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TRAVEL CULTURE PROPERTY FOOD WINE PEOPLE

LOVE MAGGIORE

Ten of the best reasons to explore this majestic northern lake by land and boat



Issue 173 April 2019 LAKE MAGGIORE • HIKING IN MAREMMA • CYCLING IN THE DOLOMITES • VATICAN CRICKET • NORBERT NIEDERKOFLER

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ANTHEM PUBLISHING

Hiking holidays in Maremma

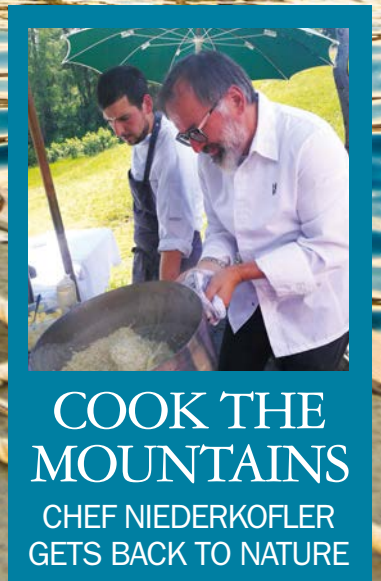
Meet the makers: Puglia's thriving artisan craft culture

HOW TO CYCLE UP A MOUNTAIN

E-biking with ease in the Dolomites

Bowled over: playing cricket at the Vatican

Olive oils and Umbrian wines on test



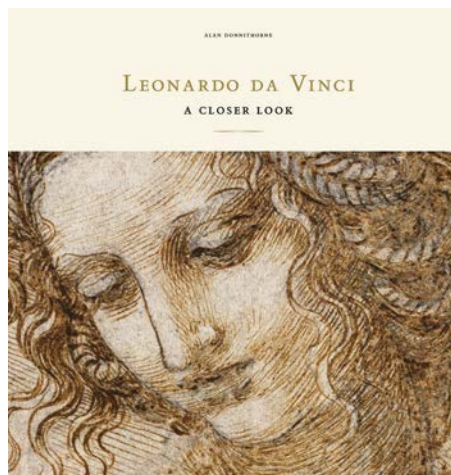
THE UK'S AWARD-WINNING MAGAZINE ABOUT ITALY

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THIS MONTH *In Print*



Leonardo da Vinci: A Closer Look

Alan Donnithorne, Royal Collection Trust
www.royalcollectionshop.co.uk,
£29.95 (hardback)

2019 is officially the 'Year of Leonardo' as it is 500 years since his death, so a new book examining the Renaissance master's creative processes is a timely and fascinating insight into his world. Shedding fresh light on Leonardo's drawing methods, tools and materials, modern methods including microscopy, ultraviolet imaging, infrared reflectography and X-ray fluorescence reveal hidden details for the first time ever.

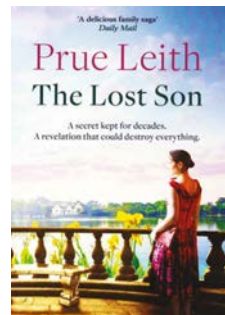
Author Alan Donnithorne is former Head of Paper Conservation at the Royal Collection Trust, and this book is a culmination of over

20 years of forensic research into da Vinci's drawings. The Royal Collection holds an extensive archive of his drawings and this book focuses on 80 of the finest. The remarkable imagery in the book reveals tangible evidence of Leonardo's working methods, much of it invisible to the naked eye, and remarkable physical traces of the artist's own hand. One of the most evocative of these is Leonardo's thumbprint on the drawing *The cardiovascular system and principal organs of a woman*, c.1509-10. At the centre of the sheet's left edge, the



Leonardo da Vinci, 'A man tricked by Gypsies', c.1493

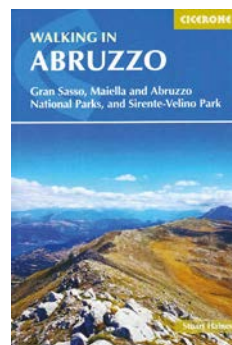
print is in the same reddish-brown ink as the ink lines of the drawing, suggesting that, after finishing the work, the left-handed Leonardo picked up the paper with ink-stained fingers. Infra-red examination also reveals that the drawing above was created with outstanding skill, as there are no sketch marks or pencil grid lines beneath the pen and ink drawing. A true insight into the visionary genius of a Renaissance artist who still has the capacity to delight and astound, half a millennium since his passing.



