this walk. It is to the North West, and appears as the highest and most massive peak with a jagged top.

Return the way you came.

Variations and other Notes

- To make this walk shorter, park at the highest point of the road (13).
- To make this walk longer (or if you don't fancy driving up the hairpins!), park at the bridge (8) over the *Ondella* brook, and take (at least in one direction) the short cut (23), (24), (10) - a mule track (deeply rutted, full of leaves) which starts behind the house at the edge of the field in the valley.
- An extension to this walk, is to continue from point (17) on the track, over the 'saddle' (21), to come out on the road to the *Mottarone* at (22). Alternatively start from point (22) and come the other way. (NB - it's slightly further than appears on this sketch map).
- An alternative way to drive down from Coiromonte (avoiding the hairpins!), is to continue through Coiromonte and descend by the road (25) through Sovazza (26) and out on the main Orta-Stresa road along the Agogna valley at (27).
- Coiromonte itself has a large number of Swiss residents - you will see a wheel symbol painted on some of the houses indicating their fraternity.



WALK 3

Walk 4 The other shore – the giro of Monte San Giulio, Egro and Ronco

This longer, hillier and very beautiful walk starts and finishes at Pella on the other side of the lake, and makes a circuit climbing up through three small villages in the hills above Lake Orta, then down to the tiny lakeside village of Ronco nestling at the foot of a steep slope, which with its single approach road seems to belong to a bygone age. The varied perspective you get of the lake and island at different points of the walk makes for some stunning views. Much of the walk is on ancient cobbled paths that have remained surprisingly intact. Most of the roads used on the walk lead only to local villages, and carry no through traffic. You start with a steep climb (in summer, aim to get the climb done before the heat of the day!), at the top of which there's a picnic area with benches and tables.

Start and finish from: The boat landing place in Pella

Time: At least three hours plus any stops

Suitability for children: Good, but care is needed on the walk back from Ronco, as although there is very little traffic, some drivers will unfortunately race on this long straight road.

Description of the walk

Follow Sketch Map on page 7. Drive around the lake, via Omegna, and find a suitable parking place in Pella, as near as possible to *Piazza Ravedoni* (1). Alternatively park anywhere suitable in Pella, and make your way up from the junction (42) up the *Via Roma* to *Piazza Ravedoni* (1) with the church on your left.

Turn right in *Piazza Ravedoni* (1), over the romantic little cobbled hump-backed bridge (2) over the fast-flowing *Torrente Pellino*. Continue up the steep cobbled path on the other side, taking in several curves (3). There is a stretch that is concreted, and soon the track levels out. With a steep drop on your left, you pass a small *madonnina* (shrine) on your right at (4).

At (5) you come out on a quiet road. Turn up to your right, climbing the wide curves. At (6) you pass the white sign announcing that you are now in Monte San Giulio, a *frazione* (administrative quarter) of Pella. You pass (7) through a number of villas below the main part of the village.

In the village at (8) there is a water fountain on your right, with then some upright stones making a sort of fence. At (9) the asphalted road goes off to your right, but go instead straight on up the cobbled steps (10).

You are now out of Monte San Giulio, and climbing (11) the cobbled curves through the countryside. At (12), you pass another small shrine on your right (you're nearly there...), and you eventually come out at the picnic area (13) with tables and benches, a great place for a bite of lunch...

Continue along the road through Egro, passing another *madonnina* on your left, and ignoring the road from your right at (14). At (15) take the path between the church (16) and cemetery (17), ignoring the left turning immediately behind the church.

You're now (18) descending on a cobbled *mulattiere* (mule track) through a beautiful wood. You pass (18) another shrine on your right, and at (19) another cemetery on your left, after which the path alternates asphalt and cobbles. Soon (20) you are climbing again, coming out (21) in Grassona next to a church. Cross over the road at (22), taking the path opposite that is slightly to your right. Ignore (23) the *Via S. Lucia* to your right. Take the path (24) to the right of yet another shrine (ignoring *Via Scuole* on your left), then at (25) turn left to come out on the road at (26), where you turn right and climb gently up.

At the top (27), where the road starts to bear down to the left (and immediately after the sign "Grassona" for cars coming the other way), leave the road by taking the track straight in front of you, on the level, next to the telegraph poles. Soon you come to a farm of some sort, where you take the left fork [not marked on the sketch map] so as to keep to the left of the buildings.

Walk for a while through the countryside, coming out at (28) above the first houses of Colma (which means 'summit'). At (28) steps lead up from the road, and at (29) a track joins from the road. Ignore (30) the road on your right (*Via Bellavista*), taking instead at (31) the *Via per Ronco*.

The path is initially asphalted, but soon (32) you are descending some steep hairpins, with some great views. At (33) a stretch of the path is cemented, and you pass the first houses of *Ronco Superiore*. At (34) you are on cobbles again, walking around another cemetery, then passing a row (35) of houses. Passing another shrine on your left, you are now descending (36) the final set of hairpins on cobbles, crossing a small stream (37), and coming out in *Ronco Inferiore* (38) above a parking area. Keep to the right at (38), and join the *Via (Michelangelo) Buonarroti* at (39).

You now have a 3 km walk along the road (40), underneath scree slopes on your right (don't worry, those rocks have been there for a while, and there are fences underneath the most precarious bits...), with the lake a few metres below you on your left.

Quicker than you think (41) you are back in Pella. Turn right at (42) up to *Piazza Ravedoni*.

