Garden tour in Italy
GARDEN TOURS

Our Garden Tours are designed by an American garden designer who has been practicing in Italy for almost 15 years. Since these itineraries can be organized either for independent travelers or for groups, and they can also be customized to best meet the client's requirements, prices are on request.

Tuscany Garden Tour

Day 1 Florence
Arrival in Florence airport and private transfer to the 4 star hotel in the historic centre of Florence. Dinner in a renowned restaurant in the historic centre.

Day 2 Gardens in Florence
In the morning meeting with the guide at the hotel and transfer by bus to our first Garden Villa Medici di Castello. The Castello garden commissioned by Cosimo I de’ Medici in 1535, is one of the most magnificent and symbolic of the Medici Villas. The garden, with its grottoes, sculptures and water features is meant to be an homage to the good and fair governing of the Medici from the Arno to the Apennines. The many statues, commissioned from famous artists of the time and the numerous citrus trees in pots adorn this garden beautifully. Then we will visit Villa Medici di Petraia. The gardens of Villa Petraia have changed quite significantly since they were commissioned by Ferdinando de’ Medici in 1568. The original terraces have remained but many of the beds have been redesigned through the ages creating a more gentle and colorful style. Behind the villa we find the park which is a perfect example of Mittle European landscape design. Time at leisure for lunch, in the afternoon we will visit Giardino di Boboli. If one had time to see only one garden in Florence, this should be it. The Boboli gardens are a living history course in Italian garden design from the Renaissance to the 19th century. This garden contains every element essential to the Italian garden from the amphitheater to the island garden, citrus trees, long winding avenues through the woods. The gardens have recently been restored with many thousands of shrubs being replanted, bringing it back to the magnificent park that it once was. From the Boboli gardens we will reach by foot our hotel and while walking our guide will show the most important masterpieces of Florence. Dinner on your own.

Day 3 Gardens in Florence
In the morning meeting with the guide at the hotel and transfer by bus to our first Garden Villa Medici in Fiesole. Villa Medici, commissioned in 1450 by Giovanni de’ Medici and designed by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo was the first of the Medici Villas built on a new design rather than resulting from the restructuring of a pre-existing castle. The original design of the property included the layout for a terraced garden which still exists today. The evolution of the gardens at Villa Medici from the original Renaissance design to the last works completed by Cecil Pinsent is still clearly visible today. Then we will visit Villa Le Balze. This Villa along with its gardens, was commissioned in 1912 by the American philosopher Charles Strong. Cecil Pinsent created this original design along one of the steepest sites in the hills above Florence. The garden is composed of a series of ‘green rooms’ along terraces which draws the visitor in by providing glimpses through windows and doors into the next space. Time at leisure for lunch, in the afternoon we will visit Villa Gambiera. Edith Wharton wrote of Gambiera: ‘Probably the most perfect example of the art of producing a great effect on a small scale...’ The history of this garden dates back to the 16th century yet most of the garden as it is now laid out was designed by the Capponi family who bought the property in the 18th century. Many modifications, including the famous water parterre were commissioned in the 1920’s by the then-owner Hungarian princess Ghyka whose head gardener, Martino, was the father of one of Italy’s leading landscape designers, Pietro Porcinai. Transfer back to the hotel and time at leisure. Dinner on your own.

Day 4 Siena, Villa Cetinale, Castello di Celsa, Villa La Foce
Today we will have a full day excursion to the magnificent Gardens of Siena. Pick up from the hotel and transfer by private bus to Villa Cetinale where we will meet our guide. Villa Cetinale: the origins of this garden date back to 1676 when Claudio Chigi of the wealthy Senese banking family commissioned the architect Carlo Fontana to build the Villa and its magnificent gardens. When Lord Anthony Lambton bought the Villa from the Chigi family in 1977 he devoted much money and energy to the expansion of the gardens which is still, today, in progress. Lord Lambton personally oversaw most of this work, creating a modern garden which fully respects both the classic Italian and modern English styles. The result is truly spectacular. Then we will visit Castello di Celsa. The Villa and part of the gardens were designed by the 16th century Sienese architect Baldassarre Peruzzi. The design of the main garden overlooking the spectacular senese countryside was originally laid out in 1500. The additions
made to the garden during the Baroque period are the semicircular pool in the main garden and a large fishing on the edge of the holm oak wood. In more recent times, the parterres in the main garden and the cypress hedging leading to the fishing pool were added. The most recent additions to this gardens are the large conifers which reflect the English Landscape style of the 1800’s.

