



CICERONI
T R A V E L

LAKESIDE IDYLL: VILLAS & GARDENS ON COMO & LUGANO

FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER – THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2020 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£3250

- **Wonderful gardens in a variety of styles, set amidst marvellous lakeside scenery**
- **Visits concentrated on Lakes Como & Lugano**
- **Villas with remarkable interiors & art collections**
- **Several private visits, including two lunches with the owning families**
- **Comfortable 4* lakeside hotel at Moltrasio, on the south-west leg of Lake Como**



Villa Fogazzaro-Roi, Lake Lugano

OVERVIEW

Combine Alpine peaks with cool lake water, garlanded with noble lakeside villas and exquisite gardens and what comes to mind – the Italian lakes, perhaps? Whilst we have organised many tours to this lovely part of Italy, this tour is a fresh look designed to introduce you to a different Lake Como. For those who might have been before, we have included several villas and gardens not featured previously, some of which are very much *not* open to the public. For those who do not know the area, this would be the perfect introduction, combining some of the most important villas and gardens with others ‘off the beaten track’.

We shall also visit Lake Lugano which straddles the border between the Swiss, Italian speaking canton of Ticino, and Italy. Contested by Milan and Como in the medieval period, it became a possession of the Dukes of Milan until 1503 after which much of the area 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 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. Famous ‘Roman’ architects such as Maderno and Borromini came from this area, and then there are the itinerant ‘plaster workers’, the *stuccodori* who plied their trade throughout Europe, even reaching Britain and Ireland – Artari, Bagutti and Lafranchini may be names familiar to anyone interested in ‘grandee’ interior decoration in eighteenth century Britain and Ireland?

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, while the garden at Villa Carlotta is one of the most enchanting on the lakes. On Lake Lugano we visit Villa Fogazzaro Roi the former home of the well known novelist. Como itself is a most attractive town and we shall have time to visit its Duomo and to explore the historic centre.

We have several private visits of exceptional interest, including Villa Cicogna Mozzoni with frescoed interiors and formal gardens, guided by the owner: 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: Friday 25 September – We fly from London Heathrow arriving at Milan Malpensa early 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’s main restaurant - wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Saturday 26 September – Travelling by private boat up 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 the central spur of the lake at **Bellagio** for lunch (not included) after which we travel to **Tremezzo** to visit the garden at **Villa Carlotta**. This is an eclectic lakeside villa, where the house has neoclassical decorative arts surrounded by lovely terraced gardens in a quite magical location. We return to Moltrasio by coach and the evening will be free.

Day 3: Sunday 27 September – We travel westwards to visit a village of singular delight! **Castiglione Olona** was transformed from a late medieval settlement into a fifteenth century Renaissance ‘Ideal City’ by the humanist and skilled diplomat Cardinal Branda Castiglioni. He commissioned the Umbrian painter Masolino da Panicale (who worked with Massaccio in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence) to fresco a new **Collegiate Church**. The most impressive schemes are to be found in the baptistery – a testament to Tuscan ‘Quattrocento’ painting in this most unlikely corner of Lombardy. Following a group lunch in the border hills north of Varese, we visit **Villa Cicogna Mozzoni** where we shall be hosted by the owner, Count Jacopo Mozzoni. The villa was transformed from a medieval hunting lodge into the retreat of a Renaissance scholar-aristocrat, and indeed little has changed since then. The gardens are charming and are laid out as a series of formal spaces. There are some wonderful interiors: a few survive from the Renaissance quarters of the original hunting lodge, while others are in a more formal, seventeenth century style. We return to our hotel after which the evening will be free.

Day 4: Monday 28 September – We visit **Villa Pizzo** near **Cernobbio**. This is the largest private garden on Lake Como, 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 5: Tuesday 29 September – Today we have a splendid day at **Villa Medici Giulini**, which is not open to the public. 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: Wednesday 30 September – This morning we drive to the Italian side of **Lake Lugano** to visit **Villa Fogazzaro Roi**. This magically located villa was the home of nineteenth century novelist Antonio Fogazzaro and remains very much as he would have known it. We then stop in a local town for a simple snack lunch (not included), after which we continue southwards along the lakeside to **Como**. This is the main town on the lake and is an agreeable place dominated by its **Duomo**, which we shall visit. After some free time to explore the historic centre, we return to our hotel and our final group dinner in the hotel’s lakeside restaurant.

Day 7: Thursday 1 October – We leave Moltrasio mid-morning 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 furniture and decorative arts. The sixteenth century villa possesses a charming formal garden and impressive grounds set against wonderful vistas of the surrounding hills that mark the border between Italy and Switzerland. Our host will entertain us for our final lunch in the villa, after which we travel by coach to Milan Linate and our early evening flight to London Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £3250

Without flights £3090

Deposit £375

Single Supplement £595 (Double for Sole Use) with garden view, £795 (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: **BA590** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **0920** arrive Milan (Malpensa) **1225**

Return: **BA591** Depart Milan (Linate) **1925** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **2025**

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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