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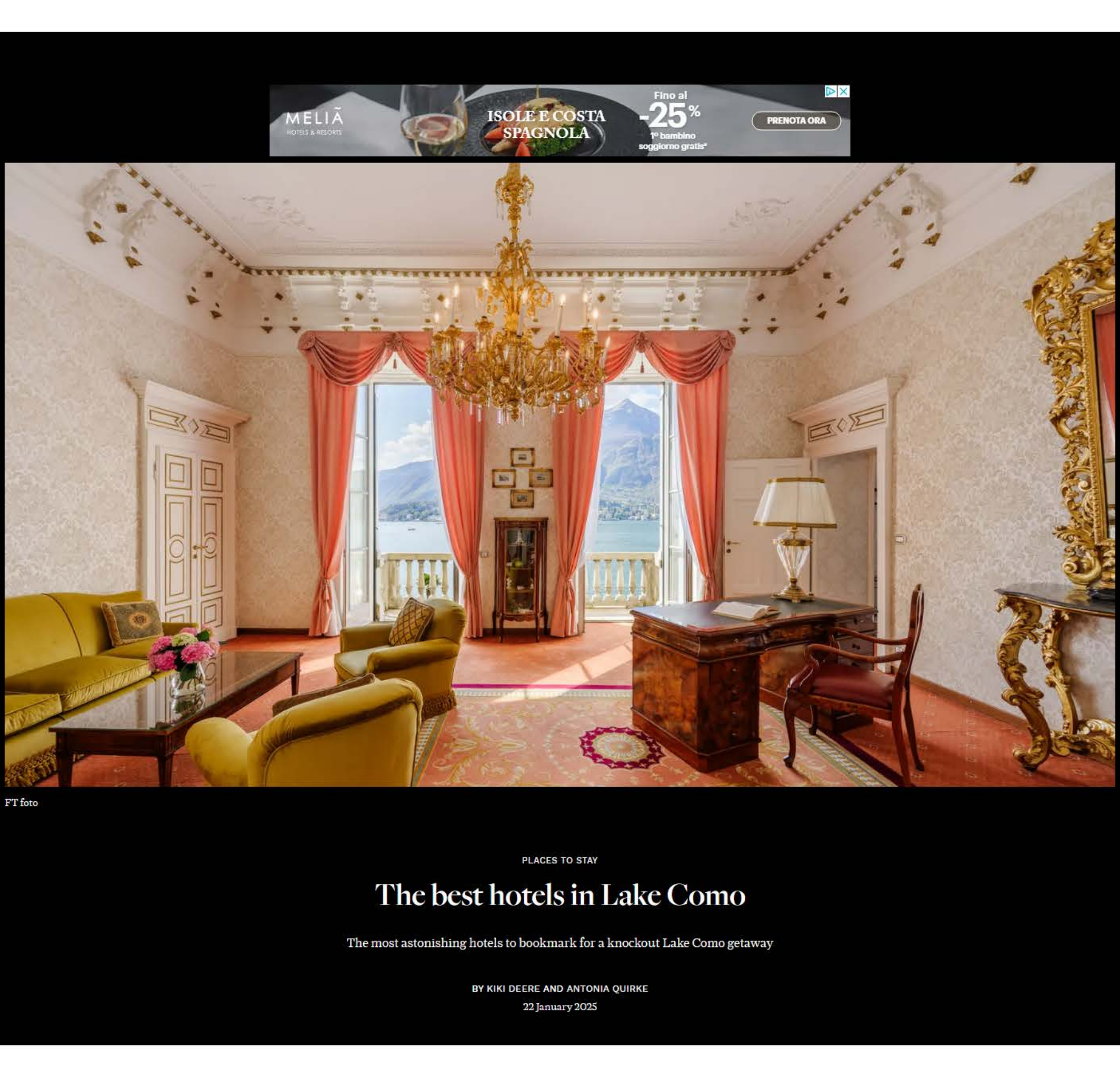

