

More Walks from Villa Gelsomina

Here are five more local walks for you to enjoy! Reference is also made to the first set of five walks from Villa Gelsomina, so it makes sense to have done those first!

Overview

Walk 6 is a triangle, that starts at Miasino and takes in Legro and Vacciago. Or you may prefer to start from the villa, and join the triangle at Vacciago (use **Walk 2** from the first set of walks). From the lowest point, at Legro, you can also add in the circuit of the Orta peninsular.

Walk 7 is a wonderful 3 hour circuit starting from Pella, climbing up a steep cobbled track to the sleepy little village of Monte San Giorgio on the other side of the lake. The walk then passes through three villages, Egro (after which you descend through a wonderful beech wood!), Grassona and Colma, before descending steeply to Ronco, the compact little village clinging to the lake edge. This walk affords some superb views of the island from the other side! You can either drive round the lake to the start point, or, to make an all day walk (of well over 5 hours in total!), start from the villa by combining with **Walk 2**, and take a boat from Orta San Giulio to Pella.

Walk 8 is the circuit of the Monte di Carcegna, the flat topped wooded hill beyond Miasino, taking about 2 hours 30 minutes. The lower reaches of the valley of the river Pescone, which make up the middle part of the walk, are about as undisturbed and picturesque as a steeply wooded river valley can be – there are some superb places for picnics here! Start either from Miasino, or from the villa and join up **walks 2, 6, and 8** to make a fantastic 5 hour walk covering more than half the length of Lake Orta!

Walks 9 and 10 take you through the small villages on the other side of the Agogna river, known as the *Cascine di Ameno*, or the *Frazioni oltre Agogna*. Although you don't get a lake view, the panoramic views, the sense of being 'on top of the world', the sweet-chestnut woods so typical of Lake Orta, and the sparsely inhabited villages, make for two fascinating walks.

Numbers (1), (2), etc refer to points on the sketch map for each walk.

Please do not rely solely on the sketch-maps included here, use a local map such as Kompass 1:50,000 Number 97 entitled *Omegna-Varallo Lago d'Orta* on sale in good bookshops back home, or from the newsagent in the main square of Orta San Giulio. .

Any feedback on these walks would be much appreciated (to William please), especially any errors or other points that may help others!

Walk 6 Triangle of Villages: Miasino, Legro and Vacciago

This walk starts at Miasino and takes in Legro and Vacciago, making a 115 minute triangle. Alternatively, start from Villa Gelsomina, walking to Vacciago using **Walk 2** (from the first set of walks), then join the triangle to make a walk of 2 hours 30 minutes altogether. From the lowest point, at Legro, you can of course add in the circuit of the Orta peninsular (for an additional 45 minutes).

Starting from Miasino

Park in the car park (1) at Miasino, opposite the petrol station. The car park is visible from the junction where 6 roads meet. Now walking, turn right out of the car park, and then turn left at the T-junction (2) into the little cobbled *piazza* of Miasino

Descent from Miasino to Legro

From the T-junction (2) walk into the piazza of Miasino (the bar and/or barber shop may be of interest!). Walking straight across the left side of the square, take the street opposite (to the left of the church) that winds along between a few shops.

At (3), turn left into Via A. Rosmini. 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 may just see the remains of some ancient hill-top fortifications (seen best when the trees are bare). 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 (take care with children!) 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 remember that trains cannot stop for you!) and continue on the other side through the first villas of Legro (14). You pass (15) a camp site on your right. At (16) you come out on the road, opposite the Hotel San Caterina.

Additional circuit of Orta Peninsular

Descend 25 metres or so to the roundabout (17) on the *Strada Regionale 229* (regional road 229). Cross over the SR229 and then bear left at (18) following the Arabic-style wall of the Hotel Villa Crespi (19).

At (20), take the cobbled road down to the waters edge and little beach at Ortello (21). (Good place to take a dip!). Follow the path (22) along the lake front (it starts behind the first house on your left as you stand at Ortello with your back to the lake). Soon (23) the path rejoins the road (24) and continue through the first villas of Orta San Giulio, some fully restored, others not yet. Walk through Orta San Giulio (time for that *cappuccino*?!).

From the main square, continue through *Piazza Ragazzoni* and walk past the Hotel San Rocco, as close to the lake shore as possible (26). The perspective of the lake and island changes as you round the corner (27) with the rushes growing at the edge of the lake. There are some nice places here to take a dip, or have a picnic!

