



sloping shores, many covered with reed beds, are teeming with wildlife (herons, kingfishers, cormorants, ospreys), with some species being unique to the lake.

The shallow waters of the lake, (the average depth is only three metres, with the deepest point being just eight metres) are criss-crossed daily by little white ferry boats, chugging along taking visitors out to two of the island's three islands – Maggiore and Polvese. But don't be fooled into thinking the region is only of interest to art buffs and nature lovers. Sports freaks are well catered for too, with facilities for sailing, kite surfing, canoeing, wind surfing, motor boats and water skiing. Watch out for posters advertising 'open lake' days when you have the chance to try a variety of watersports.

EXPLORE THE SHORE

The easy terrain of the lakeside and surrounding hills are also perfect for working up a sweat, trekking or mountain biking. Pick up the brochure *Itinerari Turistici del Trasimeno*, which includes a map, from tourist offices for information about trails round the lake. If you prefer slowing the pace down a little, try a gentle trek on horseback – the perfect way to explore the numerous medieval castles and villages dotted round the lake's shore.

Fishing in the lake is also popular, which as well as being one of the lake's principal economic activities (there are small fishing fleets at San Feliciano, Sant Arcangelo and Isola Maggiore), is also avidly practised by both local and



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visiting fishermen. Trasimeno is well stocked with perch, pike, carp, tench and eels. Last spring we had a fruitful couple of days fishing in the area round Sant Arcangelo. Imagine the look on a five-year-old's face when they catch seven giant carp in the space of a few hours!

Settlements around the lake date all the way back to Etruscan times. In fact, remains of tombs can still be seen near the town of Castiglione del Lago. The area was later conquered by the Romans, whose engineers built the first lake outlets to regulate the water level and avoid flooding. All went well until 217 BC, when Hannibal and his famous elephants arrived on their way to Rome. On a warm sunny day, surveying the tranquil scene from the hills above the lake, it's difficult to imagine that the Battle of Trasimeno left 16,000 Romans dead.

Today, in Tuoro, a small village situated just above the lake, there is a visitor centre and trail which explains the background details to this historic event. You can even visit the battlefield and *ossaia* – giant pits where the bodies were >>

Above left: Fishing nets dry in the sun at Sant' Arcangelo
Above right: Kite surfers enjoy perfect conditions on the lake