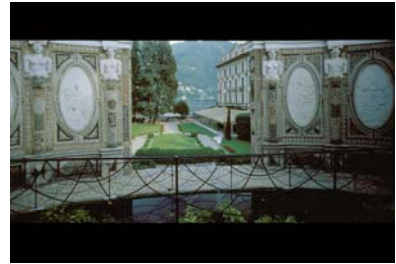


## THE GARDENS OF VILLA D'ESTE



Villa d'Este, a name that conjures up centuries of gracious living in the panoramic surroundings of beautiful Lake Como. Already a favourite holiday place for the ancient Romans, today it is known not only as one of the top resorts in the world but its gardens are drawing throngs of visitors.

In 1568 a Villa was built by Architect Pellegrino Pellegrini for the Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio. It was considered one of the finest examples of architecture and landscaping. Its fame reached far and wide and in 1615 the villa, named Garovo after the mountain stream that flows into the lake, was visited by the Sultan of Morocco with the sole purpose of seeing for himself the reported splendours. Renamed Villa d'Este when Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales and future Queen of England, bought the property in 1815.



More than 100 years ago Edith Wharton in her book "Italian Villas and their gardens" wrote: "though Queen Caroline (owner of Villa d'Este from 1815 to 1820) anglicised part of the grounds, the main lines of the Renaissance garden still exist!"



In the Villa d'Este garden, visitors enjoy a blend of two styles, the Italian and the Picturesque, or the Baroque and the Romantic.

Examples of Italian garden features are the elaborate parterres and the perspective avenue which ascends from the Nymphaeum to the sculpture of Hercules and Lica. Marked by a double chain of stone basins where water runs and flanked with tall evergreens, the "Viale dell'Ercole" is one of Villa d'Este gardens' most ancient features.

The Nymphaeum, is also called "the Mosaic" since it is decorated with myriads of polychrome pebbles.

Romantic Picturesque elements can be found for instance in the rocky hill which dominates the main building. Through narrow steps, bridges and passages, surrounded by a seemingly wild vegetation, visitors can reach the Temple of Telemachus and the small fortresses - mock fortifications - ordered in 1808 by one of the past owners of the villa to celebrate her husband's achievements with Napoleon's army in Spain.



The huge 500-year old plane tree (*Platanus occidentalis*) growing between the main building and the Queen's pavilion is undoubtedly the botanical landmark of Villa d'Este. According to experts this historical tree measures about 26,6 ft in circumference and about 114,8 ft in height. Over the centuries Queens, Empresses, Cardinals, Aristocrats, Heads of State have sat in its refreshing shade.

Are you a garden lover? Villa d'Este is the right place for you! The inebriating perfume marks the hotel opening in Spring and the closing of the hotel in Autumn. There is jasmine growing on the columns of the terrace porch, two magnificent oleafragrans trees which blossom twice a year. Apart from the topiary hedges and the bushes of bamboo, azaleas, camellias, oleanders, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, laurocerasus, lauronobilis, phitosporum, there is a variety of rose bushes which adorn the railing of the lake terrace. The trees range from chestnut, magnolia, wisteria, olive, palm, cyress, pine, ilex, privet, mediar and many many others.

Daffodils and pansies grow in the flower beds in Spring and they are replaced in Summer by begonias and impatiens. The tour ends by walking up the water staircase glanced by cypresses ad magnolias until you reach the Nymphaeum which contains a dramatic statue of the Hercules maddened with pain, hurling his companion Lichas into the water. You will probably discover many more plants which we forgot to mention. If so, let us know.





The latest addition is the Chef's Garden located on the panoramic slope leading to the fortresses.

It was created in 2004, in response to the Executive Chef Luciano Parolari's need for fresh vegetables, berries and a variety of herbs used to enhance the flavour of Luciano's dishes. On many occasions our hotel guests sign up to join Luciano on this daily excursions and attend his cooking lessons which have generated three Cookbooks.

Through the centuries Villa d'Este has undergone a complete streamlining in order to provide up-to-date service and all modern facilities without disturbing the aura of palatial authenticity. These renovations have left the façade intact and none of its old-fashioned charm has suffered from the magic changes.

Further improvements (including the mysterious construction called Ceramicus) were done from 1815 onwards when the villa was a property of Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, who renamed it "New Villa d'Este".

Villa Cima, Villa Malakoff, Villa dell'Ercole and the Reine d'Angleterre, in honour of Caroline of Brunswick, were built in the XIXth century, Villa d'Este which was the residence of the Russian Empress Maria Fedorowna in 1868, was transformed, together with the Queen's Pavilion, into a hotel in 1873. Later a lake terrace was added.

Tennis courts were built in the park and in 1966 a Sporting Club, which included a pool floating on the lake, and a Restaurant Grill were inaugurated.

In 1973 an indoor pool was added and in 1999 the Beauty Center.



The park of Villa d'Este is member of the FAI, the Italian equivalent of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and of the prestigious Association "Grandi Giardini Italiani".



From the beginning of March to the middle of November visits can be arranged for groups of a maximum of 25 persons, upon reservation.

**For further information, please contact:**

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