Time at leisure for lunch, then we will reach Villa La Foce. Designed by Cecil Pinsent for his friend the Marchesa Iris Origo in 1920’s, the gardens were constructed on a site which had been, for presence of clay soil and lack of water, considered too poor even for farm crops. Pinsent and Origo managed to create not only one of the jewels of Italian garden design, but a working farm which, in its day supported an entire community. The architect’s English style blended with a sensitivity to the surrounding landscape results in a truly unique work of landscape design. Transfer back to the hotel and dinner on your own.

**Day 5 Lucca, Villa Torrigiani, Villa Reale di Marlia and Villa Massei**

Today we will have a full day excursion to the Lucchesia Gardens. Pick up by bus from Hotel, then we will reach Lucca where we will meet our guide and we will have our first visit: Villa Torrigiani at Camigliano where the “Garden of Flora” is the clearest example of the Lucchese taste, a bright and surprising ensemble of grottoes, nymph temples, flowers, masks, play of water. Villa Torrigiani is also famous for its beautiful collection of camellias. Then we will visit Villa Reale di Marlia marvelous and surprising XVII century park, with its “water theatre,” its lemon garden and its “theatre of verdure,” where many great artist showed their works. This ‘Royal’ park was once the residence of Napoleon Bonaparte’s sister Elisa Baciocchi and has survived the centuries virtually unchanged. Time at leisure for lunch, in the afternoon we will visit Villa Massei. The Villa and gardens are owned by Gil Cohen and Paul Gervais who painstakingly restored the former hunting lodge and it’s gardens in the 1980’s. Their efforts are chronicled in the book “A Garden in Lucca”. A mix of old and new, Italian and American styles, these gardens are a real labor of horticultural sensibility and knowhow. Transfer back to Florence and farewell dinner.

**Day 6 Pick up and transfer to Florence airport**

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**Sicily Villas and Gardens**

**Day 1 Palermo**

Pick up by bus from Palermo airport and transfer to Palermo, accommodation at the 4 star hotel. Meeting with your guide at the hotel for a HD guided visit of Palermo (the Cathedral, Palazzo dei Normanni, Cappella Palatina, San Giovanni degli Eremiti). Your guide will show you the highlights of historical Palermo, capital of ancient Sicily. Colonized by the Phoenicians, boasts a rich 3,000 years of history, particularly flourishing under the Arab and Norman rule. The many great empires that once ruled Sicily’s capital left behind wonderfully diverse architecture, from Roman to Byzantine to Arab-Norman, which we will view in the city’s palaces, churches and crypts.

**Day 2 Palermo Botanical Garden, Villa Malfitano, Monreale**

Meeting with your guide at the hotel and departure for the visit of the Botanical Garden. The botanical garden’s great richness of species, the monumentality of many of its elements, and the strong tropical and subtropical components present in which elements of exotic and native flora are blended together foster this special combination of local and international cultures. This garden seeks to be free from canonical constrictions, instead its designers wished to express a universal sense of harmony and creativity guided by nature and beauty. In the afternoon we will visit Villa Malfitano. One of Palermo’s great villa palaces, built in the Liberty style, sits within a spectacular garden. The villa was constructed in 1886 by Joseph Whitaker -- grandson of the famous English gentleman and wine merchant, Ingham, who moved to Sicily in 1806 and made a fortune producing Marsala wine. Whitaker had trees shipped to Palermo from all over the world to plant around his villa. These included such rare species as Dragon’s Blood, an enormous banyan tree that happens to be the only one found in Europe. Local high society flocked here for lavish parties, and even British royalty visited. In World War II, Gen. George Patton temporarily stayed here as he planned the invasion of southern Italy. The villa today is lavishly furnished with antiques and artifacts from all over the world. The Sala d’Estate (Summer Room) is particularly stunning, with trompe l’oeil frescoes covering the walls and ceiling. In the afternoon pick up by bus for and excursion to Monreale. One of the world’s largest and most interesting mosaic covered surfaces can be admired in the Cathedral of Monreale. Financed and created by the Norman-Sicilian king William II, called “Il Buono” (the Good), the artistic area that we are about to visit leads us into cultural and religious worlds that may even help us to understand our twenty-first
Day 4 Donnafugata Castle Gardens and Ragusa
In the morning we will have a private guided visit of Ragusa-Ibla. Ragusa's baroque architecture has earned the UNESCO World Heritage status. It's an unusual town, divided into two parts - the Upper Town and Ibla. After the earthquake of 1693 destroyed most of the town, half the people decided to build on the ridge above town and the other half renovated the old town. Ibla, the lower town, is reached on foot. In the afternoon we will have a private guided excursion by bus for the visit of Donnafugata Castle and garden. The large garden, shaded first by large Ficus magnolioides trees then by other Mediterranean and exotic species (succulents and cluster pines) conceals various follies intended to charm and bemuse its visitors. Around the temple and a Coffee House, the stone maze and several artificial caves encrusted with fake stalactites (below the temple) – Visita di Ibla, il centro storico di Ragusa Ragusa Ibla has been declared a world heritage Site by Unesco. It is a land of great architecture and however it is the Baroque style which most typifies the area on its ornate churches and noble Palaces which line the streets and alleys of Ragusa. Transfer back to Ragusa.