The Lost Son

Prue Leith, *Quercus*, £20 (hardback)
Not only is Prue Leith a chef, businesswoman, founder of Leith's Cookery School and judge on *The Great British Bake Off*; she

is also an accomplished novelist. Following on from *The Food of Love* and *The Prodigal Daughter*, *The Lost Son* is the final instalment of *The Angelotti Chronicles*, the author's trilogy of an Anglo/Italian family in the restaurant business. The family is thrown into turmoil when Laura and Giovanni Angelotti's first son, given up for adoption during the Second World War, returns to the family fold. Tom (said lost son) is a successful businessman in the city until a personal tragedy leads him to trace his birth parents. But the ensuing events couldn't be further from an episode of *Long Lost Family* as his reappearance threatens to derail fifty years of family life and uncover a deeply buried and shocking secret. Racy and pacy.



Walking in Abruzzo

Stuart Haines, *Cicerone*, £16.95 (paperback)

If you love the thrill of walking in the wild, the eastern region of Abruzzo is the place to head to this summer.

Incorporating the majestic Abruzzo, Maiella, and Gran Sasso national parks and the Sirente-Velino

My favourite place in Italy Castello di Rivoli



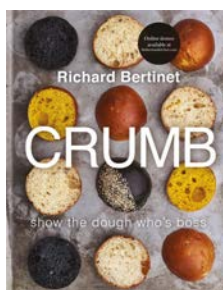
ROSALIND ORMISTON, ART HISTORIAN AND TRAVEL WRITER

“ On the perimeter of Turin, Castello di Rivoli is a 15th-century restored castle, home to an extraordinary collection of modern art, set within an early 18th-century interior, the fabulous Museo d'Arte Contemporanea. ”

www.castellodirivoli.org



regional park, this comprehensive walking guide contains 40 walks – all of which can be completed in a day, so no overnight stops required. One of the least-populated regions of Italy, with nearly 200 peaks over 2,000m high, Abruzzo is a wildlife and hiking haven waiting to be explored. The walks vary in length from 4-25km, making them accessible for all abilities and energy levels, with coloured maps and detailed, descriptive itineraries for each one, including local knowledge and historical highlights to see along the way, as well as a list of useful Italian phrases.



Crumb

Richard Bertinet,
Octopus Publishing,
£25 (hardback)

Richard Bertinet trained as a baker in his native Brittany and has over 20 years' experience as a chef and baker. He has

his own school in Bath and his Bertinet Bakery range in supermarkets and delis in the south of England. So it's fair to say he knows a thing or two about dough in all its amazing variety. With a strapline 'show the dough who's boss', there's no doubt our breadmaking aspirations are in safe hands here. With his straightforward approach to achieving the perfect crumb, Richard takes you through every step of the baking process, including fermenting, mixing and working (never 'kneading') the dough.

Make everything from classic and rustic breads to sourdough with sweet and savoury recipes like Cornbread from Manchego Cheese & Chorizo to Cinnamon Knots, as well as gluten-free breads, loaves for gut-health with different types of flour, plus recipes like Brioche Ice Cream for cooking with the finished breads.



Castello di Rivoli exterior (left) and interior (right)

THIS MONTH

Our Top 5 Events

1 The **PALIO DELLA RANA** (Frog Race) takes place in the town of Fermignano in Le Marche. Contestants representing each of the seven *contrade* (districts) dress in historical costumes and race with frogs in wheelbarrows – each trying to reach the finish line before the frog hops off. The event also features a costumed procession.

3 April, www.proloco-fermignano.it/palio-della-rana

2 The world's largest international wine event takes place in Verona this month as **VINITALY** comes to the city. This annual show for wine professionals features around 3,000 wines. It includes a competition, new launches and more – and from 5-8 April 'Vinitaly and the City' goes beyond the Verona Fiere venue to present wine and food, art, music and entertainment across the wider city.