FT foto

PLACES TO STAY

The best hotels in Lake Como

The most astonishing hotels to bookmark for a knockout Lake Como getaway

BY KIKI DEERE AND ANTONIA QUIRKE

22 January 2025

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MELIÃ HOTELS & RESORTS ISOLE E COSTA SPAGNOLA Fino al -25% 1º bambino soggiorno gratis* PRENOTA ORA

Lake Como's days as a holiday retreat can be traced back to Roman times, and some of the best hotels in Lake Como are steeped in history. Pliny the Younger is said to have spent his summers unwinding lakeside – although it wasn't until the 16th century that opulent villas began to spring up around the lake. Several were later converted into smart hotels to accommodate the increasing number of visitors who stopped off as part of their Grand Tour when European aristocracy would take extended trips throughout the continent to broaden their cultural horizons.

Lake Como has come a long way since. Of course, the grand dame hotels remain, arguably more glamorous now than ever, although a smattering of sleek contemporary openings over the last few years have firmly placed Lake Como on the map as a go-to destination for truly gorgeous, trendy stays – with jaw-dropping scenery (and plenty of people watching) to match. These are the best hotels in Lake Como to book for a slice of La Dolce Vita.

What area of Lake Como is the best to stay in?

Lake Como is undoubtedly best visited by road, with many of the hotels on this list proving worthy stops on your itinerary, whether for a stay or for a long leisurely lunch. The top addresses tend to be gathered towards the south western end of the lake, near the town of Como itself. In terms of other towns to visit nearby, Bellagio in the middle and Varena on the eastern side, are beloved highlights.

From unassuming family-run stays to glossy recent arrivals, this is our edit of the best hotels in Lake Como, all reviewed by an expert on the *Condé Nast Traveller* team. For a private stay, see our pick of the best villas in Lake Como.

How we choose the best hotels in Lake Como

Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni

The Grand Hotel Villa Serbelloni sits elegantly on the Bellagio waterfront, immersed within its own leafy grounds in the heart of what is one of Lake Como's dreamiest villages. Dating to 1873, the honey-hued villa has been owned by the Bucher family since 1918, with the fourth generation running the property today. A welcoming family feel pervades, thanks also to a loyal close-knit team of staff, many of whom have been working here for years. The opulent period interiors are dressed in lavish fabrics and no shortage of marble, with Murano chandeliers and grand works of art hanging above a sweeping bifurcated staircase that leads up to the rooms. Come morning, push open the shutters of your suite, and you'll have to pinch yourself as you take in picture-perfect lake views, Riva boats zipping past, leaving white trails in their wake.

The property's manicured grounds hug the lakefront, with secluded paths shaded by palm trees flanked by exuberant displays of blossoming camellias and bougainvillaea. It's all too easy to while away your afternoons by the swimming pool, heading over to the tennis court for a game or two when the sun begins to set (therapists are on hand to soothe aching muscles at the Spa). There's also an indoor swimming pool, kids' pool, children's playground, and a pavilion housing a fitness centre, pilates room and squash court. What more do you need? *Kiki Deere*

