
NORTHERN ITALY: LA SCALA, LAKE COMO & VERONA

Thursday, June 29th through Saturday, July 8th



Bellagio on Lake Como

*“One hundred years after its inauguration, the **Festival dell’Arena di Verona** is an essential part of the operatic scene... As for the atmosphere: A kaleidoscope of feelings, impressions and colours that makes the city’s amphitheatre the focal point of a mass phenomenon unmatched anywhere else in terms of scale, repertoire and results.”*

Opera, Nov. '13

“Lake Como remains a place of consummate partnership between the beauties of nature and those of humanity... Like so many of Italy’s most beautiful villa gardens, those of Como owe their beauty to the landscape architecture of two eras: the Renaissance Italian, with its taste for order, and the 19th-century English, with its fondness for illusions of natural wildness.”

Fodor

“Verona stands on the banks of the Adige in a setting of cypress covered hills.... It is, after Venice, the finest art center in Venetia.”

Michelin

“La Scala is closer to a cathedral than an auditorium. Here Verdi established his reputation and Maria Callas sang her way into opera lore. It looms as a symbol – both for the performer who dreams of singing here and for the opera buff who knows every note....”

Fodor

Our annual summer Tour to Northern Italy remains among our most popular offerings and is invariably sold out. For 2017, our program at the beginning of July will encompass two performances at Milan’s legendary **Teatro alla Scala** and three evenings in the spectacular **Verona Arena** –

including Verona’s signature production of Verdi’s **Aida**. Between these two prime operatic destinations, we will enjoy a three-night respite in the idyllic village of **Bellagio** on the shores of **Lake Como**. It is difficult to imagine a more breathtaking site than the Grand Villa Serbelloni, where we will relax without any performances.

Our itinerary will begin with **two nights** in the Lombardian capital of **Milan**, with accommodations at the deluxe **Hotel de la Ville** only a short walk from famed **La Scala**. Our pair of popular performances in Italy’s most prestigious theatre will be Giacomo Puccini’s beloved **La Bohème** in the **Franco Zeffirelli** setting that all opera-lovers want to see; and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s classic comedy, **Die Entführung aus dem Serail** (**The Abduction from the Seraglio**). La Scala’s international casts will feature American soprano **Ailyn Perez** and Italian tenor **Fabio Sartori** intoning Puccini’s soaring arias and duets; and Dutch soprano **Lenneke Ruiten** opposite Swiss tenor **Mauro Peter** as Mozart’s devoted lovers. The exceptional conductors will be **Evelino Pido** and **Zubin Mehta**.

Continuing to Lake Como for **three nights** at **Bellagio’s Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni**, our leisurely schedule will allow ample time to explore one of Italy’s most beautiful small towns. The magnificent views and the intoxicating charm of the village have evoked unanimous enthusiasm from our travelers over the past two decades.

Our third destination is the Northern Italian city of **Verona**, which has long been among our most important summer

destinations due to the Renaissance beauty of the architecture and the overwhelming experience of the outdoor opera performances in the **Roman Arena**. Our **three-night** visit will include a trio of the season's highlights, all from the pen of Italy's operatic giant Giuseppe Verdi. In addition to Verona's grandiose staging of Verdi's **Aida**, our schedule will also include Verdi's melodic 'middle-period' achievement, **Rigoletto**, and his earliest major success, the rousing **Nabucco** set in Ancient Babylon and Jerusalem. Each of these Verdi works will be staged in the Arena's vast outdoor stage which affords the opportunity of truly spectacular productions. Our choice of the five-star **Palazzo Victoria Hotel** is again within walking distance of the Arena.

Thursday, June 29th, departure from New York's Kennedy Airport at 6:35 pm on Delta flight #418, arriving at Milan's Malpensa Airport (NOT Milan's Linate Airport) at 8:35 am on the morning of June 30th. Or independent travel to Milan.