7-10 April, www.vinitaly.com



3 Who doesn't love an artichoke? The residents of Ladispoli in Lazio are certainly big fans – they celebrate this tasty vegetable annually with the **SAGRA DI CARCIOFO** (Artichoke Festival). This year the event sees its 66th incarnation with a three-day festival that features tastings and stalls selling various specialities. There will also be performances, artworks and a carnival, bringing plenty of colour and excitement to the town.

8-10 April, www.prolocoladispoli.it

4 **MILAN DESIGN WEEK** (or the Milan Furniture Fair) is composed of various exhibitions at the city's Rho Fiera venue. It's an essential date in the diaries of thousands of design professionals, and on the weekend is accessible to the public too (ticket only). The Fair premieres the latest trends for the forthcoming year and includes a raft of events. You'll find plenty more happenings related to Design Week taking place across the city too.

9-14 April, www.salonemilano.it



5 **TUSCANY CROSSING** is an ultra-marathon across one of the world's most beautiful landscapes. Taking in 100km across the Val d'Orcia, this course is based on an ancient pilgrim route – the idea for the race originated from the international Lost Worlds 100km Trail Series, which features races of 100km across World Heritage Sites.

27 April, www.tuscanycrossing.com

Image © FotoEnnevi

Image courtesy of Salone del Mobile Milano © Alessandro Russotti

DISCOVER ITALIA!



Stresa, a vibrant town at the heart of Lake Maggiore, makes an ideal base for exploring the region

Life on the Lake

Ten reasons to love Lake Maggiore

Rosalind Ormiston travels to one of the largest Italian lakes and shares ten good reasons why you should pay this northern beauty a visit

Stunning Lake Maggiore, the second largest lake in Italy, gently straddles the regions of Piedmont and Lombardy – the west bank is in Piedmont, the east bank is in Lombardy – with the northern shores, about one fifth of its area, crossing the border into Switzerland.

The location of Lake Maggiore has given it a colourful past, with northern Italy being close to the borders of Switzerland, Austria and France. Many people have travelled around it or sailed across it, on their way to Milan, Venice, and southern Italy. It is surrounded by mountains, which are snow-capped in winter, and lush landscapes encircle the lake. Its temperate climate attracts visitors all year round, though the main season is from March to November, with winter sports attracting visitors to the mountains in the colder months.

At the heart of Lake Maggiore are the Borromean Islands, opposite the town of Stresa. These three jewels in its waters, Isola Bella, Isola dei Pescatori, and Isola Madre, are must-see destinations, rewarding visitors with a memorable experience. And when the *Isole Borromea* have satisfied the appetite of lovers of art, architecture, food and botany, a faster pace is found around the lake edges, in the boats for hire, water skiing, or a never-to-be-forgotten alpine bobsleigh ride on the summit of Mount Mottarone, above Stresa, reached by cable car from the lake shore.

Lake Maggiore is the perfect location for a variety of holidays that can involve using the water for boating, fishing and swimming, or relaxing by a pool in one of the shoreline hotels and villas. The verdant coastline creates an oasis of beauty to explore by car or bicycle. The easiest way to visit the towns on the lake is by ferry, on a hop-on-hop-off service; tickets can be bought at the ferry stops, including those for entry to attractions.

1 Visit Stresa, and perhaps make it your base

STRESA IS A TOWN THAT HAS TO BE HIGH on the list of any visit to Lake Maggiore, and is a popular choice to stay as a central location. It is just a short water-taxi ride from the spectacular Borromean Islands. The lively town has a variety of hotels to suit everyone, from cyclists on a stopover to long-stay visitors. The grand hotels along the shore front of Stresa recall the town's first heyday as the Italian riviera of the north. Today, a tranquil ambience flows through Stresa. The hotels have been renovated, refurbished, and offer not only superb accommodation but also spectacular views of the lake, some with private access pools by its shore. The centre of the town is bustling with places to shop and eat, and is as popular today as it was when it was visited by Stendhal, Dumas, Dickens, Hemingway, Charlie Chaplin and Lord Byron.

