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#### Head Office

Via Tommaseo, 13 - 04100 LATINA  
Tel: +39 - 0773 - 1760367  
Fax: +39 - 0773 - 1760368

#### Branch Office

Corso Italia, 137  
Sant'Agnello di Sorrento (NA)  
Tel/Fax: +39-0773412570



## Hidden Gardens of Italy





## Italian Botanic gardens: guided tours



of the whole landscape, are the Brenta River Gardens and Villas.



**All our tours are aimed to customers passionate for botanical sciences, as well as for the eager travelers who want to discover the hidden corners of a country which at any time and in any corner of its landscape always reserves outstanding surprises!**



**The areas of interest of our tours cannot be summarized in one simple catalogue;  
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**We show herein enclosed just some of the most interesting sites and destinations like i.e.:**

- Ancient gardens near Rome, Naples and Pompeii
- Medieval cloister gardens and castles throughout Italy
- Renaissance gardens - particularly in Florence area, with its mannerist and early baroque gardens;
- Lake maggiore (Borromee Islands) and Lake d'Orta islands: with their marvelous gardens;
- Old botanical gardens - in Padua, Vicenza, Parma and other ancient cities of northern Italy.

- In Lazio region: Ninfa Gardens, nearby the city of Latina, Tivoli gardens and more;
- Ischia Island: Gardens of La Mortella and hot spring water gardens;
- Capri Island: Axel-Munthe gardens
- In Veneto, Trentino and Friuli regions we have plenty of proposals for beautiful Palladian villas and hidden gardens on the Brenta river side as well as nearby Dolomites.



## CAMPANIA

### Naples Santa Chiara Cloister

The old cloister was transformed after 1742 (by Domenico Vaccaro) through the construction of octagonal pillars, pergolas and seats with ceramic tiles (majolica) showing 64 scenes (landscapes, masquerades, mythological scenes etc). Two octagonal fountains were also built. The cloister is lush and luxurious, a notable departure from the plain grass lawns of early monastic cloisters. Yet it is a

calm place in contrast with the bustle of Neapolitan streets. CAPRI Island Villa San Michele - Axel Munthe Garden This is the focus of Axel Munthe's *The Story of San Michele* published in 1929 and reprinted ever-after. It has perhaps the most dramatic location of any garden in Europe and is one of the most-visited gardens in Italy. Munthe said that the villa had no architect and that so far I did not know in what style the house was going to be built, all that would settle itself as the work went on (Ch 21). Bruce Chatwin is hard on Munthe (in "Among the ruins" in *Anatomy of Restlessness*) writing that There was indeed a loggia peopled with statues - genuine and fake - of gods and emperors, and fragments of ancient marble, some salvaged from the imperial villa, were stuck into the walls like nuts.

### Ravello - Villa Rufolo gardens - Villa Cimbrone Gardens.

It is easier to travel to Ravello than describing the beauty of their botanic gardens! The two beautiful Villas and their gardens (a true paradise) have been home to many famous names from the world of art, science and politics. It was a meeting place of the English on the Amalfi coast and for the famous London Bloomsbury set. To mention just a few illustrious guests: E.M.

Forster, Lytton Strachey, Keynes, Henry Moore, Eliot, Crick, Piaget, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, the Duke and Duchess of Kent and Winston Churchill. It was the setting for the famous elopement of actress Greta Garbo and Leopold Stokowsky and has also played host to many important scientific and medical meetings at an international level. Wherever any traveler may come from, this place deserves a visit!

### La Mortella (Ischia Island) "La Mortella"

means the place of the myrtles. The garden was made by the English composer, William Walton and his Argentinian wife, Susana. Walton loved the isolation and composed there for 35 years. His wife believed there was a connection between music and gardening.

### Caserta Palazzo Reale "La Reggia"

Caserta is often seen as an Italian Versailles, though its Neapolitan designer thought otherwise. Luigi Vanvitelli, an Italian patriot, was well-read in literature and philosophy and worked closely with his Bourbon patron. Charles III, his

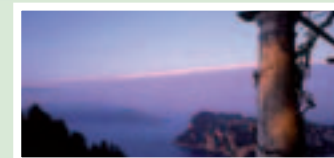
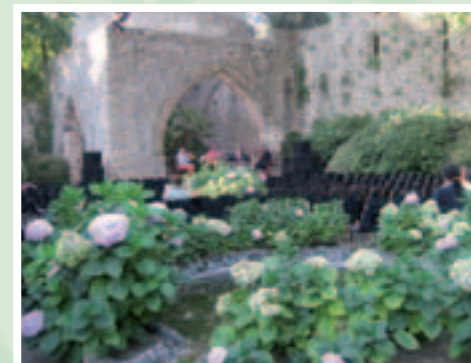
patron, wished to be an absolute but enlightened monarch. He was encouraged by a local philosopher, Giambattista Vico, who later became very famous. Vico saw monarchy as a necessity and myth as a key to understanding society. Caserta has a great sculpture programme based on the myths in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

### Pompeii Gardens

The eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD was a disaster for the citizens of Pompeii. Yet it was a boon for garden historians: about 500 domestic gardens were preserved. The 1942 bombing of Pompeii was a disaster for garden historians. Still, much survives and more is being excavated each year. Pompeii had been a Greek city and a Samnite city before it was colonised in 80 BC by another Italian tribe, known to us as The Romans. Many Pompeian buildings pre-date the Roman conquest. Town houses have several types of garden space: Atrium: a small paved court, allowing light to enter and smoke to escape, since houses did not have windows.

### Gardens of Negombo - (on Ischia island).

One of the most ancient Greek settlements in Western E. pe, the necropolis of ancient Pithecusa is located in San Montano Bay. The Eubeans landed here around 770 BC attracted by the protected position of the bay offering their ships a safe haven from winds and heavy seas. In 1946, Duke Luigi Silvestro Camerini, humanist and great traveler, reached Ischia in quest of a place to found a park in which to express his great passion for botany. The enchantment of the place and its surprising similarity to the Bay of Negombo which he had admired in Ceylon caused the choice to fall upon San Montano Bay.

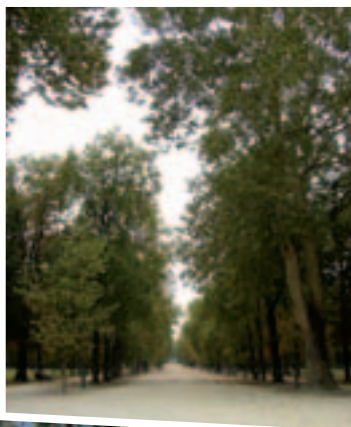




# EMILIA ROMAGNA

## Gardens of Parma's Duke (Parma)

This park contains five beautiful building gems: the sixteenth century "Palazzo Ducale", completely altered in the eighteenth century to reflect the taste for more classical lines, is decorated with important pictorial cycles and spectacular stuccoed vaults. The "Palazzetto Sanvitale" preserves instead the admirable harmony of the late fifteenth century structure, thanks to the perfect symmetry and the airy porticoes. Deep into one of the charming little woods of the Garden is the eighteenth century "Tempietto" (little temple), built to resemble a ruin where Arcadian shows were staged. Created in the middle of the XVI century by merging some private plots of land with various vegetable garden allotments. The current structure is due to Philip II of Bourbon, whom by the middle of the eighteenth century, entrusted French architect Ennemond Alexandre Petitot, the distinguished representative of the extremely sophisticated taste of transition from rocaille to neo-classicism, with the task of rebuilding it. Drawing his inspiration from French gardening treatises between the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries, he characterised its design through strict geometric patterns. The French-style is clearly detectable today, following the significant restoration work completed in 2001, which has restored the correct paving and redefined the green areas.

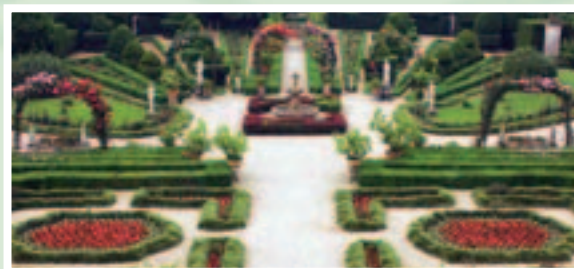
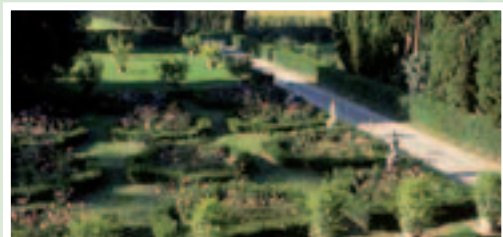


the main entrance to the majestic Castle of the XIV century - and the lines of the avenues which appear to guide the eye, co-exist with the romantic atmosphere created by the wooded areas and the sinuous paths leading deep into them, in a play of light and shade among the trees. The park is dotted with fountains, statues, little bridges and small ditches. Fully integrated in the luxuriant vegetation beyond

an arched passageway through a hornbeam hedge appears the fairy-tale "children's house" - wanted by the Duke, Giuseppe, for his younger daughters Uberta and Nane - close to a yew labyrinth.