MILAN: JUNE 30 & JULY 1

Accommodations for **two nights** with a generous European **buffet breakfast** included at the **Hotel de la Ville**, a superior four-star property centrally located on the Piazza Fontana only a short walk from La Scala and the exclusive shops of the via Montenapoleone. The stunning Gothic spires of the Duomo are viewed from the hotel's higher floors, and dining facilities include the **Visconteo Bar** and a fashionable restaurant appropriately named **L'Opera**. The premises also offer a fitness



Botticelli's Madonna of the Book, Poldi Pezzoli Museum

club and solarium roof terrace with a small swimming pool. (We have chosen the Hotel de la Ville because of its ideal location near La Scala and the city's major sights and museums.) **IMPORTANT:** There will be a performance on our first evening. If you wish to arrive a day ahead to adjust to the time change, a limited number of rooms are available for the additional night of Thursday, June 29th. You should notify us NOW if you do want the early night at our hotel.

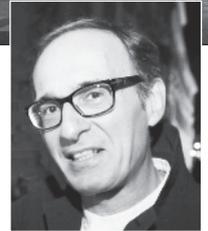


Milan, Duomo marketplace



La Scala

Early Friday evening, June 30th, a **cocktail reception** is planned in a private entertainment area of the hotel. This will be an opportunity to meet other members of the Tour.



Evelino Pidò

Friday evening at 8:00 pm, our first performance at **La Scala** will be the celebrated **Franco Zeffirelli** production of Puccini's **La Bohème**. Audiences are vociferous in their preference for Zeffirelli's grandiose visions rather than the updated single-set productions often necessitated by budgetary concerns. This colorful recreation of Montmartre in Paris remains a particular favorite. Italy's conductor **Evelino Pidò** will be in charge, with a cast headed by the MET's American soprano **Ailyn Perez** in the title role of the doomed seamstress Mimi. The quartet of principals is completed by Italians **Fabio Sartori** as Rodolfo, **Federica Lombardi** as Musetta, and **Simone Piazzola** as Marcello. *Sung in Italian with English titles.*



Zubin Mehta

Saturday, July 1st, is our only full day in Milano and is left free for independent activities. You may want to visit one of the city's priceless art museums. The intimate **Poldi Pezzoli Museum** of Renaissance masters and the **Brera Gallery** of Old Masters are both of major importance, and **La Scala's Museum** traces the operatic history of Europe's most famous theatre. The flamboyantly decorative Gothic **Duomo** (Cathedral) and picturesque **Galleria** of shops and cafés are also within easy walking distance of our hotel. Italy's most fashionable designer boutiques and upscale leather stores are a short walk from our hotel.

At 8:00 pm on Saturday, we will return to **La Scala** for a performance of Mozart's **Die Entführung aus dem Serail** ('**The Abduction from the Seraglio**'). Mozart's exuberant Turkish comedy is widely considered the greatest work of the German 'singspiel' tradition, 'Abduction' abounds in Mozartean melody and characterization, especially in the pivotal role of Konstanze ('Martern aller arten' and 'Traurigkeit ward mir zum Lose' are among the most fiendishly difficult arias in the repertoire.) Maestro **Zubin Mehta** will be the conductor, and the staging is directed by **Mattia Testi** after the original concept by **Giorgio Strehler**. The sets and costumes are designed by **Luciana Damiani**. The cast will feature Dutch soprano **Lenneke Ruiten** as a bravura Konstanze, Swiss lyric tenor **Mauro Peter** as her loyal paramour Belmonte; and German bass **Tobias Kehrer** in the 'buffo' role of the Harem's guard Osmin. *Sung in German with English titles.*

LAKE COMO: JULY 2ND – 4TH

Late Sunday morning, July 2nd, our bus transfer of about an hour and a half will take us north of Milan to the village of Bellagio.

Accommodations for **three nights** with a generous **buffet breakfast** included at the **Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio**. This sumptuous hotel is surrounded by luxurious gardens and dramatic mountains bordering **Lake Como**, the most beautiful of the romantic Italian lakes. The scenery is magnificent around the village of Bellagio, the “Pearl of the Lake”, which enjoys a unique promontory site on the northern shore. The bedrooms are richly furnished in Italianate style, and the dining room is renowned for its imaginative cuisine. There is a large outdoor swimming pool adjacent to the lake shore.

