



# THE GREAT GARDENS OF ITALY TOUR

15 - 29 APRIL 2024





Giardino Torrigiani

## OVERVIEW

**AUD 9, 890**  
(PER PERSON, TWIN SHARE)

**AUD 10, 990**  
(PER PERSON, SOLO TRAVELLER)

Since 2007, we've been designing itineraries for people who are, like us, fascinated by Italy and believe that a holiday is best experienced in good company. Our small groups (maximum of 12 people) and carefully chosen itineraries ensure you will have a delightful and authentic Italian holiday.

Our Great Gardens of Italy tour is one of our most popular tours each year. It appeals to both the passionate and knowledgeable gardeners and those who merely want to add another lens to their Italian holiday. As with all our tours, we follow a "slow travel" philosophy, with no early starts or rushing from one place to another, a minimum of 3 night stays in each location and plenty of free time to explore what interests you.

We try and ground the exploration of the beautiful Italian gardens in a general appreciation of Italian culture and history. Some days we leave gardens aside and enjoy the sights of the city we are visiting, whether that be Florence, Verona or Rome. We're experts in Italy, Italian history and culture and enjoying all facets of this captivating country, and we engage local, expert guides to lead our excursions to many of the gardens.

We stay in just four bases on this tour, spending four nights in Rome, four nights in Florence, three nights in Verona and three nights in Bellagio on Lake Como. Our hotels are chosen for their proximity to the city centre and their comfort. Five lunches and five dinners are included in the tour.

We don't place any age limits on our tour participants, but you do need to have a moderate level of physical fitness. Many of the gardens we visit are enormous, so you need to be able to walk comfortably for up to 3 hours.

Helen and I would like to thank you for organising our wonderful Italian Gardens Tour. We think the tour should be renamed the 'Wine, Food and Gardens Tour', we loved everything! Your choice of a guide for our tour ... well what can we say. Guisi was absolutely lovely, our group of eight travellers realised on the first day that we were going to have a great tour.

We would recommend Italian Tours to anyone, any day.  
Geoff (2018)





Villa d'Este, Tivoli

## ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - ARRIVE IN ROME

We'll arrange a private transfer from Rome's Fiumicino airport to the hotel in the centre of Rome for anyone flying into Rome today. We meet in the evening for a welcome dinner in a typical Roman trattoria within walking distance of the hotel.

Overnight: Rome

### DAY 2 - GIARDINO DI NINFA AND CASTEL GANDOLFO

Today we will drive south of Rome to Castel Gandolfo to visit the Papal summer palace and visit the gardens of the Villa Barberini with an official guide. There will be time for lunch in Castel Gandolfo before we drive on to the Garden of Ninfa, perhaps the most romantic garden in the world. The prosperous town of Ninfa was abandoned in the 14th Century and left as a medieval Pompeii until Prince Gelasio Caetani and his English mother started to create a garden around, on and in the ruins of the old town in the 20th Century.

You'll return to Rome in the late afternoon and the evening is free time.

Overnight: Rome

### DAY 3 - TIVOLI - THE GARDENS OF AN EMPEROR AND A CARDINAL

This morning we drive north to visit two of perhaps the most famous Italian gardens, conveniently located in proximity to each other at Tivoli. Our first stop is at Villa Adriana, the ruins of Emperor Hadrian's villa, built from 117AD. The ruins were rediscovered in the 15th Century and became a source of inspiration for the great Renaissance architects & designers. Cardinal Ippolito d'Este oversaw extens-



ive excavations in the 16th Century while he was Governor of Tivoli.

It is to his palace, the Villa d'Este, that we head off to in the afternoon. The Villa d'Este is one of the most impressive high Renaissance gardens, and we will spend a delightful afternoon wandering through the gardens.

Return to Rome by late afternoon and another free evening.

Overnight: Rome

#### **DAY 4 - VATICAN GARDENS AND FREE TIME**

We start this morning with a walking tour of the Vatican Gardens, the enormous, previously private gardens of the Pope. Our guided visit to the gardens includes entry to the Sistine Chapel, as well.