## Villa Montericco Pasolini (Imola)

In the fifteenth century the estate consisted only of an ancient keep - preserved to this very day - which was then decorated in the eighteenth century. As time went by, the agricultural estate was created. Magnificent orchards of apricot trees began to be created in the fertile Romagna region and, as of the eighteenth century, vineyards. In the first half of the nineteenth century the Sangiovese, the Cabernet Franc and other fine wines were introduced. Around the villa lies a wood in which it is still possible to find a



## Castle of "Grazzano Visconti" (Piacenza)

The Park of the Grazzano Visconti Castle was designed and established between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century by Duke Giuseppe Visconti di Modrone, the father of film director Luchino Visconti who spent his childhood here. This is an example of an eclectic garden, in which diverse inspirations live together in harmony; the symmetry of the Italian garden - situated just opposite



number of fallow deer. The parterre created in the twentieth century by Maria Pasolini Ponti is a corner full of age-old roses, modern roses and bengala roses. Her descendants are instead responsible for the renovation of the buildings, the upkeep and replanting of the wood, of trees, of hedges and a collection of different kinds of lavender, with their colours ranging from grey-blue to an intense violet. Most Italian and E. pean gardens no longer have anything to share with their contexts.

## Museum of Antique Rose (Modena)

The Antique Rose Museum Garden sprang from an idea linked to a passion for Roses. It opened to the public for the first time in May 2003 with the intention of collecting, preserving and exhibiting to visitors the greatest number of antique roses existing in the world. In 2004 it was decided to go all out with the project dedicated to antique Roses. Topics such as "Roses and art, Roses and food, Roses and history, education and publishing were discussed. In 2005 the mission was extended to become an international reference point for antique Roses. The Antique Rose Museum Garden extends over 43 hectares of hills in the Modena area, halfway between Maranello and Serramazzoni.



## King's Palace of Colorno (Parma)

This marvelous garden is dated back to the second half of the XVth century under the Sanseverino dynasty. With the accession of Ranuccio Farnese and his wife Marguerite Yolanda di Savoia, the boundary walls were

made near the palace creating the difference in height between the upper and lower gardens still visible today were completed.

The recent restoration of the park carried out by Parma Province restored the original parterre dating back to the first half of the 18th century. The operation was developed over 24,000 square meters while two green side galleries of

Carpinus mark the boundaries of the parterre with a windowed communication trench recreating two green cloisters 120 meters long. Within the central space, four large flowerbeds with geometric design in Buxus with begonias, ageratum, tagetes and irises dominate.



## Palazzo Fantini (Forlì)

The original building goes back to the 17th century but only during the next century did it acquire its present form. The precious art nouveau decorations were added in the 20th century. The present owner decided to accurately recover the stables, cellars, two large courtyards and the granary - typical buildings of the ancient country estates. The Park with the Italian garden is an extremely fascinating jewel. It has various species of plants common to great Italian landscape gardens: not only ilex, chestnut, lime, white poplar, abies pinsapo and holly trees, but also conifers such as Pinus Nigra and especially the majestic cedars (C. Libani, C. deodora, C. atlantica).



## Villa La Babina (Imola)

Immersed in the countryside on the outskirts of the small borgo of Sasso Morelli, which lies on the plains leading away from Imola; the borgo was renovated by the architect Cosimo Morelli at the end of the 18th century. This carefully landscaped park has all the key characteristics of the



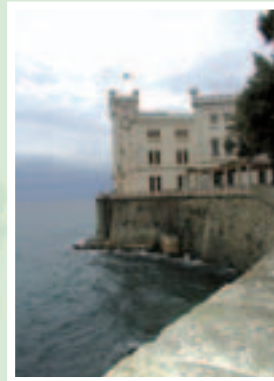
19th century parks that adjoined the mansion houses built on the plains surrounding Bologna. Emerging from the plain like a green "island", it features the following classic elements: a screen of trees surrounding the buildings and extensive lawns and open spaces. Today, it retains its original rural setting and so offers a purity of landscape that has, in so many cases, been lost to encroaching urbanisation.



# FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

## Miramare castle park (Trieste)

Emerging from the Bay of Grignano is Miramare Castle Park. Up to 1851, this area was an expanse of dry land, until the young, romantic Archduke Maximilian of Hapsburg transformed it by building his own eclectically styled white castle and the wonderful park adjoining it. The young Archduke, with his enthusiasm for botany, was also responsible for designing and overseeing the hilly landscape, assisted by his trusted gardener, Jellinek. This resulted in a coastline garden built on a small promontory housing winding paths, steps and a parterre boasting west-facing terraces. At the Archduke's request, Miramare Park became a botanical laboratory in every sense of the word, where a fight against the bitter-cold Trieste winters was engaged to acclimatise even the most exotic species. In order to remedy some of the damage caused by the Bora wind of the Adriatic, he had a dense wood of Austrian black pines (pinus nigra) planted to serve as a windbreaker, a stratagem later replicated at other coastline properties.



## Palace Coronini Cronberg (Gorizia)

The park of Palazzo Coronini Cronberg is without a doubt one of the most important green spaces in Gorizia, combining as it does art and nature. The park has also played an important role in the history of the city. It was the farsighted Count Guglielmo Coronini (1905-1990), the last descendent of a Gorizian noble family, who ensured that this picturesque part of the city, once known as the "Austrian Nice", was opened to the local public and to the many tourists that flock to visit it each year. The



design of the park appears to have been entirely the work of Count Alfredo Coronini (1846-1920). Sometime around 1880, drawing on the experience he had acquired in his travels throughout Italy and abroad, the count decided to transform the original, Italian style, small square garden to one side of the palace into a splendid English style park.

# LAZIO

## Sacro Bosco/Villa Orsini (Bomarzo)

As pure fantasy, this garden is without equal. It was made in a wood and many of its giant sculptures were carved from living rock. Stylistically, Bomarzo represents a step towards the drama of the Baroque. Poking gentle fun at the egotistical iconography of the Este and the Medici families, it is also a pre-cursor of the English landscape garden. With the elegant taste of a renaissance duke, Vincino Orsini created features with some resemblance to those in a modern theme park. But his aims were altogether serious. Orsini was a military captain with literary tastes. He conceived the garden as a Sacred Wood (Sacro Bosso), inspired by the description of Arcadia in Virgil's Aeneid.



## Botanic Gardens of Stigliano (Canale Monterano - Rome)

The nine springs and the two streams crossing it make of it a unique place. After a century of abandon, the Imperial SPA, the hotel, the 18th century villa and the park have recovered their splendor. Thermal and curative, these waters vaunt a history thousands of years long. After the Etruscans, the first to be charmed by this place, the Romans chose Stigliano as a residential spa. Some vestiges of the antiquity of the Stygian Terme can still be admired in the park such as the ruins of the baths and the consular road. Already in 18th century the prince



Altieri restored to the Stygian Waters their ancient thermal role by reopening the baths to the public, building near the sources a hotel and a small church, which gave life to a

small village. The presence of the deep running thermal waters made the flora of Stigliano extraordinarily exuberant in form and color. The twenty-hectare park completely restored by the marchioness Umberta Patrizi Montoro winds along a magic path traced by the omnipresent water courses which animate hills, clearings and moats while populating them with streams and lakelets to make this land fertile. Maple, centuries old oak, holm oak, sessile oak, hazel, tamarisk and giant bamboo compose a dream-like geometry with the predominant expanse of Roman Pine. Herons, hawks, owls, porcupines, badgers, foxes, weasels and stone martens are the most assiduous guests of Stigliano.



## Gardens of Ninfa (Latina)

The beautiful Gardens of Ninfa (Giardini di Ninfa) are located in the Lazio region of Italy, about 40 miles south-east of Rome. Known mostly to garden enthusiasts, Ninfa and its unique setting are still a fairly well-kept secret. Getting to Ninfa is a challenge, but the garden is worth the effort. Ninfa was a substantial town going back to the times of the Romans. However, during the Middle Ages the town was squabbled over, sacked, beset by malaria and eventually Ninfa was abandoned to the elements. A neglected part of the estate of the aristocratic Caetani family, Ninfa was left to slumber until the twentieth century when descendents transformed the town's ruins into a botanical garden. The last owner, Lelia Caetani, left the garden to a foundation who now run the site in conjunction with the WWF. Now plants wind over ruined towers and

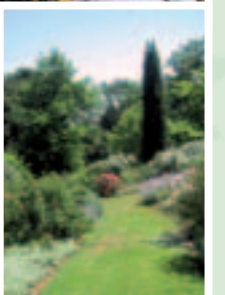
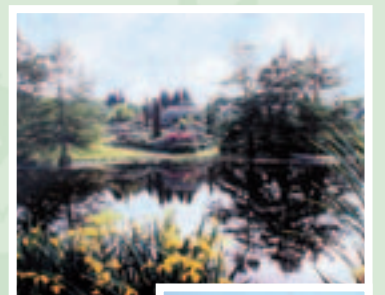


walls, rejoicing in the lush damp conditions. The setting is indescribably atmospheric, with roses scrambling for footholds in ruined archways, and the frescoed church wall still standing open to the weather. Roses, banana trees, maples and resident ducks thrive in the microclimate of Ninfa. The dampness of the location, under the hills facing the coastal plain, leads to an unusual mixture of species.



## Rome - Gardens of "Landriana"

forty kilometres south of Rome, the Landriana Gardens are truly a romantic spot reserving many a pleasant surprise. The gardens, first landscaped by Russell Page, were enlarged and altered throughout the years with the introduction of a number of plants, among which heather, hydrangeas, old roses and camellias. A distinguishing feature of the garden is its division into thirty "rooms", among which surely worth mentioning are the rose garden, in which a myriad sweetly scented roses grow in flower-beds bordered with lavender, thyme and clove pinks; the orange garden, one of the "formal gardens" of the Landriana; the olive garden; the white avenue, an extremely long stairway flanked with large white flower-beds; the blue lawn, with its mostly blue plants; the Spanish pond, hidden among the camphor trees.