Sunday evening, July 2nd, we will enjoy a leisurely **dinner** at the Villa Serbelloni. The view from the terrace overlooking Lake Como and the mountains has been immortalized by such writers as E. M. Forster, Henry James and Edith Wharton.

Sunday afternoon and all-day Monday and Tuesday are left free for relaxing by the Lake and enjoying the shops and sights around Bellagio. Just beyond the village lie the extensive **Villa Melzi** gardens for which Bellagio is renowned, offering an inviting afternoon stroll; and the Palladian **Villa Carlotta** is easily accessible by ferry or motor taxi across the lake. There are many shops in the center of Bellagio and a variety of cafés on the lakeshore for a relaxing cappuccino or gelato. You will be free Monday and Tuesday evenings to dine in the town’s charming small ‘trattorias’. *(In previous years, our opera schedules have often limited our Bellagio visits to only two nights. As our travelers have consistently urged us to stay longer in this beautiful setting, this year’s schedule allows us to remain for a third night.)*



Villa
Serbelloni
pool

Villa
Carlotta,
Como



VERONA: JULY 5TH – 7TH

On Wednesday, July 5th, a several-hour bus ride across the picturesque landscape of Northern Italy will bring us to **Verona** to experience what is probably the world’s grandest opera productions.

Our Wednesday, July 5th, a several-hour bus ride across the picturesque landscape of Northern Italy will bring us to **Verona** to experience what is probably the world’s grandest opera productions.



Verona on the Adige River

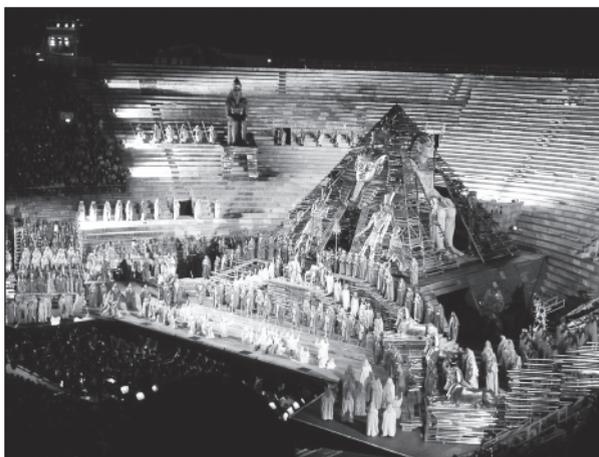
Our accommodations for **three nights** with **buffet breakfast** are at the deluxe **Palazzo Victoria Hotel**, which enjoys a perfect location in the heart of the old city within easy walking distance of the Arena, the Castello Museum and the Piazza delle Erbe. The Victoria is fully air-conditioned, and the rooms are spacious and peaceful, reflecting the quiet residential district. We are gratified to note that the Victoria has now added its own restaurant, thereby achieving an enviable 5-Star designation. There are also many ‘trattorias’ and cafés between the hotel and the Arena.

This charming town rose to prominence during the Renaissance and is a walker’s paradise. Of particular appeal during our free time are the **Piazza delle Erbe** (the central square with its colorful herb market); the 12th century Romanesque **Duomo** (Cathedral); the 14th century **House of the Capulets** (Verona was the historical home of Romeo and Juliet); and the **Old Castle and Bridge** across the picturesque Adige River (the **Castello Museum** contains an intriguing collection of Italian painting and sculpture in beautifully designed modern galleries overlooking the Adige).

Wednesday evening, July 5th, a short walk from the hotel will bring us to the **Verona Arena**, a vast Amphitheater which ranks as the third largest in the world. To share an opera with 20,000 enthusiastic Italians is an unforgettable experience! The performances begin after dark and conclude in the early morning in a truly festive spirit. The productions emphasize expansive staging on the tiers of steps and platforms of the Arena, usually accompanied by **the biggest names in opera** to fill the huge demands of the environment. The arena is also renowned for its perfect acoustics, which enable pianissimo phrases to reach all sections of the orchestra (where we will be seated **in the ‘poltronissime’ premium locations**) and surrounding ‘bleachers’. In recent years we have heard Sondra

Radvanovsky, Deborah Voigt, Fiorenza Cedolins, Alexandra Kurzak, Dolora Zajick, Placido Domingo, Marcello Giordani, Fabio Armiliato, Leo Nucci, Renato Bruson, Carlos Alvarez, Ildebrando D'Arcangelo, and Paate Burchuladze in leading roles.