Day 5 Siracusa, Biviere di Lentini Garden and Catania
Transfer to Catania stop on the way for the visit of the private Biviere di Lentini. The Biviere di Lentini estate became the residence of Scipione and Maria Carla Borghese in 1968, Once a desolate place surrounded by stones and dust, today it has become - thanks to a passion for beautiful plant life - a unique and very special Mediterranean garden. The dusty stones have given way to the fertile land that for thousands of years has held back the waters of the lake. The memories of the past have taken a different turn, no longer deprived of feelings; rather, they are inextricably tied to the reality that surrounds them. The ancient port facing south, now closed by massive boulders cut by hand, has become a charming green space, an invitation to the main entrance of "Case del Biviere." On the restored piers, which were done with particular care and attention to detail, one finds an extraordinary collection of succulent plants imported from diverse and distant countries - that almost forms a gangway of botanical statuary. Visitors can immerse themselves in open spaces in harmony with the colors and fragrances of oranges, jasmine and the poetic flight of fancy known for centuries only to those who have loved this land. Perhaps elsewhere the rapid passage of time can be justified, but here among these glorious fragrances and colors, it finds reason and joy in a slower pace, basking in the intensity of moments filled with beauty and tranquility. Here, too, we find that we have discovered a very special place, lost somewhere between reality and history. It's almost as if the goddess Demeter herself has decided today to make "Case del Biviere" her divine home once again. Then onto Siracusa. Founded in 734 BC by the Greeks, Siracusa was one of the great ancient capitals of Western Civilization. This city quickly grew to rival and even surpass Athens in splendor and power. Siracusa still has some of the finest examples of Baroque art and architecture, along with fantastic Greek and Roman ruins. Siracusa is definitely one of the most beautiful places to see in Sicily. A local guide will take us on a guided tour of this city and its archeological sites, including a Roman amphitheater, beautiful Greek temple, a famous grotto called the Ear of Dionysus, and the most complete Greek theater surviving from antiquity. Then we will visit Ortigia, the most ancient part of Siracusa, set on an island. We will explore the narrow streets, fine shops, and cafes of the lovely island. The ancient Greek colony founded on Ortigia was as important as Athens or Rome in the Mediterranean. Today it's a bustling mix of temples, churches, seaside bars, and shops. Accommodation at the 4 star hotel in Catania and overnight.
Day 6 Catania and Villa Trinità Garden

In the morning guided visit of Catania: by the name of Katane, it was one of the first Greek colonies, founded in the VIII century B.C. Conquered by the Romans in 263 B.C., the architectural debris of the Augustan period still remains. The 19th century was a flourishing cultural period for Catane, with a wonderful literary, musical and theatre scene. The town has a 18th century style, because it has been rebuilt after the earthquake of 1693. After the rebuilding, the streets were wide and regular with big squares and beautiful noble palaces of a late baroque style.

