

ACE CULTURAL TOURS

LAKE MAGGIORE

FOR THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA & MAGNOLIA GROUP

MARCH 20-26, 2012

Garden makers have favoured Lago Maggiore, which extends from Italy into Switzerland, since the 16th century when the aristocratic Borromeo family began cultivating citrus fruit on Isola Madre in the middle of the Borromeo Gulf. Maggiore, Italy's second largest lake, radiates stored heat throughout the winter. Consequently, any frost is rare, moderate and short-lived. So the lakeside gardens are famed for their abundant floral displays and their astonishing range of temperate and sub-tropical species. In the distance, the snow-clad peaks of the Prealps provide a stunning frame to this incomparably beautiful lake.

The majority of the gardens that we will visit are less governed by axial design than the classic Italian gardens in and around Florence and Rome. We will be impressed by plants grown for their own sake, in informal groups set in stunning surroundings. Even the formal gardens are

home to rare and exotic specimens. And we will not deny ourselves an experience of the ultimate formal garden – a visit to the extraordinary monument of Baroque design: Isola Bella!

We will stay for four nights in the friendly lakeside Hotel Pallanza, near a piazza adorned by *Magnolia grandiflora* specimens. On the fifth morning we will drive up the Piedmont shore into Switzerland to stay our last two nights in the Hotel Riposo, Ascona, at the northern tip of the lake. In Switzerland, we will visit gardens around Ascona, but also enjoy a tour to Lake Lugano to visit the late Sir Peter Smithers' renowned garden.



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ITINERARY

Day one March 20

AM Fly to Milan arrive 1035 transfer to Verbania - Hotel Pallanza. Afternoon visit to Villa Taranto, created by Captain Neil McEachern from 1931 and now one of Italy's most visited gardens. It has an extensive collection of trees and shrubs and is home to a gardening school. Dinner in local restaurant.

Day two March 21

Morning: visit the garden of Andrea Carneo (President of the Italian Camellia Society), followed by lunch (not included). Afternoon: visits to the Rusconi Clerici family's Villa L'Eremitaggio, and Villa Rusconi Clerici with extensive collections of Camellia. Free evening.

Day three March 22

Morning: water taxi to Isola Madre, the lake's original garden, founded in the C16 by the Borromeo family. We will then visit the nearby Isola Dei Pescatori where there are opportunities for lunch (not included).

Afternoon: water taxi to Isola Bella, with its palace and astonishing Baroque terraced gardens. Free Evening.

Day four March 23

Morning: coach and ferry to the Lombard (east) side of the lake to visit Dr Helmut Orth's garden at Cardana Di Besozzo. Continue by coach to Stresa, where we will lunch (not included). Afternoon: Giardino Botanico Alpina which, at 800m above sea level, enjoys superb views across the lake. Dinner in local restaurant.

Day five March 24

Morning: en route with luggage for Hotel Riposo, Ascona, we will visit Isola Di Brissago, an island purchased by the Ticino Canton in 1949 and developed as a botanic garden for the canton. Lunch in Ascona. Afternoon: visits to Otto Eisenhut's Nursery with hundreds of cultivars of magnolia, camellia and rhododendron, and the nearby Parco Gamberogno, developed by Eisenhut since 1955. Free evening.

Day six March 25

Visit to the garden of the late Peter Smithers at Vico Marcote, above Lake Lugano. Visit to Rolf Stockmann's garden. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day seven March 26

Morning visit to Ticino Botanical Park
PM Fly back from Milan to arrive in London at 1900

The cost of the tour is £1,390 per person: to include accommodation in a twin room, return flights, breakfast, three dinners, all coach and ferry costs, all admissions, visits and gratuities, the services of local guides and a tour manager throughout.

Own flight reduction £1,210 per person.

Not included: Travel insurance, single room supplement of £275 per person, remaining dinners and lunches.



To make a reservation, please complete a booking form and return it together with a deposit for £200 per person to ACE Cultural Tours, Babraham, Cambridge, CB22 3AP.



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