## Rome - Oasi di Porto

Situated at the mouth of the Tiber, only a few kilometres from the centre of Rome, it is a truly unique spot both from the naturalist's and from the historian's point of view. At the heart of the nature reserve there lies an hexagonal artificial basin following the layout of the ancient harbour the Emperor Trajan had built and which was connected with the pre-existing harbour Emperor Claudius had ordered to be built for the trading and storage of goods destined to the city of Rome. Trajan's lake was created in the 1920s. Fed by the Tiber and thanks to a complex canalisation system, it is used to irrigate the surrounding farming areas. The reserve also constitutes an ideal habitat and resting place for different species of migratory aquatic birds, both birds of passage and non-migratory birds. Ducks, grebes, cormorants, herons, snipes, seagulls and terns



as well as stilt plovers - which have recently returned can be admired by lying in wait at the "stilts' pond" and the "ducks' roosting post". As for the landscape, the nature reserve is also a large park with such huge trees as Roman pines, planes, holm-oaks, lindens, poplars and ash-trees.

## Rome - San Liberato Park

A real botanical park that contains Canadian maples, Japanese cherries, Spanish firs, liquidambar and Persian perrotias, camphor and tulip trees as well as wild nyssas which in autumn seem to be ablaze. After ten long years of hard-working devotion and creative effort, incessantly engaged in constant interaction with nature and the world of dreams, Count Donato Sanminiatielli, his wife Maria Odescalchi and the great landscape







architect Russel Page gave life to a dream to be presented to others. A part of the garden is devoted to acidophil plants where it is possible to admire a sizeable collection of camellias that well harmonize with the black bamboo, the choysies and the rhododendrons. San Liberato is first and foremost a Romanesque church of incomparable beauty, standing in a wood of secular chestnut trees that borders on the park. San Liberato is also a rose-garden, or better, a gallery of roses, whose delicately coloured profusion is momentarily interrupted by a little stone fountain, the breeding-place and haunt of water-lilies and frogs.



### Rome - Palazzo Patrizi

At the heart of a beautiful century-old park at the foot of the Tolfa mountains, on the site of an ancient Etruscan and Roman settlement, lies the estate of Castel Giuliano, belonging - as of 1546 - to the Patrizi family. Long renovation work carried out by the present owners has restored the ancient buildings and the park surrounding them to their long-forgotten splendour. Unfolding on wide gently sloping turfed terraces, the park results of the harmonious fusion of unspoilt vegetation and careful research into botany and landscaping, in a clever interplay of nuances and colours: cluster pines, oaks, and century-old Lebanon cedars tower above sweet-smelling herbs and flower-laden bushes, highlighting the contrast between unruly nature and nature as interpreted by man. Numerous Etruscan tombs and ruins of Roman walls covered in ferns and lichen will certainly not escape the

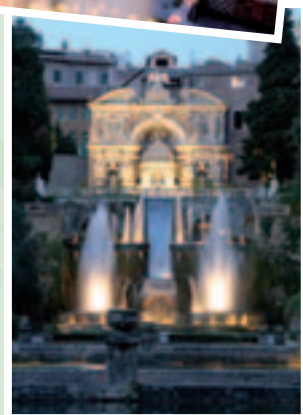


notice of the careful visitor. The truly unique feature of the garden, though, is the extraordinary collection of roses for which Marquise Umberta Patrizi has long had a real passion. Castel Giuliano boasts what is possibly one of the most important private rose gardens to be found in Italy (every year in May there is the famous Feast of the roses).



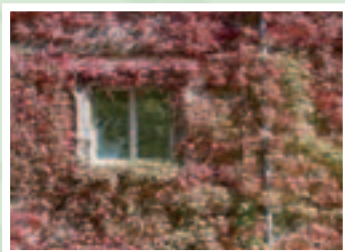
### Tivoli - Villa d'Este gardens

No other garden has such spectacular water-works and theatrical effects. The Ville d'Este is the most important example of a Mannerist garden and verges into the Baroque. Shunning the simplicity of early Tuscan gardens, this Roman "retreat" was designed for the Estes. Cardinal Ippolito d'Este was as proud as he was rich. Visitors could enter by the garden gate at the lowest point of the garden. As they ascended the hill, the water marvels, and the story, unfolded: the garden tells of the family's illustrious ancestors. They included Hercules and other heroes of antiquity. The garden has many references of Ovid's Metamorphosis.



### Villa Aldobrandini gardens

The best and most famous example of the early Italian Baroque style. Instead of standing on one edge, the palace is the centerpiece of the garden layout. It is theatrically set into a wooded hill and, like the other Frascati villas, casts an eye across the Campagna to the dome of St. Peters, Rome. Every aspect of the place is aristocratic. It was designed for a "nephew" of a Pope - this is how the church described papal children until the twentieth century. Villa Aldobrandini occupies an



imposing situation with a broad terrace dominating the town of Frascati. To the rear, there is a water theatre with niches for statues and fountains.

### Villa Adriana (Hadrian's Villa) gardens

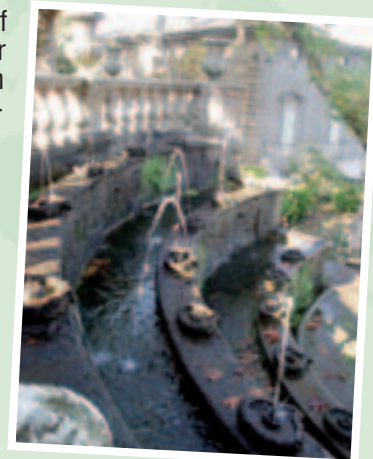
This is the most complete estate to have survived the fall of the Roman empire. It is a larger and grander version of the type of layout praised by Pliny the Younger. Though ruthless, Hadrian was a great emperor, an intellectual, a poet and a designer. His nickname "Greekling" reflects his admiration for Greek culture. Hadrian was born in Spain, near Seville, and loved to have garden features



representing places visited in his years as a military commander. He travelled more extensively than any of his predecessors. In Greece, he could see the villas made after Alexander the Great's conquest of the East. In Egypt he could admire the "land of wonders". His own villa was a lavish water garden.

### Villa Lante

In the eyes of many, this is the consummate example of the best period in the history of garden design: the Mannerist phase of the Italian renaissance. It was designed for Cardinal Gambara, who had a modern taste for outdoor living and eating al fresco. The buildings are treated as garden ornaments, illustrating a good principle, and the overall design is attributed to Vignola. It uses the Palladian circle and square. Every aspect of the garden is perfectly proportioned and richly detailed: a square terrace subdivided into smaller squares, a water parterre, a wonderful fountain in a central position. Design ideas are drawn from earlier projects.



### Palazzo Farnese

A great pentagonal villa-fortress with two quadrilateral parterres on it flanks and a casino in the woods. The layout of the parterres has changed but they remain impressive, if somewhat blank. The garden retreat in the woods, designed by Vignola, is a place of wonder. It lies in a glade at the end of a long path and is known as the Casino del Piacere (House of Pleasure). There is a water staircase, fountains, terraces, a casino and loggia. It was used as a private retreat by Cardinal Orsini.



### Botanic Centrum Mountain

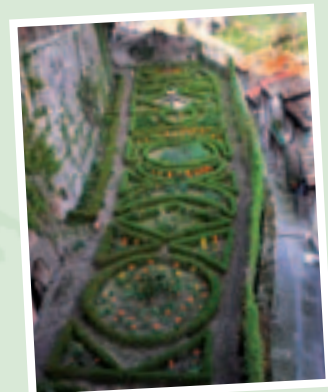
The Moutan Botanical Center is a garden, which boasts of the richest and most complete collection of Chinese Peonies in the world. Born from a deep, twenty-year passion for this flower, it is truly a corner of China in the heart of the Latium countryside which brings together in a single place more than 150,000 plants that can be traced back to 600 different varieties belonging to nearly all the botanical species known and the larger part of the natural cultivated hybrids. Shrubby and herbaceous, they have found their ideal habitat and live together today in a spacious fifteen hectares which, during



flowering, give an incomparable spectacle for charm and beauty. When visiting the Center in Spring, it is possible to follow paths conceived for the best enjoyment of the colors, perfumes and visual effects which the different perspectives can generate on the basis of the characteristics and flowering period of the individual species there.

### Vignanello Castle - Viterbo

The history of Vignanello dates back to 853, when the Benedictine monks erected a citadel on the site. Destroyed at a later date, the citadel was rebuilt as a military stronghold. On the death of Beatrice Farnese, the first feudatory of Vignanello, it was presented to her daughter, Ortensia Baglioni. On the occasion of her marriage to Sforza Marescotti, a courtier at the papal court, the stronghold was transformed into a more comfortable villa. Following generations, and in particular Ottavia Orsini, the wife of Ortensia's nephew, Marcantonio Marescotti, oversaw the creation of the wonderful Italian garden, to this day regarded as one of the most beautiful Italian parterres, at the centre of which one finds a huge basin surrounded by a balustrade: a perfectly rectangular space



crossed by four avenues and subdivided into twelve aligned parterres, composed of mixed hedges of bay, laurel, and box. Today garden and castle alike are lovingly cared for by princesses Claudia and Giada Ruspoli (the family took the name Ruspoli in 1704), who are slowly restoring the place to its antique splendour.

