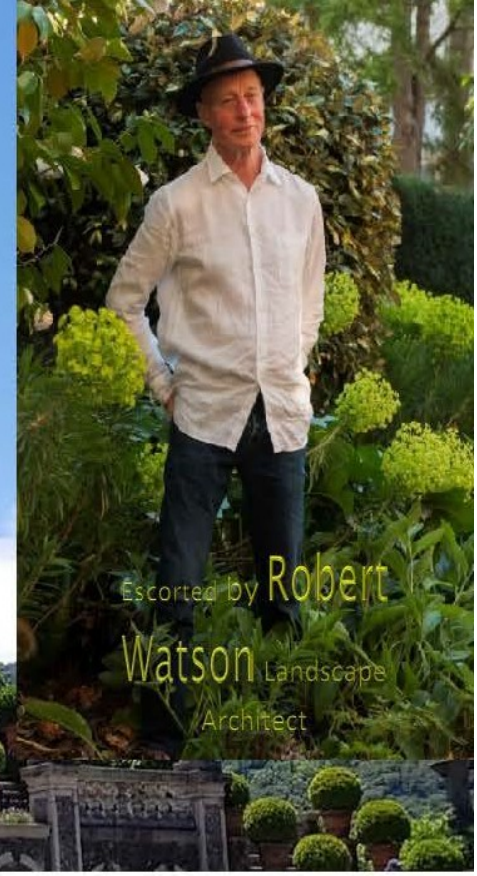


GARDEN TOUR of ITALY

"Piemonte e Lombardia - Villas and Gardens"



Escorted by Robert
Watson Landscape
Architect

CONNECTITALIA 

<https://www.connectitalia-nz.com>

I Giardini dei Laghi



Come with us!

info@connectitalia-nz.com

ABOUT CONNECTITALIA-NZ LTD

Our company's mission is to promote greater liaison between Italy and New Zealand, reflecting the different but complementary backgrounds of the company's two directors, Beniamino Petrosino and Anne Scragg. Our principal focus is planning and escorting exclusive small group tours in Italy offering a cultural experience with a difference. Our tours are most definitely not of the whistle-stop "Today is Tuesday so it must be Belgium" kind. We pride ourselves in providing you with the time and comfort to really enjoy what you are seeing and doing and you will never feel rushed. Our tours start and finish in Italy so you are most welcome to join us from anywhere in the world. Whether you are travelling on your own or with others, you can expect individual care and attention from two escorts who are willing to go the extra mile to ensure you have an unforgettable time. We also encourage travellers wanting to visit New Zealand from overseas to contact us and we will be very happy to provide you with a New Zealand tour package tailored to meet your particular needs and interests. We use accredited tour operators to ensure our tours are trouble free and we insist on the highest standards of customer service in all situations throughout our tours. Your comfort and security are of paramount importance to us. Whether you are planning a trip to Italy or a trip to New Zealand with us, it will be our pleasure to look after you throughout your tour. We are confident you will enjoy a unique cultural experience and a lot of fun along the way.

Robert Watson our Garden Tour Escort

Robert Watson is a landscape architect based in Christchurch. He undertakes a wide range of landscape design and planning projects for urban and rural clients and has been involved in a wide variety of major projects around New Zealand over the last 35 years. He is a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Landscape Architects and an Assessor for the NZ Gardens Trust. Robert's work has won numerous prizes including a Gold award at the 2009 Ellerslie Flower Show for a garden he designed for the Canterbury Horticultural Society. Another of Robert's projects is the renowned Broadfields Garden, a NZ Garden Trust Garden of International Significance, for which he was a finalist in 2015 NZILA Awards. Connectitalia-NZ is thrilled that Robert has agreed to lead its Italian garden tours and is looking forward to giving our clients the experience of a lifetime.

Robert Watson



"I sincerely hope you will join us!"

"Following a brief career in the law I travelled and worked in Europe spending time in northern Italy where I taught and visited some of its great gardens. On my return to NZ I studied landscape architecture as a post graduate student at Lincoln University.

This course included the history of Italian gardens for which I have a passion. I have since then returned to Italy on several occasions and visited more of its gardens for the sheer pleasure of being there and to better understand their place in the history of garden design.

I was delighted when Connectitalia-NZ asked me to lead its Italian garden tours. I know Connectitalia-NZ tours are unlike most tours in that they are small, exclusive and unregimented and this appealed to me. Not only will we visit some stunning Italian gardens, we will enjoy a unique cultural experience along the way."

For any queries email info@connectitalia-nz.com

VACANZE ITALIANE – Come with us!

