

Four-monthly Art magazine of the Italian Historic Houses Association

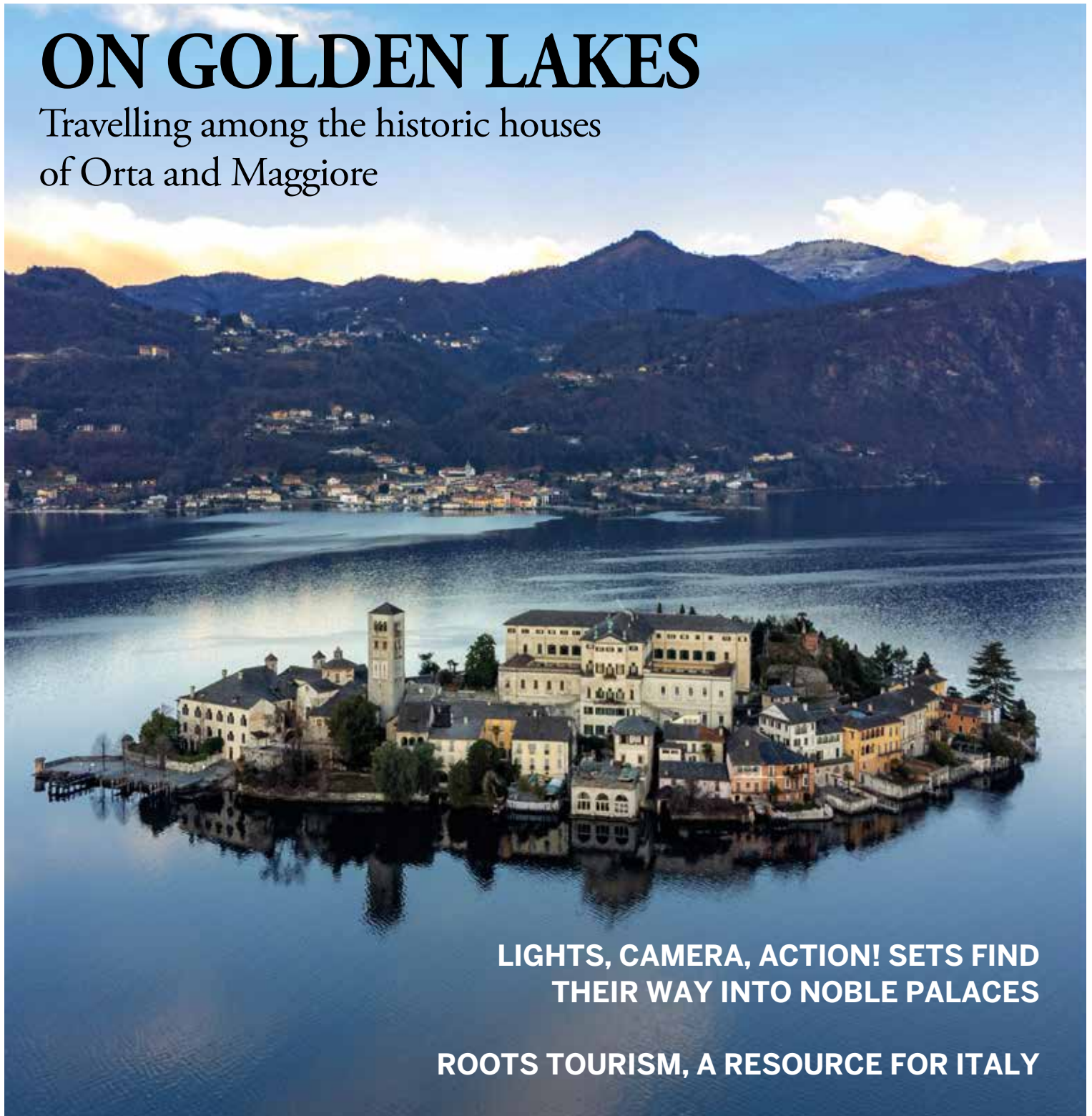
**ADSI**  
Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane

# le DIMORE STORICHE

Issue 2 - Year 2023

## ON GOLDEN LAKES

Travelling among the historic houses  
of Orta and Maggiore



**LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION! SETS FIND  
THEIR WAY INTO NOBLE PALACES**

**ROOTS TOURISM, A RESOURCE FOR ITALY**



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Aerial view of the island of San Giulio, Lake Orta.  
Distretto Turistico dei Laghi Photographic Archive  
(ph. Marco Benedetto Cerini)

**GIACOMO DI THIENE**



Castello di San Salvatore, Susegana (Treviso)  
(courtesy of Castello di San Salvatore)

*Our houses throughout the world*

**W**e are now nearing the end of the first year since the relaunch of this historic magazine. As with every anniversary, this is an opportune moment to take quick stock of the investments made. ADSI's objective was to transform the classic "in-house periodical" into an informative tool that could keep pace with the changes taking place in residences, which stimulate an ever greater attraction to the territories - regardless of whether they are open or closed to the public - and which prove increasingly equipped to offer innovative experiences. That is why we wanted the magazine to be wide-ranging, even in its graphics, and not self-referential. In line with the association's many activities on a national and regional level (think, for example, of the opening of the residences on the ADSI National Day, *Carte in Dimora*, and initiatives such as those in Sicily, which set up an impressive exhibition at Catania and Comiso airports, as we recount in these pages), we did not want to speak only to our members but rather to present our fascinating world to all visitors. As European president Pallavicini points out in this issue, encouraging tourism within historic private houses will be "a necessary step. As management costs rise, it will be difficult to maintain a historic residence without a financial return for the owner." Opening doors is therefore a wonderful opportunity not only for the owners but also for domestic and international visitors, which is why we launched the English version from the start and, as of this issue, a Spanish version as well, thanks to the collaboration of the Association of Veneti around the World, leaders of a broader project that will involve other associations of Italians abroad. The investments therefore continue to exert stronger and stronger appeal for those who visit Italy for the first time and for those who return to rediscover their origins. The latter important phenomenon is "Roots Tourism," to which this issue dedicates not only a feature article but also a new distribution agreement by conveying *Le Dimore Storiche* through the newsletters of the associations that gather our compatriots in their new countries. As you can see, there is no shortage of news, and more will follow later. Happy reading, and have a good summer, one and all.



### LUCA BONACINI

Luca writes about travel, food and wine, literature and cinema for *QN Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione*, *Il Giorno*, *James Magazine*, *Gambero Rosso*, *LivIn*, *Adv*. In 2021 he received the Friend of the Women of Wine Award and in 2022 the Gianni Fossati Award from the Italian Academy of Cuisine.



### ROSALBA GRAGLIA

A native of Turin, Rosalba writes about travel and food for periodicals including *Bell'Italia*, *Bell'Europa*, *In Viaggio*, *Corriere della Sera/Torino*, *Gambero Rosso*. Author of several travel guides on France, Portugal, Ireland and Piedmont, she loves discovering places in the footsteps of writers, artists and directors.



### CAMILLA ROCCA

Camilla collaborates with *Repubblica*, *Vanity Fair*, *Io Donna*, *Elle*, *Capital*, *Food & Travel*. Specialising in travel, hotels, food & wine, she now heads a vertical team in these four-account sectors. Her secret? Always on the lookout for enticing news to share.



### CRISTINA CIMATO

Born and raised in Milan, Cristina proudly defends her Calabrian origins. A journalist since her university days, she covers design, art, food and tourism. She loves writing, reading, travelling and drinking good wine. Her dreams include studying the cello and writing a novel.



### ANDREA GUOLO

An economics journalist, Andrea ranges from food to fashion, from design to spirits, telling the story of all that is Made in Italy. He writes for *Vogue Italia*, *Milano Finanza*, *Gambero Rosso* and many other Italian and foreign publications. He is a theatre author, essayist, ever driven by a passion for new projects.



### LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE

A pastry detective brought to life by actress Tiziana Di Masi. Wrapped in a fuchsia trench coat, wearing a magic magnifying glass for her investigative missions, La Signora in Dolce travels in search of the perfect cake. Author of the book *"La Signorina in Dolce"* (Buk Buk Editore)



### MARCO COLOGNESE

Having unrepentantly abandoned a career in financial services, Marco turned his favourite hobby into his profession. For more than thirty-five years now, he has written about food, wine and travel for various publications. At present, he collaborates primarily with *Reporter Gourmet*, *Vendemmie Adnkronos*, *Il Gusto*, *Touring Club Italiano*.



### GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO

A freelance journalist and blogger in the fields of economics, food and wine, tourism, art and culture, Giambattista collaborates with *Il Sole 24Ore*, *Il Gazzettino*, *Pambianco*, *Food & Wine Italia*, *Winenews*, *Italia a Tavola*, *Paneacquaculture*. He directs *VinoNews24* and supports the editorial staff of *ItalianWineTour*.



Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano  
(courtesy of [beniculturali.it](http://beniculturali.it))

A message from the Minister of Culture, Gennaro Sangiuliano, to ADSI—the Italian Historic Houses Association

## THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO HISTORIC HOUSES

To the magazine *Le Dimore Storiche*

Italy's historic residences are an essential part of the nation's cultural heritage, and they remain vital places that preserve their historical, architectural, artistic and monumental character, often continuing to house the heirs of their original owners from long ago. True custodians of the genius loci, the owners contribute with passion, dedication and admirable commitment to caring for and preserving the villas, gardens, castles and palaces that are an integral part of Italy's splendour and beauty. That's why it is urgent to put an end to any distinction between public and private cultural heritage, for together they represent our identity and contribute to making Italy a popular destination

for international travel. The first consequence of moving beyond the public-private distinction is to allow for the extension of the Art Bonus to historic houses. I believe this is a fair measure, in view of the many obligations imposed by the state on the owners of historic houses, most of which are earmarked to guarantee their protection. It is also necessary to work to make adequate resources available for interventions on these properties; indeed, such resources had been reduced to insufficient levels after the suspension imposed by the austerity measures to counter the sovereign debt crisis. The government is also working on this, providing for an increase in favour of historical residence-

es in the percentage of the allocation of the special fund for the protection of cultural heritage. In the same way, just as it was important to include historic homes among those benefitting from subsidies for energy efficiency improvements, it is now essential to consider their status in the name of a cultural exception that prevents the strict EU regulations on energy upgrading of homes from being applied in their case. The government is committed to this at the highest level, because the protection and enhancement of this enormous heritage is an important part what makes Italy so attractive. The nature of such a heritage cannot be distorted in the name of an abstract principle.

# Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane— Italian Historic Houses Association

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF AN ITALIAN LEGACY

The Italian Historic Houses Association (A.D.S.I.) brings together the owners of historic properties from all over Italy, for they represent an important component of our cultural heritage. Historic houses are cultural assets of significant historical and artistic interest, “subject to constraints,” and therefore protected by the State, which must favour their conservation, and are entrusted to the responsibility of the owners. It is a vast and heterogeneous heritage: houses and palaces, villas and castles, as well as gardens and agricultural estates. They are distributed throughout the nation and, in almost 80% percent of the cases, are located in the countryside or in the province. Each of these assets has a precise identity, unique in Europe, in terms of its individual history, its cultural value and close ties to the territory where it is located.

However, the serious difficulties entailed in the maintenance of these assets are also extraordinary, and the owners, in their role as custodians, must face such challenges every day. Yet these assets, if well-maintained and well-managed, can make an important contribution to the cultural, social and economic life of the communities where they are located. To achieve this result, the Italian Historic Houses Association, with its 4,500 members, is constantly

committed, together with the European Historic Houses Association (EHH), to promoting the protection and enhancement of historic homes.

