

ACE CULTURAL TOURS



LAKE MAGGIORE

FOR THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA & MAGNOLIA GROUP

MARCH 20-26, 2012

Garden makers have favoured Lago Maggiore, which extends from Italy into Switzerland, since the 16th century when the aristocratic Borromeo family began cultivating citrus fruit on Isola Madre in the middle of the Borromean Gulf. Maggiore, Italy's second largest lake, radiates stored heat throughout the winter, consequently, any frost is rare, moderate and short-lived.

The lakeside gardens are famed for their abundant floral displays and their astonishing range of temperate and subtropical species. In the distance, the snow-clad peaks of the Prealps provide a stunning frame to this incomparably beautiful lake.

The majority of the gardens that we shall visit are less governed by axial design than the classic Italian gardens in and around Florence and Rome. We shall be impressed by plants grown for their own sake, in informal groups set in stunning surroundings; even the formal gardens are home to rare and exotic specimens. And we will not deny ourselves an experience of the ultimate formal garden – a

The leader for this tour is **Ivor Stokes**. Ivor has recently retired from the post of Horticultural Director of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, he has more than 40 years experience of working with a range of ornamental plants. He is a member of the RHS RCM committee. Ivor will be assisted by an experienced Tour Manager, **Edmund Lowson**, who is Italian speaking and has accompanied many Ace tours in the Lake Maggiore region.

visit to the extraordinary monument of Baroque design: Isola Bella!

We will stay for four nights in the friendly lakeside Hotel Pallanza, near a piazza adorned by *Magnolia grandiflora* specimens. On the fifth morning we will drive up the Piedmont shore into Switzerland to stay our last two nights in the Hotel Riposo, Ascona, at the northern tip of the lake. In Switzerland, we will visit gardens around Ascona, and also enjoy a tour to Lake Lugano to visit the late Sir Peter Smithers' renowned garden.



Isola Bella, Lake Maggiore

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ITINERARY

Day one Tuesday March 20

Depart from London Heathrow 0750 to arrive Milan 1045. Transfer to Verbania - Hotel Pallanza. Afternoon visit to Villa Taranto, created by Captain Neil McEachern from 1931 and now one of Italy's most visited gardens. It has an extensive collection of trees and shrubs. Dinner in local restaurant.

Day two Wednesday March 21

Morning: visit Villa Anelli the garden of Andrea Corneo (President of the Italian Camellia Society), followed by lunch (at own expense). Afternoon: visits to the Rusconi Clerici family's Villa L'Eremitaggio, and Villa Rusconi Clerici with extensive collections of Camellia. Free evening.

Day three Thursday March 22

Morning: Dedicated to nursery production (Fiori Tipici del Lago Maggiore) with a propagation nursery (Tecnoverde) and a wholesale nursery (Comagnia del Lago). Lunch break in Pallanza (at own expense). Afternoon: Visit to Villa San Remigio in Pallanza and Villa Giuseppina (Monte Rosso – Verbania). Free evening.

Day four Friday March 23

Morning: Private visit to the home of Countessa Mirella Motta, her husband is a Camellia and Rhododendron specialist, their house is right on Lake Orta and has a terrace with breathtaking views. Lunch (at own expense). Afternoon: Giardino Botanico Alpina which, at 800m above sea level, enjoys superb views across the lake. (Subject to weather conditions). Dinner in local restaurant.

Day five Saturday March 24

Morning: en route with luggage for Hotel Riposa, Ascona, we will visit Isola Di Brissago, an island purchased by the Ticino Canton in 1949 and developed as a botanic garden for the canton. Lunch in Ascona (at own expense). Afternoon visit to Otto Eisenhut's Nursery with hundreds of cultivars of magnolia, camellia and rhododendron, and the nearby Parco Gamberogno, developed by Eisenhut since 1955. Free evening.

Day six Sunday March 25

Visit to the garden of the late Sir Peter Smithers at Vico Morcote, above Lake Lugano with an introductory talk by Amelia Smithers, Sir Peter Smithers daughter. Lunch in Montagnola (at own expense). Visit to Rolf Stockmann's

garden, Director of Swiss International Camellia Society. Private visit to Alfred Schnyder's garden. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day seven Monday March 26

Early morning visit to Isola Madre, the lake's original garden, founded in the C16 by the Borromea family. We will be shown around by the head gardener, we will then take a water taxi to Isola Bella, where there will be an opportunity to have lunch (at own expense) and visit the palace and astonishing Baroque terraced gardens. Evening flight from Milan to arrive in London Heathrow Airport at 2000.

The cost of the tour is £1,390 per person: to include accommodation in a twin room, return flights, breakfast, three dinners, all coach and ferry costs, all admissions, visits and gratuities, the services of local guides and a tour manager throughout.

Cost using your own flights £1,210 per person.

Not included: Travel insurance, single room supplement of £275 per person, remaining dinners and lunches.



To make a reservation, please complete a booking form and return it together with a deposit for £200 per person to ACE Cultural Tours, Babraham, Cambridge, CB22 3AP.



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