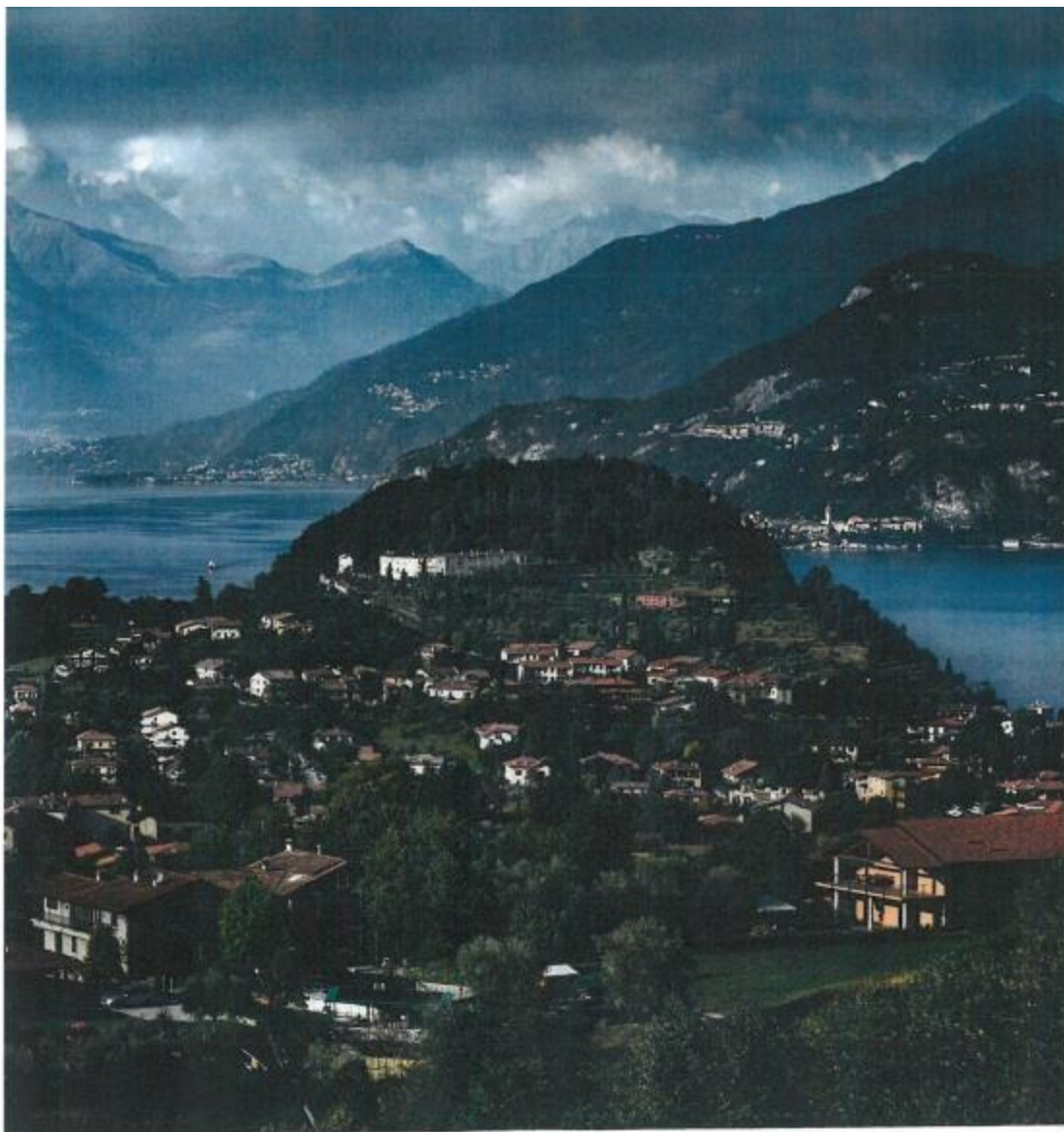


ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Cruise through vineyards on a Ducati, ski an Alpine glacier and set sail in Sardinia on an Italian adventure that forgoes the standard-issue itinerary in favor of la dolce vita

Curated by LINDSAY SILBERMAN *Text by* ALEXANDRA KIRKMAN



"You may have the universe if I may have Italy," Giuseppe Verdi, the prolific composer, once said, a trade-off that generations of Italophiles might concur is a pretty good deal. And while the splendors of cities like Rome, Venice and Florence can't be overstated, there's a deep inventory of lesser-traveled national treasures packed into this boot-shaped cradle of modern civilization that remain, at least to outsiders, relatively unsung—places where you'll find more actual Italians than people holding guidebooks.