You have the afternoon free to explore the Eternal City, catch up on shopping and postcards, or just put your feet up. Our hotel is close to some of Rome's key attractions, including the Pantheon, Spanish Steps, the Corso shopping district and the Trevi Fountain.

Meet in the evening for a meal together in a local trattoria.

Overnight: Rome

#### **DAY 5 - VILLA LANTE AND ON TO FLORENCE**

Today you leave your base in Rome and transfer to Florence. On the way, you will stop at the Villa Lante, created in the 16th Century by the architect Jacopo da Vignola. The gardens feature a riot of water and fountains, formal parterre and a series of ascending terraces. You'll stop for lunch and then continue on to our next base in Florence. We'll arrive in time for you to settle in and relax before the excitement of the next few days.

Overnight: Florence

#### **DAY 6 - GARDENS OF FLORENCE**

Today you'll visit one of the most famous gardens in Florence, the Boboli Gardens, behind the Palazzo Pitti. These extensive gardens were created by the Medici and are said to be perhaps the earliest example of the Italian Garden.

In the afternoon, you'll visit a less-famous, but perhaps more beautiful garden - The Giardino di Bardini. Located on a hillside that rises above Florence, offering spectacular views of the city and the famous duomo.

Overnight: Florence

#### **DAY 7 - GARDENS OF FLORENCE**

This morning, you will visit the private Torrigiani gardens, one of the largest private gardens in a European city. Once inside these huge gardens, you can easily forget you are in the middle of a crowded city and lose yourself in their quiet beauty.

The afternoon is completely free time to catch-up on some rest, wander around the historic centre or explore some of the museums of Florence (please book in advance if you'd like to secure tickets).

Overnight: Florence

#### **DAY 8 - RENAISSANCE AND OTHER SPLENDOURS OUTSIDE FLORENCE**

On our last day in Florence, we spend the morning visiting one of the Medici gardens at Villa Castello. The villa was constructed by Cosimo I de Medici in the 1500s when he was elected as the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Many experts claim that it is perhaps the nearest thing to an authentic Renaissance garden that exists today. We visit the Villa Gamberaia set in the hills above Florence in the afternoon. This garden was loved by a long list of English and American ex-pats, and in fact, Cecil Pinset spent time here studying its layout.

Overnight: Florence

#### **DAY 9 - TRADITIONAL BALSAMIC VINEGAR AND ON TO VERONA**

We're on the road again today, heading north to the enchanting small city of Verona. Our route takes us through Modena, famous as the centre of Italy's balsamic vinegar industry. We'll stop to visit a traditional balsamic vinegar producer, where we'll learn why this tightly controlled product is as expensive per litre as the best champagnes!

We arrive in Verona in time for the afternoon passeggiata, a leisurely stroll through the streets and piazze of this most romantic city with the rest of its gentlefolk.

Overnight: Verona

#### **DAY 10 - VERONA AND GIARDINO GIUSTI**

We start the morning with a walking tour with a local guide, giving you an excellent introduction to Verona and the Giardino Giusti. This garden is one of the relatively undiscovered treasures of Verona. It dates back to 1404, although the current layout, which features Roman ruins, fountains, mythological statues and an enormous





*Villa Melzi*

cypress beloved by the poet Goethe, was designed in 1570 by Agostino Giusti, a knight of the Venetian Republic. We'll enjoy the spectacular views of Verona from the belvedere and explore its lovely palazzo.

We leave the afternoon free to wander through the charming pedestrian streets of the city.

Overnight: Verona

### **DAY 11 - VILLA POJEGA**

Today you'll visit a garden created in the 18th Century for the Count Rizzardi, at Negar outside Verona. The garden is considered one of the latest examples of the 'Italian garden' and features extensive parterres, fountains and statues. It is best known for its "Green Theatre" created with cypress and box hedges.

The garden is situated amongst the Rizzardi family vineyards and offers a delightful prospect.

You'll return to Verona in the afternoon and the rest of the day is free time.