The commitment of A.D.S.I. is therefore devoted to ongoing work in several directions:

- towards the Members who own the assets, to whom it provides legal, administrative, tax and technical advice and assistance regarding the management of the houses;
- towards national and local institutions, towards public and private bodies with which it collaborates in planning interventions, including those of a legislative nature, most suitable to the conservation and enhancement of listed properties in Italy, also in terms of tourism;
- towards the school and university system, to promote knowledge among young people of the opportunities offered by the protection and promotion of these resources. The historic houses, in fact, cannot be relocated, and they create precious job opportunities in the territories where they are located;
- towards public opinion and the media, to promote knowledge of such a significant part of our cultural heritage.

## ADSI

Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane



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## HISTORIC HOUSES IN SICILY HAVE “TAKEN FLIGHT”



Sicily in summer takes on an even more international dimension, thanks to travellers eager to discover the wonders of the Mediterranean's largest island. Among such marvels, historic residences undoubtedly have a prominent place, but one might say that until now they have suffered from a communication gap more recently remedied through an initiative that started in Catania and then continued in Comiso, that is, in two of the four airports within the region of Sicily. The project is the exhibition entitled “**Dimore Storiche di Sicilia da amare al volo**” (“Historic Houses of Sicily to be loved on the fly”), which was inaugurated on 4 July, 2023 at Catania-Fontanarossa's Vincenzo Bellini Airport. In a series of panels displayed first at the Catania airport and then at the Pio La Torre Airport in Comiso, passengers in transit thus have the opportunity to admire images of several historic houses that are the driving force in launching visits to these great residences as part of the exciting synergy between the public and private sectors. The event was jointly organised by ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association,

the Sicilian section of which is chaired by **Salvatrice Benintende**, and the **Airport Agency of Catania and Comiso (S.A.C.)**, chaired by **Giovanna Candura**. The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of the Honorary President of ADSI Sicily, Prof. Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, Duke of Palma, who passed away recently. His widow, Donna Nicoletta Polo Lanza Tomasi, the Duchess of Palma, is patroness of the exhibition. In addition to the images on the panels, the organisers have prepared a leaflet available to passengers in transit, containing images of the historic residences on display. This shines a spotlight on the needs of historic houses, with the aim of promoting the territory of the entire island. The texts are by Salvatrice Benintende, Elena Bonaccorsi (the Villa Paradiso Bonaccorsi panel), Giulia Candura (concluding panel “*Ali spiegate oltre l'azzurro*,” that is, “Wings spread beyond the blue”). Translations by Giulia Candura and Valeria Ippolito. The images come from the ADSI Sicily photographic archive; the graphic design is by Salvatore and Lorenzo Granata Stampa, the layout by Edizioni Lussografica.

## SUMMER EVENTS IN CALABRIA

For visitors to Calabria, summer is always full of events, and the ADSI network plays an important role in enriching the scene. One example comes from the **Casa Museo Cefaly** in Acconia di Curinga (Catanzaro). From July to October, this “museum home” will be the setting for events on art, history and culture as part of the series “Di sabato al casino Cefaly.” August events begin at 9.30 pm on Wednesday the 2nd with Plautus's “Aulularia,” staged by La Duna di Acquania and directed by Rossella Oscuro. On Saturday, 12 August, there will be a homage exhibition to artist Francesco Antonio Caporale, and on 19 August, the “*Stati generali della Musica*,” organised by Tommaso Colloca, president of the Natale Proto Cultural Association. On Thursday the 24th, August events close with “Perfumes and essences from Calabrian tradition.” Two events are scheduled for September: on Saturday the 9th, a workshop dedicated to traditional Calabrian music and dance; on the 23rd, excellence in regional manufacturing will be in the spotlight. Finally, on 1 October, there will be a discussion on the idea of setting up a network of Calabria's historical houses and gardens. And many other events will be held in Calabria. From August 5th to the 12th, **Palazzo Carratelli** in the centre of Amantea will host the “Amphitrite and other stories” exhibition (free admission) by the British painter Linda Sutton M.A. In the gardens of **Palazzo Murmura** in Vibo Valentia, the Polish pianist Marek Szelezer will perform Chopin in a concert organised by the Fondazione Antonino e Maria Murmura on Friday, 4 August, followed by cocktails. In Rossano (Cosenza), the **Giorgio Amarelli Liquorice Museum** has organised a summer programme of book presentations, starting on Thursday, 10 August with “The ghetto of Rossano” by Franco Joele, continuing on Saturday the 12th at 7 p.m. with “*Alle 21.00 preciso*” by Fausto Tarsitano, and on 18 August, “Female leadership: Does it really exist?” by Chiara Galgano and Valeria Santoro. The programme closes on Monday, the 21st with “Memory and the Future” by Andrea Zaghi.



# ITALIAN HISTORIC HOUSES

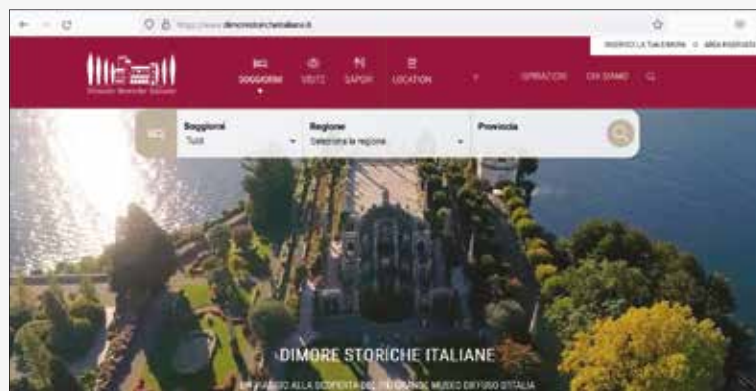
A journey to discover the most broadly spread out museum in Italy

“**Italian Historic Houses**” is a project under the auspices of ADSI Consulenze e Servizi SRL (a single-shareholder company owned by the Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane, A.D.S.I.). All residences appearing on the site are owned by members of the Italian Historic Houses Association. The project stems from the desire to create an online platform for the promotion of historic monumental Italian real estate in synergy with the cultural excellence of the country. For almost four decades, the Italian Historic Houses Association has been actively involved in the enhancement and protection of Italy’s private monumental real estate. With this goal in mind, intense nationwide activity has been launched through itineraries dedicated to the discovery of these architectural treasures, which are the natural repositories of important artistic and historical artifacts, traditions, identity and culture. It is also thanks to historic houses that the ancient professions of craftsmen remain in existence.

Through the portal, you have the opportunity to discover extraordinary places and gain access to **cultural journeys** which, thanks to experts from the Italian cultural scene,

let you relive the atmosphere and emotions of the **Grand Tour of the 1700s**. From **Venetian Palladian Villas** to the **Castles of Sicily**, from **Tuscan villages** to the **ancient fortified farm estates of Puglia**—an odyssey through time to discover the manifold identities of Italian cultural through direct experience in diverse parts of the nation. Explore not only the historic houses of the most famous Italian cities but also other hidden pearls scattered throughout the peninsula, unknown to the general public but of absolute importance and beauty. Here, where nature blends with art and traditions, the character that makes this country unique, largely undiscovered, sings through. In numerous houses it is still possible to get to know firsthand the world of Italian **oenogastronomy** which, replete with **fine wines, unspoiled landscapes and crenellated towers**, allow visitors to savour history and share in the delights of Italy.

All properties included are subject to Ministerial Constraints pursuant to Legislative Decree 42/2004 (formerly Law 1089/39) and have been evaluated and approved by the Italian Historic Houses Association.



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## DAMIANO GALLO RETURNS TO TV WITH “WHO SLEPT IN THIS BED?”

Historic houses as stars over the next two seasons. They will be filmed in Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria. And for the summer of 2024, a third Book Festival will arrive in Sicily

by **Andrea Guolo**



**Damiano Gallo** has helped introduce Italy’s historic residences and noble palaces to the general public, thanks to his small-screen productions aired on the Discovery Channel and Home & Garden (Channel 56). And in September, the multifaceted entrepreneur, publisher, author and television producer from Syracuse will return “to the palazzo” to film two more seasons of his now famous “*Chi ha dormito in questo letto?*”—“Who slept in this bed?”—in which Gallo, along with **Silvana Giacobini**, meets the “homeowners” who accompany him on a tour while telling family stories, revealing secrets of the homes, illustrating works of art contained within while

recounting historic incidents that took place there. “You don’t change a winning format,” says the star and creator of the programme, now preparing for its fourth and fifth seasons. The 12 episodes slated to be filmed this autumn in Lazio, Tuscany and Umbria will be aired in the new TV season and then next year. “Feedback from the public has been wonderfully encouraging. And as for me, I’m eager to travel all over Italy to introduce the general public to the private estates in the hands of the most important noble families, all to underline the beauty of our country,” says Gallo. Each episode of the programme will be divided into two 12-minute blocks. In the first, Gallo will

speak with the owner of the great house, discussing the building’s most interesting stories; in the second segment, Silvana Giacobini will take centre stage, creating a sort of “coffee salon” with various guests. Taking part in the programme will be many representatives from the worlds of culture and entertainment, contacts that Gallo has made over the course of his professional and public activities, such as organising events like the **Syracuse Book Festival**. Recently held for the third time (17-18 June), this year’s festival proved a tremendous success: over three-hundred people attended the literary encounters each evening in the lovely setting of Palazzo Maniace. And the first **Piazza Armerina Book Festival**, held on the eve of the Syracuse event (15-16 June) also lived up to the very highest expectations. The initiatives were sponsored by the **European Parliament** and the **Region of Sicily**, along with the participation of many private sponsors. “This result,” Gallo concludes, “fills me with even more enthusiasm to support and promote Sicily’s cultural heritage by focusing on other cities as well. We’ll probably start from **Portopalo** in the Ragusa region, where we could triple as early as next year. And in the meantime, I’m thinking of other projects, such as organising a week dedicated to Sicilian literature.”



Damiano Gallo with Silvana Giacobini

# OSCAR WORTHY RESIDENCES

Cinema and TV series are a powerful driving force for tourism. From the “White Lotus effect” that has recently rewarded Sicily to the *Rassegna Dimore del Cinema* (Festival of Residences in Films) project in Campania, castles and historical buildings are ideal locations to be used as sets. Coming soon, the remake of “The Leopard”

by CAMILLA ROCCA

Palermo, pool and garden at Villa Igia  
(courtesy of Villa Igia)



Palermo, Villa Tasca (courtesy of Villa Tasca)

Films and TV series draw travellers to historic residences. When the beauty of a place is projected to reach millions of viewers, the impact has a lasting value, motivating visitors to travel to locations where the films are set. The synergy between the world of entertainment and tourism offers opportunities for spectators and local communities alike, creating a unique link between art and reality, leading more and more people to nurture an interest in historic residences. An educative example destined to be remembered in the history of film tourism is the so-called “**White Lotus effect**”: the awards for Best Series and Best Supporting Actress (Jennifer Coolidge) at the 2023 Golden Globes have generated a strong interest among the American public in the locations where the second season of the series was filmed. We are in Taormina, at the **San Domenico Palace**, an ancient 14th-century Dominican monastery recently renovated by Four Seasons, with views that sweep from Isola Bella to the tip of smoking Etna. The expression “White Lotus effect,” originally coined by *The New York Times*, has spread throughout the world. Suites where the stars stayed are highly coveted, and it has become almost impossible to book a table at Principe Cerami, the one-Michelin-starred restaurant where the actors dined while filming. Another example is Palermo’s **Villa Igia**, part of the Rocco Forte Hotel chain, where the Igia Terrace Bar was taken by storm after the finale of the White Lotus episode “Italian Dream” was filmed there. Indeed, at Villa Igia they have created an itinerary that retraces all the locations of the series. Starting from Cefalù, the tour continues to **Villa Tasca**, the enchanting 16th-century villa where Daphne and Harper spent the night alone (the series places the location in Noto, but it actually lies between Palermo and Monreale), immersed in the 8-hectare grounds surrounded by one of the most emblematic gardens of 19th-century Sicilian Romanticism. At the end of the day, the return to Villa Igia is crowned by a tasting at the Igia Terrace Bar, where the dinner of the second episode featuring Jake and Portia was set. A cocktail—called “The White Lotus” of course, created at last year’s hotel shoot—introduces a menu that faithfully reproduces what appears on screen. And so the new jet-setting phenomenon has engulfed the whole of Sicily. Another example of the overwhelming White Lotus effect arises from the scene where the protagonists decide to take a tour of local wine cellars. Giulio Bruni, manager of the Tenuta dei Conti Tasca d’Almerita on Mount Etna, the Tascante and Capofaro on the island of Salina in the Aeolian Islands, has been the most popular person on wine tours for foreign visitors ever since. In the series, we watch him simply pour wine for the characters, but that single scene has led these wineries to greatly increase the demand for wine tourism. According to the latest figures published in *The New York Times*, some 70 percent of travellers are inspired by the location of a film or series. Screen appearances thus make for good cultural business. A further example is the **Villa del Balbianello** on Lake Como, which has been used as a location for several cult films such as “Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones” and “Casino Royale,” which further boosted the allure of Lake