Panoramic vistas of Lake Maggiore are prevalent from the shore side hotels in Stresa



Stroll by the lake shore, or hire a boat

Both images by Rosalind Ormiston



Palazzo Borromeo on Isola Madre

2 Explore the Borromean Islands

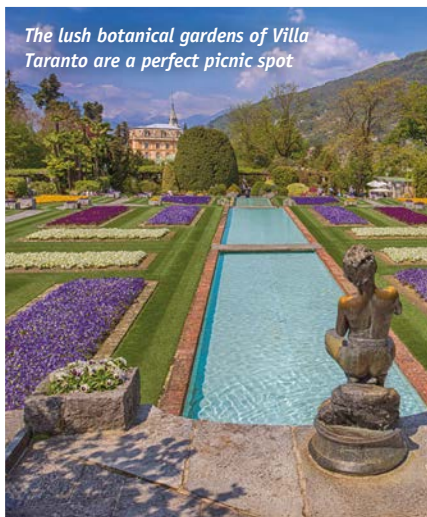
THESE FABULOUS ISLANDS are the highlight of any visit to Lake Maggiore. They are a short journey by private boat rental (for example www.cantierenauticotaroni.com), with a plentiful service of water taxis, or by ferry from Stresa (a bit longer from other locations) to Isola Bella, Isola Madre and Isola dei Pescatori. The most visited is Isola Bella with an 18th-century palace, its rooms bursting with ornate detail, exquisite statues in Italian terraced gardens, including a stunning grotto, and fabulous blooms, along with the breathtaking amphitheatre, Teatro Massimo. Isola Madre is equally breathtaking, as host to the 16th-century Palazzo Borromeo, and stunning botanical gardens populated with peacocks and Chinese pheasants roaming landscaped gardens of rare plants. Isola dei Pescatori, the 'Fishermen's Island', is the only one with permanent inhabitants. The tiny village is home to restaurants offering freshly caught fish, as well as little shops and boutique albergos. To get a spectacular bird's eye view of the islands and other parts of Maggiore there are helicopter rides that can take several routes. www.madeinuvet.com

3 Picnic in the grounds of Villa Taranto

TAKE A PICNIC TO VILLA TARANTO, Pallanza, to relax in the internationally famous botanical gardens, created over 60 years ago by Scotsman Neil McEacharn, a retired captain. On the slopes of Punta Della Castagnolla, a promontory on the lake, McEacharn bought a 40-acre plot of land that he had seen advertised in *The Times* newspaper. Many childhood holidays spent in Italy led him to make this place on the northern shore of Lake Maggiore his home. A keen botanist and landscape gardener, he set about planting the extraordinarily beautiful gardens that surround the villa today with more than 20,000 different species. On his death in 1952, McEacharn left his property to the Italian State. The garden is open to the public from March to November for us to enjoy the herbarium, Fontana dei Putti and Dahlia garden, which alone has more than 350 varieties.

www.villataranto.it

The lush botanical gardens of Villa Taranto are a perfect picnic spot



4 Ride the Lake Maggiore Express

Combine a lake cruise with a return train from Locarno, Switzerland



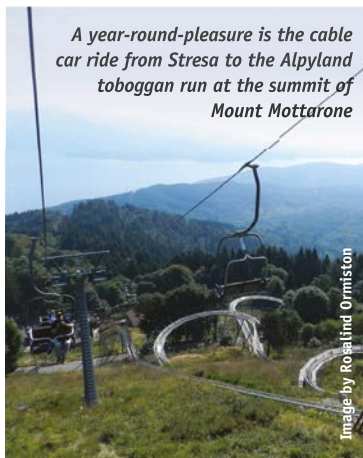
OPERATING FROM EASTER through to September, the Lake Maggiore Express is a combination of lake cruise and express rail tour, journeying from Italy to Switzerland and back, over one day, or at gentler pace over two, depending on your holiday plans. The journey is a comfortable, scenic tour. The boat leaves from any ferry point on Lake Maggiore. For

example, from the Stresa ferry landing stage the lake cruise is a journey of 61km, criss-crossing the lake, stopping at Baveno and Pallanza before crossing to Laveno. The medieval town of Cannobio is the last stop before sailing into Switzerland. Another stop at Brissago leads on to Ascona, chosen by authors and artists as a perfect place to stay, then on to Locarno to disembark. The return journey ends at Stresa's railway station. www.lagomaggioreexpress.eu