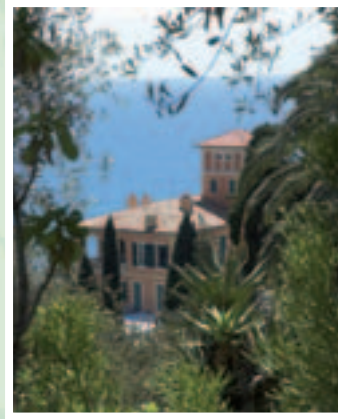




# LIGURIA

## Hanbury gardens (Ventimiglia)

The Italian State bought the building complex in 1860 in order to assure its preservation for scientific purposes. According to the regional law of March 27th, 2000, the Hambury Botanical Gardens, managed by Genoa University, became a regional protected area. The Hanbury Botanical Gardens, situated at few kilometres from the French border, extend to the La Mortola promontory. The history of the Hanbury Gardens is indissolubly linked to his founder, Sir Thomas Hanbury, who turned a promontory of 18 hectares planted with olive trees and vineyards, in one of the most important and famous botanical gardens of exotics plant acclimatisation in the world. Sir Thomas Hanbury left China in 1866 and in March 1867, during an holiday on the French Riviera he was struck by the la Mortola promontory; in 1867 he signed a contract for purchasing the Orengo Palace.



## La Cervara Abbey of St. Girolamo (Portofino)

The abbey was founded in 1361 by a small group of Benedictine monks and in its 7 centuries of history it has seen peaks of great splendour and lows of decline, which is reflected in the various architectural transformations of the building. The Cervara Abbey is situated on a sheer cliff between Santa Margherita and Portofino. Today it is mainly used for conferences, company meetings, concerts, private parties and wedding ceremonies. Of particular importance is the monumental Italian garden, the only one still in Liguria, on two levels connected by pergolas and steps. On the lower part, box-tree hedges in geometric designs such as cones and graded cones (a noteworthy example of the artistic shaping of plants), surround the 17th century marble fountain representing a putto.



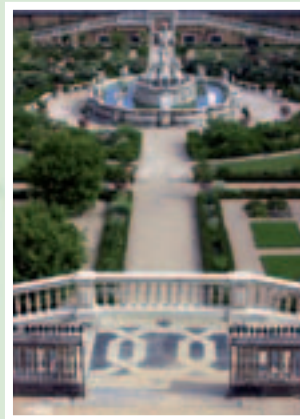
(Buxus Sempervirens L.) are shaped in geometric designs such as cones and graded cones (a noteworthy example of the artistic shaping of plants), surround the 17th century marble fountain representing a putto.



## Villa Serra (Genova)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the marquises of Serra purchased the property from the Pinelli family. After a trip to London in 1851, the marquis Orso decided to convert the farm buildings into a Tudor style house, a medieval tower and an English style park. Work was completed according to plans taken from John Claudius Lou-don's 1846 encyclopaedia. After a long period of abandon the park and villa were bought in 1982 by the municipal councils of Genoa, Sant' Olcese and Serra Riccò and the Villa Serra Consortium was established to run them. Following restoration to its original layout, the park was re-opened to the public in 1992, and the villa was restored to its full splendour in 2001. In 2004 a restaurant and a charming little hotel were opened in the restored eighteenth century stables and neogothic tower. The park, which nestles in the Comago river valley, encompasses three vast meadows and a large lake which lies in front of the Tudor house..

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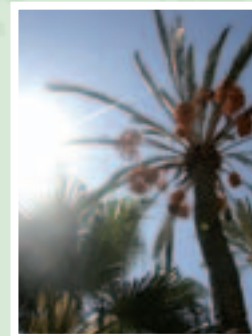


## Palazzo del Principe Gardens (Genova)

The Palace was the residency of Andrea Doria, an admiral for the Emperor Charles V and a protagonist in European politics in the first half of the XVI century, who had it built and decorated between 1521 and 1540. A de facto Lord of the city, though within the Republican context, Doria wanted to build a palace that could be a symbol, due to its large size and rich decorations, of obtained power: for this reason, his residency was the only "royal palace" that the Republic of Genoa recognised during the course of its century-old history. In addition to the famous cycle of frescoes painted by Perin del Vaga and the spectacular tapestry collection, the Palace was also famous for its external spaces and in particular for the garden to the south of the palace, whose creation was started around 1530 and was then completed, at the beginning of the 1600's, by Andrea's successor, Giovanni Andrea I. The garden was organised into ordered flowerbeds and was embellished with marble fountains, many of which are still conserved today and the most important of which is "Neptune's Fountain", which was carved by Taddeo Carlone in 1599. During the 1800's, the garden underwent a partial transformation into a romantic, English-style park. Damaged in 1944 by war events, the central part of the garden has been recently



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den and appreciate its history and peculiarities.

## Villa Mariani (Imperia)

In the upper part of Bordighera, Buen Retiro of many Italian and foreign artists, is located the Garden of Villa Mariani, which today is the Italian seat of the Foundation Pompeo Mariani. The Cottage built for the will of the Countess Fanshawe by Charles Garnier, author of the Paris Opera, in 1885, it was located inside the old Garden Moreno which became from 1909, after the acquisition by Pompeo Mariani and the related enlargements of the architects Broggi and Winter, his place of residence. In 1911 the artist made build the Atelier called "Specola". After a long time, in 1998, after the proposal of Carlo Bagnasco, the current President of the Foundation, with the approval of the la test heiress of the artist, Stefania Scevak, the body was created to promote the figure of the Artist and to protect the structures of landscape and architecture. Walking in the park, which still preserves its Nineteenth Century flavour of English garden, the careful visitor can notice the glimpses that Claude Monet represented in some of his works in 1884. The Artist had been captivated by the marvellous position of the Park on the coast and in the old village of Bordighera, so he reproduced the points with worldwide known specimens.



tly restored and the layout from the 1500's has been recovered by following accurate archaeological and archival surveys. The selection of the species to use, which was partially based on historical descriptions of the garden, was guided by the principal of using only species and varieties which were known and used in Italy between the end of the 1500's and the beginning of the 1600's (which included the first botanical tulips).

The Palazzo del Principe, which over the centuries remained the property of the Doria Pamphilj heirs, was opened to the public in 1995.

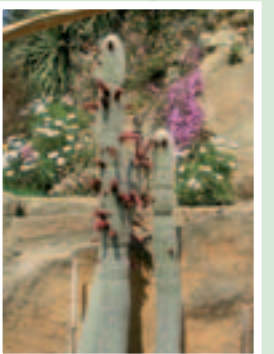
## Villa Durazzo park (S. Margherita Ligure)

Villa Durazzo Park is situated on the top of a hill in the centre of Santa Margherita Ligure. The park surrounds the villa built in the 17th century by the marquis Durazzo and has a wonderful position overlooking the Tigullio Gulf. The little citrus plantation that lies on the terrace in front of the sea, between the garden wall and the balustrade, is the oldest part of the park; It's made of orange, lemon- and grapefruit- trees planted by the family Durazzo to create a green zone for the visitor who climbed from the sea towards the villa. The layout of the "Italian Garden" was developed by the family Centurione who succeeded the Durazzo in the 19th century. The garden is characterized by the geometric designs of the box-trees hedges embellished by several plants of Cycadaceae - among them some rare male plants of Cycas revoluta and an example of Encephalartos Lehmannii. Along the borders of the garden are plants of hydrangea, magnolia and various species of camellia japonica including the important variety "Contessa Lavinia Maggi". In 1998 the Italian Garden was twinned with the Botanical Gardens Hanbury of Ventimiglia.

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## Exotic garden Pallanca (Imperia)

Bordighera's history is strongly connected to Ludwig Winter, landscape painter, botanist and agronomist who collaborated in the creation of many gardens, parks and avenues along the Ligurian and French Rivas. He worked together with Giacomo Pallanca for many years, who had abandoned traditional olive cultivation in his farm in Airole; it was his son Bartolomeo who decided to invest in a still little known sector, dedicating himself to the passion of cultivating exotic and tropical plants which he was able to learn about during his apprenticeship period. In 1910, he decided to create the B.Pallanca floral horticultural establishment. The Pallanca family, who today is still dedicated to cultivating this species originating from all over the world, has obtained international experience having participated in the preparation of the largest botanical gardens in Europe, the exotic sector of the Montjuich park and the Gardens of Castel Trauttmansdorff in Merano. This introduction is necessary without a doubt for visitors who want to prepare their visit to the garden and appreciate its history and peculiarities.



Walking in the park, which still preserves its Nineteenth Century flavour of English garden, the careful visitor can notice the glimpses that Claude Monet represented in some of his works in 1884. The Artist had been captivated by the marvellous position of the Park on the coast and in the old village of Bordighera, so he reproduced the points with worldwide known specimens.



# LOMBARDIA

## Il Vittoriale (Brescia)

The art of gardens resembles poetry in an outstanding way: the poet does with words what the gardener does with plants, flowers and water features. Our thoughts go to the "Vittoriale degli Italiani", the citadel at Gardone Riviera where Gabriele D'Annunzio arrived in 1921, making of it his final home. It was designed with the help of the architect Gian Carlo Maroni as a mausoleum of his adventure as an artist and hero. Collector and interior designer par excellence, the poet designed in great detail the extravagant scenography of his home, the Prioria, that houses thousands of collections of objects d'art, ceramics, silver and carpets. Like the interiors, the author landscaped the nine hectares of parkland sloping down to the lake with great care. Nature and Art are depicted, more than ever, as one "bi-frontal god", with apparitions, symbols and bizarre perspectives, enhanced by a profusion of oleanders, palms, acanthus, rhododendrons and lots of cypress and olive trees among laurel and myrtle hedges, while the geometry of the terraces of an old lemon-house cohabit surprisingly with the sensuality of a rose garden. The pomegranate grows everywhere, that fruit that d'Annunzio elected as his lifelong emblem and that in the Frutteto (the Orchard)

was celebrated in the opulent sculpture of the Canefora by Napoleone Martinuzzi. The airy open-air amphitheatre, currently the venue of a famous summer theatrical season, rises against the incredible natural backdrop. D'Annunzio is also a hero of the First World War and his military experience is illustrated in the War Museum set up the wing of the Prioria called Schifamondo.