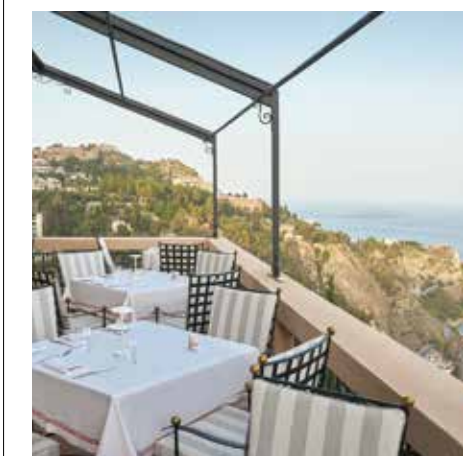
Como. A series in the making entitled “The Lions of Sicily” is slated to be filmed at **Palazzo Comitini** and **Palazzo Gangi Valguarnera**, already the set of a film that made the history of Italian filmography, Luchino Visconti’s “The Leopard,” the remake of which is in the pipeline, likely to become a cult hit. For this revisitation of the classic film that starred Claudia Cardinale and Burt Lancaster, the **Castello di Mandela** of the Del Gallo marquises of Roccajovine was chosen as the location in Lazio’s Aniene Valley. **Palazzo Pica Alfieri**, the only royal palace in Abruzzi, is a Baroque jewel in the heart of L’Aquila’s city centre. Years ago, the film “D’Annunzio e io” starring a very young Stefania Sandrelli and Robert Powell was shot here, as were “Casa Mozart” and “Cappotto di legno.” And the Campania Region has invested heavily in making residences involved in series and films known and accessible to the public—hence the creation of the Festival celebrating historic Campania houses seen in films, the **Rassegna Dimore del Cinema della Regione Campania**, thanks to the help of ADSI members Maurizio Stocchetti and Nicola Tartaglione.

The following locations have been opened to the public: **Casa Museo Mondo Capodrise** in Caserta, where “Il commissario Ricciardi” was filmed, starring Lino Guanciale; **Palazzo Grauso** in Marcianise in the province of Caserta, seen in the film “I fratelli De Filippo” directed by Sergio Rubini; **Palazzo Cocozza di Montanara** in the province of Caserta, where two novellas of the “Decameron” were filmed in 1970 under the direction of Pier Paolo Pasolini; finally, two episodes of the TV series “Gomorra” were filmed at the **Villa dei Duchi Guevara di Bovino**, in Grecale in the Caserta area.

Unforgettable scenes from Federico Fellini’s “Amarcord” were shot inside the **Grand Hotel di Rimini**. A legendary location, the Grand Hotel of Rimini was declared a national monument by the Superintendency of Fine Arts in 1994. Equally famous is the scene filmed in the Sala degli Stucchi ballroom of the **Hotel Excelsior Venezia** at the Venice Lido, where the young Robert De Niro dances with Elizabeth McGovern in “Once Upon a Time in America” directed by Sergio Leone. “Death in Venice” was filmed at the **Hotel des Bains** on the Venice Lido where Thomas Mann’s novel was set. Indeed, the

Serenissima has lent itself as the perfect location for numerous films over the years. In “Casino Royale,” James Bond visits the **Belmond Hotel Cipriani**. The city is clearly one of his favourite destinations, for he also stays there in “Death is Forever,” and in “For Your Eyes Only” he stops for coffee at the Caffè Florian. Among the Venetian hotels, it is perhaps the **Hotel Danieli** where, more than any other, Agent 007 loves to stay. The Danieli appears in three films: “Moonraker,” “From Russia with Love” and “Casino Royale.” The house cocktail is none other than the Vesper Martini, dedicated to the eponymous Bond Girl featured in 007’s first book. Travelling down to Florence, the “Room with a View” that gives the title to James Ivory’s film is a splendid room on the 4th floor of the **Hotel degli Orafi**, room no. 414, with its magnificent terrace offering a unique view over the Arno and the Ponte Vecchio.

And then there are hotels and palazzi that interpret a style, an authorial point of view, so much so that staying there feels like living inside a film. The Condé Nast Johansens Luxury Hotels Guide carried out research on the scenic settings, exceptional interiors and grand style that give guests the feeling of being on a film set. At **Villa Spalletti Trivelli** you breathe the atmosphere of “House of Gucci,” released in 2021, which tells the story of Patrizia Reggiani (Lady Gaga) and Maurizio Gucci (Adam Driver). Director Ridley Scott shot the film entirely in Italy. Some scenes were set in a villa similar to this Roman marvel: you can relive scenes from the film about the Gucci family in this lovely *palazzetto* embellished with historical neoclassical details. The villa is located in a privileged position in the heart of Rome, a short distance from the fabulous Gucci boutique on Via Condotti. At **Villa Gelsomino Seaside Luxury House** in Santa Margherita Ligure, guests experience the atmosphere of “The Talented Mr. Ripley,” a film that won five Oscars in 1999, starring Matt Damon as Tom Ripley and Jude Law as a spoilt millionaire playboy. The entire film was shot in Italy, from the Gulf of Naples to Rome, and then on to Venice and Palermo. True greatness and the beautiful things in life are the main theme of the film and the very essence of Villa Gelsomino, an Art Nouveau villa located on the Ligurian Riviera providing spectacular views over Portofino.



Top, the lush garden of Villa Guevara a Recale (courtesy of [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it))

Below, the terrace of the Ristorante Principe di Cerami inside the Four Seasons San Domenico Palace in Taormina (courtesy of *Four Seasons*) and Villa Spalletti Trivelli (courtesy [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it))

Facing page, from bottom, the garden of Palazzo Cocozza di Montanara (courtesy [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it), ph. Vincenzo Di Nuzzo) and Palazzo Mondo a Capodrise (courtesy [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it))





The sumptuous villa of the Piacenza Family Foundation (courtesy of Fondazione Piacenza)

## BIELLA'S RENAISSANCE

Artistic, cultural and entrepreneurial ferment is to be found in the city famous for its wool, making it a centre for investment and a magnet for elite travellers from around the world, thanks also to historic buildings that have become a venue for get-togethers and exciting activities

by **CRISTINA CIMATO**

Last June, bidding at Sotheby's Concierge Auction for the house of fashion designer **Nino Cerruti** began at 1.25 million Euros. In the end, a top-secret sum was paid by a wealthy American enthusiast. The change of hands is the most striking event in a new wave that has confirmed the growing appeal of the Biella region in recent years. This area draws foreigners who are eager to invest in real estate within the province. Already world-famous for its textile output, the attractive features of Biella have broadened to include culture, enhancement of the territory, outstanding wine and food, plus niche accommodation. The development of wool production during the 20th century led to the flourishing of companies that set an international standard through the excellence of their products, still demonstrated today by brands such as Zegna, Loro Piana and Piacenza 1733. Work with yarn stands as a memory of the trade, of the individual places and of all that textiles have meant for the territory. What's more, it embodies the theme of industrial archaeology and the heritage of buildings to be preserved and revived. The **DocBi - Centro Studi Biellesi** association, for example, has acquired the Fabbrica della Ruota industrial complex, formerly the Lanificio Fratelli Zignone wool mill, now transformed into a cultural centre. The **Pistoletto Foundation** (the artist and promoter of which just celebrated his 90th birthday) has its headquarters in a former wool factory, as does the **Sella Foundation**, housed in the buildings of what was once the Lanificio Maurizio Sella wool mill.

It is more than textiles, though, that set Biella apart. The rich heritage of this area is also evident in historic buildings that have been transformed over the years into places for people to come together. Standing out among them is **Palazzo La Marmorata**, a complex built over the centuries from 1350 onwards. In 1990, this precious example of a house-museum became one of the first buildings to open its doors to the community,



From top, an image from 1892 of the Maurizio Sella Wool Mill, where the Sella Foundation has its headquarters, and a room inside the institution that houses a vast documentary and iconographic archive (courtesy of the Sella Foundation)

Facing page, from above, an external view of Palazzo La Marmorata, the surrounding park and a glimpse of the Grand Gallery of paintings (courtesy of Palazzo La Marmorata)

providing a setting for guided tours, concerts and conventions as well as weddings, private parties and travel hospitality. “All this with the aim of fostering the shared participation in beauty and an ongoing collaboration between public and private territorial bodies,” explains Francesco Alberti La Marmorata, councillor of ADSI—the Italian Historic Houses Association, of which he has been a member since 1982, and promoter of **Generazioni e Luoghi** (Generations and Places), an organisation that highlights the historical and artistic treasures to be found within the Palazzo. Visitors may follow special itineraries through gorgeously frescoed halls, an 18th-century ballroom and the Grand Gallery of Paintings to admire priceless artifacts left by the generations that have lived here since the Renaissance.

