



Grand Hotel Tremezzo

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Tuscana to Lake Como

I HAVE FOUND one of the best ways to depart Tuscana. This involves a side trip to Lake Como en route to Piemonte. We all know that good things must end, but this permits one to reach new heights before coming back to earth.

We departed from Castel Monastero en route to the Grand Hotel Tremezzo on Lake Como. Along the way, we stopped for a very fine lunch at Antica Trattoria La Busa restaurant in Modena. It is famous for typical handmade pasta, especially tortellini which was fabulous.

This was the only place in Italy where I found one of my favorite wines—the Teroldego from Elisabetta Folonari. Teroldego is a red Italian grape variety grown primarily in the northeastern region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol, in the Italian Alps, and is thought to be related to the black-skinned French grape Petite Sirah (or Durif). It



Sala Contessa at the Grand Hotel Tremezzo



Wines enjoyed at Sala Contessa.

goes particularly well with pasta in a red wine sauce and with pizza. After lunch, we were treated to a balsamic vinegar tasting and then continued our journey to Lake Como.

Due to the rainy weather and Friday rush hour traffic around Milano, we arrived at the Grand Hotel Tremezzo about an hour late, but the kitchen had been advised and after freshening up, we were treated to a superb five-course dinner at the Sala Contessa in one of Europe's finest hotels. All courses were fantastic and accompanied by world-class wines: Vorberg Pinot Bianca Reserva 2019; Lis Neris Jurosa Chardonnay 2018; Arnaldo Caprai Montefalco Sagrantino 25 Anni 2016; and Vaio Armaron from Serego Alghieri 2015. This was truly one of the finest dinners of my life considering food, wine, atmosphere, and friends.



Villa Del Balbianello



Gardens at Villa Del Balbianello

After a leisurely breakfast overlooking Lake Como, we boarded a cruiser and toured the shoreline's bays and villages with the Alps in the background. We spent an hour or so at a magnificent estate, Villa del Balbianello. I think this is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. We toured the extensive grounds and gardens as well as the villa. With our visual senses sated, we moved to lunch at Crotto Del Misto, but not before a short walking tour of Lezzeno, the longest town on the lake.

Before we ate lunch, we had a tour of the cellar and then feasted on ample servings of fresh, local fish and wines. We enjoyed the cruise back to the Tremezzo, visited the gardens, and then walked to La Darsona Restaurant where we had an excellent four-course dinner.

On Sunday, we spent the entire day exploring this jewel of a hotel. It was rated Europe's finest hotel in 2019. Everything in the hotel and its property seems in perfect harmony. If you prefer to swim on the grounds, you can do so, or if you would rather swim in a pool enclosed by Lake Como, it's your choice. After a mile swim in the former, we had by far the greatest pizza outside under trees overlooking the pool.



Pool at Grand Hotel Tremezzo

This pizza "supreme" had the thinnest crust I've ever seen. I had saved a bottle of the Teroldego from Elisabetta Folonari which made the experience after the refreshing swim the best imaginable.



A view at the Grand Hotel Tremezzo.

After a walk around the magnificent grounds, we gathered for an unusual wine treat hosted by Oskar Reimann and Pierette Bettex from Basel, Switzerland. They had been on several cruises with us and Oskar, a wine aficionado, was impressed with the wine tastings we did as a group on the ship. He asked if we would like for him to arrange a Swiss wine tasting with about 10 wines, almost all of which were not exported. This was an excellent presentation and an unusual treat given the general non-availability of the wines.



The Swiss wines we enjoyed

The take-away for this audience is that if you find yourself in Switzerland and go to an excellent wine shop—indulge in some of the country's finest

whites and reds. They are relatively unknown because the Swiss consume most of them, but the best wines are worth the effort.

We finished the day with a nice dinner just a short walk from our hotel. The food and wine were remarkable and plentiful, and provided a nice ending to our last day on Lake Como.

After a lavish breakfast, we departed for Piedmonte with a three-hour wine tasting and lunch at one of my favorite wine destinations. Villa Sparina is in the Gavi Region of Piemonte. We found this property several years ago on our last trip to this region and were anxious to return. The weather was perfect and after a brief winery tour, we had appetizers served outside with great wines—especially the Gavi.



Villa Sparina

After appetizers, we moved inside for a beautiful lunch serviced with endless wines. After a final stroll around the lovely property, we departed for our hotel Casa di Langa in Piemonte.

A Vôte Santé! 🍷



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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