

2022

HARVARD ALUMNI TRAVELS

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Village Life around the Italian Lakes

October 15 - 23, 2022

with Study Leader **Christie McDonald**




HARVARD
Alumni Travels



Nestled on the shores of Lake Como and surrounded by majestic Alpine peaks, the legendary Villa del Balbianello has one of the most dramatic settings in Italy.

Join our small group of travelers in the quintessentially Italian città di Como during this one-of-a-kind VILLAGE LIFE® around the Italian Lakes *soggiorno*. Your accommodations for this comprehensive program are in the heart of charismatic Como in the ideally located, lakeside PALACE HOTEL, just steps away from the city's Gothic-style Duomo. This historical hotel overlooks stunning Lake Como and welcomes guests with warm Italian hospitality and impeccable service. Indulge in the refined traditions of the Italian Lake District on this unique program.

The safety and well-being of our travelers remains our highest priority. Cruise lines and some other providers of services (as well as, potentially, some countries) require all passengers traveling on our programs to present confirmation of a full COVID-19 vaccination, and, as well, passengers may have to produce evidence of a recent negative COVID test. All our staff are committed to adhering to all health and safety protocols from the start of your trip to the end as directed by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overseas health officials as well as those protocols mandated by your cruise company (if applicable) and other suppliers of services. Detailed protocol information tailored to your travel program will be mailed to you along with additional pre-departure information.

Activity Level 2: 

LOW KEY

Many of the cities and towns being visited were founded centuries ago, and the terrain is rugged. Therefore, a fair amount of walking along narrow cobblestone streets, stone floors or uneven and/or slippery terrain and climbing several flights of stairs (some without railings) is to be expected. Walking excursions often cover distances of at least one mile and are approximately three hours in length.

Study Leaders



Christie McDonald

was born in New York City. She is the Smith Research Professor of French Language

and Literature in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and Research Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. From 2000-2006, she served as Chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

A literary historian, as well as cultural critic and theorist, McDonald has published in the areas of literature and philosophy, anthropology, feminist theory, and the arts (music and painting). Recently, she is the author *The Life and Art of Anne Eisner: An American Artist between Cultures* (2020) as well as a major chapter on 18th century French women writers (1715-1793) in the French publication *Femmes, littérature. Une histoire Culturelle* (Gallimard, 2020). Among other honors, McDonald is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and was named Commandeur in the French Palmes Académiques. She divides her time between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and northern Vermont.

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The Palazzo Borromeo showcases the works of Giulio Cesare Procaccini and Luigi Pellegrini Scaramuccia.

Schedule by Day

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15

U.S.

Depart the U.S. for Milan, Italy

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16

Milan, Italy/Como

Arrive in Milan and transfer to the PALACE HOTEL COMO. Enjoy the welcome reception this evening. (R,D)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17

Como

Founded by the Romans in 196 B.C., Como has been internationally known for its silk-weaving industry since silkworms were first imported here in the 14th century. At one time, Como was the largest European silk producer—dyeing, weaving, and designing fabrics to be shipped to the fashion houses of Milan, Paris, and London. Stroll past medieval towers and defensive walls, Renaissance palaces and churches, Neoclassical 19th-century villas and small family-owned *negozi* on your way to Piazza Cavour and the tranquil lakeside promenade. See the magnificent Duomo di Como, which took nearly 400 years to complete. Now considered the most beautiful cathedral in Lombardy, this 15th-century masterpiece reflects a seamless blend of Gothic and Renaissance styles. Visit

the 12th-century Romanesque Basilica di San Fedele, with stunning frescoed naves and apses and an exquisitely sculptured choir, carved by Comacini masters. Peruse fresh fruit and vegetables in the colorful outdoor market, a tradition for centuries.

Cultural Enrichments:

A local scholar of Como from the Roman era to the present, resident art historian Giuseppina Lucini will present a private expert lecture. During the exclusive VILLAGE LIFE[®] FORUM, residents will discuss contemporary life in the dazzling and historic

between the regions of Lombardy and Piedmont.

A close rival to Lake Como as the most spectacular in the Lake District, Lake Maggiore's mild climate allows gardens to cultivate rare and exotic plants beneath the Alps, particularly on the remarkable Borromean Islands. Enjoy a private boat cruise amidst the charming islands that inspired Gustave Flaubert, Richard Wagner and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Cruise among Lake Maggiore's enticing islands, graced with elegant villas and striking natural beauty.



Cruise past Isola Madre, the largest of the Borromean Islands, home to a diverse array of plants from every continent.