5 Take a trip on the Mottarone cable car

AT A HEIGHT OF 1,491m, Mount Mottarone, above Stresa, is the most wonderful spot for a 360-degree panoramic view of Lake Maggiore and surrounding lakes. The cable car from Stresa is a 20-minute ride up the mountain, changing cable cars halfway up. At the first stop there is the world-famous Giardini Alpini, well worth a visit for green-fingered plant enthusiasts. From the upper cable car terminus, there is a café for refreshments and a ski chairlift for the last few hundred yards to the top, or you can walk to the summit. Many mountain-bikers take their bikes in the cable cars to cycle from the top down to the lake. At Mottarone's majestic peak there is Alpyland Alpine Coaster offering an exhilarating ride on a 1.2km of track in individual bobsleighs down the mountain via a circular route back to the top. Suitable for all ages. www.alpyland.com

A year-round-pleasure is the cable car ride from Stresa to the Alpyland toboggan run at the summit of Mount Mottarone



WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL BELVEDERE

Via di Mezzo – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 32929

www.belvedere-isolapescatori.it

One of the most romantic hotels in Italy, with beautifully simple décor. Waking up to views across the lake, especially early in the morning before the day-visitors arrive, adds to its aura. The Isola Pescatori is an intimate place to stay, with regular water taxis and ferries across the lake.

LA PALMA

Corso Umberto I, 33 – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 32401

www.hlapalma.it

A stunning hotel that's positioned so perfectly that it's easy to get everywhere, whether by car, water-taxi, ferry, bicycle or rental boat. However, with the panoramic bar, spa and swimming pool you probably won't want to go anywhere.

REGINA PALACE

Corso Umberto I, 29 – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 936936

www.reginapalace.it

This majestic historic hotel with manicured lake side gardens offers fabulously ornate rooms as well as an incredible spa, pool and fitness facilities. There are two restaurants, a bar and dancing six nights a week.

HOTEL CANNERO

Piazza Umberto I, 2 – 28821 Cannero Riviera

☎ +39 0323 788046

www.hotellcannero.com

Positioned in a quiet and relaxing part of the lake, with a close ferry stop, this hotel offers elegant interiors with standard rooms and suites with breathtaking views across Maggiore. There are also apartments that allow use of the facilities, such as the pool.

HOTEL FLORA

Via Sempione Nord, 30 – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 30524

www.hotelflorastresa.com

This comfortable family-run hotel with pool has wonderful views onto the lake and is close to Cantiere Nautico Taroni (www.cantierenauticotaroni.com) for boat hire, plus water taxis for the Borromean islands, the cable car to Mottarone, and ferries to lake side destinations.

HOTEL CASA DEL NEVE

Loc. Mottarone – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 923516

www.casadellaneve.it

Open all year round, with breathtaking views on top of Mount Mottarone, this is the perfect place to stay if you are skiing, as the hotel is close to routes in winter, or walking in warmer months.

6 Get sporty with cycling, golf and sailing around the lake

FOR THOSE WANTING TO STAY FIT and enjoy the views, cycling offers several beautiful routes around the lake, with rewarding stops such as the stunning Hermitage of Santa Caterina del Sasso. This 12th-century piece of tranquility can be found teetering on the edge of a sheer cliff overlooking the Borromeo Gulf. (To hire bikes or e-bikes go to www.mottarone.it/bike-rent). For golfers, there are a number of breathtaking courses, including the Golf Des Iles Borromées, teeming with flora and fauna and offering incredible views of the Swiss Alps. When you get as far as the last hole, you'll be able to see Milan, Lake Maggiore and also the lakes of Varese, Monate and Comabbio. If sailing is what you love then you're in great company as it's a local lifestyle and every year the shores are filled with the celebration of the annual Verbania Vela Festival in June, with races, concerts and delicious food and wine.

