CICERONI TRAVEL

LAKESIDE IDYLL:
VILLAS & GARDENS ON COMO & LUGANO

THURSDAY 12 – WEDNESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2019 (7 DAYS)

LECTURERS: TOM DUNCAN & JAMES HILL

£2970

- **Wonderful gardens in a variety of styles set amidst marvellous lakeside scenery**
- **Visits to both Lake Como and Lake Lugano in Ticino, Switzerland**
- **Villas with remarkable interiors and art collections**
- **Private visits including two lunches with the owning families.**
- **Comfortable 4* lakeside hotel at Moltrasio on south-west leg of Lake Como**

Villa Fogazzaro-Roi, Lake Lugano

OVERVIEW

Combine Alpine peaks with cool lake water, garlanded with stunning noble lakeside villas and exquisite gardens and what comes to mind – the Italian lakes?

Whilst we have organised many tours in the past to this lovely part of Italy, this is a new visit designed to introduce you to a different Lake Como. For those who have been there before, we have included several villas and gardens which we have never featured before, some of which are not open to the public. For those who do not know the area, this would be a gentle introduction combining some of the most important villas and gardens with others 'off the beaten track'.

For the first time, we shall also visit Lake Lugano in the Swiss Canton of Ticino. It is Switzerland's Italian-speaking area and wholly different from the rest of the country. Contested by Milan and Como in the medieval period, it became a possession of the Dukes of Milan until 1503 after which it became a member of the Swiss Confederation.

Long before our modern borders were established, Piedmont, the Ticino and Lombardy all shared not only a common geography via sharing the Alps, they also managed to produce generation after generation of wonderful architects, masons and sculptors who worked in both stone and stucco. 'Como' masons and decorative craftsmen were in demand throughout the medieval period. Maderno and Borromini came from this area, and then there are the itinerant *stuccodori* who plied their trade even reaching Britain and Ireland – Artari, Bagutti and Lafranchini are all names familiar to anyone interested in 'grandee' interior decoration in the eighteenth century.

On Lake Como we visit Villa Pizzo, the largest private garden on the lake; Villa del Balbianello where the setting, villa, art collection and garden are exceptional; Villa Monastero on the opposite shore is enchanting. On Lake Lugano we visit villas on both the Swiss and Italian shores to include Parco Scherrer, part villa and part folly; Villa Vela dedicated to two fine local artists; Villa Fogazzaro Roi and some time in Lugano itself.

We have three private visits of exceptional interest: a garden where Italian formality is softened by English style planting; a villa with one of the finest art collections in northern Italy and a villa where we shall see and hear a unique collection of historic keyboard instruments – and in two of these villas we shall be entertained to lunch.

We stay for six nights at the 4* Grand Hotel Imperiale in the delightful lakeside village of Moltrasio on the south-west leg of Lake Como. Located close to the water on one of the loveliest parts of the lake, all our visits are within easy reach. The hotel has an outdoor swimming pool, grounds and terraces, a spa and two restaurants. Moltrasio itself has a handful of bars and restaurants within easy walking distance and a ferry stop for boat trips up and down the lake.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Thursday 12 September – We fly from London Heathrow arriving at Milan Malpensa late-afternoon. We drive to **Moltrasio** on **Lake Como** for six nights at the **4* Grand Hotel Imperiale**. There will be a group dinner in our hotel - wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Friday 13 September – We visit **Villa Pizzo** near **Cernobbio**, This is the largest private garden on the lake, with formal gardens and much English-style planting, all laid out along the lakeside frontage - truly enchanting. We continue to **Cernobbio** for lunch (not included) after which we travel by coach south of Como close to Lake Arserio to visit a **private garden**, guided by the owner who has for nearly three decades developed a series of interconnecting 'rooms' – a marriage of Italian formality and English-style planting. We return to our hotel and there will be a group dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 3: Saturday 14 September – Travelling by private boat up and down Lake Como, we visit two stunning villas. We begin at **Villa Balbianello** near **Lenno**: the setting, the villa, its art collections and gardens – it is as close to Paradise as one could wish. We continue to Bellagio for a group lunch after which we travel to **Varenna**, to visit **Villa Monastero**. This is an eclectic lakeside villa, where the house has fine decorative arts and furniture, surrounded by lovely gardens in a quite magical location. We return by boat to Moltrasio and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Sunday 15 September – We make our way to the Italian side of Lake Lugano for the first of two days on the lake. From **Porlezza** we take a private boat to visit **Villa Fogazzaro Roi**. This magically located villa was the home of nineteenth century novelist Antonio Fogazzaro. We continue into Switzerland to **Lugano**, the most important city in Ticino. Following lunch (not included) and a little free time, we visit the church of **Santa Maria degli Angeli**, which contains wonderful frescoes by Lombard renaissance painter Bernardino Luini. We return to our hotel and a free evening.

Day 5: Monday 16 September – Today, we have a splendid day at **Villa Medici Giulini**. Built in 1643, it has had many owners including the Medici of Marignano. Fernanda Giulini and her family restored the villa in the twentieth century and it is where she houses some of her extraordinary collection of historic keyboard instruments, many of which will be played for us. We also visit the formal Italian and English-style gardens. After a group lunch and a recital, we return to our hotel and a free evening.

Day 6: Tuesday 17 September – We drive into Switzerland for the second of two days on **Lake Lugano**. We begin at **Parco Scherrer** in the picturesque village of **Morcote**. Enjoying panoramic views of the lake, it is part botanical garden and part architectural folly - testament to the original owner's travels and interests. Lunch (not included) will be spent at Morcote's lakeside. In the afternoon, we drive the short distance to **Mendrisio** to visit **Villa Vela**. This charming house museum is dedicated to local nineteenth century sculptor Vincenzo Vela and his painter son. Plaster models, casts and paintings are very well displayed. We return to our hotel and our final group dinner in the hotel's excellent lake-side restaurant.

Day 7: Wednesday 18 September – We make a leisurely departure from Moltrasio and drive to within a few kilometres of the Swiss border to visit a **private villa** whose owner is a renowned collector of Lombard Old Masters. Here we shall see some wonderful paintings and an enviable collection of decorative arts and furniture. The sixteenth century villa possesses a charming formal garden and impressive grounds set against wonderful vistas of the surrounding hills that border Italy and Switzerland. Our host will entertain us for our final lunch in the villa after which we travel by coach to Milan Malpensa and our early evening flight to London Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2970 **Without flights** £2820 **Deposit** £300

Single Supplement £475 (Double for Sole Use) with garden view, £770 (Double for Sole Use) with lake view

Hotel 6 nights with breakfast at the 4* Grand Hotel Imperiale on Lake Como
Couples/Two sharing in Executive Rooms with lake view

Flights British Airways
Outward: **BA566** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1455** arrive Milan (Malpensa) **1800**
Return: **BA567** Depart Milan (Malpensa) **1855** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1955**

Price includes 3 dinners & 3 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan and James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 dinners & 3 lunches

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