Price: Doubles from £850 per night

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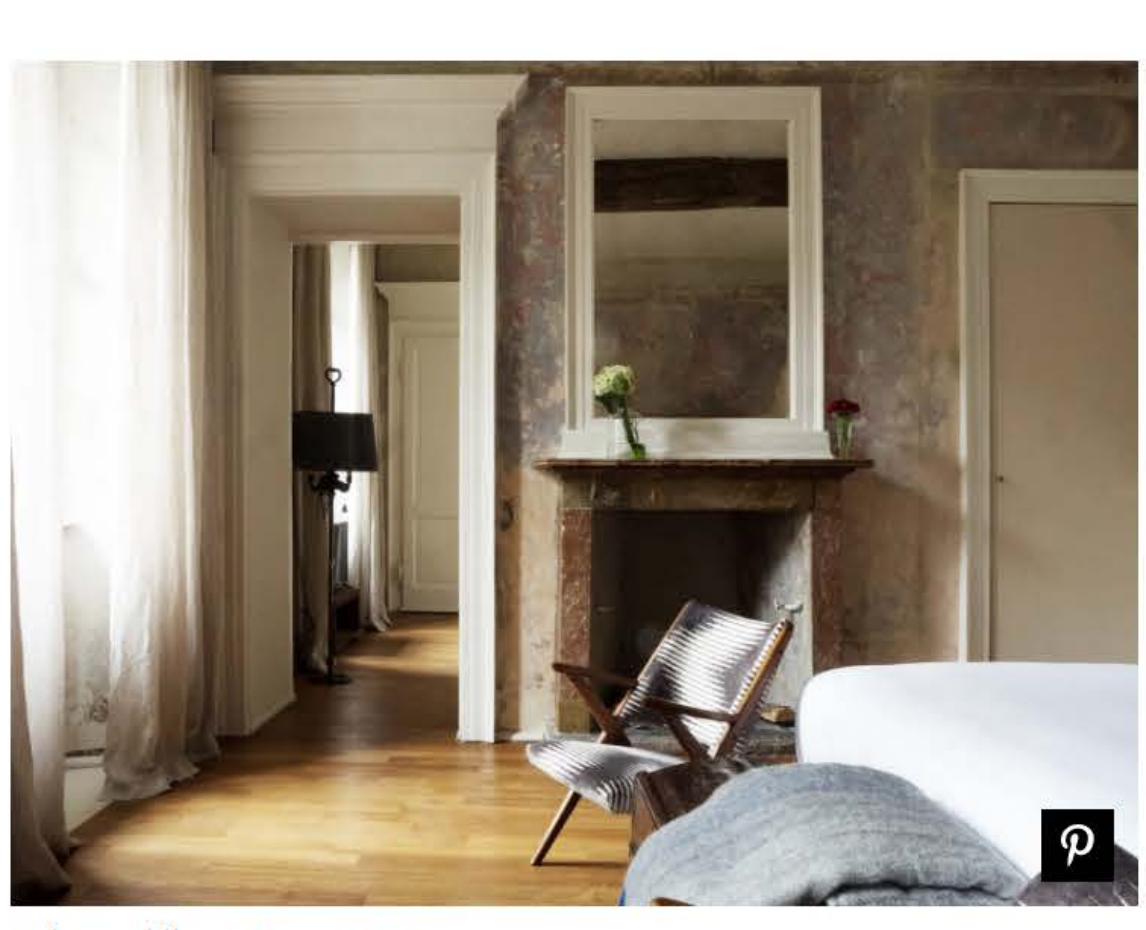

Palazzo Albricci Peregrini

The Galli family have opened their home to guests, transforming their 15th century palazzo into a sophisticated boutique hotel in the heart of Como town. In summer, guests can sip aperitivo in the shaded garden, while visit in winter, and you'll find yourself cosying up by a roaring fire in the building's former stables (the hotel is open year-round). Low ceilings and thick wooden beams create a snug ambience exuding rustic sophistication, with reclaimed chests and low tables adorned with curios and ornaments assembled over the course of family travels to exotic, far-flung locales.

Bedrooms in the former stables come with wooden floors, low ceiling beams and textured materials (thick rugs; chunky throws) to create a warm, all-enveloping feel. Abstract canvases and long draping curtains in creamy linens lend a breezy feel, while bathrooms – all with monsoon showers – come in tones of muddy red or brown. Rooms on the first floor *piano nobile*, meanwhile, exude a serene feel with their streamlined look, with lofty ceilings adorned with frescoes, and whirlpool tubs and steam rooms in two of the suites. Come morning, expect a lavish breakfast prepared with locally sourced produce, from homemade cakes and savoury pies to scrumptious eggs benedict and cheese and cold-cut platters. *Kiki Deere*