Lake Como, known for its arresting landscapes and historic villas, photographed by David Drebin for Dreamscapes (reNevo), his latest collection of transporting images

True to character, Italy's most rarefied escapes offer something to fuel every passion. For momentum junkies, there's skiing down the largest glacier in the Dolomites—a mesmerizing mountain range—or ripping through the Tuscan countryside on an all-terrain Ducati. Those in search of off-the-grid privacy and wine—in that order—can find it on the wind-swept island of Pantelleria, while gourmets and autophiles will savor the distinct charms of Emilia-Romagna, home to Italy's greatest gifts to the

Villa Sola Cabiani

The six-suite baroque-style villa, which dates back to the 1500s, once served as the summer residence of the distinguished Serbelloni dynasty. Today it's a living artifact, with antiques from the family's collection in every room. (And a few modern luxuries, like a helipad and cinema.) Serbelloni descendants still own the property, and they'll happily escort the curious to the family's private museum on the top two floors, where heirlooms and centuries-old pieces remain perfectly preserved.

Il Cigno Estate

Set amid seven acres of gardens at the end of a gated road, the sprawling estate comprises two villas, separated by a harbor, that can be booked individually or by the pair. Suites come outfitted in the finest Italian linens and overlook a huge private swimming pool, but Il Cigno's standout feature is unquestionably its wood-burning fireplaces, which pair perfectly with bottles of vintage Barolo.

Restaurants

Il Gatto Nero

George Clooney is a regular at Il Gatto Nero, a casually elegant mainstay perched high on a hill in Cernobbio, where the views of the lake are as impressive as the cuisine. An acclaimed wine cellar and dishes like pasta with fish, raisins, pine nuts and bread crumbs, and veal tenderloin with foie gras and chestnut honey help cultivate a loyal and well-heeled clientele.

Silvio

Specializing in just-caught seafood since 1919, this fifth-generation family-owned restaurant and hotel is the star of Lake Como's quaint Bellagio village. Sit under Silvio's vine-covered pergola or at a table on the veranda—you can't go wrong with either—and order the catch of the day, prepared by the chefs in a Parmesan and truffle sauce.

The Market Place

Highly imaginative tasting menus and local ingredients make this upscale farm-to-table spot a can't-miss for epicureans. The dining room is intimate, with just 24 seats, and each dish—like the rabbit ravioli with chanterelles, or fish with zucchini carpaccio and scampi—is meticulously constructed.

Locanda La Tirlindana

If there's one thing Locanda La Tirlindana has mastered beyond its flawlessly tender calamari and mascarpone-filled ravioli, it's personalized service. The owner has been known to jump on her Vespa in search of lost customers, then usher them through narrow cobblestoned streets to the idyllic waterfront venue. The entrées are outstanding, and desserts, like red berry tiramisu, are even better.

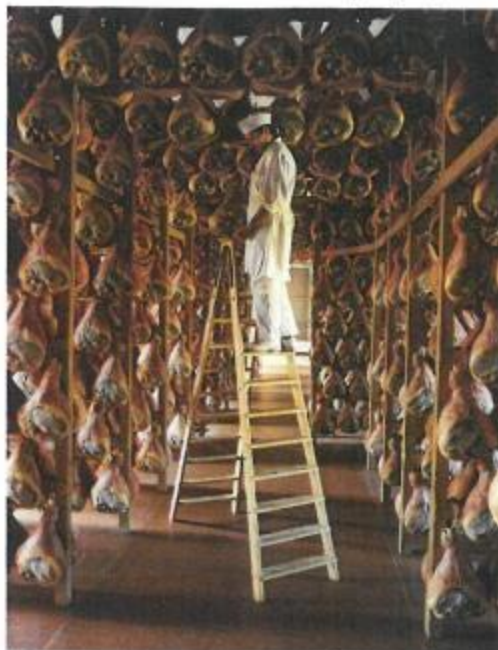
Cocktails

Fresco Cocktail Shop

While Lake Como's nightlife is largely relegated to low-key soirées at private villas, this lively tavern is a popular option for after-dinner drinks. Bow-tied bartenders craft cocktails using fresh ingredients and are known for putting a unique spin on typical Italian libations. Try their take on a *digestivo*, a chocolate sangria with ruby port, fresh orange, sugar and white chocolate mousse.