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), then continue with the coach park on your left to (18). From here, return over the roundabout (17) and you are back at (16) with the Hotel Santa Caterina on your right.

Ascent from Legro to Vacciago on the Via Prisciola

Take the footpath marked "Prisciola" next to the Hotel San Caterina (16), and climb up this old *mulattiera* (mule track) (30) which has a central strip of smooth granite (be careful, it is rather slippery when wet!).

Eventually you come out in the open and 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 (*Orta-Miasino*), where you turn right. Now walking on the level, pass (33) the *Hotel Villa San Francesco* (until a few years ago a monastery) on your right, and new nursery school on your left, and begin to climb up through the woods (34) for some distance. Soon you come to the junction (35) marked by a short length of motorway crash barrier on your right.

Climbing up to Sant'Antonio di Vacciago

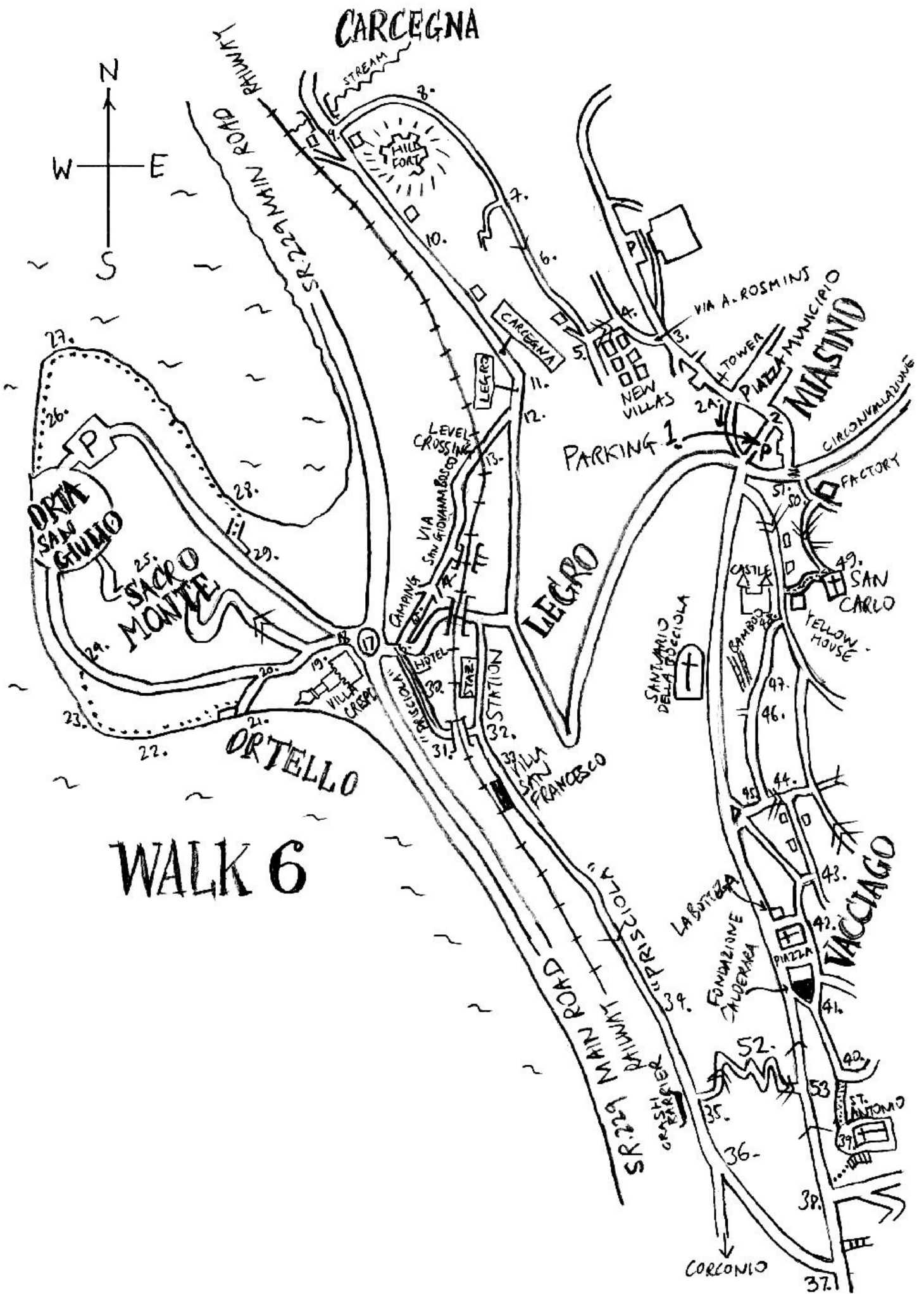
From the junction (35) with the piece of motorway crash barrier on your right, turn left. Climb up the curves up between the first few villas (52) of Vacciago, on the steepest part of the walk. At (53) you come out on the Vacciago – Gozzano road, opposite a clump of bamboo. Turn right, and descend the 50 metres 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 Sant'Antonio (39). Enjoy a well-earned rest on this terrace with its fantastic view (restrain children from climbing on the low wall) and take consolation from the fact that you are more-or-less at the highest point of the walk...!