Price: Doubles from £335 per night

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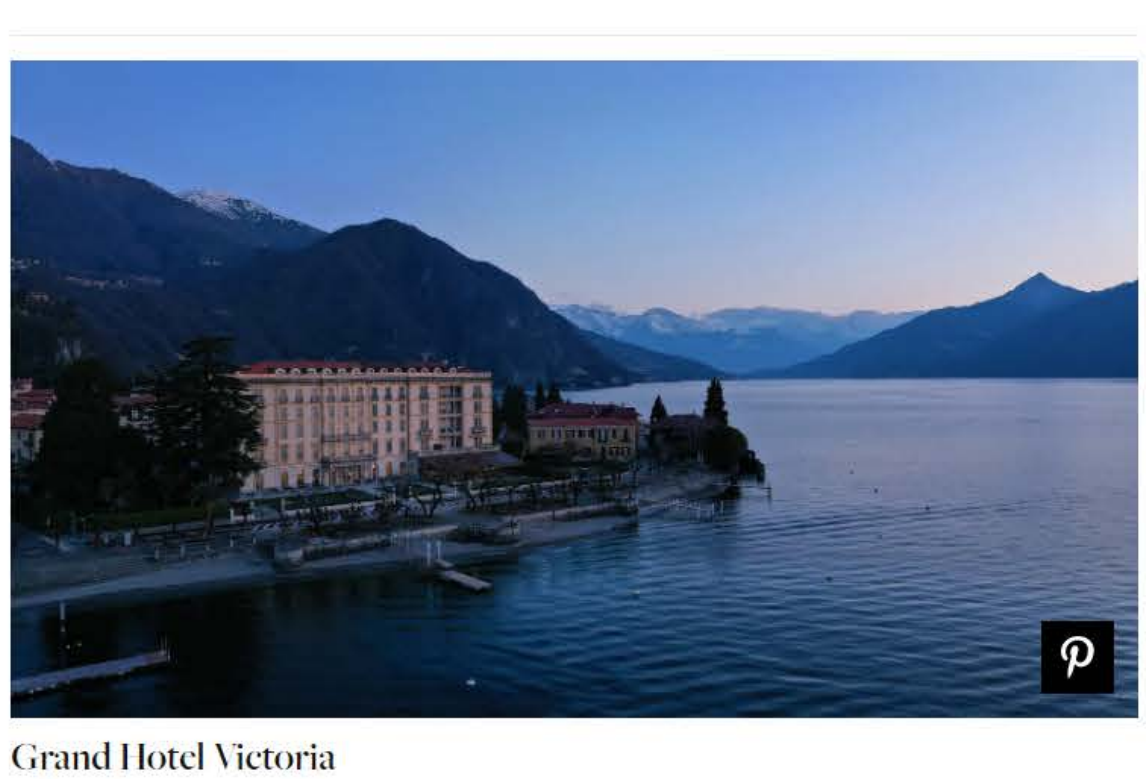
WATCH

Fish curry with coconut milk recipe: how to make fish Malaikari by Asma Kahn

Condé Nast Traveller
which is from the city
where I was born, Calcutta,



Grand Hotel Victoria

Built in 1890, the Grand Hotel Victoria recently re-opened its doors with a contemporary new look following extensive renovations. Original Liberty-style features, including a lovely marble staircase, interplay with contemporary taupe and cream fittings that firmly place the hotel in the twenty-first century. Soothing tones prevail in the light-flooded rooms, with nut browns and soft blues echoing the colours of the lake. The location on the front means you're a ten-minute stroll from Menaggio's ferry terminal, making it all too easy to nip out and take in the sights before retreating to the hotel for a little R&R.

