

Below are described four walks in the area, which should be undertaken in conjunction with a map (please do not rely solely on the sketch-maps included here) 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. The numbers (1), (2), etc refer to the numbers on the sketch maps. *Please do pass any comments on these walks to William Schwitzer.*

## **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:* Piazza Motta, Orta San Giulio  
*Time:* About 45 minutes  
*Suitability for children:* Restrain toddlers when walking right on the lake front.

### **Description of the walk**

*Follow the sketch map on the next page.*

From *Piazza Motta* (main square), turn right, 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  
*Time:* A round trip of about 1 hour 40 minutes, plus stops  
*Suitability for children:* Good.

### **Description of the walk**

*Follow the sketch map on the next page.* From *Piazza Motta* turn left, so as to walk southwards with the lake on your right (repeat last part of Walk 1 in reverse). Pass the Villa Crespi (19), and continue towards the roundabout (17). Cross over the main road (the *Strada Regionale 229*) at 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* (until recently a monastery) on your right, and new nursery school on your left, and you begin to climb up through the woods (34) for some distance.

*(continued on page 3)*



*(Walk 2 - continued from page 1)*

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 narrow track at (46) that 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 on 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 walk straight through 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, 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. Descend to the roundabout (17) and cross over the main road. 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.

### 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!

*Start from:* Coiromonte, *finish at:* Coiromonte

*Time:* About 2 hours walk, plus stops

*Altitude:* Climb from 800 metres to 1080 metres, and back again.

*Suitability for children:* Good - almost entirely off the road.

*Notes:* Choose a good clear day (e.g. the day after it has rained): if it's hazy you won't see *Monte Rosa*, and the view of Lake Maggiore will be much less impressive.

#### ***By Car to Coiromonte***

Follow the sketch map on page 2. From Orta San Giulio, cross the main road at the traffic lights (17), and drive up the road opposite, through Legro. Ignore the first turning on the right (immediately after passing under the railway bridge) which leads to the station. Take the second turning on the right, and drive up one left hand hairpin through the woods to Miasino.

At the junction at the top, where five roads meet, go straight on, on the *Circonvallazione*. Now follow the sketch map on page 5. From a certain point on this road, you can see straight ahead the three rounded peaks on the skyline, just (to the right of the *Mottarone*, which is the highest peak with all the antennae. This is your destination, *Le Tre Montagnette*, ('3 Little Mountains'), marked on maps as *Monte del Falò* ("Bonfire Mountain").

At (5) turn left, so as to enter Armeno, and in the main square (6) go straight on, then right following signs (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.

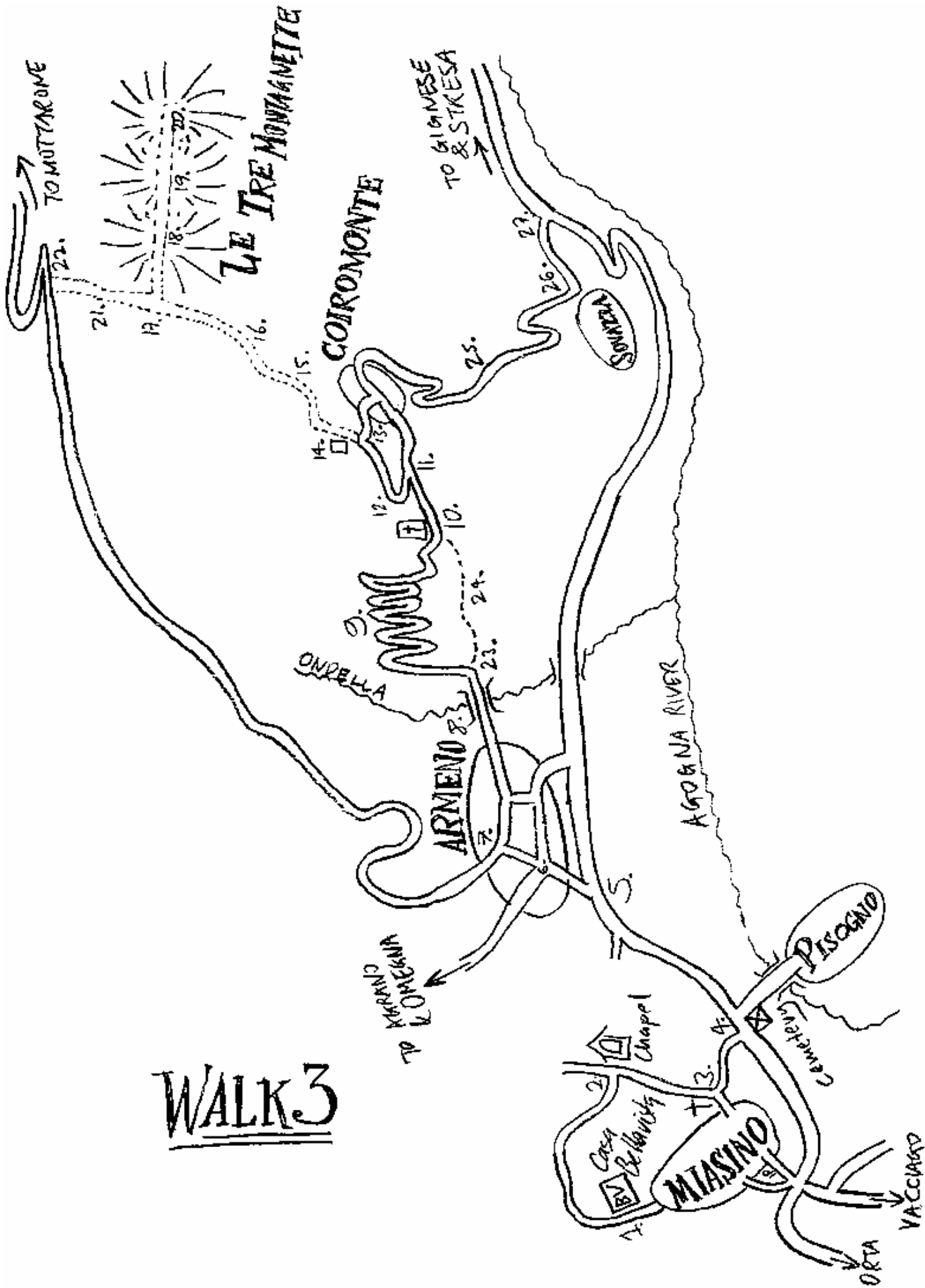
At the highest point (17) of the track, turn right up the grass and climb straight up the first mountain (18). Although the second (19) is the highest, the keenest will want to go the whole hog for the best view of *Lago Maggiore* from the third (20)!

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 access road for vehicular traffic 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 (if you do the walk in summer, aim to get the climb done before the heat of the day), at the top of which is 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 the sketch map on the next page.

Take a scheduled boat across the lake, or ask a private launch to take you across, to Pella. You might want to check the return time, or make an arrangement to pick you up later.

Walk up the narrow *Via Roma* that is in front of you, away from the lake. At (42) cross over *Via Buonarroti* and continue along the *Via Roma* into *Piazza Ravedoni* (1) with the church on your left. Turn right, and go 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 left at (42) back down to the lake front, to catch a boat home.