From Vacciago to Miasino

Walk up the cobbled path from Sant'Antonio (39), above 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 (La Bottega) 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 Ristorante Aquila across the field to your right, and passing various villas on both sides. At the junction (44) with the grey ornate railings on your right (that lead to the road a few yards away), turn left, and descend to point (45) (just above the lower road). Turn right, passing above the *Grolla* apartments, and walk along the path above various villas.

Ignore the narrow track at (46) that leads 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 giant 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 where many weddings are now held.



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 walk straight into Miasino

- If you parked in Miasino, turn left at the T-junction (2) back to the car park.
- If you started from Villa Gelsomina, walk straight on at (2) into the little Piazza, and continue from the paragraph above entitled **Descent from Miasino to Legro**.

Alternative start from Villa Gelsomina to Vacciago

Follow the directions to **La Bottega** on the front page of the first set of walks, i.e. do Walk 2 to point (5) and then continue on the level, descending the bends at (25) and climbing up to Sant'Antonio (28) [NB references in this paragraph are from Walk 2]. Continue from the paragraph above entitled **From Vacciago to Miasino**.

Alternative finish from point (35) to Villa Gelsomina

From the junction (35) with the short motorway crash barrier on your right, continue straight on, on the Via Prisciola. Ignore the right fork (36) to Corconio. When you come out on the road at (37), turn left. After a few metres, find the steep steps up on your right, and at the top turn right to walk back through the old part of Lortallo back to villa, in effect doing the last part of Walk 2.

Walk 7 The Other Side of Lake Orta

This longer and very beautiful walk starts and finishes at Pella on the other side of the lake, and makes a circuit, through four small villages in the hills above above Lake Orta, then down to the tiny lakeside village of Ronco nestling at the foot of a steep slope, which, accessed by a no through 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 in the walk lead only to local villages, and carry no through traffic. You start with a steep climb (do that bit early in the morning!), at the top of which is a picnic area with benches and tables.

Description of the walk

Park wherever you can in Pella, ideally in *Piazzza Ravedoni* (1) with the prominent white church. (If you are arriving by car from Gozzano, turn left at (42) up the Via Roma).

If you have taken the boat from Orta San Giulio, you arrive at (43). You might want to check the return time, or make an arrangement to pick you up later. From the far side of the square, walk up the narrow *Via Roma* away from the lake, and at (42) cross over *Via Buonarroti* and continue along the *Via Roma* into *Piazzza Ravedoni* (1) with the church on your left.