The highlight is the outstanding Spa, which comes with a heated indoor swimming pool, glass-fronted saunas and steam rooms, salt rooms, relaxation rooms, a hot tub and a Kneipp path. If sunning yourself by the pool is more your thing, there's an open-air swimming pool in the leafy courtyard garden surrounded by comfy lounge beds; or make for Victoria Beach, the hotel's sleek Beach Club with two swimming pools, a children's pool, and lots of opportunity for lounging – all while soaking up glorious lake vistas to the upbeat sounds of live music. *Kiki Deere*

Price: Doubles from £590 per night

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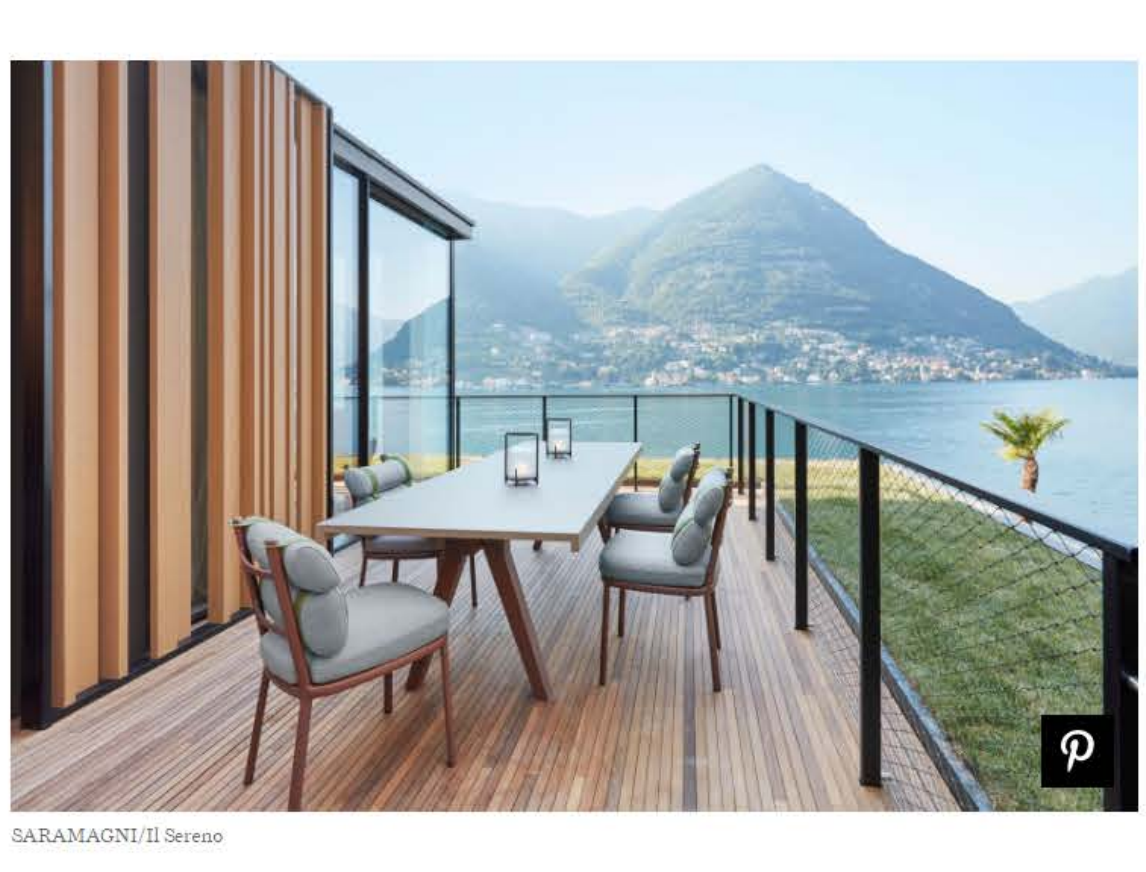