## Villa Carlotta (Como)

Villa Carlotta lays on the western coast of the Como lake with an extension of 70.000 square meters and a wonderful view on the mountains and the villages of Bellano, Varenna, Bellagio. The building was begun in 1690 by Giorgio Clerici, a Milanese banker, then the villa first passed in 1795 into the hands of marquis Giambattista Sommariva, a big business man at Napoleon's time, then it was bought by princess Marianne of Nassau, who gave it as a wedding present to her daughter Charlotte on the occasion of her marriage with Georg, Prince of Saxe-Meiningen. The Italian garden with its staircases, balustrades, fountain and the tunnel of citrus plants belongs to the Clerici period; to Sommariva's time date the masterpieces of art - still nowadays in the house museum (work of Canova, Hayez and Thorvaldsen) and the romantic park on the hill with grotesques long paths and sudden amazing views, whilst the landscape garden was developed on a large scale by the Saxen-Meiningen, to whom it owes its wide reputation.



## Villa Melzi D'Eril (Como)

Francesco Melzi d'Eril, Duke of Lodi, Vice President of the First Italian Republic and a personal friend of Napoleon, decided at the beginning of the nineteenth century to build a summer residence at Bellagio on a site with an incomparable view and with a mild climate. He wanted it to be as elegant as the Villa Reale in Monza and other villas on Lake Como. Construction of the house was entrusted to Giocondo Albertolli, the architect on whom he had also relied for his Milan palace, while the park was placed in the hands of Luigi Canonica and the agronomist Luigi Villoresi, creators of Monza Park. Constructed to a neo-classical design between 1808 and 1810, its proportions were designed to blend elegantly into the area of the second promontory of Bellagio, almost becoming an integral part of it. The great appeal of this property lies in its extraordinary park facing on to the lake and in the ploys that create an illusion of space, although in reality it is confined between the foot of the hill, which is also a monumental park, and the water. The visitor

is greeted by a small lake of water lilies, just beyond a kiosk in Moorish style with a delightful view of Bellagio and in front of the monument of Dante and Beatrice by Comolli, which seems to have inspired Liszt's "Dante sonata".



## Isola Del Garda (S. Felice del Benaco, Brescia)

Isola del Garda is a place of rare and special beauty. A precious jewel, bursting with history, memories and legends. A treasure surrounded by the clear waters of the lake. A picturesque rock that has welcomed ancient people from the Romans to the Longobards. It was the home of St. Francis, St. Anthony of Padova, St. Bernard of Siena and probably Dante Alighieri. The early 20th century villa built in Neo-Gothic-Venetian style rises up southwards, in all its elegance and charm. This impressive and harmonious building is full of surprising architectural details with Italian style terraces and gardens sloping down to the lake. Everywhere you find yourself surrounded by the exuberant and undisturbed vegetation, native and exotic plants, rare scents and unique flowers. The heavenly woods are made up of Pine and cypress trees, acacias, magnolias and agaves. The sound of bird song seems to echo the joyful spirits of those who have respected, cared for and loved this place throughout the centuries. In the past the Island was named "Insula Craniae", and later on at the turn of the century it was named "Isola del Garda" and then "Isola dei Frati", "Isola dei Lechi", "Isola Scotti", "Isola De Ferrari" and "Isola Borghese Cavazza". It was already inhabited in Roman times and was used as a hunting ground up until the year 879 when it became the residence of Carlo Magno who later donated the island to the monks. In 1221 St. Francis of Assisi built a simple hermitage on the rocks facing north. The five monks who inhabited the Island lived a life of absolute poverty and contemplation closed away within their cells, cut out of the rock. St. Anthony of Padova visited the place in 1227. It is also likely that Dante Alighieri himself visited the Island in 1304.



## Villa D'Este (Como)

The Villa was built in 1568 by Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio from a design by Pellegrino Tibaldi, known as the pilgrim. At the end of the eighteenth century the villa was bought by marquis Bartolomeo Calderara for his wife, Vittoria Peluso, who restored the building and modified the design of the gardens. In 1815 the property was taken over by Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales and repudiated wife to future George IV of England who gave the estate its current name. The Villa changed hands many times: becoming a hotel for the first time in 1856; for two years from 1868 tsarina Maria Fedorowna lived in the splendid residence, in awe of the surrounding countryside; finally in 1873 the Villa was reopened as a luxurious Hotel, today one of the most famous in world.



## Villa Borromeo Visconti Litta (Milano)

Villa Visconti Borromeo Litta was built at the end of the XVI century. Creator of the whole complex was the Count Pirro I Visconti Borromeo, who, around 1585 gave to his estate in Lainate a playful dimension, while up to that moment it was characterized by agricultural exploitation. Outstanding patron of the arts in Milan, very widely educated and interested in different fields, Pirro I made use of the collaboration of the best Lombard artists, such as the architect Martino Bassi, the sculptors Francesco Brambilla Jr. and Marco Antonio Prestinari, the painters Camillo Procaccini and Pier Francesco Mazzucchelli (named "il Morazzone") to transform his Lainate estate into a "place of enchantment". In addition to the works for the architectonic renovation of the Palace, Pirro I set the garden and built the Nymphaeum. This building can be reasonably considered one of the most important examples in northern Italy for the abundance of decorations and for the variety of its water games, that also today enjoy the visitors during the summer. The Nymphaeum consists of a series of rooms decorated with mosaic and with artificial grottoes. It was meant to collect the Count's enormous art collection. In 1970 the Municipal Administration of Lainate purchased it. Thanks to the Monuments and Fine Arts Office and the intervention of public and private contributions, restoration works began and today the monumental complex recovers its ancient splendour.

## Villa Del Balbianello (Como)

The best way to reach Villa del Balbianello on Lake Como is by motorboat: during your short boat trip you will catch the first glimpses of one of the most beautiful gardens on Lake Como. The Villa was built by Cardinal Angelo Maria Durini (1725-1796) at the end of the 18th century and is situated on a sheer wooded promontory above the lake. This position offers a fascinating sight that inspired numerous painters and engravers of the landscapes of Lake Como. Today the Villa is seen as it was under its last owner, the explorer Guido Monzino, who bequeathed it to the FAI (Italian Fund for the Environment) in 1988. The garden is a real work of



art, built on terraces obtained from the rock.



## MARCHE

### Parco Storico Seghetti panichi (Ascoli Piceno)

Once Italy had been united in 1860, the robust defences near the Lama river - with the Mediaeval tower, the castle, the country house - were able to be embellished by the addition of graceful gardens. Planned and realised between 1875 and 1890 by the great German botanist and landscape gardener Ludwig Winter, the park testifies to his passion for palm trees of various kinds. One can admire two rare exemplars of *Jubaea spectabilis*, numerous *Phoenix canariensis* and *Ph. dactylifera*, the silvery-blue *Heritaea armata*, some monumental *Washingtonia filifera*, as well as *Chamaerops humilis* and groups of *Yucca gloriosa* and *Cordyline australis*. This park has the distinction of being the first historical garden in Italy to undergo bio-energetic measurements over large areas. The electromagnetic readings were conducted for a period of two years. Strolling through an enchanting natural landscape and stopping to rest in tranquil and calming areas, visitors can enjoy an itinerary that offers them the possibility of testing the different beneficial effects of various kinds of plants.



## PIEMONTE

### The Borromee Islands (Lake Maggiore)

comprise three real islands (Island the Mother, largest, Beautiful Island, dedicated from Carl III Borromeo to its Isabella wife, Island of the Fishermen, thus called for the main activity from practiced always here), Isolino, that one of Saint Giovanni, place own in front of Verbania and a isolotto, the Malghera, little more than a deserted rock. Botanic Gardens in Isola bella and Isola Madre



### Villa Taranto (Verbania)

Located on the Piedmont's shore of Lake Maggiore between Intra and Pallanza, the garden has been created starting from 1932 in the estate that captain Neil McEacharn had purchased from the marquise of Sant'Elia with the ambition of creating a botanical complex of international standing. Born in the south of Scotland in 1884, McEacharn came from a wealthy aristocratic Scottish family, thing that allowed him to devote himself full time to the great passions of his life: botany, gardening and travelling. He was therefore, one of the few impassioned gentlemen who succeeded in touring the world repeatedly (it seems 7 times, the first of which when he was only 16) always searching for new plants to acclimatize in his gardens.



### Parco Villa Pallavicino (Verbania)

Built in 1855 as a holiday house for Queen Margherita and King Umberto I by Ruggero Bonghi (a friend of Manzoni's and Rosmini's) in one of the most beautiful spots on Lake Maggiore, the villa was at a later date sold to the Duke of Villambrosa, to whom we are indebted for the first park and the introduction of plants at the time relatively unknown in E.pe such as sequoias and *Liriodendron tulypifera*. The villa became the property of the Marquises Pallavicino in 1862: to them we the present layout of the park. Covering a surface of about 0,15 square kilometres, the park includes a zoological garden planned by the present proprietor's mother, open lawns and classical gardens.