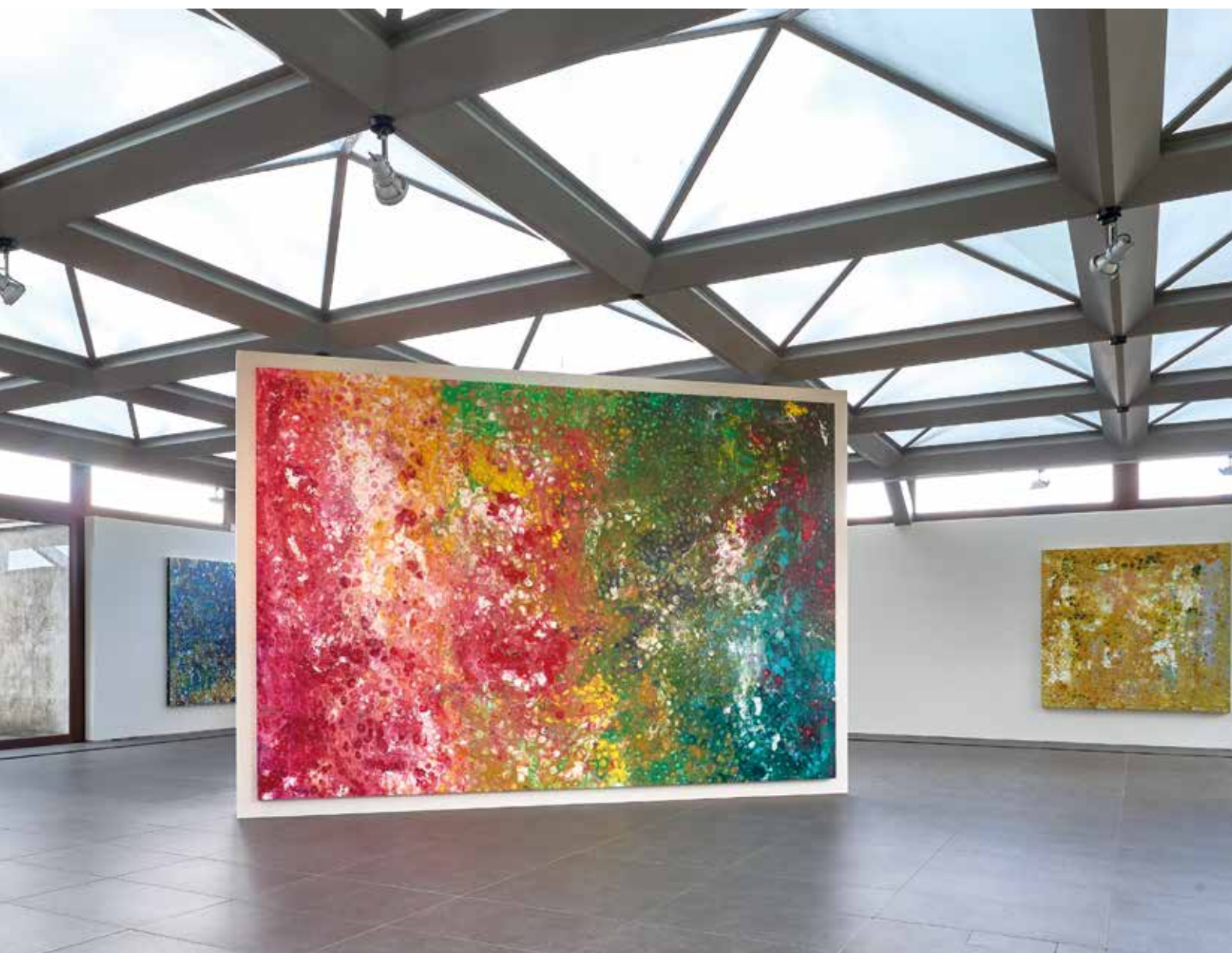
Another key player in Biella and ADSI is the **Lanificio Fratelli Piacenza** wool mill, a centuries-old symbol of the genius loci, transforming its history from the 18th century onward into an invaluable archive of the company’s history. Indeed, the tradition of industriousness in this Piedmont province finds one of its greatest expressions in the archives. It is no coincidence that the textile industries in the area have created the Biella Archives Network with the aim of giving life to a single entity to preserve their documents and collections. This broad view of exalting the territory has involved several crucial businesses in the Biella area, such as the **Ermenegildo Zegna Group**, which has its Oasis and Foundation here. As far back as the 1930s, the entrepreneur and founder of the company launched a wide-ranging project to exalt the landscape around the wool mill, founded in 1910, of which the Oasis is a direct outgrowth. “The Zegna Foun-



ation was created by the family to ensure the continuity of the philanthropic legacy received from my grandfather, Ermenegildo,” said president **Anna Zegna**. “Following his vision and the path he set, quality and dedication live in harmony with protection of the natural environment, social welfare and cultural development. Since the year 2000, we have carried on his philosophy that revolves around the ‘culture of beauty’.” Beauty as a priority has also motivated the Rivetti family, owners of **Villa Era**, to transform their property into an art centre in recent years. The ADSI-associated residence will open to the public for the first time next October on the occasion of *Carte in Dimora*, the day devoted to honouring the archives of historic houses.

The same urge to conserve and renew one’s family history in one’s birthplace led entrepreneur **Alessandro Ciccioni** to return to Castellengo after his parents bought the Castle at the foot of Monte Rosa to revive a wine-growing and hospitality business that would also involve new generations. “We breathed new life into the winemaking tradition of the place, which dates back to 1682 but which, following a 50-year hiatus, was in sore need of fresh energy. Today, through the **Centovigne Società Agricola** company, operational since 1998, we have not only brought about the production of our Nebbiolo and Erbaluce wines but have also set up two Bed & Breakfasts of charme within the village surrounding the Castello as well as the Cascina Foresto agriturismo near the Baraggia Biellese Nature Reserve. The Osteria della Villa Restaurant was also opened at the foot of





the Castle. Our aim is to encourage a continuous flow of outsiders and locals to attract niche tourism here thanks to a tailor-made approach, which is our hallmark.” Since February 2020, **Fondazione Biellezza** has contributed to the Renaissance of the Biella region. The foundation was conceived to spotlight this special corner of the world, where proud industrial history may be paired with an all-encompassing vision. “Among the greatest potentials for the area are the outdoors, and food and wine,” said **Alessandro Boggio Merlo**, in charge of the Foundation’s food and wine project. “More recently, there’s industrial tourism as well,” in keeping with the traditions of the place. “From an architectural and cultural point of view, there are working textile industries and company museums that have a widely expressive capability, such as the Sella Foundation and the Fila Museum. In addition, there are buildings that will find new purpose through tourism. With this thought in mind, the creation of a textile museum is also being discussed,” says Boggio Merlo, who sets his sights on the Valle Cervo, a mountainous territory famous for its enchanting landscapes, one of the fastest-growing travel destinations in the area.



From top, Castellengo Castle owned by the Ciccioni family, and Villa Era, owned by the Rivetti family (courtesy of Castello di Castellengo)

Facing page, from top, in the foreground “Landslide and Mud” from Roberto Coda Zabetta’s solo exhibition “And the Garden Created Man” hosted in the rooms of the Fondazione Zegna, and an image of the Oasi Zegna and its rhododendron basin (courtesy of Fondazione Zegna)





# CONTEMPORARY DISHES IN ANCIENT PALAZZI

by **MARCO COLOGNESE**

The trend: fine dining for events, anniversaries and even everyday meals is coming to historic houses with ever-greater frequency. From Calabria to Veneto, here are six outstanding examples



Great houses have seen the generational passage of noble families and illustrious personalities, as well as the people who served them. The buildings preserve the secrets of centuries, intrigues and loves, fortunes and dramas. Whether in the heart of a city or quietly isolated in the green hills, each edifice bears silent witness to fragments of the stories of those who spent time within its walls. Thus every corner of a historic palazzo could tell of such moments—and indeed it does, carefully observing evolution over the years. That is why something remarkable happens every time the ancient structures welcome new guests who come to observe their beauty and details, if only for a few hours. Many palazzi have become venues for important events, others host festive celebrations, some offer elegantly laid tables and haute cuisine. Join us now as we explore a select group of significant examples, starting in Calabria and ending in Veneto.

## PALAZZO FALCONI L'AQUILA

Palazzo Falconi in Via del Falco in L'Aquila is a place of great charm. Once again it shines as one the Abruzzo city's gems after careful reconstruction and restoration work. Now a venue for events, photographic exhibitions and shows, the building dates back to the 17th century. Located on the main floor of the Baroque-style palace, it is owned by Maria Paola Pandola and Andrea Salomone, she a television producer, he an author and director. Its three inter-connecting halls are furnished in a contemporary style beneath remarkable frescoed ceilings that reach up to ten metres in height. Pierfrancesco Vesce, a talented young Roman chef who graduated from the Accademia Italiana Chef, plies his culinary skills here, offering a refined and modern cuisine. The entire space may be booked for private dinners, and the chef will work with clients to customise the menu each time, with dishes such as sea bass rollé with scampi and confit tomatoes.



From above, Villa Giusso Astapiana (courtesy of Villa Giusso Astapiana), and one of the splendid, high-ceilinged, frescoed halls of Palazzo Falconi in L'Aquila (courtesy of Palazzo Falconi)

Opening photo, a dish prepared by chef Pierfrancesco Vesce (courtesy of Palazzo Falconi)

## VILLA GIUSSO ASTAPIANA VICO EQUENSE (NA)

It is worth following a narrow, picturesque little road along the ancient monastery wall to reach Villa Giusso Astapiana in Vico Equense, which sits in an enviable position between Pompeii, Amalfi and Sorrento, right in the heart of the Monti Lattari Park. The structure of what could be defined as a charming agriturismo is welcoming and bright, its ten rooms furnished with original period furniture. Dining is offered to overnight guests and to the general public. Be sure to take in the beauty of the loggia overlooking the Bay of Naples, and don't forget to explore the splendid majolica-clad kitchen and catch the reflections of candlelight in the hall of mirrors. The chef at Antiche Officine serves simple yet elegant cuisine of the highest quality, using local and seasonal ingredients in recipes from the Sorrento peninsula and the Amalfi coast.



## RISTORANTE ALBERGO LE CLARISSE AMANTEA (CS)

In 1986, Fausto Perri bought what went on to become a hotel with a renowned restaurant. Originally a convent of the Franciscan Clarisse order built in 1610, it remained so until Napoleon expropriated it two hundred years later. The building was then sold to Marquis De Luca di Lizzano, who turned it into his residence by hiding the church and cloister, which Perri expertly restored to their former glory. Now in fine weather you can dine on the terrace of this magnificent historic property in a unique setting with a view of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Admire the Aeolian Islands, Mount Etna and Cape Palinuro on clear days while you enjoy chef Andrea Zazzaro's dishes, such as the excellent lobster prepared in two different ways.



From top: Villa Zerbi in Taurianova (courtesy of villazerbi.com) and a dish from the restaurant under the consultation of chef Nino Rossi (courtesy of villazerbi.com)

Below: panoramic view of the Tyrrhenian Sea while dining at Ristorante Le Clarisse di Amantea on a summer's day (courtesy of Le Clarisse)

## VILLA ZERBI TAURIANOVA (RC)

Villa Zerbi in Taurianova, in a style reminiscent of Sicilian Baroque, was built in 1786. The design is attributed to Filippo Frangipane, an architect from Monteleone. The faithful restoration, dating back to 2002, is the work of Natale Zerbi. Elegant interior rooms open onto the courtyard and onto the beautiful tufa terrace that overlooks the enchanting, spacious Mediterranean garden, rich in collections of native botanical species. A venue for events and celebrations, Villa Zerbi is proud to rely on the collaboration of Nino Rossi, an outstanding Calabrian chef who came to haute cuisine after long experience with banquets and receptions and who, with his restaurant Qafiz in Santa Cristina d'Aspromonte, won a Michelin star.



## VILLA PISANI BONETTI LONIGO (VI)

In the year 1541, the Venetian Pisani family commissioned a young Andrea Palladio to design a villa that would adequately express their power on the mainland as well as in the lagoon. Villa Pisani Bonetti, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a majestic building of rare beauty. Visitors may admire works of contemporary art from the collection of the current owners, husband and wife Carlo Bonetti and Manuela Bedeschi. The adjoining Barchessa has become a refined Relais with fifteen elegant rooms. It also houses a restaurant of remarkable taste, the Osteria del Guà, named after the river that passes near the buildings. In the kitchen, the talented Marco Culeddu offers inspired and creative dishes such as rice with potatoes, mussels, thyme and lemon. The lovely dining room is the domain of the smiling and affable restaurant manager Luca Pinter.

Rice, potatoes and mussels with thyme and lemon by Marco Culeddu of the Osteria del Guà located in the Barchessa of Villa Pisani Bonetti (courtesy of Villa Pisani Bonetti)

Below, the mansion that houses the restaurant (courtesy Villa Pisani Bonetti), and a view from above of Castello di San Salvatore in Susegana (Treviso) (courtesy of Castello di San Salvatore)

## CASTELLO DI SAN SALVATORE SUSEGANA (TV)

The Castello di San Salvatore is located in the town of Susegana, exactly halfway between Venice and the Dolomites. Belonging to the Counts of Collalto since the 13th century, it is a picturesque village surrounded by imposing medieval walls, complete with drawbridges and frescoed towers. Homes within the village are furnished with sober refinement, and each is named after a family noblewoman. All around are woods and olive groves amid hills that are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here Prosecco and other outstanding wines are produced by the Cantina di Collalto winery in a beautiful ochre and brick-red Habsburg-style building at the foot of the castle. Guests are greeted personally by the owner, Princess Isabella Collato de Croj. The castle is frequently the venue for events and dinners prepared by leading chefs.