Our performance on Wednesday at 9:00 pm will be Giuseppe Verdi's **Aida**, premiered in Cairo in 1871. Opera enthusiasts travel from all over the world to encounter 'Aida' in Verona, the Arena's signature production. More than any other work, the scope of Verdi's most popular opera and the backdrop of Ancient Egypt during the Pharaohs' reign have consistently inspired Verona's directors and designers to create an unforgettable experience of 'grand opera'. An adventurous multimedia production new to Verona this year will be staged by *Fura del Baus*, "a Spanish theatrical group known for their urban theater, use of unusual settings and blurring of the boundaries between audience and actor". (Wikipedia). *All Verona casts will be announced at a later date.*



Aida in the Verona Arena

Thursday morning, July 6th, an introductory **walking tour** will familiarize you with the major Renaissance piazzas and monuments of Verona. The afternoon is left free to shop along the Corso, visit museums, and stroll through the many charming side streets which characterize Verona. (*You will also be grateful for any free time in Verona to rest, because of the very late opera performances which begin after dusk at 9:00 pm. Bedtime is usually between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m.*)



*Piazza degli Signori;
Piazza delle Erbe, Verona*



Thursday evening, a pre-opera **dinner** of Veronese dishes will be served at **Il Torcolo**, one of the atmospheric trattorias which line the streets in the neighborhood of the Arena. Il Torcolo's homemade lasagna has proven to be a favorite dish for our former travelers.

At 9:00 pm, we will return to the Arena for a performance of Verdi's brilliantly composed melodrama, **Rigoletto**. With a libretto by Piave based on Victor Hugo's French play 'Le roi s'amuse', 'Rigoletto' is set in the Northern Italian city of Mantua during the High Renaissance of the 16th century. Verdi's 'middle period'

classic is highlighted by the Duke's three famously lyric arias ('Questa o quella', 'Parmi veder le lagrime', and the fourth-act 'La donna è mobile'), Gilda's coloratura 'Caro nome', the celebrated Quartet, and the hunchback's poignant 'Pari siamo' and angry accusation 'Cortigiani, vil razza dannata'. *Sung in Italian with English titles.*

At 9:00 pm on Friday evening, July 7th, our final opera will be Verdi's rousing 'early period' opera, **Nabucco**. Premiered at La Scala in 1842, 'Nabucco' is considered Verdi's first important success. "The Hebrews' choral lament ('Va, pensiero') is the most famous piece in 'Nabucco', perhaps in all of Verdi... It creates that powerful sense of nostalgia which gave the chorus its status as a symbol of Italian national aspirations." (*New Grove Dictionary of Opera*). In Verona – as in most opera houses today – the enthusiastic audience insists on an encore of this emotional scene.

Saturday, July 8th, departure from Verona's airport at 12:05 pm on Alitalia flight #1492, arriving at Rome's Fiumicino Airport at 1:10 pm. This connects with Alitalia #610, departing Rome at 2:45 pm and arriving at New York's Kennedy Airport at 6:20 pm. Or independent departure.

Northern Italy

Price per person, based on double occupancy	\$ 6,900
Single room supplement	\$ 1,480*

**We apologize for the high single supplement at our deluxe hotels. However, single travelers will be accommodated in comfortable 'double rooms for single occupancy'. NOT included in our price are the new Italian city taxes, which you should expect to pay when departing the hotels. These small taxes are 5 euros in Milan, 2 euros in Bellagio, and 3 euros in Verona (per person per night).*

Airfare NOT included.

Airfare: Prices are subject to change depending on time of booking. Please contact our agent Linda Botros (back cover) for lowest current fares.

You should expect to walk four or five blocks to participate in this Tour, as it is impossible for a bus to reach some of our destinations any closer. Vehicles are not allowed in the inner city of Verona or Bellagio.