### Palazzo Malingri di Bagnolo (Cuneo)

The slope of the Piedmont hill of Valle Po is broken by an earthen platform held in place by dry stone masonry. The park of Malingri Palace in Bagnolo stands on this platform. The seventeenth-century arrangement of hedges, flower beds, alleys lined with *carpinus alba*, and trees with tall trunks was redesigned at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the style of an English garden, with winding paths, places to admire the view, small buildings and dark woods. Even today the park's twin souls, one classical and the other Romantic, co-exist and complement each other,



surprising the visitor with attractiveness of the combination. The park, covering about two hectares, is rich in centuries-old trees as much as 40-45 metres tall, with examples of *pinus nigra*, *pinus austriaca*, *cedri deodara*, *taxus bacata*, *metasequoie* as well as *fagus tricolor*, oaks, chestnuts, *libocedrus* and *criptomeria japonica*, which surround the two spacious, airy lawns. A magnificent *liriodendron tulipifera* welcomes visitors right at the park entrance, flowering in May with thousands of yellow tulips.



### Venaria Reale (Turin)

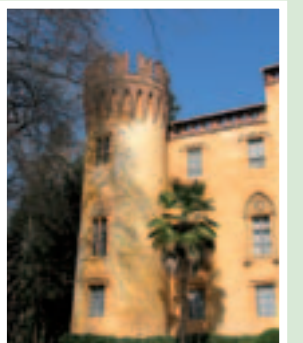
Venaria Reale is an excellent example of the magnificence of royal architecture between the XVII and XVIII centuries. By the middle of the Seventeenth century, Charles Emmanuel II of Savoy wished to build a dwelling "for pleasure and hunting" and therefore commissioned architect Amedeo di Castellamonte, who drew up plans for a small town village, a royal palace, some gardens and a wood. The main building was the "Diana's Royal Palace", built between 1660 and 1671 and extended starting from 1716 by the famous Filippo Juvarra, whose other works included the 'Galleria Grande' (Great Gallery), "Cappella di Sant'Uberto" (Saint Uberto Chapel), the 'Citroniera' (Orangerie) and the 'Scuderia Grande' (Great Racing Stable). The gardens too were altered with time, undergoing a style change from Italian to French gardens, taking up 125 hectares with elegant parterres, long avenues, pergolas and fishponds. Recognised by Unesco as "World Heritage Site", since 1997 La Venaria has been undergoing extensive and thorough restoration work, which has included, among other things, the restructuring of the gardens.



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### The Roccolo Castle (Cuneo)

Built in Neo-Gothic style the residence whose building started in 1831 - was the summer residence of Marquis Roberto Tapparelli d'Azeglio and Costanza Alfieri di Sostegno. The park is an outstanding example of historical garden in Piedmont and was created under the direct supervision of the owners. A letter by Roberto d'Azeglio to his son Emanuele, dated 1831, mentions the intervention on the Roccolo Park of Xavier Kurten, the same famous landscape architect who, from 1820, started redesigning the paths and areas of the park of the Royal Racconigi Castle. Over the years, the park was then altered, with reference to two different types of garden: in the section at the rear of the castle, the mark of Costanza Alfieri di Sostegno is detectable, with a more spiritual and romantic interpretation, given by the presence of a series of small waterfalls (restored in 2007) and other water features, whereas in the area in front of the castle, embellished by a set of terraces, there is a more classic vision closer to the ideas of Guglielmo Moffa di Lisio, a cousin of Roberto d'Azeglio. There were several changes and innovations made to the park, judging from the letters written by Roberto Tapparelli d'Azeglio and Costanza Alfieri di Sostegno to their son Emanuele, during the period from 1831 to 1862.



### Castello di Pralormo (Cuneo)

The castle, an austere construction dating back to the 13th century underwent alterations that transformed the large fortified estate into a pleasant residence surrounded by a luxurious English garden designed in the fourteenth century by the court landscape painter Xavier Kurten. The first definitive record of a garden is dated 12th June 1574; however it was not until the 19th century that the Count of Pralormo, minister to the King, chose the best architect of the time Ernesto Melano to transform the residence. He entrusted the garden to Xabier Kurten, whose romantic English garden design was fully realised and whose framework has been handed down to us. Each year blossoming marks the opening of the park to the public with "Messer Tulipano"

that offers in depth studies, starting points. Count Beraudo of Pralormo is a habitual resident of the castle.





## SICILIA

### Il Giardino del Biviere (Siracusa)

The legend goes that it was here that Hercules, a son of Jupiter's, offered the hide of the Nemean lion he had defeated to Ceres, goddess of agriculture, and had a lake built, "Lacus Erculeus", which owes its name to him; at a later date this same lake was to be called "Beverè" by the Arabs, that is to say watering place for flocks and fish hatchery. The Palermo State Archives house the original document of King Marino's Edict (1392) documenting that the feud going by the name of "Il Biviere di Lentini" was granted to one of the maternal ancestors of the present owner, Don Scipione Borghese. Reclaimed in the thirties to combat malaria, the lake was deserted by fishers and hunters alike and the house turned into a heap of stones and dust. If the place has been granted a new lease of life, it is thanks to the love for plants and the enthusiasm of the present owner, Maria Carla Borghese, who on their own, without the assistance of architects or landscapists, have turned the place into a truly unique Mediterranean garden.



### Catania University Botanic gardens

The Botanical Garden of the Catania University, established in 1858 by Francesco Tornabene Roccaforte, still preserves the original structure of both the garden and its architecture. It is divided into General Garden and Sicilian Garden. The almost geometrical plan of the General Garden has the School building, sector basin and the large Greenhouse as its focal points. Here an extensive and rich flora is being preserved, with theme-based collections and highly prized and rare varieties of plants. The collection of succulent plants features specimens grown in plein air, from the monumental Cereus, Opuntia and Euphorbia to the Echinocactus and Machaerocereus covered with a thick layer of white fluff. In the greenhouse, among other plants grown here are the small Mamillaria, Lobivia, Matucana, and the "stone plants" of the Lithops and Gibbaeum varieties.



### Parco Paternò del Toscano (Catania)

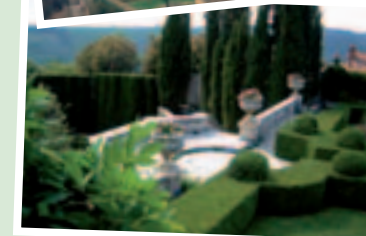
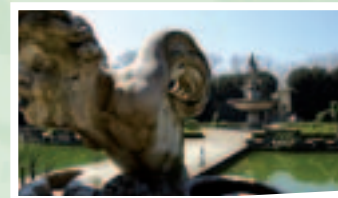
The park covers more than three hectares on the slopes of Mount Etna. Agave and Yucca plants, plus hundreds of tropical specimens, clamber up the lava outcrops, the residue of ancient flows. At the peak of the garden stands the main house which blends in effortlessly with the surrounding nature thanks to a system of asymmetrical terracing. The result is a unique rock garden, quite unlike any other, with spectacular and breath-taking

views, one of the most charming masterpieces of the landscape gardener from whom the park has inherited its name, Ettore Paternò. Without violating the traditional aesthetics of citrus-tree plantations and vineyards of the Etna territory, the park has been designed to create a luxuriant environment in which plants sourced from all over the world can find an ideal breeding ground, blending in effortlessly and naturally.

## TOSCANA

### Giardino di Boboli

The Medici's Florentine villa, now one of the world's most august galleries, has a famous garden. The original 1549 garden, designed by the sculptor, Tribolo, was similar to his work at Villa Castello. His clients were Duke Cosimo I and his strict, demanding, arrogant, but loyal Spanish wife, Eleonora of Toledo. The renaissance design was as regular as it could be on an undulating site. During the century after its inception, the garden changed and developed with help from many prominent designers. It became Florence's grandest garden, with an early baroque drama and some avenues. This suited the theatrical events which were held. The great grotto, designed by Buontalenti, is near the Palace.



### Villa Gamberaia

Though long regarded as one of the most perfect Italian gardens, little is known about its design history. Gambereraia has the simple structure of an early renaissance garden combined with the rich decoration of the mannerist or baroque styles. The long lawn, peopled with statues, is a bowling green. There is a nymphaeum, fountains and a lemon garden. The water parterre was a late nineteenth century addition, by a Serbian princess and her close American friend, Miss Blood. Gambereraia was badly damaged in the second World War but has been restored.

### Villa Medici di Careggi Garden

This quattrocento fortified villa is but one remove from a castle. The garden nestles behind a high wall and is famed as the place where Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464) assembled his Platonic academy. Michelozzi was employed to transform the medieval manor house into a comfortable residence with elegant logias. The garden was laid out in imitation of a Roman villa with space for outdoor living, of the type Pliny wrote about in his letters. A 1636 drawing shows the house and garden much as they are today, though without the circular pool. The original planting was botanical. Cosimo also employed Michelozzi to work on Medici Villa at Fiesole.

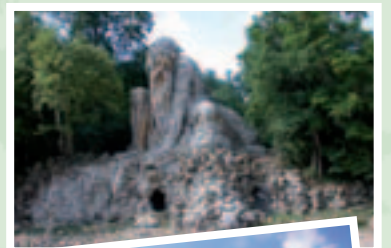


### Villa Medici, Fiesole, Garden

This Medici Villa has gracious terraces, as Alberti recommended, cut into a stony hillside. There are panoramic views of the River Arno and Florence. Sites for earlier villas had been chosen because they were easy to defend, or because of their rich agricultural surroundings. Giovanni de Medici, Cosimo's overweight, libidinous, cultured and favourite son was a child of the renaissance. He cared for art, music and beautiful views. Michelozzo Michelozzi designed the villa. After Giovanni's early death, it was inherited by Cosimo's grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent. Had it been built 50 years earlier, the garden would surely have been enclosed in the medieval way.

