

Condé Nast Traveller

beauty
SPECIAL

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL

JULY/AUGUST 2023

Summer breeze

DREAMING OF THE MED, FROM SIFNOS TO THE AMALFI COAST



PLUS

**MALAGA'S FRESH ARTY BEAT • VERDANT BRITISH GARDENS
THE GOOD LIFE IN TICINO • SLOW CYCLING TURKEY'S TAURUS MOUNTAINS**

CONTENTS

JULY/AUGUST 2023

AMALFI COAST p104

Vivid tales and cliffside reveries on Italy's most storied seaside stretch

MALAGA p116

The new food and art scenes powering this unsung Spanish city's exciting renaissance

SIFNOS p126

The Greek island where traditional cooking, pottery and communal rituals thrive

TICINO p138

Lakes, lidos and lounging in Switzerland's stylish, Italian-flavoured southern nook



PHOTOGRAPH: LAVINIA CERNAU

HOTEL SPLENDE ROYAL, LUGANO, TICINO



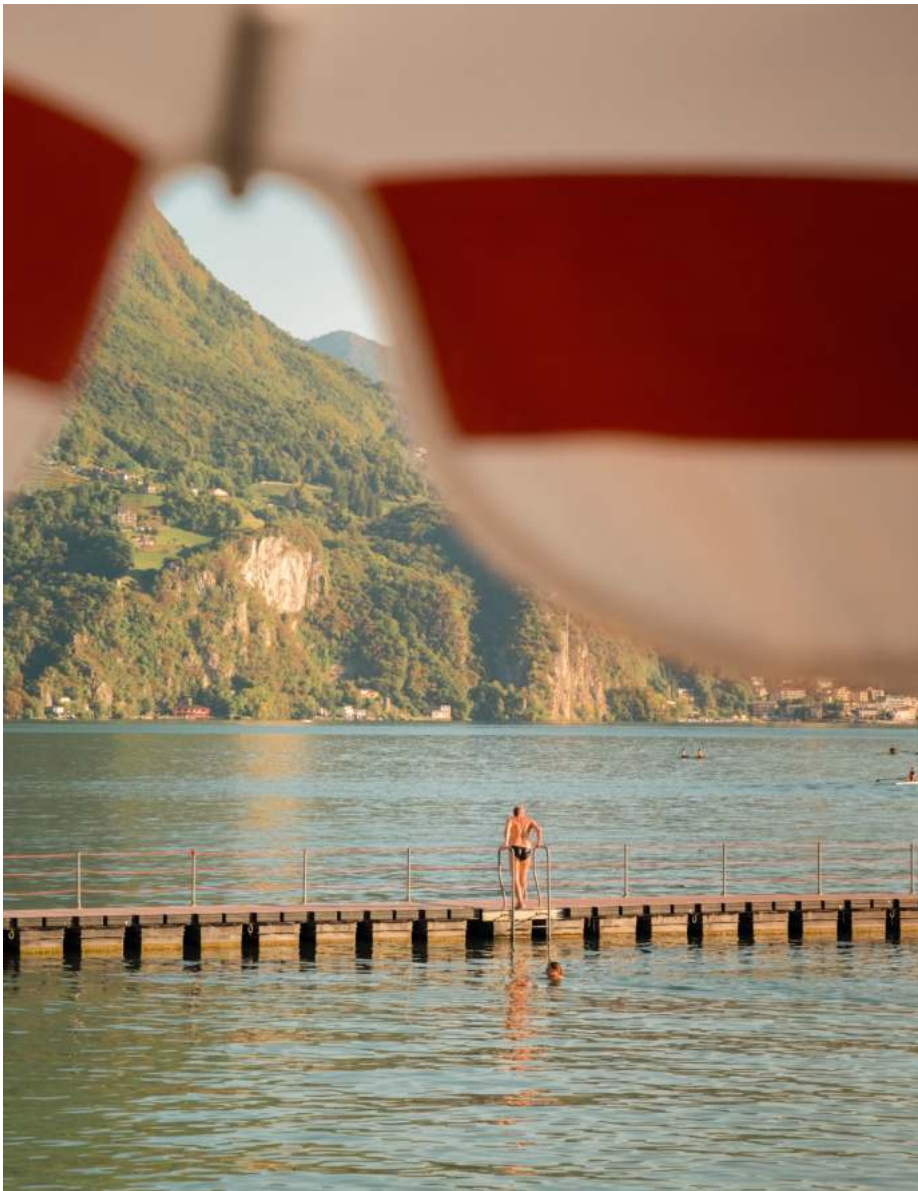
Bedroom at Hotel Splendide Royal, Lugano.
Opposite: Gandria village on Lake Lugano