Go by ferry, bike or car to visit the Hermitage of Santa Caterina del Sasso

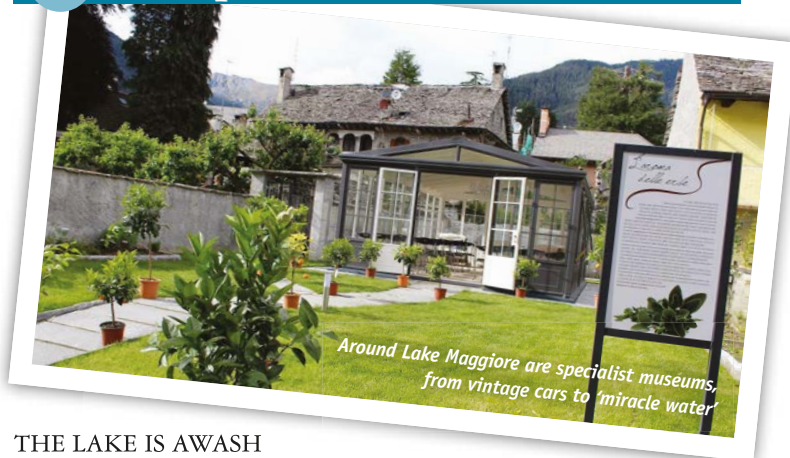
7 Explore Angera Fortress

THE ROCCA DI ANGERA, belonging to the Borromeo family, is a superbly preserved fortified medieval building built between the 12th and 14th centuries, situated on an outcrop of limestone above Lake Maggiore, at the southern end. The castle was one of a pair with Arona Castle on the opposite bank, a Lombardian defence system to deter invasion by Swiss troops and other adversaries. The fortress also controlled the shipping and flow of traffic on the lake for trade. It offers commanding views across the lake and inside hosts stunning 12th-century frescoes in the Sala della Giustizia, depicting the life of archbishop Ottone Visconti. The fortress also boasts a collection of tapestries from all over the world, and the renowned museum of toys and dolls, which was founded in the late 1980s and showcases more than 1,000 dolls dating back to the 18th century – a true collector's delight. www.isoleborromeo.it/angera.html



Angera Fortress stands on a rocky outcrop overlooking the lake

8 Visit specialist museums



Around Lake Maggiore are specialist museums, from vintage cars to 'miracle water'

THE LAKE IS AWASH with fascinating and quirky museums giving a insight to the history and culture of each area surrounding it. At the southern end is the slightly surreal but fascinating Gottard Park, a vehicle enthusiast's dream with planes, motorbikes, cars and boats (www.museogottardpark.it). There are also museums dedicated to ceramics, pink granite, hats, pipes, umbrellas and parasols, and a new museum dedicated to perfume. La Casa del Profumo (santamariamaggiore.info/) in Santa Maria Maggiore, celebrates the invention of Eau de Cologne. Learn more about the invention by local Giovanni Paolo Farina, who emigrated to Germany as a child and subsequently created what was then known as Aqua Mirabilis, or 'Miracle Water'. Its medicinal properties were certified by the University of Cologne in the early 1700s and its scent has been enjoyed by many thousands of wearers since.