### Parco Demidoff - Pratolino

Only a few elements, including the gigantic statue of Appenine, survive from what was once the most celebrated garden in Europe. The rest was destroyed in 1819 to make a well-wooded, easy to maintain, "English garden". Garden designers should be wary of fashions. Francesco I, son of Duke Cosimo I, had the garden made for his beautiful and highborn Venetian mistress, Bianca Capello. She later became his wife but the Florentines disliked her as they disliked Francesco I's hobbies: chemistry, alchemy, glass-blowing, porcelain-making and the construction of frivolous gardens. Pratolino was full of humour and invention. A great iconographical programme, partly inspired by Ovid's Metamorphosis.



### Villa Medici at Castello (Villa Reale)

Duke Cosimo I, Grand Duke of the Medici, loved this place. Though a cold, secretive, moody and ruthless despot, Cosimo I was a generous patron of the arts. He employed a sculptor, Niccolò Tribolo, to design the garden. Castello has spacious terraces and a central axis, following Bramante's example. There is a fine grotto set into the garden wall on the main axis. It celebrates Cosimo I's love of hunting (check). Tribolo's garden sculpture uses an iconographical theme drawn from Ovid's Metamorphosis. It celebrates the greatness of the Medici family. Much of the original garden furnishing, which Vasari describes (below) has gone.

### Villa Vignamaggio (Firenze)

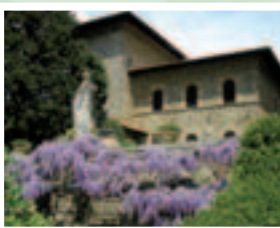
Vignamaggio is a small Renaissance gem, situated in a setting that is still quite similar to the original one. The core of the villa dates back to the XIV century, but its current look is the one given at the end of the XVI century by the Gherardi family who had purchased it from the Gherardinis. A girl was born here in 1479 to a member of the family, the famous Mona Lisa whose portrait was subsequently painted by Leonardo da Vinci. In more recent times, the renovation work carried out on the property by Counts Sanminiatielli, starting from the 1930s, have made the extension and embellishment of the gardens possible, so as to "have a natural park around the villa" as the poet, Bino Sanminiatielli, once wrote.





### Villa Peyron al Bosco di Fontelucente (Firenze)

Villa Peyron al Bosco di Fontelucente of the Bardini and Peyron Monumental Parks Foundation is one of the most beautiful villas of the Fiesole hill. The entire complex of the villa, the formal garden, the vast grounds, the woods and the surrounding olive groves are located in a splendid position with a spectacular view of Florence to the south and, eastward, a framing of Castel di Poggio. It owes its name to the luxuriant nearby wood from which it emerges with its Italian gardens and, uphill from the villa, a sixteenth century fountain which supplies the falling water necessary for the functioning of the numerous fountains in the grounds and a small lake.



### Giardino Bardini (Firenze)

Bardini Garden offers wonderful views of Florence from its 4 hectares of parkland between the left bank of the Arno River, Montecuccoli Hill and the medieval wall. Originally it was an arrangement of walled orchards near Mozzi Palace covering the whole of the hill behind it. In the eighteenth century Giulio Mozzi, who loved gardens, enriched the property with a long fountain wall with a multi-material mosaic at the bottom. In the mid-nineteenth century the baroque garden was enlarged through the purchase of the adjoining Anglo-Chinese garden of Villa Manadora, created by Luigi Le Blanc at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the second half of the nineteenth century the Carolath Benten princes acquired the whole property and enriched the garden with Victorian details. In 1913 the antiquarian Stefano Bardini purchased the complex consisting of Mozzi Palace, the baroque garden and the Anglo-Chinese garden with a remaining agricultural portion and Manadora Villa.



### Parco di Pinocchio (Pistoia)

Collodi is famous for having provided Carlo Lorenzini with his pseudonym: it was the birthplace of his mother and the childhood haunt of the author of The Adventures of Pinocchio, the most-translated and widely printed non-religious book in the world. Collodi consists of three major elements: the hamlet, Garzoni garden and Pinocchio Park. These offer three itineraries that blend into the Tuscan landscape and share a capacity for stretching our imagination into the realms of wonderland. The idea of extolling Pinocchio's praises at Collodi came about in 1951 when the then mayor of Pescia, Rolando Anzilotti founded the Pinocchio Monument Committee and invited major artists to take part in a competition. The joint winners were Emilio Greco with Pinocchio and the Fairy and Venturino Venturi with Little Square of Mosaics. In 1956 came the inauguration of the famous five-metre tall bronze group symbolically representing the metamorphosis of Pinocchio and the extraordinary mosaics depicting the main episodes of the Adventures.



### Giardino storico Garzoni (Pistoia)

The Garzoni villa and garden are extraordinary examples of 18th century Tuscan taste and culture. The Garzonis were a powerful family originally from Pescia who sided with the Ghibellines and promptly had their property confiscated. They were banished and went into exile, but found refuge in Lucca, where they took on the highest state offices. When it came to building a villa, the contemporary taste for provocation and challenge prompted them to choose this site, which was on the former border between the Grand Duchy and the Republic of Lucca. The first definite record of the villa dates back to 1633 and to Marquis Romano di Alessandro Garzoni, who was probably also the first architect of the garden, which by 1652 had already adopted its current outline. The formidable labour involved in its completion took a hundred and seventy years and the efforts of three generations.



### Varramista gardens (Pisa)

Varramista belonged to the Capponi counts from 1406 until 1953, when Dr. Enrico Piaggio purchased it; in the '90's it became the favourite residence of his nephew Dr. Giovanni Alberto Agnelli who started a wine and tourist businesses. Nowadays the sister, Donna Chiara Visconti di Modrone, runs them. Varramista welcomes you with a striking avenue of oak trees. The current entrance to the Villa which dates back to 1600 dominates the parterre; here one finds an Italian style garden designed by Bartolomeo Ammannati consisting of buxus sempervirens (boxwood) dating back to the original plantation, livened by two stone fountains situated at the centre of the garden. Restructure works were carried out by Pietro Porcinai during the '50's.



### Villa la Pescigola (Massa)

In the northernmost tip of Tuscany, in the land called Lunigiana, lies a villa known by the name of "La Pescigola", boasting a 600-year-long history. Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti, in his "Reports on some journeys made in various parts of Tuscany to observe nature's products, and the ancient monuments in it", published in Florence in 1779, describes the villa and its park so: "The countryside around Fivizzano is farmed with great industry, and made delightful, with various Villas of the Families of the Land, among which I have been able to observe one which is very beautiful and grand, in a location called Pescigola, and embellished by a Garden with Citrus trees, Springs, Fishponds, Grottos, Wood with Labyrinth, Covered Avenues for strolls, large Bird cages, and a wide Path about a third of a mile long, whose entrance is decorated with Statues, so that the Villa cannot only rival others in Lunigiana, but is also in no way inferior to many in the Lucca and Florence provinces". Today, more than 200 years on, the springs and fishponds that gave the place its name still survive, as do the grottos and part of the covered avenues and statues. As for the citrus tree garden, the current owners are trying to revive its existence taking the drawing of the original, testified by a bird's eye view painted on the door of a hall, as a model.



### Villa di Geggiano (Siena)

Five kilometres from Siena, on the top of a hill covered in vineyards, stands villa di Geggiano, belonging as of 1527 to the Bianchi Bandinelli family. Renovated between 1780 and 1790, it forms, together with the surrounding garden, a very unusual complex, both from the historical and the landscaping point of view. Adorned with century-old cypresses and potted lemon plants and carefully-clipped box hedging, the garden boasts a unique Green theatre - where Alfieri, a family friend, staged some of his tragedies - equipped



with two masonry proscenium arches in a late Baroque style embellished with statues and a vegetable garden decorated according to the canons of topiary art with a vegetable garden and a terraced fish-tank from which one can admire a wonderful view of the countryside opening out towards Siena.



### Parco della Villa reale di Marlia (Lucca)

One of the great showplaces of Tuscany, the Royal Villa at Marlia has long been the abode of distinguished families and patrons of the arts. Napoleon's sister, Elisa Baciocchi, ruler of Lucca and later of Tuscany, created this grandiose ensemble by joining the extensive Villa Orsetti grounds with the grounds and palace formerly used by the Lucca Bishops as a summer residence. She modernised the entrance lodges and the old Orsetti palace in contemporary Empire style, but the splendid 17th century Orsetti gardens, including the outdoor green theatre consisting of carefully shaped shrubs "Green Theatre" and the Avenue of Camellias, with its many old and rare species, have been handed down to us substantially as they were.



### Villa Oliva Buonvisi (Lucca)

Built around 1500 by Matteo Civitali, a well-known architect and sculptor, Lodovico di Buonvisi's villa, is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful existing specimens of sixteenth-century architecture and one of the most important of the properties owned by this ancient family from Lucca, which died out in the eighteenth century. It is the only villa in the Lucca area whose portico (in Matraia stone) is two-storeys high, a feature as unusual as the two halls stretching from South to North, one above the other, in the main body of the building. Having gone from owner to owner (Montecatini, Poniatowski, Rosselmini Gualandi, Cardinal Maffi and Paolozzi), the villa was eventually bought by the Oliva family - the present owners - to whom we are indebted for the massive renovation and restoration work carried out.