Overnight: Verona

### **DAY 12 - FRANCIACORTA WINE AND ON TO LAKE COMO**

The Franciacorta area has some of the best champagne-style wines in the world. We're lucky to have a great relationship with one of the smaller quality producers in the area, who are also sensational chefs. So our road north to Bellagio today will be punctuated by an enjoyable break at this beautiful small winery, a tour of their production facilities and memorable lunch.

We arrive at Bellagio in the mid-afternoon in time to settle down for aperitivi on the hotel's terrace overlooking the exquisite Lake Como.

Overnight: Bellagio

### **DAY 13 - LAKE MAGGIORE AND THE BORROMEAN ISLANDS**

Today we drive across to the neighbouring Lake Maggiore where we visit the most spectacular of the Borromean Islands, Isola Bella. In the sixteenth Century, Carlo III Borromeo acquired this island as the site for his Baroque palace and surrounding gardens. Its unique geography has resulted in a multi-level tiered garden with spectacular





and surprising views from different angles. Watch out for the noisy white peacocks who love to put on a flashy display.

Overnight: Bellagio

#### **DAY 14 - VILLAS AND GARDENS OF LAKE COMO**

We spend our last day crisscrossing the waters of Lake Como to see some beautiful villa gardens. We visit two of the most famous, Villa Melzi and Villa Carlotta. These two gardens are, in part, the product of the rivalry between Francesco Melzi d'Eril and his neighbour across the water Giovanni Battista Sommariva as they tried to outdo one another in an open display of horticultural one-upmanship.

Overnight: Bellagio

#### **DAY 15 - DEPARTURES**

Today we depart our base and transfer back to Milan's Malpensa airport, arriving by noon and then to Milano Centrale station, where we arrive by 1 pm. If you need to catch a flight at a different time, speak to us about arranging a private transfer. We are happy to organise for you to extend your stay in the Lakes area or offer advice for extending your holiday in Italy.

Overnight: NA





Giardino Torrigiani



Luca and Philippa



Ninfa

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## STAY

- ❖ 4 nights in Rome, in a wonderful 4-star hotel within walking distance of the Pantheon, Piazza Navona and Trevi Fountain
- ❖ 4 nights in Florence in a charming family-run hotel just 400m from the Duomo
- ❖ 3 nights in Verona, in a wonderful historic hotel just around the corner from Piazza Bra and the Arena
- ❖ 3 nights in Bellagio with stunning lake view rooms

## INCLUSIONS

- ❖ Private transfer from Rome's Fiumicino airport at the start of tour
- ❖ Group transfer to Milan Malpensa (arrive 12 noon) or Milano Centrale station (arrive 1pm) at the end of tour
- ❖ Tour leader on hand for duration of tour
- ❖ Breakfast daily and 5 lunches and 5 dinners (wine, or something softer if you would prefer, is included with all lunches and dinners)
- ❖ All land travel in Italy in private, air-conditioned mini-coach (we also utilise the ferry service on Lakes Como and Maggiore)
- ❖ Entry fees to all attractions listed in the itinerary
- ❖ Expert, local guides at many of the gardens
- ❖ All gratuities and local taxes (no surprise taxes at hotels as you check-out)

## PHYSICAL FITNESS

Our Great Gardens of Italy tour requires a moderate to high level of fitness. This tour includes more walking than our other tours, mostly due to the size of the gardens that we explore. We don't place any age limitations on the tour however, you must be able to walk unassisted over uneven circumstances and to walk at a decent pace around the gardens. If you do not meet these requirements, the tour leader may have to exclude you from certain visits for safety reasons and so as not to negatively impact the group.

## SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

We try to keep our single supplement as low as possible, passing on only the additional costs charged by hotels. The single supplement is AUD1100.

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is compulsory when travelling on one of our tours. Please contact us if you need help arranging travel insurance.

## BOOKING

If you would like to book a place on this or any other tour, or if you have some questions about the itinerary, please don't hesitate to contact Luca or Philippa.

P 02 9358 4923

E [ciao@italiantours.com.au](mailto:ciao@italiantours.com.au)

W [www.italiantours.com.au](http://www.italiantours.com.au)