Beniamino Petrosino



I am the founder of CONNECTITALIA-NZ. I came from Italy to live in New Zealand in the 1980's and have worked as a chef, restaurateur and consultant in the hospitality industry in New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and the United States of America. I have taught Italian in schools and privately and also English to refugees. In 2003, Hazard Press published my novel "The Passage of the Frog and the Wild Strawberries of 1942" set in the Mezzogiorno regions of Italy where I grew up and it would give me great pleasure to introduce you to this magical land and its people. In late 2015 I met Anne Scragg when she became one of my Italian language students. In 2016 we ran a successful cultural programme in Christchurch showcasing many special Italian foods and wines and introducing our guests to delightful Italian locations off the beaten track. Now Anne and I take our guests to see the enchanting places we have talked about and ensure they have a cultural experience like no other. Our future plan is to secure a home in Italy so you will even be able to put down your luggage and forget about it!

Anne Scragg



I initially trained as a lawyer and worked in private practice in New Zealand for some years. I had a few years off work while my family was young and then returned to work as an adjudicator and mediator. Over time I became involved in designing and establishing specialist dispute resolution schemes in the public and private sectors. In 2015, I retired from a senior management role with the intention of doing something entirely different. One day my husband came in from the letterbox with one of Beniamino's business cards and I thought Italian language lessons might be just what I needed! I have been to Italy several times and have loved every visit. I am confident I know what non-Italians need and want when travelling and I want to share my passion for Italy with others. I also want to show our guests from other countries the treasures that my homeland, New Zealand, has to offer and would be delighted to work with you to plan your trip through the land of the Lord of the Rings.

Exclusive Tours of Italy

"Over the last few years we have got together to bring people a genuine glimpse into Italian culture and customs. Now our intent is to take you there for an experience unlike any other."

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I Giardini dei Laghi

THE GARDENS OF THE LAKES with Robert and Beniamino



I Giardini dei Laghi - 8 days (7 nights)

NZ\$ 12,958 (small group max 10 pers. - single supplement may apply)

Commencement and end of the tour: Milan

On this tour, you will:

- Visit outstanding Italian gardens with Robert Watson, a renowned New Zealand landscape architect
- Hear about developments in Italian garden design from the Renaissance to the modern day
- Admire the exquisite gardens of the Villas nestled along the shores of Lakes Como and Maggiore
- Visit Villa Cicogna, an ancient hunting lodge which became a stunning Renaissance Villa
- Marvel at 16th Century stone statues and stunning water features in heritage Italian gardens
- Visit the Palazzo Borromeo and 10 tiers of terraced gardens at the spectacular Isola Bella
- Experience Italian culture and customs with Beniamino, your Italian escort
- Enjoy luxurious accommodation in stunning surroundings. No boring high rises for us!
- NOT be getting up every day at 7am and moving on to your next stop
- Learn about the regional cuisine from an experienced Italian restaurateur and enjoy local delicacies
- NOT have absolutely everything mapped out for you – there will be surprises along the way that you will want to tell all your friends about when you get home and MOST IMPORTANTLY you will have fun!

"The spectacular landscape and benign climate of Lakes Como and Maggiore gave the creators of the gardens we will be visiting the opportunity to use a rich and diverse collection of plants as part of their gardens' designs."

"We will find out when and why these gardens were created, who designed them and what inspired their owners. I'd like to share all I've come to know about them and I'd very much like you to join me."

Robert Watson (Landscape Architect)

Tour outline

Start date: 18 September 2023

End date: 25 September 2023



Note: The tour package is a land package only. Flights to suit your individual needs can be arranged for you or you can make your own flight arrangements if you prefer.



VISITING BERGAMO AND THE MAGNIFICENT GARDENS AT LAKE COMO AND LAKE MAGGIORE

Our tour group will be picked up in Milan and driven through the Lombardian countryside to the fabulous hill town, Bergamo, the hometown of the composer Gaetano Donizetti. We will have to stop for a coffee at least in the Piazza Vecchia in the old walled town, described by La Corbusier as "the most beautiful square in Europe."

We will then move on to gorgeous Lake Como for three nights. To get our bearings we will take the funicular railway from Como to the village of Brunate, climbing 1,000 metres in seven minutes to enjoy breath-taking views of the lake. In "*Charterhouse of Parma*," Stendhal described Lake Como as an "enchanted spot, unequalled on earth in its loveliness." Virgil called it simply "our greatest" lake.





If we can tear ourselves away from enjoying al fresco refreshments on the lakeside, we will spend the next two days cruising the lake and visiting gorgeous villages like Bellagio with its stone staircases, cypress groves and beautiful gardens.

We will visit the outstanding gardens at Villa Serbelloni which stand on the site of Pliny the Elder's villa overlooking Bellagio. Another must-see will be the celebrated gardens of Villa Melzi at Bellagio, where on a previous visit we met the head gardener who has won prizes in national competitions for his work.



Gazing across the lake we will see and later visit imposing Villa Carlotta with its equally impressive garden running down to the lake shore. Villa Carlotta was built between 1690 and 1743 for the luxury-loving Marquis Giorgio Clerici. The garden's collection is remarkable and includes palms, banana trees, cacti, eucalyptus, a sequoia, orchids, and camellias among the more than 500 species. As the story goes, the owners of Villa Melzi and Villa Carlotta were great rivals and whenever either added to his villa and garden, it was tantamount to taunting the other in public.