I Tigi in Theoria

Built in 1613, this former bishop's palace turned Michelin-starred restaurant radiates character with a wooden coffered ceiling, candlelit courtyard and rotating art exhibitions. The upstairs lounge serves up a selection of drinks like the Spritz des Alpes, a spicier version of the Italian classic made with netmeg and prosecco.



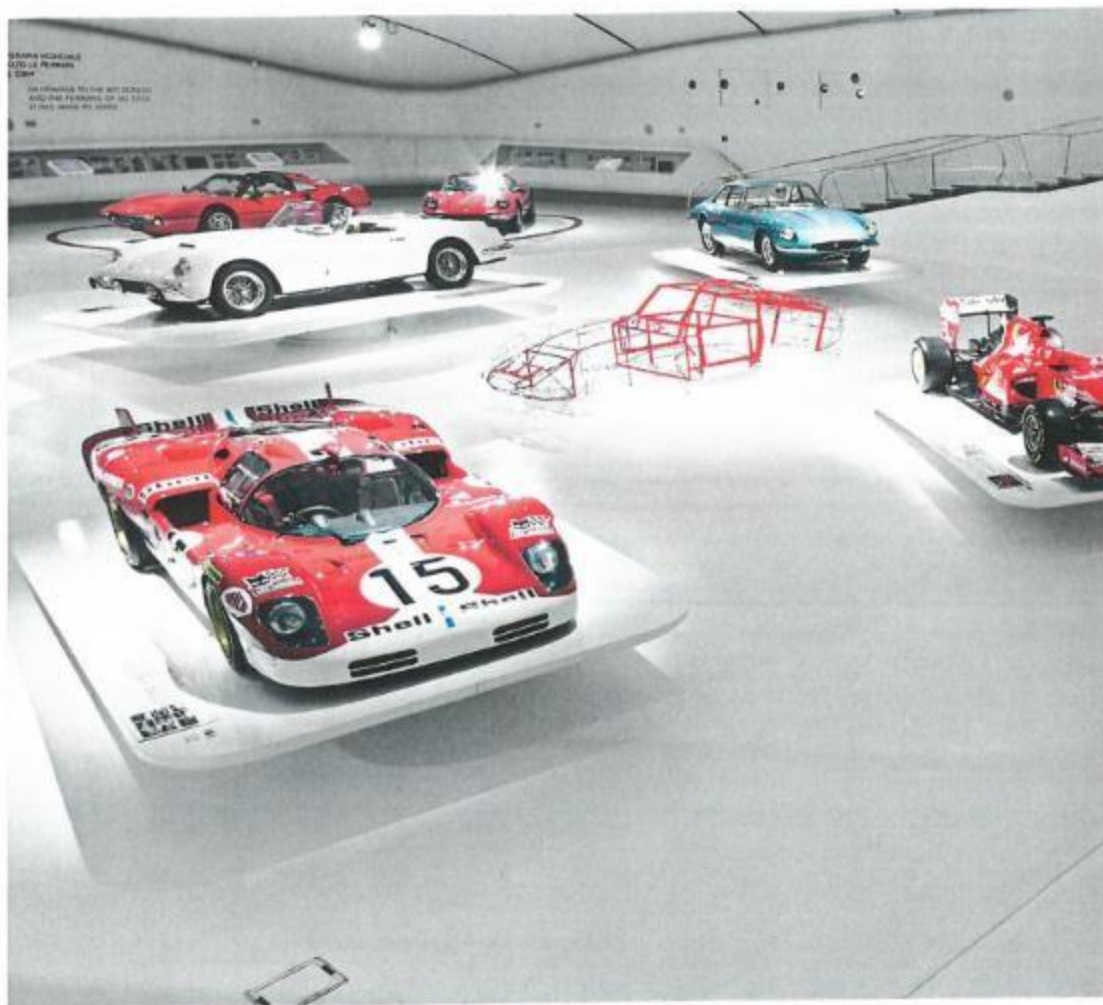
EMILIA-ROMAGNA: Artisanal cuisine & superstars

Even in a country so rich in gastronomic gifts, the Emilia-Romagna region, bordered by the Po River to the north and the Apennine Mountains to the south, is without culinary peer, bringing more Denominazione di Origine Protetta (D.O.P.)—literally “Protected Designation of Origin”—foods to the global table than any other area of Europe. Only D.O.P. products can bear the word *tradizionale* on their labels, and the prized certification ensures that the region's shortlist of 39 delicacies, which include Parmigiano-Reggiano, prosciutto di Parma and aceto balsamico di Modena—the world's finest balsamic vinegar—are painstakingly crafted by farmers and artisans using centuries-old methods. Emilia-Romagna's affinity for food is on display in 25 separate museums dedicated to the subject, which pay tribute to everything from the art of Italian home cooking to the eels of Comacchio, a lagoon town in the province of

Ferrara that claims the slithering creature can be prepared a thousand different ways.