9 See the UNESCO sites

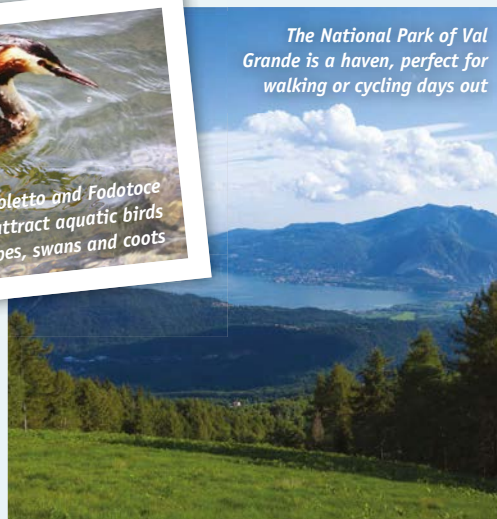
UNTOUCHED, PROTECTED TREASURES surrounding Lake Maggiore lie in wait, including the Sacro Monte of the Holy Trinity at Ghiffa, which stands at the foot of Mount Carriage. Made up of a church and three chapels, this serene piece of architecture stands in hundreds of hectares of woodland with footpaths leading to glorious walks. For the last six years, the National Park of Val Grande has become part of UNESCO's World Network of Geoparks. There are beautiful reserves to be discovered, including the Lagoni di Mercurago springs, which are wonderful to explore, whether you're walking or biking. You'll come across many plant and bird species as well as an archeological route leading to necropolises dating back to the 6th century BC. Other places to explore include the Dormoletto and Fodotoce reed beds, which extend for kilometres and act as essential water filters for fish and nesting places for birds such as grebes, swans and coots.



Sacro Monte of the Holy Trinity at Ghiffa is worth exploring



The Dormoletto and Fodotoce reed beds attract aquatic birds like grebes, swans and coots



The National Park of Val Grande is a haven, perfect for walking or cycling days out

10 Try local markets, festivals and cookery courses

FOR FASHION AND FOOD LOVERS ALIKE there's a bustling market every day of the week. The most famous is Luino, every Wednesday and established since the mid-1500s. It offers an abundance of clothing, homeware, sweets, biscuits, salami, fruit and vegetables. Other markets to note (they normally start at around 8am and finish at 1pm) are Cannobio, and Verbania-Intra, with hundreds of stalls. For those interested in *sagre* (food festivals), then mid-summer is the best time of year in Italy. Lake Maggiore hosts the Sagra del Pesce a Castelveccana in early August with an abundance of all types of fish to eat. For those wanting to roll up their sleeves, there are several cooking schools around the lake from chefs' large kitchens in villas to more homely surroundings where you can learn from skilled locals. ■



Cannobio market is a must-visit during a stay on Lake Maggiore



The busy town of Luino holds a market every Wednesday

WHERE TO EAT

HOTEL RISTORANTE BELVEDERE

Via di Mezzo – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 32292

www.belvedere-isolapescatori.it

Open mid-March until November, the hotel on Isola Pescatori also has a wonderful restaurant. Book in advance and a free launch will be sent to the Stresa quayside to collect you and take you back.

THE SKY BAR

Corso Umberto I, 33 – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 32401

On the top floor of Hotel La Palma you'll find delicious local, fresh ingredients. The views alone are worth the visit and you can stay a while with a dip in the open-air pool, or cocktails at the bar.

RISTORANTE PIEMONTESE

Via Giuseppe Mazzini, 25 – 28838 Stresa

☎ +39 0323 30235

www.ristorantepiemontese.com

Set in the heart of historic Stresa, this intimate restaurant with internal garden serves fabulous local courses, including pear and gorgonzola, simple fresh perch with butter and sage, plus dishes with black truffles, and has a spectacular wine list.

RISTORANTE MILANO

Corso Zanitello, 2 – 28922 Verbania

☎ +39 0323 556816

www.ristorantemilanolagomaggiore.com

With rich, red interior walls, gilt-framed paintings and crisp white tablecloths, this elegant restaurant sits on the edge of the lake with a pretty terrace and fabulous view and offers a vast array of Piemontese specialities such as veal with tuna sauce.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rosalind Ormiston is an art and architectural historian and arts and travel writer with books published on Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and the Dutch Golden Age.

INFORMATION

► Rosalind travelled as a guest of Tui Travel by EasyJet from Gatwick to Milan, with a transfer to Lake Maggiore. She stayed at 3-star Hotel della Torre, located on the edge of Stresa, a 15-minute walk to town and a few hundred metres from the lake shore, the ferry landing stage, and the Mottarone cable car. From here it is easy to get a water taxi to the Borromean islands. The Hotel della Torre is one of several hotels on Lake Maggiore available through Tui Travel www.tui.co.uk/holidays/all-inclusive