



# Gardens of Italy

With Pat Webster and

Julia Guest

May 13 – 22, 2015

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> tour collaboration by Pat Webster & Julia Guest and the 2<sup>nd</sup> to Italy, offered by invitation only and limited to just 10 guests. Intimate, interesting, fun. Together for 10 days/9 nights, visit extraordinary gardens, appreciating the particular genius of the Italian style and the enormous contribution it has made to our idea of what gardens are. This is the inspiration behind the tour agenda.

From Renaissance Florence to the gloriously romantic Ninfa Garden just south of Rome, our tour encompasses the best. If you saw Monty Don's Italian Gardens series some names are familiar: Villa Gamberaia, Il Bosco della Ragnaia and Villa Lante; while Castello Ruspoli and Ninfa were featured in the "Recreating Eden" series by Knowledge Network. At least six gardens are additions to the previous tour ensuring a true adventure in garden exploration. Days are planned for interest and contrast; some gardens are historic, some are revival Renaissance with a modern twist and a few are interesting curiosities.

Ten amazing days in one amazing garden tour, not to mention the fine Italian cuisine and wines... La dolce vita awaits!

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 through 3: Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup> through Friday May 15<sup>th</sup> – 3 nights Hotel Antica Torre, Florence**

An afternoon visit to **Giardini di Palazzo Corsini al Prato**; hidden behind a high wall and originally in the countryside, this 17<sup>th</sup>C garden is a rare example of a late Renaissance town garden. On the first evening a Welcome Dinner will offer introductions to the tour and a chance to become acquainted. Our visits during these Florentine days will include **Villa Medici's** superb 'hanging gardens' that date to the 15<sup>th</sup>C with later additions by Cecil Pinsent. An English architect living in Florence in the early 20<sup>th</sup>C, Pinsent's influence can be seen here, at the nearby **Villa Le Balze** and at **Villa Capponi**, a 17<sup>th</sup>C garden with Rococo flourishes, where his talent for 'listening to the landscape' is again evident. **Villa Medici di Castello**, called the perfect example of the classic Italian garden, was laid out in 16<sup>th</sup>C and is exceptionally well-preserved. The gem-like **Villa Gamberaia** is perhaps Italy's most celebrated Italian villa garden, a masterpiece in the loveliest of settings. A delightfully typical Tuscan lunch at a trattoria in Fiesole will be included one day.



#### Day 4 through 6 – Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> & Sunday May 17<sup>th</sup> – 2 nights Relais Il Chiostro di Pienza, Pienza

Leaving Florence, we stop at **Poggio Torselli** in San Casciano, a garden that has little of the sobriety and restraint seen in classic Tuscan gardens but offers instead a riot of exuberant colour. We visit with owner and garden creator Sheppard Craige at **Bosco della Ragnaia**, a contemporary landscape that is for many as thought-provoking as the great Renaissance gardens. The 17<sup>th</sup>C **Villa Cetinale** combines history with oak woods of wild flowers and 20<sup>th</sup>C elements; meticulously restored and an absolute favourite of Penelope Hobhouse – anywhere. (This visit to be confirmed in March). There will be time to enjoy the pleasures of Pienza – a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the hotel facilities.

#### Day 6 through 7: Monday May 18<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup> – 2 nights Relais Falicso, Civita Castellana

Civita Castellana is an authentic (read – non-touristy) medieval walled village well-located for our garden visits and the hotel is a renovated Palazzo with an excellent restaurant. Much photographed **La Foce** is a 20<sup>th</sup>C classic design with a fascinating story told by our sympathetic guide.

**Villa Lante**, a greatly admired Renaissance ‘watery garden’, illustrates Renaissance ideas about humanity’s metamorphosis from the Golden Age to the Christian era. At **Castello Ruspoli**, one of the best preserved Renaissance parterres in Europe, we will meet with one of the owner-

sisters and visit the castle interior. **Caprarola** is said to offer the perfect balance between landscape, architecture and sculptural decoration, making it one of the greatest masterpieces of Italian garden art. For a more contemporary experience we visit **San Liberato**,

described by the great British landscape designer Russell Page who came to work there as a “place of magical silent harmony”. Dinner in our hotel is included one evening.



#### Days 8 through 9: Wednesday May 20<sup>th</sup> & Thursday May 21<sup>st</sup> – 2 nights Hotel Flora, Frascati

**Villa d’Este**, one of the first *giardini delle meraviglie* (garden of wonders), was an early model for the development of European gardens, the epitome of fountain art and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. **Villa Aldobrandini** overlooks Frascati; with its tunnel of clipped holm oaks and its Water Theatre, it is one of the great dramatic setpieces of all gardens. Beautiful **Ninfa** contains “as much beauty as any visitor can bear” and **La Torrechia** is a modern private garden by English landscape designer Dan Pearson, built around the ruins of a medieval village; it is lush, slightly shaggy and very green. As at Ninfa, the energy between vigorous growth and the slow decay of the buildings gives the garden its dynamic and its harmony. A Farewell Dinner will be held the night of May 21<sup>st</sup>.

#### Day 10: Tuesday May 22<sup>nd</sup>

We say goodbye at Rome daVinci/Fiumicino airport. And so, until next time....

Travel to Florence Italy for arrival not later than May 13<sup>th</sup>, returning from Rome May 22<sup>nd</sup> or later. You may wish to extend your Italian stay; please contact Julia for hotel reservations.





### The tour price includes:

- ✚ Garden entrance fees including a private guide where appropriate.
- ✚ Accommodation as shown for 9 nights, inclusive of city tax and full Italian breakfast daily.
- ✚ Dinner on 3 evenings and 1 lunch, including gratuities.
- ✚ Gratuities to the tour facilitator and motorcoach driver.
- ✚ Porterage of 1 bag per person in/out each hotel.
- ✚ Departure transfer to Rome's daVinci/Fiumicino airport for departures noon or later.
- ✚ Comprehensive tour booklet, full of answers and information, sent one month before travel.

### The tour price does not include:

- ✚ Items of a personal nature, meals not shown to be included.
- ✚ International airfare.
- ✚ Arrival transfer in Florence; Rome departure for flights other than noon or later.
- ✚ Additional hotel nights in Florence.

### How it works:

- ✚ The price per person sharing accommodation is CA\$6475, single supplement is CA\$1470.
- ✚ The tour is strictly limited to 10 tour guests and guided by Pat Webster & Julia Guest; accompanied by an Italian/English speaking tour facilitator and professional driver for our chartered motorcoach.
- ✚ It is a requirement that all tour members have out-of-country emergency medical coverage.
- ✚ Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended and may be arranged by Travel Concepts.
- ✚ Payment: A deposit of \$1000 is required to secure a space. A second deposit of \$1000 is required by Nov.30<sup>th</sup> 2014 and the balance is due by February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 and once paid, all is non-refundable.
- ✚ The gardens chosen may be altered should confirmations be withdrawn for whatever reason, further inclusions made if considered to an enhancement to the tour and hotels of equal quality may be substituted.
- ✚ The tour cost may be subject to change due to currency fluctuations and other conditions beyond the control of Travel Concepts.

**Contact Julia Guest at Travel Concepts for further information: [JuliaG@trvlconcepts.com](mailto:JuliaG@trvlconcepts.com)**

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