In the afternoon we will visit the private Villa Trinità Garden, is a garden that was born on lava, full of native and exotic species, a sophisticated example of botanical garden. It is an extraordinary collection of Mediterranean and exotic plants that plays host, among others, to numerous species of agaves, aloes, irises, palm trees, and many unusual trees like Chorisia, a species with a trunk studded in large thorns, or the false soft pepper tree Schinus, many varieties of oaks, mastic trees, ancient roses, sages plants, lavender, gold narcissus, native trees and shrubs such as mountain ash, arbutus (strawberry tree), and Crataegus azarolus, countless types of climbing plants and a rich collection of citrus trees and plants. In addition there is a number of shrubs and fruit trees from the Mediterranean such as Indian fig Trees, Kahki, walnut, chestnut trees, pear and apricot trees, as well as exotic trees such as acca sellowiana, macadam, guava (guava, and Eugenia jambos). Transfer back to your hotel.

Day 7 Paternò del Toscano Park and departure

Pick up by bus for the private visit of the private Paternò del Toscano Park. The park, can be visited on request and spreads across more than three hectares at the foot of Etna. Agaves, yuccas and hundreds of different varieties of tropical plants climb on volcanic surfaces tainted by past flows of lava. The main house rises at the top of the garden, blending delicately with the surrounding nature thanks to a system of asymmetric terraces. The outcome is a unique garden, with breathtaking views, and among the most inspired works of the designer after whom the garden is named, Ettore Paterno. Without tampering with the natural esthetic of the citruses and vineyards found in the territory around Etna, the park was designed to create a lush environment in which plants from all around the world are unobtrusively introduced. From Mexico to Cape Verde, from the Canary Island to Australia, passing through India and Brazil, various exotic species find a natural habitat inside the park. There are over 40 different kinds of palm trees, from the classically Mediterranean Chamaerops humilis to the Trithrinax campestris that dots the Argentine scenery. The luxuriant tropical and sub-tropical vegetation that surrounds the main living quarters is expertly integrated with the wilderness of the surrounding areas, such as the overflowing woods of the Etna rich in indigenous species that bear witness to the ancient roots of the place. Connecting the house to the park are two open-air suites: one to the north, where the shadow of the volcano is framed by two majestic Washington palms along the borders of a pool, and one to the south, where a cluster of Trachycarpus palms, native to the mountainous regions of Asia, delineate the space like columns. An endless source of inspiration, the park was considered by the great Roberto Burle Marxone of his favorite haunts during his trip to Sicily for the sheer wealth and variety of its vegetation it represents one of the most outstanding examples of a Mediterranean garden. Transfer to Catania airport.

Gardens of Campania

Day 1 Naples
Arrival in Naples airport and private transfer to your 4 star hotel
Time at leisure, dinner at the hotel

Day 2 Naples, Santa Chiara cloister, Botanical Garden
This morning you will meet your guide at the hotel, then you will reach by bus the Cloisters of Santa Chiara. The gardens of the cloisters of Santa Chiara are of not only horticultural but also great historical and cultural interest. The cloisters are located behind the Gothic Church built in 1320. You have very little information about the origins of the cloister gardens as the Monastery allowed its nuns very little contact with the outside world. In the 1700's, life in the Monastery changed significantly and the Mother Superior engaged the Architect Domenico Antonio Vaccaro to decorate the cloister which was in that time used also for parties and concerts. Vaccaro built the gardens as we see them today including the 72 tile covered pillars of the pergola, the tile covered benches and fountains, tiles being a traditional form of art in Campania. The plantings in the raised flower beds are representative of the antique monastic tradition with vegetables and citrus fruits as well as ornamental plants. Time at leisure for lunch, then you will visit the Naples Botanical Garden. The Botanic Gardens of Naples are built on 12 hectares of land and contain over 9,000 species of plants. The gardens and greenhouses which have been recently restored are some of the most important in Italy, with an impressive collection of tree ferns and a microclimate created by high water sparsys and fountains. Transfer back to the hotel.
Day 3 Ischia, La Mortella Garden
Meeting with the guide, pick up by bus and transfer to the port of Naples where you will take the hydrofoil for Ischia Island, you will visit La Mortella Garden. On the beautiful island of Ischia, Susan Walton, the wife of composer Sir William Walton enlisted the help of English landscape architect Russell Page to build the gardens of La Mortella. The gardens are divided into two areas: the Valley Garden designed by Page in 1956 and the Hill garden designed by Lady Walton after her husband's death in 1983. The garden contains plants from all over the world which are complimented beautifully by the local flora and the garden design which links the various rooms of the two main garden areas. The exotic plants, water features, terraces with sea views, and the many paths wandering through this garden paradise create a dreamlike atmosphere.