SARAMAGNI/Il Sereno

HOTEL

Il Sereno→

$$$

Featured in our Gold List of the best hotels in the world 2024

When it launched a few years ago in Torno, Il Sereno, Lago di Como caused a sensation. It was the first hotel in the area of Lake Como to be designed by a world-renowned architect – and Patricia Urquiola, the Spanish starchitect and a longtime resident of Milan, did a fabulous job. The hotel blends into its surroundings thanks to the "light" building, with its many windows awash with sunlight reflected by the lake. The garden, with around 183 varieties of plants, creates a gorgeous floral landscape that syncs up with the environment. Even the Brazilian quartzite heated infinity pool and the ashwood deck become one with the lake in a continuous line: harmony. From inside the hotel, you can often glimpse the waters of the Lario, the other name by which Lake Como is known, an iconic part of Italian culture and the backdrop of Alessandro Manzoni's 19th-century novel The Betrothed, where star-crossed lovers Renzo and Lucia manage to finally reunite and get married. Il Sereno's lobby is elegant, soft, and welcoming, filled with the best of Italian design – furniture by Cassina, Moroso, and B&B Italia – as are the 40 rooms, all with a view, and the exquisite vertical garden by Patrick Blanc. The delicious and simple (albeit Michelin-starred) food is courtesy of Raffaele Lenzi and features local freshwater fish and vegetables, served alongside sensational cocktails (even the alcohol-free ones). As if so much contemporary beauty were not enough, there's still the wooden motorboat, a beautiful Riva, ready to take you around the lake or to Villa Pliniana, a 16th-century palace with another 17 bedrooms – a perfect setting for listening to the music of the villa's beautiful grand piano while gazing upon the waters of Lago di Como. *Maddalena Fossati*

Price: Rooms from around £647 per night

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Stefan Gifthaler/Passalacqua

HOTEL

Passalacqua→

Featured in our Hot List of the best new hotels in the world 2023

From a pale-amber estate, seven acres of olive groves, roses, mimosa, jasmine, and magnolia descend to the glittering waters of Lake Como, wafting their fragrance into the sleepy air. A perfectly confected 24-suite hotel born of a 1787 neoclassical villa, Passalacqua is the second Como hotel for the De Santis family, after their beloved Grand Hotel Tremezzo. The suites in the villa have baroque details like original frescoes and ceiling carvings. Como silks, etched Barbini mirrored cabinets, and Bordoni leather ottoman tables. The Palazz contains a small spa stocked with Seed to Skin Tuscany products, with hand-painted wallpaper that replicates that of Portaluppi Herbarium in Milan's Atellani House. Guests congregate on the colourful swimming terrace for unfussy Lombardy lunches. There, the sage green 200-year-old greenhouse and jaunty La DoubleJ – designed floral parasols offer a cheeky riposte to the formal villa interiors. Passalacqua deliciously recaptures the lost art of villeggiatura, or taking to a country villa and revelling in la dolce far niente – sweet idleness. *Lydia Bell*