### Villa Grabau (Lucca)

Villa Grabau is situated on the hillside near Lucca and it is a marvellous example of 16th and 17th century architecture. Commissioned by the Diodati family in the early 16th century and built on the site of a pre-existing medieval villa, it underwent massive changes between the 17th and 19th centuries under the Orsettis first and the Cittadellas at a later date. In 1868 the German banker Baron Rudolf Schwartz bought the property for his wife Carolina Grabau. The park, which extends over an area of nine hectares, is surely among the most interesting in the area Lucca. Noteworthy is the seventeenth-century garden behind the villa - an Italian garden - with its parterre defined by a tall espalier of holm-oaks alternating with white marble statues of goddesses, two beautiful bronze heads of satyrs attributed to Pietro Tacca and other remarkable grotesque sculptures.



## TRENTINO

### Trauttmansdorff Gardens (Merano)

Meran is always worth a visit. Empress Sisi of Austria already knew that and so she used twice as her winter domicile Trauttmansdorff Castle which Count Trauttmansdorff around 1850 had reconstructed from medieval ruins. Today, the castle houses the Touriseum; it tells about 200 years of moved history of tourism in Tyrol. Around this historic treasure plants from all over the world unfold since 2001 their glory in the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle. In more than 60 garden worlds the plants are arranged according to their country of origin, taking into account the relationships between natural vegetation, climate, locality and human influence. Due to Meran's mild climate Mediterranean plants such as olives, figs, cypresses and lavender grow together in the Sun Gardens and help conjure up the inimitable flair of the south. In the Water and Terraced Gardens steps lead on to the Italian Garden, to the Sensual Garden and further down to the Water Lily Pond.



## VENETO

### Villa Trento da Schio (Vicenza)

The property is made up of three distinct villas dated between the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Two of these, the private ones, are being prepared on the hill whilst the third is found opposite the "Covolo" or cave and contains the wine cellar quoted by Fazio degli Uberti in 1330 for the high quality of wine held within. The garden was originally part of a much larger park that included all three residences and was created in the XVI century; the general plantation and a cave behind Neptune's fountain remain from this period. The current appearance is the result of work carried out by Giuseppe Trento and Valeria Fieramosca in the eighteenth century.



### Il Serraglio di Villa Fracanzan Piovene (Vicenza)

The Fracanzan family purchased the land and buildings that form the original nucleus of the current Orgiano complex in 1316. In the early eighteenth century the Fracanzans, then among the most important families in Vicenza, commissioned the architect Francesco Muttoni to build the villa that stands today, and to extend the garden and outbuildings in a manner that would consolidate their prestige and reputation. Since then the house has hosted a famous literary circle and was long inhabited by Elisabetta Caminer Turra, the first woman journalist of the period, famous for her Illuminist ideas. In the nineteenth century the property was acquired from the Fracanzans by the Orgians who transferred it to the Piovene family by succession. Villa Fracanzan Piovene is one of the most important works of Francesco Muttoni (1668 - 1747), the Lugano archi-

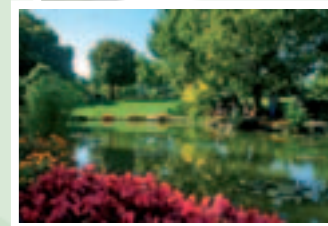
tect who was active in Vicenza in the late seventeenth century. The original plans for the house and gardens are now held in the Library of Congress in Washington, as well as in various Italian archives.



### Villa Trissino Marzotto (Vicenza)

On the top of a hill dominating the Agno valley, one finds one of the most important Venetian gardens of the eighteenth century. It unfolds around two villas, the upper one located where the medieval Trissino stronghold used to stand and the lower one built in the eighteenth century by descendants of the noble Vicenza family. The realisation of the upper villa (1722-1746) and of its garden is the work of Francesco Muttoni, who turned the irregularity of the ground to an advantage, creating a series of terraces, yards, roof-gardens and panoramic belvederes on different levels, connecting the one to the other

by means of stairways. A charming walk flanked by cedars leads to an octagonal gazebo where the Muttoni garden ends; a wood of fir trees, Scots pines, Himalayan pines, beeches, cypresses, holm-oaks, yew trees and holly connects the higher part of the estate with the lower one.



### Parco Giardini Sigurtà (Verona)

World famous for its round table encounters with Nobel prize winners like G. Domagk (sulfamidics), A. Fleming (penicillin), S. A. Waksman (streptomycin), K. Lorenz (ethology), A. Sabin (anti-polio vaccine), the park has rapidly become an attraction not only for famous botanists but also for people who simply love nature. It all began thanks to a horse-drawn gig. In 1941 there was hardly any petrol available, due to the war, and Doctor Carlo Sigurtà decided to buy one and so went to Veleggio, a village 8 kilometres from Peschiera sul Garda well known for its horse-drawn traps and gigs. And there, purely on impulse, he bought 50 hectares of farm land. Originally this estate had been the orchard of an aristocratic 18th century villa, Villa Maffei, designed by V. Pellesina, a pupil of Palladio, which in the mid 19th century had for a while been Napoleon III's headquarters. Thanks to an ancient right authorising water to be taken from the river Mincio, which flows beside the estate, the arid hilly landscape has been covered with abundant and flourishing vegetation, from which various magnificent trees stand out.



### Giardino Giusti (Verona)

Created at the end of the 15th century, the garden now presents itself as planned in 1570 by Agostino Giusti, a knight of the Venetian Republic and courtier of the Tuscan Grand-Duke. It was designed as a scenery to Palazzo Giusti taking advantage of the terraces which were to reveal the city to the gaze a little at a time, according to a pre-ordained plan. Starting from just outside the sixteenth-century hall, a now famous avenue of cypresses climbs up to a cave full of stalactites, above which there is a "gar-goyle" built so as to emit tongues of fire from its mouth.

### Villa Arvedi (Verona)

Located on the steep slopes of a hill and limited to the north by lush vegetation and ancient olive-trees which frame it and protect it from the winds, majestic villa Allegri was bought in 1824 by Giovanni Antonio Arvedi of Verona, whose descendants still own it. As of the second half of the sixteenth century, it was decorated and frescoed by artists of the calibre of Veronese. In the following century, architect and sculptor G.B. Bianchi joined the various existing structures into a single complex. The villa, standing on a turfed terrace, looks out onto a parterre - the only one of its kind in Italy - characterised by elegant double-fan-shaped drawings in century-old box hedges.



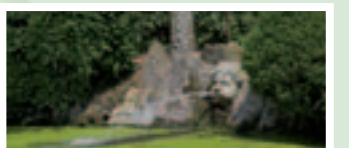
### Villa Novare Bertani (Verona)

A few kilometres from Verona, in Arbizzano, right in the heart of the Valpolicella region, we find Villa Novare Bertani. Located in the wine-making estate which goes by the same name, it is the seat of the prestigious Bertani Cellars, well-known for the excellent quality of their wines. The imposing villa has an attic crowned with statues and pinnacles. It was built by architect Cristofoli for Fattori and completed in 1759 by the new owners, the Counts Mosconi, who began to work on the garden. The villa includes an eighteenth-century cellar, where one can admire ancient barrels over 140 years old. In the Novare valley, as a matter of fact, vine-growing is an ancient art. Behind the villa, included in the huge brolo, there is a vast English-style park with age-old plants, among which truly worthy of mention are the imposing specimens of taxodium which crown the small island and are gracefully mirrored in the small picturesque lake, uncannily shaped like nearby Lake Garda.



### Giardino Barbarigo Pizzoni Ardemani (Padova)

Valsanzibio was brought to its present splendor in the second half of the 17th century by the Venetian nobleman Zuane Francesco Barbarigo and his son, Antonio. The monumental building is a project of Bernini, the "architect of the popes". Seventy statues are complementary to the architecture, cascades, fountains and





water effects on 15 hectares (6 acres) in the intact nature of the hills. The salvific itinerary begins with the paganish portal of Diana. Once it was reached in a boat across the Saint Eusebio fishing valley. After the entrance, we skirt Diana's Bath, the Rainbow Fountain and the Fishpond of the Winds, then we follow the Main Path with its statues, fountains, water effects and the Stairway of the Leopards.



**Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin (Padova)**

Creation of the splendid garden is ascribable to the Countess Evelyn van Millingen, wife of Almorò III Pisani in 1852. English in taste, it surrounds the great palace built by Cardinal Francesco Pisano around 1550 to administer the enormous estate formerly controlled by Venice and purchased in 1468 by Pisani, the wealthy Venetian family. The villa was built on the remains of a defense stronghold of the Estensi family and the medieval mark is still recognizable in the vast tree-shaded piazza behind the access canal. It was Evelyn Pisani, born in Constantinople of an English father and cosmopolitan in culture, who created the aura of aristocratic informality of Pisani Palace, renamed "The Doge's Farm" by a English writer, Margaret Symonds, who in 1893 published the book, "Days spent on a Doge's Farm", an incomparable text for describing the garden of Villa Pisani, Evelyn's "secret paradise where even illustrious guests like the Empress of Germany, the Queen of Sweden, Lord Byron and Henry James stayed.



**Villa Nazionale Pisani (Venezia)**

From the sixteenth century onwards the Venetian nobility built a series of villas with gardens and orchards along the Brenta River, between Padua and Venice. These faced on to the waterway, which soon became a true continuation of the Grand Canal. From the early seventeenth century these buildings were enlarged, so that by the next cen-



thury they were of substantial size and lavish appearance, emulating contemporary European courts. The brothers Alvise and Almorò Pisani, members of one of the richest and most powerful Venetian families, wanted a large resort at Strà worthy of their rank, comparable with Versailles in size and partly in design too. Having decided to seek office as Doge (Supreme Leader) of the Republic of Venice, they engaged for this ambitious project the Padua architect Girolamo

Frigimelica, who designed the villa and garden.