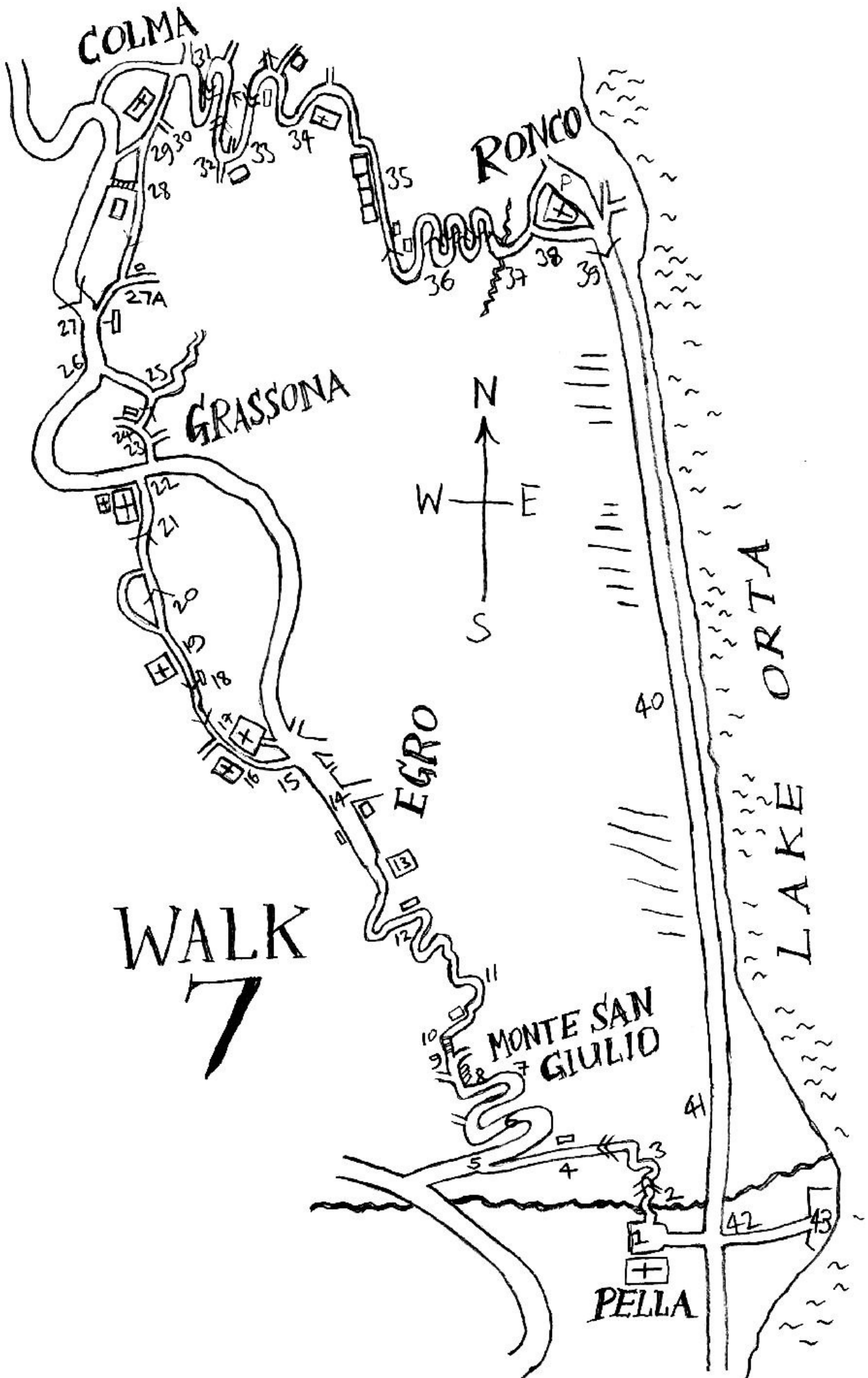
From the top of the square, take the romantic little cobbled hump-backed bridge (2) over the fast-flowing *Torrente Pellino*. Continue up the steep cobbled path on the other side, taking in several curves (3). There is a stretch that is concreted, and soon the track levels out. With a steep drop on your 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 (27A) you come to a farm of some sort, where you take the left fork, keeping 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. At (42) turn right to get back to Piazza Ravedoni (1), or turn left to walk back down to the lake front (43), to catch a boat home.

Walk 8 The Valley of the Pescone and the giro of Monte Carcegna

This lovely circuit takes you right around Monte Carcegna (the flat topped wooded hill beyond Miasino) without hardly feeling it! The middle part of it takes you along the river Pescone, which comes down from the Mottarone.

Description of the walk

Park at Miasino, in the Car Park (1) opposite the petrol station. Now on foot, turn right out of the car park, and left at the T-junction (2) into the little *piazza* (36) of Miasino.

Alternatively, to reach this piazza from Villa Gelsomina, do the following two paragraphs from **Walk 6** above:

- ‘**Alternative start from Villa Gelsomina to Vacciago**’ (which is the first part of **Walk 2**), and
- ‘**From Vacciago to Miasino**’

Leave the piazza of Miasino to the left of the church (36), and ignore the left turn (Via Rosmini) at (34). Follow the road on the level round the right bend (3) keeping to the outside of the blind corner!. When you come to the little chapel (4), turn left. Descend slightly as you follow this road (5). Now you start to see Monte Carcegna on your left!