Time at leisure in for the visit of Ischia then transfer back to the hotel in Naples, dinner at the hotel.

Day 4 Pompei, the Gardens of Pompei and Ravello, Villa Cimbrone and Villa Rufolo
Meeting with the guide and departure by private bus for a full day excursion to Pompei and Ravello. You will stop in Pompeii for the visit of the archeological site.

The Gardens of Pompei
Although the city was destroyed during the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, many of the 500 gardens in Pompeii were miraculously preserved. These gardens are an important page in the history of garden design. The garden elements such as the atrium, peristyle court, fountains and statues were all used in the designs of gardens which would be built in the Renaissance period when many garden layouts were influenced by a revival of the Roman and Pre-Roman styles. Many of the plant roots have been found by archeologists digging on site which has allowed them to faithfully reconstruct not only the ornamental structures but the horticultural species present in these ancient gardens. Then you will drive to Ravello, on the Amalfi coast, there you will visit Villa Cimbrone. The gardens of Villa Cimbrone were once part of a large estate dating back to the twelfth century. When Ernest Beckett bought the property in the beginning of the twentieth century the elements of the original garden were incorporated into what today are famous for being the most magnificent and extensive English style gardens in Southern Italy. Vita Sackville-West and Gertrude Jekyll both contributed to the design of these spectacular gardens built high on a hill with a breathtaking view of the Bay below. The vegetation combines local flora, exotics and northern European plantings to create a singular and fascinating effect.

Villa Rufolo
The Villa is one of the oldest existing Palaces in Italy having been built in the 13th century by the wealthy and powerful Rufolo family. Boccaccio wrote of the Palace in his work Il Decamerone. In 1851 the complex of buildings was bought by the Scotsman Frances Neville Reid who carried out many important modifications to the garden including an irrigation system which also served the surrounding community. Many restorations of the gardens have taken place but the garden today presents itself much as it would have during Reid's time. The position and views of the surrounding hills and sea make a visit to this spectacular garden a must. Transfer back to the hotel in Naples.

Day 5 Capri and Anacapri, Villa San Michele
Pick up by private bus from the hotel and transfer to Naples port, there you will take the hydrofoil to Capri where you will meet your guide. Private visit of Villa San Michele. Villa San Michele in Anacapri was the home of the Swedish physician, Axel Munthe. Built on the ruins of an ancient Chapel dedicated to San Michele, the villa now belongs to the Axel Munthe Foundation and has been transformed into a Museum. The gardens of the villa, home to a great variety of Mediterranean plants and a charming little mediaeval chapel, which Munthe restored himself, are as beautiful as any of the exhibits inside the museum. From here, a magnificent view of the Bay of Naples can be seen. Time at leisure.

Transfer back to the hotel in Naples.

Day 6 Departure
Pick up and transfer to Naples airport

Gardens of Lazio

Day 1 Rome
Arrival at Fiumicino airport and private transfer to your 4 star hotel in the centre of Rome.

Day 2 Ninfa and Landriana Gardens
Meeting with the guide at the hotel for a full day excursion by private bus to Ninfa and Landriana Gardens.
La Landriana Garden
This private garden was bought by the present owners in 1950 and designed by the English landscape architect Russell Page. Since the 50's the garden as been enlarged and additional garden rooms have been added with new plants species by the owner who is, herself a keen horticulturist. Among the 30 garden rooms we find a unique mix of both the English style combined with Mediterranean plants and typically Italian style geometric gardens with citrus and other native plants. The grey and pastel colored plants, the water features and the grey gravel and stone paths make this garden one of the most harmonious and tranquil gardens of Lazio. Light lunch at La Landriana, then we will reach Ninfa Gardens.