M A G I C
M O U N T A I N

THE SPLASHING PLEASURES AND DANCING DELIGHTS OF TICINO,
SWITZERLAND'S ITALIANATE ENCLAVE

BY CATHERINE FAIRWEATHER. PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAVINIA CERNAU



BEYOND THE STARCHED APRON OF THE TERRACE at the grand Hotel Splendide Royal, while sipping a chinotto – the addictive and bitter-sweet myrtle-flavoured pop of northern Italy – I delight in the spectacle of Lugano residents enjoying the traditional pre-dinner stroll of la passeggiata in the late afternoon sun. There’s the parade of mothers jogging behind their prams and the group of prosperous pensioners in Borsalino hats. The tourists are licking ice-cream cones, the cyclists are Lycra-clad, and everyone is busy meeting, greeting and communing in this most Italianate and civilised of Swiss cities.

Lugano’s vivid mountain backdrop – the round-topped summits of Monte Brè, Monte San Salvatore and Monte Generoso, benign and graphic as a child’s drawing – can be reached by funicular, in a vertigo-inducing 10-minute ascent. Then there is the famous lakeside promenade, with improbable lollipop-shaped trees and jade-coloured glacial waters lapping against an extraordinary variety of ornamental palms, chestnuts and pollarded lime and ilex trees, cloud-pruned into the pom-poms of a prize poodle.

Lugano was the catwalk of the beau monde in the 1800s, when the notion of leisure time was born for a privileged few. The 19th-century habit of promenading bred a new stereotype of the flâneur, busy eyeing up the social landscape, intent on being seen. Today’s dandy equivalents are the thong-clad paddleboarders, performing headstands or playing volleyball on their SUPs, and the high-divers at the lidos, clamouring for an audience. Lido life is an integral part of summer, when the 30-odd pools in the canton of Ticino open to the public. Everyone gets their patch of sun, from the peaceful, no-frills sunbathing platforms of the Lido San Domenico to the buzzy Caslano Lido, with its guest DJs, or the multi-generational, slightly retro Lugano Lido.

At the latter, launched in 1928, the chalet-style changing rooms remain intact and there are striped deckchairs on the lawns, plus a beach occupied by canoodling couples and snoozing grandparents with squawking babies. A hairless professional swimmer counts lengths up and down the Olympic-size pool, and crowds gather at an outdoor cinema and around the trampolines. It’s a sporty, wholesome, democratic scene: a microcosm of Switzerland.

In German, people refer to Ticino as “Sonnenstube”, which means “sun porch”. The canton is the gateway to the south, with expectations of sunny days and balmy nights. The mountains that gaze down at their reflections in the great mirrored lakes of Lugano and Maggiore are more Mediterranean than Alpine in spirit, with human life revolving, in animated Italian, over bowls of pasta and gelato. Olives, citrus and the merlot grape are cultivated here, as well as the classic Alpine produce of polenta and chestnuts.

Tracing the lake’s edge to the picturesque former fishing village of Gandria on the Italian border, on a four-and-a-half-mile stroll along



LUGANO WAS
THE CATWALK
OF THE BEAU
MONDE IN THE
1800S, WHEN
THE NOTION OF
LEISURE TIME WAS
BORN FOR A
PRIVILEGED FEW

the Olive Trail, I discover the heady, acrid scent of capers springing out of rocky crannies, as well as wafts of wild marjoram redolent of pizza parlours and the Mezzogiorno. I pass by Villa Favorita, an imposing Baroque estate being revamped by the architects Herzog & de Meuron. Heini Thyssen, the art-collecting Swiss industrialist who bought the villa in the 1930s from Prince Leopold of Prussia, was among many to seek refuge in this political safe haven with its blessed climate. He angled the views of his villa across Lake Lugano, where brazen modern-day foghorns announce the arrival of the ferry boats that skim over the glassy surface like giant bugs.