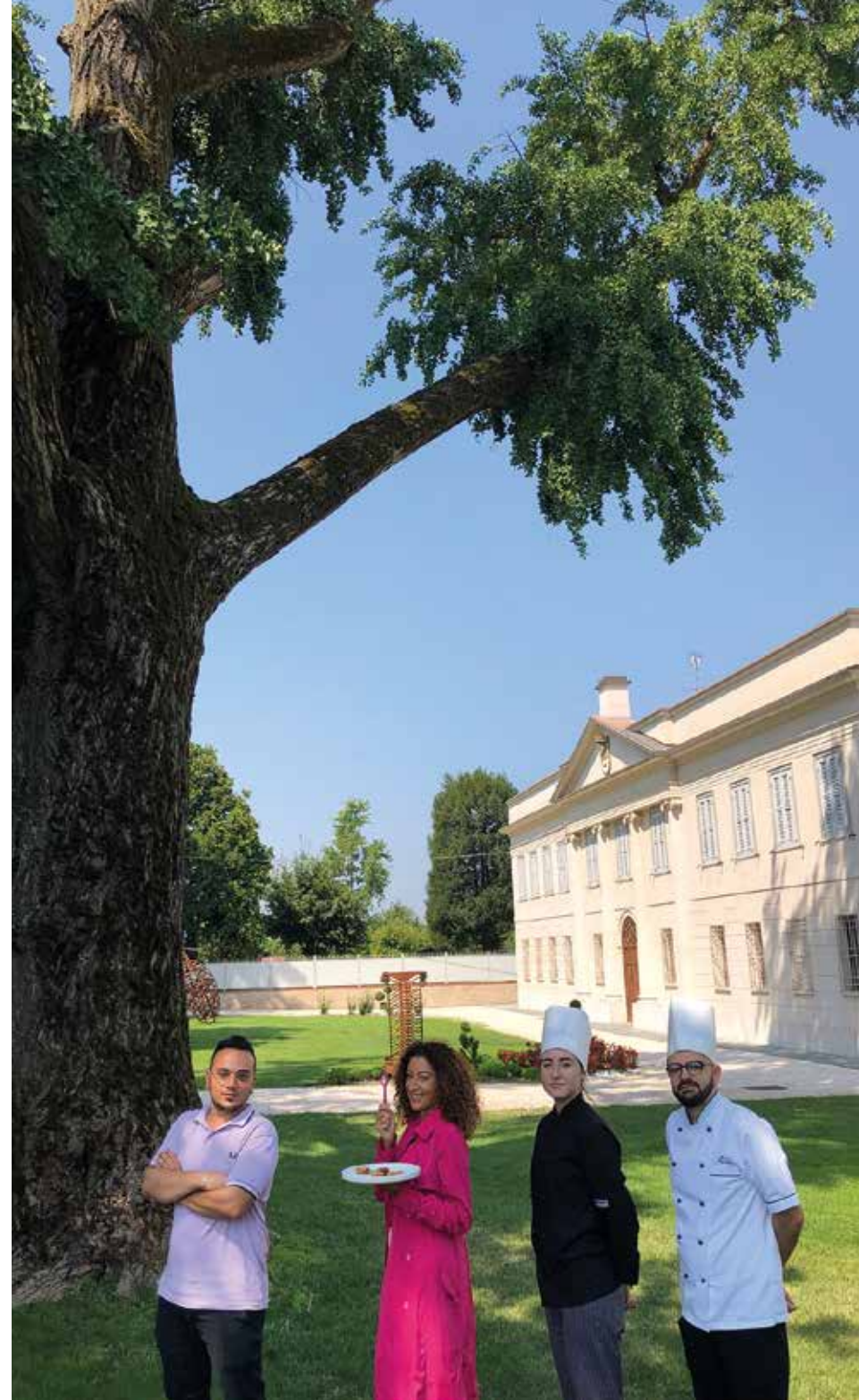
# THE GONZAGA FAMILY “END-OF-THE-MEAL” TREAT

La Signora in Dolce makes a stop in Sabbioneta (Mantua), discovering Villa Cantoni Marca - recently restored to its former glory as a venue for events and catering - and its “mythic” Sbrisolona

by **LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE**



Where the Great River flows in the province of Mantua, there is a largely unknown jewel of a town called Sabbioneta, which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site along with its provincial capital because, as UNESCO explains, both Sabbioneta and Mantua “offer an exceptional testament of urban, architectural and artistic achievement during the Renaissance, linked together through the ideas and ambitions of the reigning family.” The family in question were the Gonzagas, and it was Vespasiano Gonzaga who founded Sabbioneta, endowing it with an imposing city wall, giving shape to the miniature city that today has many attractive features, from the parade ground to the gallery of the ancients, to the theatre *all'antica*, and also to a historic residence recently restored to its erstwhile splendour. Its name is Villa Cantoni Marca and its history is tied to a family of Lazio origin, who decided to set up their country residence here because, at that time, proximity to the Gonzaga court was a source of pride—just as today, in the province of Mantua, a similar source of pride springs from the ability to prepare an excellent Sbrisolona, the most widely known sweet of the area. The origins of this delight were noble, for butter and almonds were not always within the reach of the peasants, who made do by substituting lard for butter, replacing almonds with whatever nature had to offer at different times of the year. Today the classic ingredients are to be found in every self-respecting traditional local kitchen. Sbrisolona is the perfect end to a Mantuan meal, perhaps accompanied by a good nocino walnut liqueur. At Villa Cantoni Marca, Sbrisolona is also the dessert of tradition inside the Ristorante Da Francesco, named after the chef and manager Francesco Rizzuto. He breathed new life into this residence, following an excellent renovation job carried out by the Barbieri company after the building had been neglected for some twenty years. Today the restaurant is a popular location for events, thanks also to a centuries-old park with trees that have stood for over three-hundred years. Ten suites are available in the residence for people visiting Mantua



and the surrounding area. The next step will be the restoration of the manor house, due for completion within a couple of years. Working with Francesco are his partner Miriam, sous-chef Mattia Cipolla and pastry chef Francesca Perini. How did I find the dessert? In Francesca's reworking of the traditional sweet, Sbrisolona is softer and fuller-bodied, with almonds that are not excessively fragmented. I appreciated this detail because Sbrisolona often tends to be too floury, precisely because high-quality almonds are costly, so many chefs save by using common flour and heaps of butter—often low-quality butter at that. The butter Francesca uses, by contrast, is so good that it leaves your hands fragrant. The roundness of the almond is counterbalanced by the roughness of the flour, evoking rustic sensations reminiscent of the myths and traditions of the countryside. It is thus a cake with two souls that combine to characterise its evolution: the connection between past and present, and the nobility that is linked to rural reality.

From left, Francesco Rizzuto, La Signora in Dolce, Francesca Perini and Mattia Cipolla

Opening photo, from above, La Signora in Dolce, and Sbrisolona interpreted by the Ristorante Da Francesco (courtesy of lasignoraindolce.it)

## THE RECIPE

### SBRISOLONA

Recipe from Villa Cantoni Marca

#### INGREDIENTS FOR A 20-CM. BAKING TIN (2/3 SERVINGS)

For the dough: 100 gm type-00 flour, 100 gm corn flour, 100 gm almonds with skin, 100 gm butter, 100 gm sugar, 1 egg yolk, 1 pinch of salt.

For the zabaglione: 250 gm milk, 225 gm yolk, 175 gm sugar, 250 gm Marsala, 12.5 gm corn starch, 12.5 gm rice starch.

#### PROCEDURE

Coarsely chop the almonds with the sugar; add the flour, salt, egg yolk. Mix in a planetary mixer—but not too much, or the cake will not crumble. Add the cold chopped butter to the mixture. Spread in baking tin and decorate with a layer of caster sugar and whole almonds. Bake at 180 degrees for 15 minutes. Serve and add the zabaglione.



Fusine Lakes in autumn (ph. Francesco Cecconi)

# ITALIANS BACK-TO-ITALY

Every year, millions of emigrants return to their country of origin to discover where they came from. This trend is “Roots Tourism,” and potentially it may involve 60-80 million people. The role of historical residences is important, with itineraries dedicated to this heritage

by **LUCA BONACINI**




Every year, several million Italians living abroad return to the Bel paese. They do so because they are beckoned by a deep feeling that touches the innermost heartstrings, linked to memory, childhood and the stories of parents and grandparents, something that has to do with family roots, very similar to the Brazilian saudade. Before the pandemic, around 10 million people per year returned to spend a few days on the peninsula. In 2021, despite the closure of borders, almost 6 million made the trip. In a larger sense, the phenomenon concerns between 60 and 80 million Italians living abroad, most of whom are second and third generation emigrants. Family reunions in Italy take place for many Italians every year, creating a significant influx and considerable expenditure. Revenues in 2021 were estimated at 4.2 billion euros, taking into account that those who come to our country rarely stay less than six days, and arrivals are not limited exclusively to the summer months and Christmas, but occur throughout the year.

It is called **Roots Tourism**. What is now a major project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism, took its first steps at the Directorate General for Italians Abroad of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, which five years ago believed in the potential offered by this segment of tourism. “There have always been journeys of compatriots to Italy,” says the Director General for Italians Abroad, Min. Plen. **Luigi Maria Vignali**. “Since 2018, we’ve been working to systematise this process, envisioning a purpose-designed and well-organised offering to encourage a meaningful visit for Italians abroad, orienting this experience especially around the very places of origin of their ancestors. This means a rediscovery of the origins that accompany the visitor along an emotional journey, in many ways reawakening the sense of belonging to the Italian spirit and to our homeland, which in any case is always latent among people of Italian descent.” The phenomenon



Above, view of Sauri  
(ph. Francesco Cecconi)

involves the entire peninsula and translates into the enhancement of the beauty of our country, attracting Roots visitors and many others, thanks to the ministerial project and to the fine-tuning of targeted itineraries, touching all the Italian regions and the most important destinations within the vast sector of Italian museums. “The technical coordination round table on Roots Tourism that was created in 2018 with ENIT (the Italian Government Tourism Board) and two other related associations,” Vignali explains, “sparked a fruitful exchange of ideas, planning and proposals, and furthermore gave rise to the core concept of Roots Tourism, which was then presented and accepted as a proposal under PNRR (the National Recovery and Resilience Plan). An organised, systematised project has taken shape, providing a highly professional, important offer within the travel industry, enabling the descendants of Italian emigrants to experience the culture and traditions here, while also facilitating research into their genealogy. Above all, the programme aims to familiarise people with the small villages and municipalities of lesser-known Italy. This kind of involvement is very important for us. Perhaps for the first time, a central administration is addressing small villages to involve them in a project of this magnitude.” It is a wide-ranging project, involving all twenty regions in preparation for 2024, the Year of Italian Roots in the World.

Expectations from the regional territories are high. “This project concerns Italians abroad, but not only,” says **Cristina Lambiase**, Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Coordinator for the PNRR Roots Tourism Project. “Reaching our goals also depends on raising the awareness of the local communities. In Friuli Venezia Giulia, the association that won the call for tenders will develop the programme, creating travel itineraries and product offers for Roots Tourists of all ages, who eager to retrace the footsteps of their ancestors. At periodic intervals, they will verify the work of the organisations concerned, and will necessarily involve all the provinces of each region. National coordination will guarantee reliability to the entire architecture of the project, while looking ahead to 2024, which will be the Year of Italian Roots in the World, an opportunity to welcome travellers to the territories where their ancestors were born.” In Veneto, a land of historic emigration, the machine is already in motion. “Roots Tourism is a quality travel sector with great potential, given the numbers of descendants of Italians in the world,” confirms Atty. 