At the bottom (6), turn right onto the ‘main’ Legro-Carcegna-Armeno road. After just 80 metres (7) turn left (next to the pylon) onto an unsurfaced road, and follow this between meadows. Ignore the hard left turning (8), and begin to gently descend.

When you come to the farm entrance (9) (Masserie Creut), bear right and continue down this track into the woods. Just after crossing the Onella brook, you come to a three way fork (10), where the main path descends to the left, and the right-hand path leads up to a house. Take the middle path, initially on the level. Pass below (to the left) of a house and bear right round the back of a hut. Cross the meadow between posts. The path is not very clear, but keep going across the meadow for just another 50 metres and you come out at the junction (12), where you turn left. Follow this path down to the bottom of the valley, through a couple of zig-zag bends.

Soon (13) the stream you are next to joins the larger Pescone. Follow this wide track along the bottom of the steep sided river valley. At (14) there is an old water mill across the river, with evidence of various diversions of the water towards the mill.

The track then crosses the river on wide bridge, with the ancient picturesque stone bridge – somewhat overgrown! – still standing next to it on the right. There is a picnic place on your right. You can see the massive granite arches of the Pettenasco railway viaduct ahead.



But just before the bridges, at (15), on your left, is a turning signposted 'Carcegna', which you should take. Climb up this path, next to the railway viaduct. Suddenly (16) you are next to the railway! Continue climbing on this path (17) which soon turns out to be a beautifully cobbled ancient *mulattiere* (mule track) with some great glimpses of the lake down to your right!

At (18) make sure you bend round hard to your left (if you come to some fallen trees at (18A) you have missed the turning). At (19), where you come out into a tiny 'meadow', turn hard right. Soon at (20) you join a level road, and get some better views of the lake, and of Pella and Ronco on the other side of the lake.

At (21) a surfaced road joins from below on your right, and you are now walking on a surfaced road amongst the first villas of Carcegna (some rather nice...). At (22) from the left hand bend there is a great view of Miasino.

Follow the somewhat windy road into Carcegna, the last bit nicely cobbled, and come out (23) on the main road opposite the large church. (If you happen to come out anywhere else in the village, just walk along the main road to the church!)

Turn right along the main road, but after less than 40 metres from the church, at (24), turn left up the asphalted road signposted to the ‘Circolo’ (25) (which is a communal meeting place). Bear round to the left, and continue next to the Circolo. When you come to the meadow on your right, follow the track diagonally across the meadow (26) between the telegraph poles, down to the three slabs (27) making a tiny footbridge over the brook at the bottom. Having crossed the brook, climb up the steps (28) the other side, next to a house (29), and come out (30) on a track in the woods.

Turn left on this track and climb up through the woods (31), turning hard left at (32) up the very steep road next to the new villas, then right at (33) above those villas. At (34) you join the road you came on, from where you walk through the village (35) and through the piazza (36). Turn right at (2), back to the car park (1).

If you started from Villa Gelsomina, now do the first part of the walk in reverse, back up to Vacciago and Lortallo.

Walks 9 & 10 – “Le Cascine di Ameno”

These walks take you through the small villages on the other side of the Agogna river. Although you don’t get a lake view, the panoramic views, the sense of being ‘on top of the world’, the spanish chestnut woods so typical of Lake Orta, and the sparsely inhabited villages, make for two fascinating walks.

	Walk 9 – Tacchino (<i>longer</i>)	Walk 10 – Cappella del Vago (<i>shorter</i>)
<i>Start and finish from:</i>	Park just before Milanetto	Park in Cassano (NB last part of the drive is on an unsurfaced road unsuitable for sports cars etc)
<i>Time:</i>	Approx 2 hours.	Less than 90 minutes
<i>Change in altitude:</i>	Park at 516m, up to 659m at Cassano, 585m at Tacchino, and down again.	659m at Cassano, up to 690m at the Cappella del Vago and down again.
<i>Suitability for young children:</i>	Some steep drops to the side, so keep a close eye on very young children.	OK, very easy
<i>Note</i>	Avoid doing these walks at weekends when there are occasional off-road motorbikes some of the roads.	