These waters may look still, divine and burnished by the sun, but in some places the lake is 945 feet deep, with unseen currents that have been known to take down small boats. The ferries are the connecting

From top: view of Lake Lugano from Morcote village; dining room at Hotel Splendide Royal. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Lake Lugano; Hotel Splendide Royal’s gold decor; Ascona, a town on Lake Maggiore; free newspapers at Lugano Lido; exterior of Hotel Splendide Royal; swimming at Lugano Lido

I DISCOVER THE HEADY, ACRID SCENT OF CAPERS
SPRINGING OUT OF ROCKY CRANNIES, AS WELL AS
WAFTS OF WILD MARJORAM REDOLENT OF PIZZA
PARLOURS AND THE MEZZOGIORNO



Foyer at Hotel Splendide
Royal. Opposite: Spaghetti
Store restaurant in Lugano



ANTIPASTI & INSALATE

- scoglie di Grana Padano 10,95
- pecorino sardo fresco 12,95
- pomodorini Cherry 14,95
- mozzarella di bufala 16,95
- Tomino in crosta di

S
SPAGHETTI VIORE
PIAZZA R. REZZONICO 7
6900 LUGANO
TEL. +41 (0)91 922 20 60
EVENTS@SPAGHETTIGASTROGROUP.COM
FACEBOOK.COM



ANCIENT HERDING
PATHWAYS
CONNECT TO
EDELWEISS-
SPECKLED
SUMMITS, AND
MYSTICAL BEECH
FORESTS ARE
SPONGY WITH
MOSS



thread of Lake Lugano, not only looping together the outlying villages but also giving passage to the grotti (caves) on the far shores and the alfresco taverns serving simple produce that would otherwise be unreachable. Grotto Descanso, near the Swiss Customs Museum and smugglers' post on the Italian border, is a 12-minute boat trip across from Gandria. I sit in the lee of a beech tree at a gingham-clad table, with a cool carafe of red from the owner's cavern cellar to accompany salamis, a cheeseboard and rib-sticking polenta and sausage – a peculiarly Ticinese pleasure, made more vivid for only being available for four or five months of the year.

On an electric bike I follow a grotto trail up into Val Bavona to eat foraged-mushroom risotto and chestnut cake beside the mighty Foroglio waterfall at La Froda osteria's great stone tables over the river. There

are old 16th-century village houses, or rustici, made of stone and slate, and splüi shelters built into and around collapsed boulders, which serve as sturdy roofs. They are no longer lived in by traditional smallholders and local cowmen – transhumance is no longer the raison d'être of these valleys – but back then, villagers would winter with their livestock in the valley and follow them up to higher pastures at the start of the summer. The centuries-old tradition died out in the 1950s, but the remaining residents voted against the electricity grid: La Froda is still powered by a generator and lit by candles.

The Ticinese know how to exploit the short window of summer, and indulge in back-to-back outdoor events and festivals. There's a famous film festival in Locarno, on Lake Maggiore, every August. In Lugano, the days inevitably include an open-air jazz recital in the Parco Ciani, early-morning yoga at Lugano Lido or impromptu dance-offs for young and old in the Piazza della Riforma.

Dancing is treasured in Ticino. In the plateaus and mountains surrounding Lugano, from the islands of Brissago to the waterfalls and rock pools of the Maggia Valley, groups of strangers sign up for the Innerwalk Project: therapeutic and ecstatic silent dancing with headphones in the great outdoors. It's a throwback to the utopian nature-seeking commune that existed at Monte Verità near Ascona in 1900, when a group of free-thinkers, vegans, bohemians and artists from

around the globe – hippies avant la lettre – set up in a vineyard and took to dancing barefoot and sometimes naked. The locals referred to them as “the balabiott” – the nude dancers. Other non-conformists have been drawn to Ticino: Carl Jung, Hermann Hesse and the dance diva Isadora Duncan all craved its dramatic landscape (and its political neutrality, especially once Europe became stoked by nationalism and threats of world war).

While Ticino today is not about counter-culture – these hedonistic utopian communities have given way to a different kind of haven: secure repositories for the money of the super-rich – the mysticism and back-to-nature impulse has never quite lost favour. Now, visitors can stay at Monte Verità in a Bauhaus-inspired hotel with a Japanese tea house and cultural commune, just a short journey from Lugano on Switzerland's faultless railway network.