To glean the flavor of both the D.O.P. production process and the region, take a tour of some of its top purveyors. At **Antica Corte Pallavicina**, a sprawling 14th-century estate in the Po Valley, sample the rare and coveted culatello di Zibello, a slowly cured boneless ham that purists contend makes prosciutto di Parma pale in comparison. (Its proprietor, Massimo Spigaroli, is widely regarded as Italy's culatello king.) Take classes ranging from pasta making to pork production, dine at the Michelin-starred restaurant or stay over in one of the castle's rustic rooms, featuring fireplaces and 16th-century paneled ceilings.

Above: To ensure the highest-quality product, inspectors pierce each ham in several different places and approve or reject the product based on its scent. Opposite page: Lake Como's Villa del Balbianello, which dates back to the late 18th century, has appeared in a number of Hollywood films, including *Casino Royale* and *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*.



For the best balsamic, visit Acetaia di Giorgio, considered the most esteemed house for the liquid gold in Modena, where the Barbieri family will guide you through the minimum 12-year fermentation process. For its exquisite sweetness, Giorgio's Primo Reserve Juniper D.O.P., aged more than 25 years in juniper barrels, is worth its \$160 price tag. **Hombre Organic Farm** is the only local maker of organic Parmigiano-Reggiano on a closed-cycle property, meaning everything that goes into its production, including the corn and barley that feed Hombre's 500 Italian Friesian cows, comes from the premises. Call ahead to book a tour, on which you can observe artisans carefully crafting the cheese in giant copper cauldrons. A modest outbuilding also happens to house the world's most complete collection of Maseratis: Hombre's owner purchased the collection in its entirety 20 years ago to

ensure it remained in Modena, the carmaker's home since 1940.

A mecca for exotic car connoisseurs the world over, Emilia-Romagna's celebrated **Motor Valley**, encompassing the area from Bologna to Modena, is the birthplace of Maserati, Ducati, De Tomaso, Lamborghini, Stanguelini, Pagani and, of course, Ferrari. With 14 museums and 11 private collections devoted to high-octane titans, it feels like the mythical land of the car gods.

Ferrari is feted religiously here, with flags bearing its famous black horse flying far and wide. Founded in the Modena suburb of Maranello in 1947—where the original Ferrari museum remains—the prolific racing brand unveiled its latest showstopper, **Museo Enzo Ferrari (MEF)** in Modena, in 2012. The brainchild of founder Enzo Ferrari's only living son, Piero, the

Built in 2012, Museo Enzo Ferrari Modena is a fantasyland for Ferrari fanatics. Its showroom displays a rotation of vehicles like works of automotive art.



museum is a futuristic engineering triumph on par with Ferrari's most seductive creations. MEF's gleaming white, pillar-less exhibition space was designed by the late visionary Czech architect Jan Kaplický and displays more than 20 cars; its double-curved aluminum roof—the first large-scale application of its kind—measures 35,500 square feet and is painted bright yellow, the official color of both Ferrari and Modena. In addition to a range of Motor Valley-related exhibitions, MEF offers an F1 simulator that you can upgrade to "professional" mode for an even greater rush.

The factory and museum of **Pagani**, Italy's most secretive carmaker, founded by Argentinian Horacio Pagani in 1992 in San Cesario sul Panaro, is a high temple of automotive achievement. Here you'll get a firsthand look at the unparalleled craftsmanship and engineering that bring handmade

marvels like the Pagani Huayra BC to life. When the supercar debuted at this year's Geneva International Motor Show, the entire fleet—just 20 cars—had already sold for \$2.5 million each.

You can get behind the wheel yourself with the **Imola Faenza Tourism Company**, which customizes experiences by request, including some spins around the track in a Ferrari 430 at the storied Imola racing circuit, former home of the Formula 1 San Marino Grand Prix, with two-time GT1 champion Thomas Biagi cheering you on from the passenger seat. **Modenatur**, another local tour provider, arranges test drives like the two-hour "precision tour" in a Ferrari or Lamborghini, where a professional driver will sharpen your skills in the rolling hills around Maranello as you channel Italian racing legends and relish *la grande bellezza* of it all.