Price: Rooms from around £670 per night

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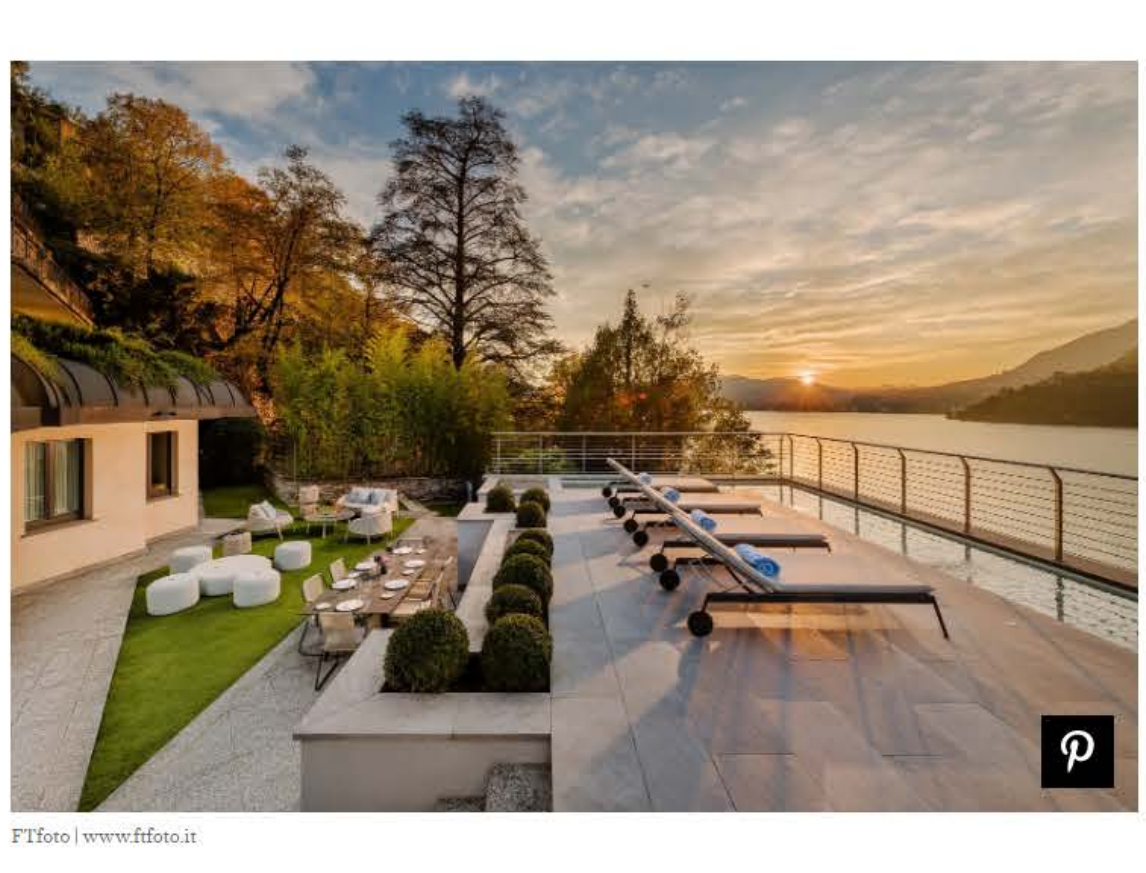

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HOTEL

Mandarin Oriental→

Once the lakefront estate of Italian opera singer Giuditta Pasta, Mandarin Oriental took over this 75-room grand dame in 2018. Milan-based designer Eric Egan made over heavy interiors (also behind the Belmond Hotel Caruso revamp), sharpening the meticulous gardens and floating swimming pool. Mandarin Oriental added a lounge for afternoon tea and a spa in the basement, bringing in Italian chef Massimiliano Blasone to oversee the resort's restaurants and bars. This was the Mandarin Oriental's first European resort and a rare new arrival on the lake – yet it slotted into the scene seamlessly.

Most of the rooms have at least partial views of the lake, and balconies. With muted tones, luxurious textiles and custom wood furniture, the effect is cocooning, although not particularly Italian, which isn't entirely surprising considering the brand. I loved my marble bathroom and terrace, where I could hear the birds from the landscaped gardens and watch the ripples on the lake. The spa here is a standout – notably the amazing new floating swimming pool on the lake with its hard-to-believe engineering. *Ondine Cohane*