Giardini di Ninfa
The gardens and ruins of Ninfa have become world famous for the restoration work carried out by the Caetani family and in particular by Livia Caetani. The property has belonged to the Caetani family since 1294 but the gardens and buildings were repeatedly destroyed in territorial battles. The area was also abandoned in the past due to the abundance of water which brought with it malaria. From the 1800's when the family returned to the area to drain the swamp land and create their home at Ninfa, extensive works began to restore the property and create on of the most significant English style gardens in Italy. The eight hectare park has nineteen different species of deciduous magnolia, a collection of English roses which cover the ruins and trees and border the flower bed. Due to the unusual climate, Ninfa also has exotic plants such as avocado and banana trees. But it is the dreamy atmosphere of the ruins delicately draped in climbing roses and soft English landscape style which make this garden truly remarkable.

Day 3 Rome Orchid collection and Villa d’Este
Meeting with the guide at the hotel and transfer by bus for the private visit of the Orchid collection of the City of Rome. Time at leisure for lunch, then you will drive to Villa d’Este in Tivoli.
Villa d’Este is a masterpiece among Italian gardens, inserted as it is in the UNESCO world’s heritage list with the impressive concentration of fountains, nymphaeums, grottos, jeux d’eau and water music. The imposing buildings and terraces over terraces are reminiscent of the Hanging Gardens of Babylonia. The Republic of Italy has recently bought the property and brought it back to its former magnificence. Transfer back to the hotel in Rome.

Day 4 Bracciano, Castello Giuliano, San Liberato, Castello Ruspoli
Meeting with the guide at the hotel for a full day excursion to Castello Giuliano.
The gardens of Castel Giuliano are a spectacular showcase of hundreds of Rose varieties. The park is the site of ancient Etruscan then Roman settlements. The owners have recently decided to restore the ruins of the Castel and park to their former splendor. The Gardens extend from the Castle and take up a large portion of the Park, evolving in style from formal to landscape garden: they begin by joining the architectural structures, then merge with native Mediterranean scrub. In the month of May, the gardens host an annual Rose fair.
San Liberato
In the spring of 1964 when Russell Page first set eyes on this location of breath-taking beauty he exclaimed: "I don't know of any other garden capable of emanating the magic San Liberato does". Over the next 10 years Page and the owner's wife Maria Odescalchi would pour their efforts into creating these spectacular gardens. 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. San Liberato is also a rose-garden, or better, a gallery of roses, decorating the pathways and structures all around the garden.
Castello Ruspoli
The original medieval Castel was transformed in the 16th century by the Farnese family into the impressive Castel which we see today. In 1611 Ottavia Orsini had the terraced gardens created including the giardino di verdura the secret garden, and the extensive woods used for hunting. The intricate Giardino di verdura has higher hedges surrounding a parterre of lower boxwood plants. The garden has been so well preserved due to the fact that the original family still owns the property and has passed down their gardening techniques through the ages. Transfer back to the hotel in Rome.

Day 5 Viterbo, Centro Botanico Moutan, Villa Caprarola, Villa Lante a Bagnaia
In the morning meeting with the guide at the hotel for a full day excursion to the Gardens in Viterbo

Centro Botanico Moutan

The Moutan Botanical Center is a garden which boasts one of the richest and most complete collection of Chinese Peonies in the world. It is a 15 hectare estate entirely cultivated with Chinese tree peonies: a unique collection with very rare specimens belonging to different botanical species and cultivated, natural hybrids (cultivar) which in many cases cannot be found anywhere else in the world. The best time to see the spectacle of this garden in flower is the period from the 10th of April until the end of May.

Villa Caprarola

The whole Villla Farnese complex in Caprarola was designed by the architect Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, under commission from Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. The gardens of the villa are as impressive as the building itself, a significant example of the Italian Renaissance garden period. The villa's fortress theme is carried through by a surrounding moat and three towers. Two facades of the pentagonal arrangement face the two gardens cut into the hill; each garden is accessed across the moat by a drawbridge from the apartments on the upper floor of the Villa and each is a formal parterre garden of boxwood topiary with fountains. A walk through the chestnut wood beyond, leads to the secret garden with its well known casino. Two of the most famous water features of this garden are “The Fountain of the Satyrs” and “The Fountain of Venus emerging from the ocean” Villa Lante a Bagnaia