## POSSIBLE ITINERARIES THROUGH HISTORIC HOUSES

### FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

We begin the journey through the region in the province of Pordenone at Palazzo Attimis (Maniago), the residence of the Lords of Maniago since the end of the 16th century. Today the palazzo is open to visitors, and it provides a guided tasting of four wines from the Conte d'Attimis-Maniago di Buttrio winery. Following this, the suggested stops are: the Castello di Porcia, with its historic wine cellar; the Castello di Cordovado, with its marvellous village; Villa Pace in Tapogliano (Udine), with its late 18th-century mural paintings and historic wine cellar; Villa Attems Cernozza de Postcastro in Lucinico (Gorizia), with its extraordinary centuries-old park. From here we travel up towards Cividale del Friuli, where we find the Villa Rubini complex in Merlana di Trivignano Udinese, with the typical “folador” of the Friulian plain, used as a vat cellar. The wine cellar here has the exceptional dimensions of sixty metres long by fourteen metres wide. Finally, we ascend towards Carnia, where in Comeglians we find Palazzo De Gleria, the only example of a Venetian villa in this portion of the Alpine Arc. To end on a high note, we move on to Polcenigo, also in the Pordenone area, with a visit to Palazzo Scolari Salice, an aristocratic residence dating back to the 17th century, today used as a B&B.

*Total route: 360 km. Recommended length of trip: 3 days and 2 nights*



In the photos in numerical order: Villa Attems, Castello di Cordovado, Palazzo De Gleria, cellar at Castello di Porcia Castle, Villa Manin, Villa Pace, Palazzo Scolari Salice and the “folador” of Villa Rubini (courtesy of [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it))



## POSSIBLE ITINERARIES THROUGH HISTORIC HOUSES

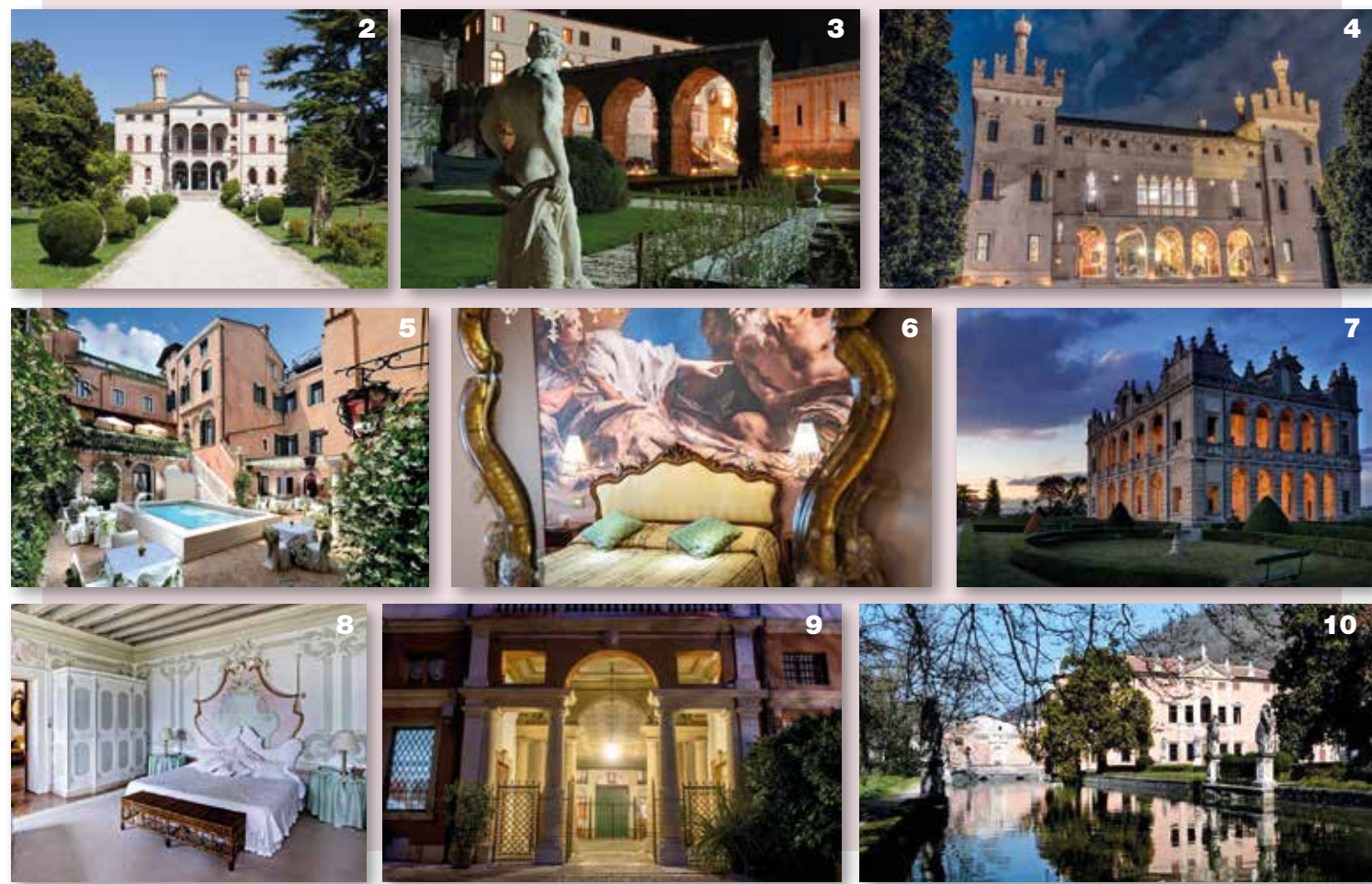
### VENETO

Using Venice's Marco Polo International Airport as a reference point for arrivals from abroad, our itinerary of discovery through historic residences makes a first stop at the nearby Castello di Roncade for a guided tour and tastings of the wines produced on the castle's grounds, before continuing on to another castle where history is linked to wine—Prosecco, in particular. This is the Castello di San Salvatore in Susegana (Treviso), owned by Collalto. Wine-tastings may be arranged here, as may overnight stays. After a visit to the lovely town of Asolo, where it is possible to spend the night in the historic residence Villa Il Galero, we move on to Bassano del Grappa to discover the famous Ponte degli Alpini bridge and the Palladian Villa Angarano, now also a farm estate where extra virgin olive oil is produced. The province of Vicenza is the land of Palladio and thus of great historical houses such as Villa da Schio in Castelgomberto, where visits may be arranged and overnight stays booked in four types of apartments. Then there is Castello Porto Colleoni in Thiene, one of the most exclusive Veneto locations for special events, also offering hospitality in the rooms within. In Verona, Palazzo Negri, formerly Vela Sambonifacio, is certainly worth a visit, offering a rare treat to all lovers: an overnight stay in a flat just opposite Juliet's house. After a stop on Lake Garda to admire the Romantic Park of Villa degli Albertini in Garda, we begin the return journey towards Padua with a visit to Isola della Scala at Villa Guarienti Baja, and then in the Euganean Hills where we find Villa Albrizzi in Este and then, farther north, Villa Emo Capodilista "La Montecchia," also famous for its agricultural production and excellent wines. On the return journey to the airport, a stop in the Riviera del Brenta, the land of luxury shoes and villas is a must (you may stay overnight at Villa Mioni Tron in Dolo). The grand finale takes us to Venice, where there are two accommodation options in historic ADSI residences: the Hotel Giorgione in Calle Larga dei Proverbi, and the Hotel Scandinavia in Santa Maria Formosa.

*Total route: 405 km. Recommended length of trip: 5 days and 4 nights*



In the photos in numerical order: Villa Angarano, Castello di Roncade, Castello di San Salvatore, Castello di Thiene, Hotel Giorgione, Hotel Scandinavia, Villa Emo Capodilista, Villa Il Galero, Palazzo Negri, Villa da Schio (courtesy of [dimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://dimorestoricheitaliane.it))



**Aldo Rozzi Marin**, President of the Veneti in the World Association, and Honorary Consul of Chile in Vicenza since 2003. "It is outside the traditional tourist circuits, and in addition to helping people discover the places of origin of their ancestors, it also promotes knowledge of our villages, villas and historic houses, traditions and local cuisine. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation, the Associazione Veneti nel Mondo signed a cooperation agreement with ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association, to stimulate Roots Tourism, inviting people to visit the beauties of our country with itineraries dedicated to the network of castles, villas, and palaces. Among the activities we are working on is the fourth edition of 'Venetian History in Villa,' in which the history of the Venetian Republic will be illustrated by scholars from different fields with the aim of making that significant cultural heritage better known."

Interest in the project is coming from as far away as the continent of Oceania. Senator **Santo Santoro** is a prominent member of the Italian community in Queensland, Australia. Twice a minister in his country's government, during his terms of office he has dealt with training, industrial relations, workers' compensation, and safety at work. He holds two degrees and is originally from Francavilla di Sicilia (Messina), whence his family left for Australia in 1961. "Roots Tourism is a valuable project. The longer Australian-born immigrants stay in that country, the stronger their desire to return home and reconnect with family, friends and culture. Living the Italian dream in Italy is not the same thing as replicating the Italian dream in a country like Australia, and I feel that this desire is just as strong in the children of Italian immigrants, who increasingly seek to learn about their roots and, more often than not, return to Italy together and proudly proclaim their Italian-ness." From an operational point of view, Santoro adds, "I am confident that the Italian Government and relevant ministries will follow up on the project and provide incentives for Italian-Australians to return to Italy as often as possible, to nurture their roots and culture in a mutual and fruitful exchange. It would be important to involve long-term Italian immigrants in countries like Australia to provide advice in relation to this project and offer help." Santoro notes that the number of Australians of Italian descent intending to visit their home country "increases exponentially every year. Italy is constantly promoted as the most desirable tourist and business destination in the Australian media. This helps Italo-Australians further increase their desire to travel to their homeland. Over the past 20 years, with the assistance of a friend in Sicily who is a tour guide, I have organised tours for Italian-Australians and have seen how much Italy impresses first-time visitors. I am sure that an intuitive and easy-to-access website will be set up where one can find all the possible information on Roots Tourism, pointing out for example the main airports, what to see and what to visit, recommending travel agencies that are able to delve deeper and advise travellers who are not always clear on how to best organize the days of their trip."