Ascona – its core still traditional and car-free – has a couple of Switzerland's most innovative hotels in the stately Hotel Eden Roc and outlying Castello del Sole. But less than an hour away, up the Verzasca Valley, is a different version of living at the newly restored Albergo Diffuso in Corippo. There's a handful of monastic bedrooms, each with just a bed, a pole to hang clothes on and a square felt curtain. They are scattered around 16th-century rustici in Ticino's smallest village, with roughly 10 residents. Ancient herding pathways connect to edelweiss-speckled summits, and mystical beech forests are spongy with moss. Rock pools of emerald clarity attract another kind of migration, of summer hikers, electric bikers and wild swimmers. It's a reimagined idea of holidaying in a raw and uncut natural world that finds perfect expression in Ticino. 📍

From top: balcony in Carona village; moped rider on a street there. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* hair salon in Morcote; Agua restaurant; Corippo, the smallest village in Switzerland; powerboating on Lake Lugano; menus at Lugano Lido; view of the lake from Hotel Splendide Royal



THE TICINESE KNOW HOW TO EXPLOIT THE SHORT
WINDOW OF SUMMER, AND INDULGE IN BACK-TO-BACK
OUTDOOR EVENTS AND FESTIVALS





TICINO IN STYLE

WHERE TO STAY

LUGANO

Hotel Splendide Royal The marbled, gilded belle époque grandeur of the Hotel Splendide Royal, overlooking the lake in Lugano's cultural heart, never palls. The 94 bedrooms are vast and the top-rated spa has a chandeliered indoor pool. *Doubles from about £355; splendide.ch*

Villa Principe Leopoldo Outside the city on the Collina d'Oro, this former princely residence has 37 suites and a freeform swimming pool in a lemon grove with sublime views. *Doubles from about £265; leopoldohotel.com*

Grand Hotel Villa Castagnola This 19th-century Russian mansion became a hotel in 1885 and has been in the same family for 40 years. It has 72 bedrooms set in subtropical gardens, a seafood-heavy restaurant-art gallery, a sensational lakeside terrace and a private beach, all just over a mile from the Olive Trail. *Doubles from about £430; villacastagnola.com*

ASCONA

Castello del Sole Beach Resort & Spa This Michelin-starred Relais & Châteaux country manor is set in 346 acres of park and farmland on the shores of Lake Maggiore. It belongs to the same group as the Terreni alla Maggia farm and vineyards, and has a beach, marina, bird sanctuary, immaculate stables and powerboats, plus a rustico retreat further up the mountain. The property is working on becoming plastic-free and has built shelters for about 500 migrating house martins. *Doubles from about £510; castellodelsole.com*

Hotel Eden Roc This exuberant beach resort on Lake Maggiore is part of the legendary Tschuggen Collection. The 95 balconied bedrooms are spread across the jaunty, nautical-style Eden Roc marina, a contemporary art-filled main building and a more sober wing. There are three pools and four top-notch restaurants, which do bewitching things with vegetables. *Doubles from about £570; tschuggencollection.ch*

LOCARNO

Villa Orselina After travelling up to see the view over Locarno and Lake Maggiore, and the 15th-century Madonna del Sasso, on a cable car designed by brutalist architect Mario Botta, the cherry on the cake is a stay at this honeymooners' favourite. *Doubles from about £290; villaorselina.ch*

Corippo Albergo Diffuso This plain but magical 10-room hotel in the deepest nook of the valley is open all year. It's part of a movement to revitalise historic settlements, with no bar music, chlorinated pools or minibars, and minimal plastic. *Doubles from about £160; corippoalbergodiffuso.ch*

WHERE TO EAT

Locanda Gandriese Overlooking the lake in Gandria, this unpretentious restaurant with rooms is known for chef Davide Crobe's Sardinian specialities and legendary pizzas. *locandagandriese.com*

Grotto dei Pescatori A top choice for excellent fish and meat prepared on an open grill by the water in Caprino. *grottodeipescatori.ch*

Grotto Descanso Next to the Swiss Customs Museum, this summer eatery is accessible only by boat and dishes up the region's cheeses, charcuterie and seasonal produce in a lakeside setting. *ristopro.org*

Casa del Tè A tea house by the on-site plantation in the Zen Garden at Monte Verità, serving ice-cold green tea. *casa-del-te.ch*

La Froda Winning plates at this Foroglio osteria include boar stew, foraged-mushroom risotto and chestnut cake. *lafroda.ch*

Agua This lively Lugano restaurant offers great fish, local wine and abundant opportunities for people-watching on the terrace. *agualugano.ch*

HOW TO GET THERE

To find out more about Ticino, visit myswitzerland.com. Fly with Swiss International Air Lines, swiss.com

From left: cat at the Church of San Vigilio, Gandria; the church exterior; Borsalino hat shop in Lugano. Opposite: outdoor seating at Lugano Lido