

The Travel Maven: Bellagio, Lake Como: The Romantic Splurge Vacation

FEBRUARY 21, 2018 BY [EXAMINER MEDIA](#)

By Richard Levy

As you can imagine, as a travel writer I've been to many drop-dead beautiful places, but none compare to the medieval storybook village of Bellagio on Lake Como.



Lake Como is totally gorgeous and one of the largest and deepest in Europe. Its picturesque shoreline is artfully decorated by swaying tropical palm trees, quaint terra cotta-roofed villages and aristocratic villas tucked into its beautiful terraced countryside and surrounded by the magnificent snow-capped Swiss Alps. Everywhere you look is breathtaking.

I call this the Romantic Splurge Vacation because its pricey, but worth every lira...I mean Euro. This is where I tell couples to go for the most luxurious, romantic, decadent vacation they've ever taken. Bellagio is renowned as the "Pearl of Lake Como," but its crown jewel is unequivocally the most luxurious five-star hotel in Italy, the Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni where the rich and famous have stayed since 1909 – presidents, world leaders and movie stars, including JFK, Roosevelt, Churchill and George Clooney.

The experience is more like staying in a grand palace than a luxury belle époque hotel. The attentive staff treats you like royalty even if you're not famous. The 95 rooms and suites are fit for a queen and have panoramic lake vistas. The Royal Breakfast Room is a baroque architectural masterpiece and there are magnificent fresco ceilings, marble staircases and

gilded trim everywhere. There are two pools on the lake, health club, sauna and a world-class spa.

One of two gourmet restaurants is the glass-enclosed La Mistral overlooking the lake with live music. Its tasting dinner will blow you away. One night be adventurous and order their inventive "molecular menu." There's La Goletta, a casual restaurant where one specialty is more delicious than the next.

Every facet of this villa hotel is astonishingly beautiful and it's only steps from Bellagio and its twisting and winding cobblestone streets, quaint churches, mouth-watering restaurants and historic Villa Melzi Gardens. My favorite restaurant was Ristorante Bilacus, where the owner/chef cooks up his mother's favorite recipes. There's also Ristorante Suisse on a terrace overlooking Lake Como. Ask the owner to bring out a tasting of the dishes he loves the best. Buy a bottle of his local olive oil.

Take a scenic hop-on, hop-off ferry tour of Lake Como. The next day rent a motor boat and explore the lake and its picturesque villages on your own. One day, take a water taxi to the Locanda dell'Isola Comacina restaurant for lunch, located on the only island in the lake. You'll devour a sumptuous meal presented by its charismatic owner.

The Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni's rates are between \$550 and \$700 a night – well worth the splurge – and includes a gastronomic buffet breakfast. But if they're booked or it's too rich for your budget, consider the lovely Hotel Belvedere Bellagio at between \$375 and \$475 night or the charming Hotel Du Lac at about \$225 night.

Taking a Bellagio on Lake Como vacation is a once-in-a-lifetime, La Dolce Vita experience the rich and famous have been taking for a hundred years. Life is short, you deserve it.

Bellagio is a scenic hour and a half ride by taxi from Milan's Linate airport. Check out Google Flights or Hopper for best airfares.

Travel Secrets

1. Check your passport, if it expires within six months of leaving or returning you must have it renewed or be turned away at airports.
2. Download Mezi App. It'll help plan every facet of your trip, book everything and e-mail tickets.
3. Take TraveLex Trip Insurance because "stuff happens." You're covered if you have an accident or health problem on the trip. Buon viaggio.

Hastings-on-Hudson resident Richard Levy is a former advertising "Mad Man" creative director and now prolific travel writer. He's also an inventor of innovative new products and is writing and illustrating a new children's book. You can contact him at RichardLevyTravelWriter@gmail.com.