Left, view of Venice and, from above, three images of the Veneti nel Mondo Association (courtesy of Veneti nel Mondo)



# Villa Contarini in Piazzola sul Brenta

by **LUCA BONACINI**

*Designed by Andrea Palladio, this imposing mansion contributed to the advent of the renowned Venetian villas, intended as strongholds in the territory and as venues for cultural and diplomatic get-togethers*

**V**illa Contarini, owned by the Veneto Region since 2005, is a symbol of Italian art. Located in Piazzola sul Brenta to the north of Padua, the villa stands on the remains of an ancient castle built by the Dente family around the year 1000. Acquired by the Carraresi, lords of Padua, it was bequeathed to a member of the Contarini family, and today it shines as one of the best-known examples of a 16th-century patrician residence. Aldo Rozzi Marin, lawyer and sole director of Veneto Edifici Monumentali srl (Veneto Region, sole shareholder), tells us about the importance of this noble home. “It is an extraordinary heritage for humanity. The villa, with its architectural and functional features as well the surrounding countryside, was created as a working centre where all the families contributed to the production of local

wealth that pushed the economy towards new heights,” the attorney explains. Villas like this one became the emblem of Venetian reorganisation, outposts of the Serenissima’s transformation of the territory. And Villa Contarini, together with many other historical buildings, gave life to the so-called “culture of the Venetian villa,” which fulfilled various purposes. Villas served as garrisons for the government of the territory, as sites for the development of agricultural and early industrial entrepreneurship, as diplomatic meeting places to cultivate relations with foreign guests, and as the settings for cultural encounters and festivities, especially in celebration of the Serenissima Republic and its loyal noble families. The villa was designed by Andrea Palladio, famous for the 23 palaces and 24 villas recognised by UNESCO as

World Heritage Sites in and around Vicenza, and author of *The Four Books of Architecture*, the most important architectural publication of all time, a model for the architectural image of the western world. Palladio’s authorship of the central body of the villa is attested by one of his drawings, now preserved at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London, as stated by Guido Beltramini, art historian and director of the Andrea Palladio International Centre for Architectural Studies (CISA) during the study day held in Piazzola sul Brenta in 2018, as well as in the recent publication “*Palladio: The Guide.*” The current appearance of the Reggia Serenissima, so grand that it can be counted among the largest residences in Europe, is the result of a series of extensions and renovations carried out over the centuries. From the outset, the building developed along two wings, which were later transformed in terms of size and use. In the second half of the 17th century, thanks to the work of Marco Contarini, the palace achieved the characteristics of architectural complexity and magnificence that distinguish it even today. The Auditorium is particularly interesting, with a curved gallery halfway up and an octagonal opening in the centre that connects it to the Sala della Chitarra Rovesciata above—the “Hall of the Overturned Guitar.” Marco Contarini, in the second half of the 1600s, initiated an “industrial” investment plan of enormous scope. Capitalising on the considerable water resources available locally, Contarini made provision for iron to be worked, books to be printed, timber to be sawn and hydraulic machines to be used for

husking rice. He invested significant sums in silk and wool processing and manufactured high-quality cloth for the Levantine and European markets, dedicating the villa not only to agricultural activity but also to the creation of a great cultural centre that would rise in prominence over the centuries that followed. What’s more, 45 hectares of land surrounding the villa were devoted to biodiversity in a lush park full of varied flora, while inside the building, while inside the building a monumental library was established, holding some 21,000 volumes, rare publications, maps and drawings. Today this historical heritage is open to the public.

## VILLA CONTARINI

Via L. Camerini 1  
35016 Piazzola sul Brenta (Padova)  
villacontarini.eu

Available for visits year-round. Closed on Wednesdays  
Hours: 10 am – 4 pm during the winter season; 9 am – 7 pm during the summer season

To visit the Villa, Reggia Serenissima, it is advisable to book in advance by calling the Ticket Office at the following telephone number:  
+39 049 5590347



Images of Villa Contarini in Piazzola sul Brenta (courtesy of Villa Contarini) and, bottom left, Atty. Aldo Rozzi Marin, sole director of the company Veneto Edifici Monumentali (sole shareholder, Veneto Region), with governor Luca Zaia





Aerial view of Isola Bella (courtesy of Wikimedia)

# A JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAKES THAT WRITERS LOVED MOST

Maggiore, Orta and Mergozzo form the “lake district” of Upper Piedmont. Here is an itinerary among the most evocative residences in a land of historic houses, enchanting gardens and works in “landscape creation”

by ROSALBA GRAGLIA

Find once more the pleasure of holidaying in the spirit of yesteryear among the villas and palazzi of the Piedmont lakes. Immerse yourself in a land of slow, graceful rhythms and an invitation to (re)discover what really counts: experiencing forgotten emotions while taking in a stroll through a flower garden, a boat ride, art exhibitions, tucked away from the crowds that flood to overly popular destinations. It is no coincidence that the lakes of Piedmont – Lake Orta, with the magical silence of the Isle of San Giulio, the western shore of Lake Maggiore, the green purity of Lake Mergozzo – have always been so loved by writers. Enamoured of Lake Orta, Balzac described it as “a delightful little lake at the foot of Monte Rosa, an island lying on its calm waters.” The island then became a protagonist in the work of Gianni Rodari and the story of Baron Lamberto (and the location for an intriguing film, “La corrispondenza” by Giuseppe Tornatore). Gustave Flaubert considered the Borromean Islands on Lake Maggiore “the most voluptuous place I have ever seen.” Other literary admirers include Stendhal, Soldati, Dickens, Piero Chiara and Hemingway, who set *A Farewell to Arms* in Stresa.

Helping travellers relive those charmed moments today, there are perfect historic residences, some to stay in, others to visit, some that have been transformed into superlative locations for special events. You might start on Lake Orta and its spellbinding little capital, Orta San Giulio, one of the most beautiful villages in Italy, with its piazza-salon and the Palazzetto delle Comunità, the Church of the Assunta at the top of the Salita della Motta. Up high stands the Sacro Monte, a Unesco heritage site that fascinated the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

**Casa Boroni**, right on the church hill (officially called Via Caire Albertoletti) is the first stop on our itinerary. Medieval portals from the 11th and 12th centuries on the ground floor, with a portico and workshop, an open loggia on the third floor, internal



Garden of Villa Motta. Orta San Giulio (courtesy of [associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it))

stairs, wooden and vaulted ceilings, stone walls together recreate a thoroughly medieval atmosphere.

Then relax in the garden of **Villa Motta**, a splendid 19th-century villa on the tip of the Orta peninsula overlooking the lake. The park has been recognised by the International Camellia Society as a “Garden of Excellence,” and it contains some 250 different varieties of camellias, as well as osmanthus, satsuki azaleas, rhododendrons, century-old conifers and sarmentose roses. This small paradise on the lake, where blooms follow one another all year round, offers entrancing and surprising views of the Isle of San Giulio. In Opagliolo, a hamlet within the domain of the town of San Maurizio d’Opaglio on the lake, **Casa Bettoja** exemplifies the lovely houses of the local petty nobility, in this

case the Bettoja family, who resided on the Isola di San Giulio and held properties in the area from the 17th century on. The house, originally a farmstead, was extended and transformed over time into a stately residence, with its large terrace, avenue, secret garden and the 18th-century chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows before it.

Further discoveries continue on Lago Maggiore. A few kilometres from the lake, be sure to stop at Oleggio Castello, at the **Castello dal Pozzo**, originally a fortress belonging to the Visconti family in the year 1000. Later, in the 19th century, it came into the possession of the Dal Pozzo family, who have lived there for six generations. Today it is a 5-star hotel of charme with the look of a neo-Gothic castle surrounded by the greenery of a grand park.

Casa Bettoja in Opagliolo, on Lake Orta (courtesy of [associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it](http://associazionedimorestoricheitaliane.it))



Castello dal Pozzo in Oleggio  
Castello (courtesy of  
castellodalpozzo.com)

Facing page, Teatro Massimo  
on Isola Bella (courtesy of  
isoleborromeo.it)

Below, Lago Maggiore seen  
from Isola Bella (courtesy of  
dimorestoricheitaliane.it)

Time to go down into the historical centre of Arona, to **Palazzo Usellini**, which dates back to the end of the 18th century. The year 1783 is marked on various buildings, but the palazzo's core is older. The property was acquired during the second half of the 18th century by Carlantonio Usellini, a curious character who had first moved to Amsterdam to set up a business selling luxury products and antiques. Having made his riches there, he sold the business and returned to Arona, where he bought the property and transformed it into his palace. Today the palazzo hosts exhibitions and events, and a portion of it is still inhabited by the family.

Following the lake, we reach Stresa and the magic of the Borromean Islands. Here, over time, an extraordinary masterwork of "landscape creation" transformed small fishing islands into places of delight. The visionary project continued for nearly four hundred years, from the 17th century onwards. Discover the Italian-style **Baroque Garden** on Isola Bella, with the **Amphitheatre** or **Teatro Massimo**, a fairy-tale structure punctu-



ated by niches, columns, statues, staircases and balustrades. This marvel extends to the Palazzo, a Baroque jewel containing the **Berthier Gallery**, a collection of 130 paintings, the Throne Room, the Queens' Room, the Music Room, the Napoleon Room, and the Great Hall of the 1900s. The palace-and-gardens combination is repeated on Isola Madre in the idealised nature of an English-style park, the greenhouses of exotic fruits and the mid-sixteenth-century palace, furnished with pieces from various family residences—a journey through the art of fine living in the 17th and 18th centuries. And there's the chapel that became the setting for the wedding of Lavinia Borromeo and John Elkann.

The botanical splendour of Lago Maggiore is also to be found in Verbania, enclosed in an inlet of the lake, the Borromeo Gulf, with its extraordinary villas and gardens. Here the gardens of **Villa Gritti** and **Villa Rusconi-Clerici** from the end of the 19th century immerse visitors in the beauty of an English-style park abloom with camellias. Overlooking the lake, the villas boast ancient cellars and historic kitchens—another enchanted location for parties and events.





# A EUROPE OF PALACES AND CASTLES

The emergence of sites specialising in the influx of visitors to private historic houses, the role of Airbnb, and the need to gradually raise the standards of hospitality are among the topics we discuss with Alfonso Pallavicini, president of the European Historic Houses Association

by ANDREA GUOLO

Europe is a world to be discovered through its private historic houses, which more and more are opening their doors to the public through a process of enhancing the quality of comfort and the level of service

while finding effective ways to communicate just how unique they really are. Alfonso Pallavicini, the president of the **European Historic Houses Association**, is convinced that the future of these properties will increasingly be based on hospitality. The continental association includes almost all member states of the European Union, with the exception of nations such as Hungary, where many state-owned residences have yet to be privatised. Is there an estimate of the number of buildings that may boast the title of historic houses? “No, actually,” replies Pallavicini, “because there is no precise definition of what a historic house is. But we can calculate that they make up between 5 and 7 per cent of the total number of buildings in Europe. And, through our national associates, we can count on about 50,000 owners.”



From top, President Alfonso Pallavicini and Blatná Castle in the Czech Republic  
Opening photo, Château de Villandry in France (courtesy of European Historic Houses Association)



Palais Pallavicini in Austria (courtesy of European Historic Houses Association)

**In your opinion, is the trend of travel with a stay in historical residences gaining ground?**

I believe that grand houses were already considered a travel destination in the past. The limit, if anything, was the number of houses that received visitors, because they were mostly closed to the public, being kept instead as the private homes of the owners. Today, on the other hand, more residences are opening up. The level of quality is rising and tourists are happy to go there. So much so, in fact, that I think they much prefer private historic houses to standard hotels, precisely because they are places that are lived in.

**What are travellers looking for when they visit historic houses?**

They come to experience the special atmosphere to be found inside. We are talking about houses, often inhabited, that are authentic, where each room is different, each room has its own history, and where the level of comfort is particularly high. Moreover, many are located in rural Europe, in places where quiet and silence reign.

**Are there travel programmes or specialised portals that offer custom-made “stay in history” suggestions?**

They are springing up and taking shape, because there is indeed a rapidly rising demand. The first platforms to establish themselves on a European level were the French *Bienvenue au Château* and the Irish site *Hidden Ireland*. Now the recent agreement that the European Association, and several national associates such as the Italian ADSI, signed with Airbnb represents a quantum leap because it facilitates the launch of a new line for historic homes, with a special search key within the world's most popular home-booking site. And I am convinced that in the coming years it will lead to the creation of a specialised portal for private historic houses.

**How are managers of residences preparing to welcome guests?**

Due to their exceptional nature, historic private dwellings cannot be considered as places for mass tourism. It's clear that if you want to attract the most discerning visitors within the sphere of high-end hospitality, you have to increase quality

and the level of service provided. This means that owners must be prepared to undergo quality controls, to make sure that every promise made to the visitor will truly be fulfilled in an unforgettable experience. The objective is to ensure the satisfaction of those who have chosen historic houses as their destination.