Conceived as the summer residence of the Bishops of Viterbo, it was built between the 16th and 17th centuries on the wishes of Cardinal Raffaele Riario, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV, of the Della Rovere family. In 1566 Cardinal Gian Francesco De Gambara, fascinated by the place, commissioned a new project from the famous architect Il Vignola, creator of the gardens at Villa Farnese at Caprarola. The gardens of the Villa Lante are those at Caprarola feature cascades to fountains and dripping grottoes. Villa Lante and Villa Farnese belong to a period of Italian garden design which is considered one of the most important. Design ideas are drawn from earlier projects. The geometry was inspired by the Belvedere at the Vatican; the use of water by the Villa d'Este; the circular island echoes Hadrian's 'marine theatre' at Tivoli and the islet at the Boboli. They are the sum of the important history of Italian garden design from the Roman to the renaissance periods. Transfer back to the hotel in Rome

Day 6 Departure

Pick up and transfer to Rome airport

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Gardens of Liguria

Day 1 Santa Margherita Ligure

Arrival on Genoa airport and private transfer to your 4 star hotel in Santa Margherita Ligure.

Afternoon and evening at leisure

Day 2 Cinque Terre, Villa Marigola Lerici

Today we will meet our guide at the hotel and we will reach the Cinque Terre villages by train, we will visit Monterosso, Manarola and Vernazza by train, then we will reach La Spezia by train and our private bus will transfer us in Lerici for the visit of Villa Marigola

High above the bay of San Terenzo we find the Villa Marigola with gardens unique in their style for the area. The Villa was built as a summer home for the Marchese Ollandini in the second half of the eighteenth century. The gardens, which were originally laid out in a typically Italian style with a large citrus garden and many native plants, have acquired a softer more English garden style. Many English visitors stayed at the Villa Marigola and the other Villas in the area, including Percy Bysshe Shelley and Admiral Pearce.

Day 3 Santa Margherita Ligure, La Cervara Garden, San Fruttuoso

Meeting with the guide at the hotel, then we will take the public bus from Santa Margherita to Paraggi (5 minutes by bus), then we will reach La Cervara located in a spectacular setting overlooking the bay of Tigullio was built in 1361 as an Abbey dedicated to San Girolamo. Over the centuries many influential religious and literary figures have visited the Abbey. The site which was originally the monk's vegetable gardens have been transformed into splendid gardens. The most extensive Italian style garden in the province of Liguria. The walls of the Abbey are covered in: fico repens, campanula carpatica and caper plants while the pergola is cover in a centuries-old wisteria plant. The boxwood parterre contains hedging and clipped topiary. After the visit we will take again the public bus and we will reach Portofino, and by public boat we will visit San Fruttuoso.
Day 4 Genova and Palazzo del Principe Gardens
Pick up from the hotel and transfer by private bus to Genova where we will meet our guide. We will visit the Palazzo del Principe, the largest existing monument created in the style of the Genovese Renaissance. The palace was built in the sixteenth century for the famous admiral and ‘condottiere’ Andrea Doria as a monument to the Doria family's wealth and power. The gardens, first laid out in the second half of the 1500's by the architect Perino del Vaga have, through the centuries been transformed. In the fashion of the 1800's many of the flower beds were softened to create a more English style. After being heavily damaged during bombing in World War II the gardens have been restored to the original sixteenth century design. Many statues and fountains and a unique grotto adorn this splendid garden. Then we will have a guided visit of Genova. Transfer back to Santa Margherita Ligure.

Day 5 Pallanca Garden and Hanbury Garden
Pick up by bus and departure for a full day excursion to Giardino Esotico Pallanca.
In 1910 Bartolomeo Pallanca decided to create a plant nursery to furnish the gardens of the Ligurian Riviera. After the War he dedicated his interests to the cultivation of cactus and other exotic plants. The garden is still owned by the Pallanca family who continues the tradition of introducing exotic plants into the area whose unique micro-climate is ideal for the cultivation of these plants. The collection of over 30,000 plants of 3,000 different species is set out on a series of terraces, each with a breathtaking view of the sea.
Then onto Hanbury Gardens
On his return from China, Thomas Hanbury visited Ventimiglia and was inspired along with his brother Daniel, a famous pharmacologist and botanist, to develop a botanical garden on the 18 hectare site which is today one of the most important of it's kind in the world. The brothers enlisted the help of Ludwing Winter, mentor of Bartolomeo Pallanca, to help design the gardens and manage the property and carry out botanical experiments. Today the Gardens are part of the University of Genova which has ensured that this wonderful site is carefully maintained. Some of the many gardens are: the Australian garden, cactus garden, citrus and peonie gardens. Transfer back to Santa Margherita Ligure