Getting to the starting points by car

Drive to Ameno (1), and turn right in the main square, signposted ‘*Frazioni Oltre Agogna*’. Bear left after the *Farmacia* (chemists). The road bears round to the left. At the T junction (2), turn right.

The road descends through the woods (3) and a pair of hairpin bends (4) and (5). Cross over the Agogna river (6) (pronounced ‘AGONYA’) and ignore the left turn to Pezzasco (7). Climb up through a pair of hairpin bends (8) and (9). For **Walk 9**, park on the patch of ground just below (and inside) the next hairpin bend (10).

For **Walk 10**, keep driving up though Milanetto (11) and Tabarino (12). Ignore the left turn to Barozzera. The road becomes unsurfaced at (13) but is still good. Follow up through the bends (31) and (32). Take the left turn at (33), signposted to Cassano. Immediately you enter the village, park in the parking place (34) on your left.

Walk 10 – Cassano and the Cappella del Vago

From where you have parked (34) in Cassano, walk on through the village, passing a pink house. (Take a little detour down the narrow passage just before the pink house, to the little square with the overgrown and abandoned church on your left, and take in the view of Ameno and the other villages you have driven up through).

Following the road on beyond the pink house, with the fence and large meadow to your left at (19), descend slightly as you enter the chestnut woods. Ignore the left turn (20) where the fence goes round the corner, and continue more-or-less on the level through the woods.

At (21) ignore the right turn with the central drain. At (22) a road joins from the left, then you pass on your right the water station supplying the entire *Comune* of Ameno with some Mussolini period lettering, before a left curve.

At (23) you reach a fork, where the left fork descends, and the right fork ascends. Take the right fork.

Walk up this path, and you eventually come out on the ‘main road’ (unsurfaced) at a tiny chapel, the *Cappella del Vago*, which is as good place as any to have a rest.

From here turn right, and the walk is very easy, following this 'main road' all the way gently down through the bends (38) until you come to the curve (33) signposted to Cassano, where you turn right. Another 50 yards and you are back at your car.



Walk 9 – Milanetto, Tabarino, Barozzera, Cassano and Tacchino

From where you have parked (10) just below the hairpin bend, walk up the surfaced road through the little villages of Milanetto (11) and Tabarino (12). It's a little steep, but just remember this is always the best way to get into your stride as quickly as possible! These villages are known as the *Cascine di Ameno* ("Farms of Ameno"), or the *Frazioni oltre Agogna* ("Villages beyond the Agogna river").

Turn left at the signpost (13) to Barozzera on the curve, and walk up the steep hill with the porch of the church of Barozzera in front of you (14). Keep walking past the church, and at the T-junction (15) turn right. Almost immediately, at (16), turn left.

With an fine but overgrown hedge on your left (17), the view ever more panoramic, climb up to Cassano (18), passing the abandoned church completely covered in 50 feet of ivy on your right, opposite the entrance to a once splendid villa built around 1700 for Bishop Pecorino, one time Cardinal and Bishop of Constantinople. From here you can see Ameno, the Church of Sant'Antonio (in Vacciago) just, and the villages on the *other* side of the lake, but Lake Orta itself is in too much of a 'pit' to be seen from this far back.

Pass up the narrow passage to the right of the pink house, and turn left on the level road which passes behind the pink house. Following this road (19) with the fence and large meadow to your left, descend slightly as you enter the chestnut woods. Ignore the left turn (20) where the fence goes round the corner. Continue through the woods.

At (21) ignore the right turn with the central drain. At (22) a road joins from the left, then you pass on your right the water station supplying Ameno, with some Mussolini period lettering, just before a left curve.

At (23) you reach a fork, where the left fork descends, and the right ascends. Take the left fork.

At (24) you cross the stream and turn hard left more or less on the level, on the other side of the steep little valley (ignoring two right turns up the valley). At (25) the path makes a slight detour for another tributary stream. Bear left at (25a). The path continues for some time (26), at times a little difficult with a steep drop to your left and fallen trees.

Eventually you come out above the all but abandoned village of Tacchino (27). Continue above the houses until the path descends right through the village, with its somewhat melancholy sense of time passed. Please be very careful, as several of the buildings are in an extremely dangerous state. Keep well away from overhanging roofs!

Head for the concrete bridge (29) below you, and crossing over, follow the road (30) that eventually brings you out where you parked your car (10).