**In Europe, how much progress is being made towards opening historic houses to the public?**

The situation is quite varied. The European Association is trying to share best practices among the individual national associations, so that they can serve as an example, but there is still no single common vision as to the fundamental role tourism will play in the future of private historic houses. Personally, I believe this is a necessary step. As management costs rise, it will be difficult to maintain a historic residence without a financial return for the owner. And I think the national associations' focus on this topic is bound to increase.

**What role can the European Union and national governments play?**

The role of Europe is especially important, as witnessed by the new directive which includes specific rules for heritage houses. As a result, national governments will finally have to define what a historic house is, and as a second step they can further define exceptions. This way, we'll have a complete list of private historic houses in Europe. And then, if the political will is there, the European Union will be able to allocate funding to establish a European portal of residences, a necessary tool to accompany owners in the process of opening their historic houses, including the fundamental aspect of quality control.

**If you, as a traveller, had to choose one route in Europe among the historic houses, which one would you choose?**

I would like to visit countries I know less about, such as the Baltic area and Finland in particular. And some eastern countries like the Czech Republic, where there are wonderful castles, like the one you talk about in this issue of your magazine.



An old farmstead in Denmark (courtesy of European Historic Houses Association)



View of the water castle (courtesy of Zámek Blatná)

## A CHÂTEAU WITH A BOHEMIAN SOUL

The charm of Blatná Castle (in Czech: Zámek Blatná) attracts tens of thousands of visitors every year, and a full calendar of events has enabled the old mansion not only to maintain itself but also to serve as a driving force for the dynamism of the village

by **GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO**

In the heart of South Bohemia stands one of the most valuable private historical structures in the region and in Central Europe as a whole – Zámek Blatná, Czech for “Blatná Castle,” where *zámek* indicates more a château on the French model than a fortified fortress.

Its history stretching back centuries, its distinctive architectural style set in a well-cared for environment of parks and wetlands together with its excellent state of conservation make it a jewel among Bohemian castles. Along with Švihov and Červená Lhota, Blatná is one of the best-preserved water castles in the Czech Republic.

Thanks to evolutions in its architectural structure arising from historical events, this château embodies a structural testimony to the change in artistic styles over the centuries.

Archaeological findings indicate that the knoll in the centre of the marshy area of Blatná (the name derives from the root word “mud”) was inhabited in prehistoric times, and Slavs appeared in the area as early as the end of the 7th century. The first historical documentation of a fortress in Blatná dates back to 1235, when the building was described as the seat of a member of the petty nobility. A second mention from 1241 clearly indicates the existence of a small castle protected by water with a private Romanesque chapel built before 1225. The earliest period in the castle’s history is linked to the Knights Templar (along with their ever-present legends).

Documents indicate, however, that Blatná was always owned by secular feudal lords. After the extinction of the hereditary line of the Bavor family of Strakonice, explicitly named in 1299 as owners of the castle, the property passed from the Rožmítal family – who initiated a golden age leading to the renovation of the original Romanesque building and its transformation into a Gothic fortress with a fortified entrance tower – to the Lev and Sternberg families, the Polish counts of Rozdražov, and the Hungarian Serényi family.

Wenzel Karl Hildprandt von Ottenhausen, a Tyrolean nobleman, purchased Blatná in





1798, and his heirs have retained ownership to the present day, except for a forced interruption during the communist period, when the castle was taken over by the National Heritage Commission and subsequently confiscated.

After 1989, the estate returned to the hands of the Hildprandt family, and the current ownership is working hard to restore the castle and open it to visitors. What it means today to own a historical structure of the size and importance of Zámek Blatná is clear from the words of Stephanos S. Germenis-Hildprandt, representing the present generation called upon to manage and preserve the castle's legacy. "I cannot speak for other owners of historical residences, because each case is unique," he points out, "yet what I can say is that anyone who undertakes such a journey has my utmost respect and admiration, especially the people who did not inherit the building but decided to save and develop it for the sake of culture and heritage. For me personally, it entails a combination of deep responsibility to my family, and perhaps to the wider community, to ensure that this building lives on. At the same time, I aim to create a project that is self-sustaining." Owning and managing a historic and monumental structure like Blatná is therefore "a delicate balancing act between duty and pragmatism," Stephanos adds. Born and raised in Greece, moving then to England where he lived, studied and worked before relocating to the Czech Republic, the entrepreneur took charge of the estate after his father's death in 2014. "When I took over the ownership and management of the estate, I set myself and my family three conditions for the acquisition: renovation and management of the property according to my vision, respecting the cultural and historical value it has for my family and for this country, but with a modern, financially sustainable and, above all, pleasurable approach."

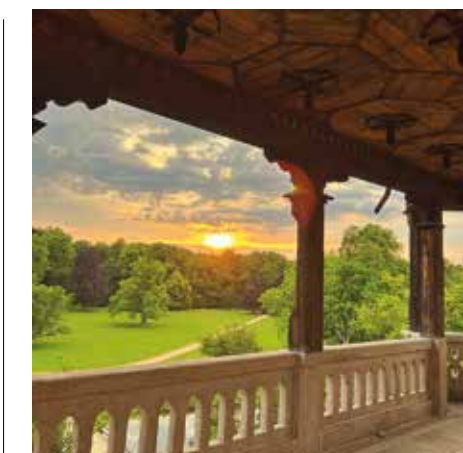
Preserving such an inheritance is no easy task. "It is as challenging as it is rewarding," Stephanos explains. "There are countless legal restrictions on the building, and the relationship with the local authorities and community may be delicate at times, but there is an endless list of factors that make managing such a project extremely challenging. Seeing our project, the number of our visitors and the organisation as a whole grow exponentially from year to year means that we are doing something right. And that is the most rewarding feeling one can have."

As a historical residence, Zámek Blatná today is not only the heritage of a family (and specifically of an heir who has brought a decidedly managerial approach) but also the heritage of the world.

Blatná is a founding member of the Czech Association of Castle Owners (AMHZ, of which Stephanos is president), itself a body within the European Historic Houses and Europa Nostra Association. Now comprising 55 members, the AMHZ provides a platform for interaction and the exchange of information between members, promotes private heritage and facilitates communication with government bodies, as well as offering a bridge to the wider European network.

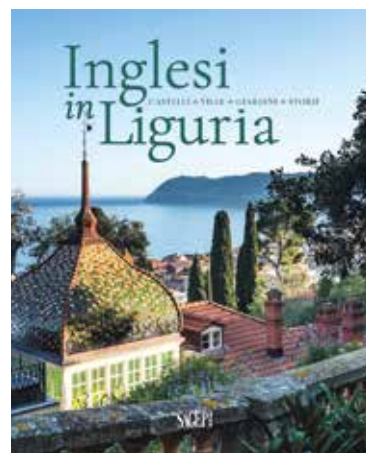
There is also financial support from the institutions. "We ask for and receive subsidies," the owner reports, "for the reconstruction of the castle exterior, the renovation of the façade and the roof, as well as advisory support from the Ministry of Culture, with which we have excellent relations." However, public funds are not the mainstay for the present and future of Zámek Blatná. Stephanos S. Germenis-Hildprandt has set out to build a strategy for the castle that will prove effective in the long term. Back in 2014, there were 50-70 thousand visitors a year, of whom fewer than 15 thousand spent time in the museum, and Blatná's online presence was essentially insignificant. By contrast, the numbers in recent years have exploded. Despite the pandemic, in 2020, no less than 100/120 thousand guests visited the castle; up to 140 thousand in 2021; and in 2022 the total number of visitors exceeded 150 thousand. How did this transition come about? "We have pushed events with such energy," Stephanos says, "that in 2022 we hosted around fifty events, with parterres ranging from 30 to 7,500 people. This year we will go further. For the most part, these are internal events, coordinated by our staff in partnership with other organisations: from Christmas markets to historic automobile and sports car fairs, to the collaboration with the Prague company Studio 2, with whom we have planned three dates for the summer that will bring some 4500 people to the castle over three evenings."

The next step is already taking shape, and it looks toward the development of an offer in hospitality. "We are working to open a boutique hotel in Blatná," Stephanos told our magazine, "with the aim of having between 10 and 20 rooms for accommodation as special as our location. The project will be developed over the next five years, perhaps starting with a small B&B, culminating in the completion of a luxury hotel."



Previous page: from above, Stephanos S. Germenis-Hildprandt, the current generation called upon to manage and preserve the Blatná legacy, frescoes in the castle rooms and a view of the entrance tower (courtesy of Zámek Blatná)

Clockwise on this page, spectacular events in the gardens of Zámek Blatná, winter view of the castle, sunset views, and Christmas markets (courtesy of Zámek Blatná)



## INGLESI IN LIGURI

### The English in Liguria

**ALESSANDRO BARTOLI AND FRANCESCA CENTURIONE-SCOTTO BOSCHIERI**  
Sagep – 2023

Officially presented in London at the Italian Embassy, in the presence of H.E. the Ambassador of Italy in the United Kingdom, Inigo Lambertini, this volume is the result of two years of intense work by leading scholars to reconstruct the presence of the English in Liguria and their incessant activity as

creators of gardens, marvellous villas such as the outstanding Villa Hanbury and Villa della Pergola, two of the most important Italian botanical gardens, and charities for the population. In addition to the greatest names in the field of garden conservation and archaeology, including Clarence Bicknell, Thomas Hanbury and Lord Carnarvon, there have been many illustrious travellers, from Byron to Shelley to Dickens, who have described and experienced Liguria, as well as lesser-known sportsmen and women who introduced Italy's first football club and first tennis club to Liguria.



## 35 CASTELLI IMPERDIBILI DELL'UMBRIA E DELLE MARCHE

### 35 Castles not to be missed in Umbria and the Marches

**ELENA PERCIVALDI AND MARIO GALLONI**  
Edizioni del Capricorno – 2022

Blessed with an abundance of water, lush nature and the splendour of breathtaking views, Umbria embodies all that is amazing about Italy: millenary civilisation, refined art, profound spirituality, moving beauty. Similarly, thanks to their strategic position as "middle ground" between the Apennines and the Adriatic, the Marches have long been a crossroads of populations and an outpost between the West and the East. The complex and exciting history of the two regions is reflected in villages

and castles, their medieval and Renaissance atmospheres still intact. Rising as centres of power of illustrious dynasties, and in other epochs as symbols of the dominion of the Church, the fortresses have hosted sovereigns and pontiffs, noblewomen and patrons, mystics and condottieri, and have endured splendour and misfortune, conspiracies and sieges, destruction and reconstruction. Elena Percivaldi is a medievalist historian and professional journalist who has authored an analogous work on Lombard castles; Mario Galloni is a journalist who is editor-in-chief of several national newspapers.



## VILLA NISCEMI

### MASSIMILIANO MARAFON PECORARO

Translation by **Matthew Furfine**  
Illustrations by **Alberto Forte**  
40th Edition – 2023

Eighteenth-century aristocratic Sicilian society forms the backdrop to the events narrated in this book, which retells the history of Villa Niscemi, purchased in 1987 by the Municipality of Palermo as the city's representative seat. The matrimonial policies of social and economic growth of the Princes of Niscemi, on the one hand, and the talent

of the artists, on the other, lie at the heart of the construction and decorative work that make this residential building an extraordinary artistic monument. By investigating this exquisite noble house in the Piana dei Colli (the Edenic territory chosen by the Palermo nobility for their holidays), careful documentary research has made it possible to publish previously unpublished information on the urban dwellings of Palermo's patrons. The cover of this new edition is intended as a tribute to Santa Rosalia, the patron saint of Palermo, who will be the protagonist of the quadricentennial of the Festino in 2024.

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