

HORTICULTURAL HEAVEN GARDENS & VILLAS OF THE ITALIAN LAKES

SATURDAY 28 APRIL – FRIDAY 4 MAY 2018 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: SYLVIA RICHARDS

£2485

- Wonderful gardens in a variety of styles set amidst marvellous lakeside scenery
- Visit timed to coincide with the Azalea and Rhododendron season
- Villas with remarkable interiors and art collections
- Private visits including two lunches with the owning families
- Guaranteed Lake View Rooms overlooking Lakes Como and Maggiore



Lake Como, Villa Del Balbianello

OVERVIEW

Lakes Maggiore, Como and Orta: the magnificence of the scenery combining Alpine peaks with cool lake water, dotted with islands full of princely villas and lakeshores garlanded with exquisite gardens. These have long conspired to draw poets, artists, gardeners and perhaps, next May, you too? We shall visit all the famous horticultural sites and on two occasions we shall be entertained to lunch by the owning families.

The visit will be led by **Sylvia Richards**, who lives on Lake Maggiore and who has led many horticultural groups in the past for the Royal Horticultural Society and similar groups, ably assisted by **James Hill**, our resident Italian Tours Director.

We shall stay at two excellent hotels: in Bellagio on Lake Como we use the **4* Hotel Belvedere** on the edge of the town; in Baveno on Lake Maggiore we use the **4* Splendid Hotel**. You will have ample time to enjoy their varied facilities.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Saturday 28 April – We fly from London Heathrow mid-morning, arriving at Milan Linate in the mid afternoon. We drive to **Lake Como** for three nights at the **4* Hotel Belvedere** in **Bellagio**. There will be a group dinner in a local lakeside restaurant. Wine, water & coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Sunday 29 April – Our first formal visit of the week will be on the opposite side of the lake when we travel via private boat to **Villa Balbianello**: the setting, the villa, its art collections and gardens – it is as close to Paradise as one could wish. We return to Bellagio for lunch, not included, after which we visit the nearby gardens of the **Villa Melzi**, a marvellous Neo-classical building, alas not open for visits. This part of the lake was much favoured by Milan's 'great and good' in the early nineteenth century and the park offers shady lakeside groves, with fine specimen trees and shrubs and a remarkable private mausoleum chapel. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Monday 30 April – Our day begins when we cross the lake by passenger boat from Bellagio to **Tremezzo**. **Villa Carlotta** is a Neo-classical gem which sits on the side of the steeply rising landscape, looking down onto the lake. It contains a totally unexpected and superb collection of sculptures by Canova, together with many of his contemporaries. The gardens are laid out as a series of gently paced terraces and these should be ablaze with the Spring colour of azaleas and rhododendrons. For dendrologists, there are also many fine trees and shrubs.

We continue to the lakeside village of **Argegno** where we shall have a group lunch after which we visit **Villa Pizzo** near **Cernobbio**, formerly the summer villa of the Austrian Viceroy, who ruled from Milan.

In recent years the Counts Pizzo have transformed the formal gardens with much English-style planting, laid out along the lakeside frontage. It is truly enchanting. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Tuesday 1 May – We make our way south of Lake Como towards Milan to the village of **Briosco** for a splendid day at **Villa Medici-Giulini**. Built in 1643, the estate 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 Mrs Giulini displays some of her extraordinary collection of historic pianos, harpsichords and psalteries. We shall visit the fine formal gardens and visit the villa to view the instrument collections and a saloon painted by Zuccarelli. After lunch on site we shall sit in the estate's charming little theatre for a private recital. After a wonderful day we drive to **Baveno on Lake Maggiore** and check into the **4* Splendid Hotel** for three nights. The hotel has its own private beach and a restaurant. The evening will be free.

Day 5: Wednesday 2 May - The day begins in splendid fashion on **Lake Maggiore**, travelling by private launch to visit the **Borromeo Isles**, starting with **Isola Bella**, almost unreal in its beauty. The island is entirely dominated by the Borromeo family palace and its extraordinary formal, terraced gardens. The palace has recently undergone a magnificent restoration and extra rooms have now been opened. The gardens need little introduction as they are the most famous formal gardens in northern Italy and are *immaculately* maintained.

We then go on to **Isola dei Pescatori** where there will be a group lunch. In the afternoon we visit **Isola Madre** where the villa and gardens are delightfully informal. The style of the garden reflects a more relaxed approach with many fine trees and shrubs. The villa is not as grand as that seen earlier in the day and it was clearly designed to be a place to 'unwind' rather than as somewhere to impress and entertain. We return to our hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 6: Thursday 3 May – After a leisurely breakfast, we drive along Lake Maggiore to **Pallanza** to visit the garden of the **Villa Taranto**, considered by most authorities to be the best garden on the lake. Here, the fecund imagination of the original Scottish owner, Neil MacEachern, survives with plantings of great originality, albeit now overlaid in some places with the less imaginative 'intervention' of its present municipal curators! After our visit we return to **Stresa** where there will be some extended free time for lunch, which is not included. In the late afternoon we leave the hotel for a scenic drive to **Lake Orta** where we visit **Orta San Giulio**, a most charming lakeside town. We then have our final group dinner in an excellent local restaurant.

Day 7: Friday 4 May - We cross Lake Maggiore by ferry to the eastern shore and drive on to visit a villa of great interest, **Villa Cicogna Mozzoni**, where we shall be entertained to lunch by 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 areas utilising still water, framing hedges, accented with the gentle use of colour. There is also a more relaxed area where many fine roses roam freely over wall and hedge. The villa itself has 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 then continue to Milan Malpensa for our evening flight to London Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2485 **Without flights** £2335 **Deposit** £300

Single Supplement £395 (Double for Sole Use)

Please note that there is a £300 discount if The Other Lakes is taken with The Italian Lakes

Hotel 3 nights with breakfast at the 4* Hotel Belvedere on Lake Como with lake view & 3 nights with breakfast at the 4* Splendid Hotel, Lake Maggiore, with lake/pool view. To be assured a frontal lake view at the Splendid Hotel there is a supplement of £60 (per room)

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA562** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1200** arrive Milan (Linate) **1500**

Return: **BA567** Depart Milan (Malpensa) **1855** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1955**

Price includes 2 dinners & 4 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Sylvia Richards & Tour Manager James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 4 dinners & 2 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