Italian Lake District. Savor the delights of an Italian dinner in a local *ristorante*. (B,D)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18

Lake Maggiore/ Borromean Islands/ Stresa

Beloved by Lombardy's nobility, Lake Maggiore is Italy's second-largest lake and a natural boundary

Isola Bella, Isola di San Giovanni, Isola Madre, and Isola dei Pescatori are collectively known as the Borromean Islands, named after the powerful Borromeos—a dynasty of counts, cardinals, and warriors. During the 16th century, swaths of what is now North Central Italy were known as the Borromeo State, and the family wielded absolute



Admire the 14th-century Piazza del Duomo, which marks Milan's geographic, social and cultural heart.



Enjoy Como's world-class architecture, including the 14th-century Duomo di Como, financed by a prospering silk industry.

political and military power.

Any 18th- and 19th-century "Grand Tour" of Europe would be considered incomplete without visiting 10th-century Stresa to experience its spectacular mountain views, tropical gardens, and the sparkling waters of Lake Maggiore.

The quintessential *dolce vita* town, Stresa's inviting piazzas, cobblestone streets, and lakeside promenade are dotted with *Belle Époque* mansions. A young Ernest Hemingway, recuperating in Stresa during World War I, was inspired to make it the setting for Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley's famed reunion in *A Farewell to Arms*.

Cultural Enrichment:

Visit Borromean archipelago's crown jewel, Isola Bella, entirely occupied by the 17th-century Palazzo Borromeo. Walk through its splendid Italianate gardens—a botanical wonder with roses, gardenias, azaleas, and rhododendrons, described by Edith Wharton as a work of "Renaissance poetry." Commissioned by Count Carlo Borromeo III in 1632, this secluded Baroque retreat is dedicated to his wife, Isabella, and its extravagant halls and opulent salons are filled with priceless masterpieces by Old Masters such as Peter Paul Rubens, Titian, and Anthony Van Dyck. See the Sala di Napoleone,

where Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine slept in 1797, and the island's unforgettable grotto, decorated entirely with marble- and lava-studded mosaics of marine life. (B)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19

Milan

The recognized capital of the design and fashion worlds, Milan's cultural heritage blends ornate palaces, Gothic churches and venerable museums with vibrant contemporary life, a wealth of modern art, an abundance of haute cuisine and outstanding operatic traditions. Visit Milan's exquisite late-Gothic Duomo, which dates to 1386, and the world-famous Teatro alla Scala opera house, a Neoclassical jewel of sumptuous gilt boxes and glittering chandeliers, founded in 1778 by Empress Maria Theresa of Austria.

Cultural Enrichment:

By special arrangement, visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Santa Maria delle Grazie to experience the enduring genius of Leonardo da Vinci's, *The Last Supper*. (B)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20

Lake Como/Villa del Balbianello/Bellagio

Composer Franz Liszt romanticized, "When you write the story of two happy lovers, place them

on the shores of Lake Como."

Cruise by private boat across the sparkling waters of Italy's deepest—and one of the most spectacular—lake while learning more about its fascinating history and allure. Survey the quaint coastal village of Bellagio, a favorite retreat since the time of the Caesars, and grand Renaissance villas built on the slopes of snowcapped mountains.

Across Lake Como from Bellagio is the magnificent Villa del Balbianello and its unique terraced gardens. Built in 1787 by Cardinal Angelo Maria Durini, this consummate Italian lake villa was renovated in the early 20th century by an American veteran of World War I. The villa was then purchased by Italy's first explorer to summit Mount Everest, Guido Monzino, who bequeathed it to the Italian National Trust. A paragon of authentic Italian luxury, the villa is a repository of 18th-century French and English furniture and an exquisite collection of Monzino's Chinese, pre-Columbian and African art.

Perched on a promontory punctuated by stands of cypress trees, Bellagio is one of the Italian Lake District's most internationally well-known communes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Milanese nobility flocked here



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All bookings are conducted online only.

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to build elaborate villas and cultivate subtropical gardens. Cobblestone alleyways wind above an idyllic waterfront promenade that affords spectacular Alpine vistas. (B,D)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21

Lake Orta

Lake Orta, nestled in the captivating Piedmont region of northwestern Italy, is the Lake District’s best-kept secret. An ethereal mist rises above Lake Orta’s forested shores which are imbued with a permeating stillness. Enjoy a walking tour of Orta San Giulio’s medieval village center, a tableau of gracefully aging ochre-hued houses woven with arabesques of decorative wrought iron and

flamboyant Baroque palazzos built by Italian nobility.