Those of us who have seen the films "A Month by the Lake" or "Casino Royale" will be particularly delighted to visit Villa Balbianello, often described as the most magical villa in Italy. This picturesque property sitting on its own little promontory is composed of loggias, terraces, and palazzini all spilling down lush green slopes to the lake where there is an old Franciscan church, a magnificent stone staircase, and a statue of San Carlo Borromeo blessing the waters.



It will be hard to leave Como but we have much more to see. Our destination for the next four nights is majestic Lake Maggiore but on the way we will stop at Villa Cicogna at Bisuschio. This magnificent villa started its life in the 15th century as an ancient hunting lodge and was subsequently embellished and completed between 1530 and 1559. The interior merges cleverly with the exterior and its seven levels of beautiful gardens were established by Ascanio Mozzoni in the 16th Century. Its walled-in



garden is a typical example of formal Italian garden design with box hedges, water basins, fountains and a grotto with remarkable water features and Robert cannot wait to show it to us.



After leaving Villa Cicogna, we will drive to our home on the Piedmont side of Lake Maggiore for the next four nights. Our hotel is situated in the elegant resort town of Stresa, where Ernest Hemingway and many other notable writers and artists created some of their most famous works. Imposing villas and opulent Art Nouveau hotels line the elegant lakeside, which is ideal for a gentle stroll. The town is renowned for its sophisticated atmosphere and is a pleasant place to potter about.





down to the lake. It is a Baroque fantasy of a garden in which white peacocks roam freely and it is certainly a highlight of our tour.

Stresa is the ideal place from which to visit the stunning Borromean Islands including the world-renowned Isola Bella which is shaped like a vessel with a villa at the prow and ten tiers of terraced gardens dropping



Stresa is also home to Villa Pallavicino with its wonderful lakefront gardens and wildlife museum. The trees are a major feature of the park at Villa Pallavicino including centuries-old chestnut trees and liriiodendrons, red beeches, maples, larches, the majestic ginkgo biloba, tall sequoias and fragrant magnolias. A real attraction is the imposing cedar of Lebanon, in the natural amphitheatre outside the villa.



From Stresa our driver will take us to Villa della Porta Bozzolo, a splendid furnished 16th Century villa which was donated to the National Trust of Italy. It sits in the Varese province and has very splendid gardens. To get there, we will take a vehicular ferry across Lake Maggiore.



To visit the last gardens of the tour, we will travel by ferry a short distance from Stresa to Villa Taranto in Pallanza. In 1931, an avid botanist Scottish Captain Neil McEacharn bought an estate called La Crocetta from the Marquise of Sant'Elia with the aim of transforming it into an English-style garden in an area of Italy which reminded him of his native Scotland. The result was the beautiful gardens we see today with a magnificent Valletta, terraced gardens with waterfalls, fountains and statues. The garden extends over 16 hectares crossed by 7 kilometres of paths and avenues and it is a riot of blooms with enticing scents.



Autumn will be a wonderful time to visit these world-famous gardens. The winding dahlia path shows off blooms from more than 300 species from June to October and in the hot-houses we will be able to admire extraordinary equatorial water lilies. Overall, the gardens contain nearly 20,000 plant varieties, representing over 3,000 species.

Captain McEacharn wanted to ensure his work would be continued after his death and he

generously donated the property to the Italian state in exchange for permission to be buried in the mausoleum which now stands in the middle of the park. Captain McEacharn's generosity extended to shipping over 11,000 packets of seeds to over 40 countries in 1959, to help other gardens around the world.



"A beautiful garden does not need to be big, but it should be the realization of one's dream, even though it is only a couple of square metres large and it is situated on a balcony." Captain Neil McEacharn



Sadly we have now come to the end of our tour and our driver will return us to Milan for our onward connections or (if we are lucky) our next tour "Dopo La Vendemmia" (After the Grape Harvest), during which we will make our way through Piedmont and Tuscany to Rome. Wherever our onward travels take us, we will have had a truly memorable experience visiting some of the most famous gardens on the shores of the northern Italian lakes.

Tour inclusions

- All accommodation costs sharing a double or twin room including breakfasts. Note - a single supplement may apply for single travellers wanting their own room. We will discuss this with you prior to confirmation. All accommodation will be of a high standard
- All tour travel costs including ferry services de-luxe coach or minibus transport and associated charges such as fuel, tolls, taxes, with local drivers
- Daily sightseeing. It will be completely up to you whether you want to participate or spend the day independently
- One group dinner including wine and soft drinks.
- All garden entry fees
- Local guides as needed

Tour exclusions

- Meals and beverages other than those included
- City taxes, room service meals and mini bar refreshments
- Telephone/internet charges
- Portage
- Gratuities
- Individual sightseeing not undertaken as part of the tour
- Expenses incurred on sightseeing trips other than transport costs and garden entry fees
- WE DO NOT ARRANGE TRAVEL INSURANCE. COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL INSURANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED



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