Day 6 departure
Transfer to Genova airport

Gardens of the Veneto

Day 1 Villa Pisani
Arrival in Venice airport, pick up by private bus and transfer to Padua. Stop on the way for the visit of Villa Pisani. Imposing Villa along the Brenta canal. Villa Pisani and its stables were built in 1730. The park with its rolling lawns, water features and secular trees shows a strong French influence. The maze at Villa Pisani is world famous! Then transfer to your 4 star hotel in the historic centre of Padua. Time at leisure in the evening

Day 2 Padua and the Botanical Garden
In the afternoon meeting with the guide at the hotel for a guided walking tour: Scrovegni Chapel, Sant’ Antonio Basilica. Time at leisure for lunch then visit of Orto Botanico
The Orto Botanico of Padua which is the oldest of its kind in Italy dates back to 1545 when it was instituted as an apothecary’s teaching garden. The original layout has remained the same and many of the trees we see there today date back hundreds of years. The oldest plant, a Chamaerops humilis was planted in 1585. The Orto Botanico has been recognized as a UNESCO world heritage site. Overnight in Padua

Day 3 Padua, Castello di San Pelagio, Villa Emo, Villa Barbarigo Pizzoni Ardemani
In the morning meeting with the guide for a full day excursion to the gardens around Padua. Castello di San Pelagio
The ancient tower of San Pelagio built in the 14th century stands over the Villa, museum and the spectacular gardens which in May are filled with an abundance of roses and other flowering plants. These gardens were restored in the 1970’s when a census of all of the centuries-old trees was conducted. The two labyrinths built in recent years complete the visit of this park which is continuously evolving.
Villa Emo
The Villa was built in 1588 and attributed to Palladio's pupil Vincenzo Scamozzi. The gardens were recently created by the owners and, unusually for an Italian garden, contain a profusion of flowers. Among the garden features present at the Villa are, hornbeam hedges, boxwood parterres and water features, all of which are immaculately maintained.
Villa Barbarigo Pizzoni Ardemani
Situated on a hill with a breathtaking view of the valley below, the gardens of Villa Barbarigo are some of the most impressive of all Italy. With ingenious waterworks, 4 meter high boxwood hedges, labyrinth and rabbit island are some of the features of this garden. The current owner Count Pizzoni Ardemani is a garden-lover and has spent decades restoring the entire garden meticulously and bringing it back to its original splendor. Transfer back to Padua.

Day 4 Gardens from Padova to Verona: Villa Allegri Arvedi, Villa Rizzardi, Giardino Giusti Verona
Pick in the morning for the transfer to Verona. On the way to Verona we will stop for the visit of the most interesting
gardens:
Villa Allegri Arvedi
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. This Villa has one of the most elaborate and ornate parterres in Italy.

Villa Rizzardi
Villa Rizzardi has one of the last examples of true Italianate style. The garden, built in 1783 on a property of 5.4 hectares was designed in a period when most gardens were following the English landscape garden design. With its citrus garden water features and boxwood parterres, this garden is an homage to the true Italian garden style.

Giardino Giusti in Verona
Created at the end of the 15th century, the garden is one of the oldest examples of Renaissance garden design in Northern Italy. 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. Clipped boxwood parterres, lemon trees, water features and views on to the Tyrolean Alps and across the Po valley towards Mantua all contribute to the beauty of this garden. Accommodation at 4 star hotel in Verona, in the historic centre.

Day 5 Verona and departure
Guided visit of Verona. Verona itself is a work of art: beautiful Roman and Medieval buildings are boasted along narrow streets in the ancient city-centre embraced by a winding river and cozy hills. this tour will give you the knowledge of all the highlights of the city, covering Romeo's and Juliet's House, the Roman Arena, the ancient Castle, lovely squares and dramatic landscapes.

Then transfer to Venice airport