Cruise across cobalt-blue Lake Orta in a private boat to the petite and rarely visited San Giulio Island, taking in stunning views of picture-perfect Italian villas and gardens along the way. Robert Browning, Honoré de Balzac and Lord Byron all wrote of this intimate island’s sublime beauty. Visit the 12th-century Romanesque-style Basilica di San Giulio, which has an opulent interior adorned with richly detailed frescoes painted upon the nave, chapel, vaults, and aisles, and stroll the monastery’s lush grounds.

Cultural Enrichment:

Visit several small chapels dedicated to St. Francis

of Assisi, decorated with frescoes built between the 16th and 18th centuries, amid a picturesque landscape of forested hills atop the summit of Sacro Monte di Orta—one of nine sacred mountains in northern Italy and a UNESCO World Heritage site. (B)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22

Como

Spend the day at leisure before enjoying the Farewell Dinner with your fellow travelers. (B,D)

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23

Como/Milan/ Return to U.S.

Return to the U.S. (B)

Experience the beauty of Bellagio, the “Pearl of Lake Como,” beloved by many for its colorful houses.



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THE PALACE HOTEL

The ideally located, classic Belle Époque Palace Hotel is a delightful establishment with an ideal setting on the lungolago—the lakefront promenade—overlooking Lake Como, just steps away from Como’s beautiful marble Duomo and the medieval, pedestrian-only town center. Venetian stucco artistry, Italian marble and antique furniture provide subtle touches of 19th-century elegance throughout the hotel.

Its expertly landscaped gardens are the perfect setting to admire enchanting views across Lake Como. The Garden Bar Ceccato, with its terrace overlooking the lake, is an excellent place to enjoy the hotel’s renowned homemade ice cream or a cappuccino.

Each of the hotel’s 94 renovated guest rooms is tastefully appointed with a private bathroom, air conditioning, satellite television, minibar and hair dryer. Meals feature fresh seasonal Italian ingredients, local specialties and international cuisine. Regional wine selections accompany dinner. The hotel staff provides exceptional service.

Tour Cost Per Person:

Double occupancy: \$3,995 Single occupancy: \$4,995
Taxes are included.

Treasures of Bologna and Florence

POST-PROGRAM OPTION

\$1,995 per person, double occupancy

\$2,995 per person, single occupancy

Few cities have the power to enchant quite like Bologna and Florence, both UNESCO World Heritage sites. Enjoy a walking tour of Bologna’s storied medieval square, from Piazza Malpighi up through the heart of the city to Piazza Maggiore. Enjoy a visit to the legendary Basilica of San Petronio with its 15th century frescoes. During the walk, admire the 17th-century Anatomical Theater at Archiginnasio—the ancient seat of the University of Bologna, which exhibits on its walls one of the richest heraldic collections in the world.

Discover the glory of Florence’s historical center, the birthplace of the Renaissance and home to amazing pieces of unparalleled art, architecture and literature. Admire Filippo Brunelleschi’s iconic dome on the Duomo and Lorenzo Ghiberti’s bronze-cast “Doors of Paradise”—created for the Baptistery of San Giovanni to depict scenes from the Old Testament. Savor an afternoon at the world-famous Uffizi Gallery to view works by such iconic artists as Botticelli, Giotto, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci. Conclude your sojourn with a tour of Ravenna’s historical center to see the stunning Ravenna Cathedral and the majestic Basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo.

Details will be provided with your reservation confirmation.



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The Romantic Allure of the Italian Lake District

Through the centuries, Italy's Lake District has seduced the hearts, minds and souls of artists and writers, including Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Edith Wharton, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini and Ernest Hemingway. Long before the Romans annexed the region 2,000 years ago and began to build their well-ordered towns, it was settled by Etruscans and invaded by Celts. Following the Romans through the Renaissance, nobility built palatial holiday villas, filled them with priceless art and laid out extraordinary gardens. European aristocrats of the 18th and 19th centuries considered the Italian Lake District an essential stop on their "Grand Tour" of Europe, as chronicled in E.M. Forster's *A Room With a View*.

Lombardy became one of the richest and most economically developed areas of Italy and Europe due to its agricultural production, trade and banking activities that extended throughout the continent.

To this day, the region remains of paramount importance to Italy. The mild climate and the snowcapped Alpine peaks descending to serene lake shores continue to lure the wealthy, as well as celebrities and elite travelers from around the world. From the deep-blue glacial lakes of Como, Maggiore and picturesque Orta to the enchanting Villa del Balbianello, and from colorful Bellagio—the "Pearl of Lake Como"—to the modern sophistication of Milan, discover the exquisite gem that is the Italian Lake District.

The beautiful town of Stresa is a quintessential and cherished destination in the Italian Lake District.