Price: Rooms from around £738 per night

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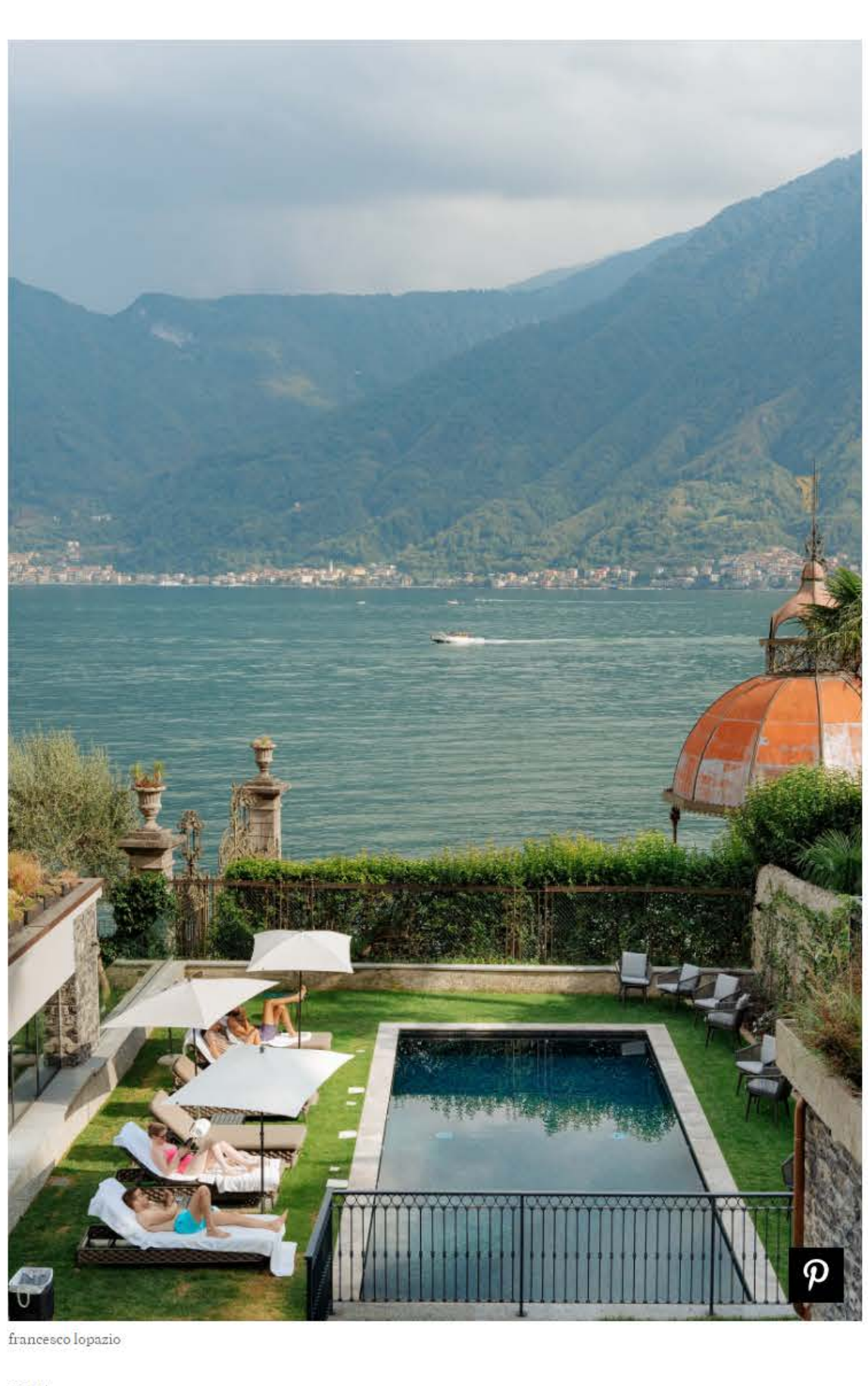

francesco lopazio

HOTEL

MUSA Lago Di Como→

Hugging the manicured shore of Como's west shore, Villa Musa stands proudly – a whitewashed modern villa with only 12 rooms, all with balconies overlooking the handsome backdrop of the lake. Elegant guests arrive by boat at the private jetty or via the meandering road, a 30-minute drive from Como town. Interiors are sleek, with neutral and monochrome furnishings that run throughout the hotel. Bedrooms follow suit: white washed linen bedding, contemporary artwork, white marble bathrooms with a deep bath and spacious shower, cosy seating areas and balconies revealed by heavy curtains that we couldn't wait to draw every morning. Wake up to the cinematic views dotted with eager paddle boarders and bobbing boats easily lost amongst the glittery morning waters.

Food is a big thing here, which makes sense – the hotel and restaurant are run by two acclaimed Italian chefs, Robert Moretti and Matteo Corridori, after al. Dine at the glass-fronted restaurant or on the outdoor terrace, which has an artistic Italian menu – think poached eggs with carbonara sauce for breakfast. Later, lounge by the lakefront pool, sip a creative cocktail at the makeshift boat bar or unwind in the spa facilities. With only a few guests, it's a rather relaxing affair. *Sophie Knight*

Price: Rooms from around £520 per night

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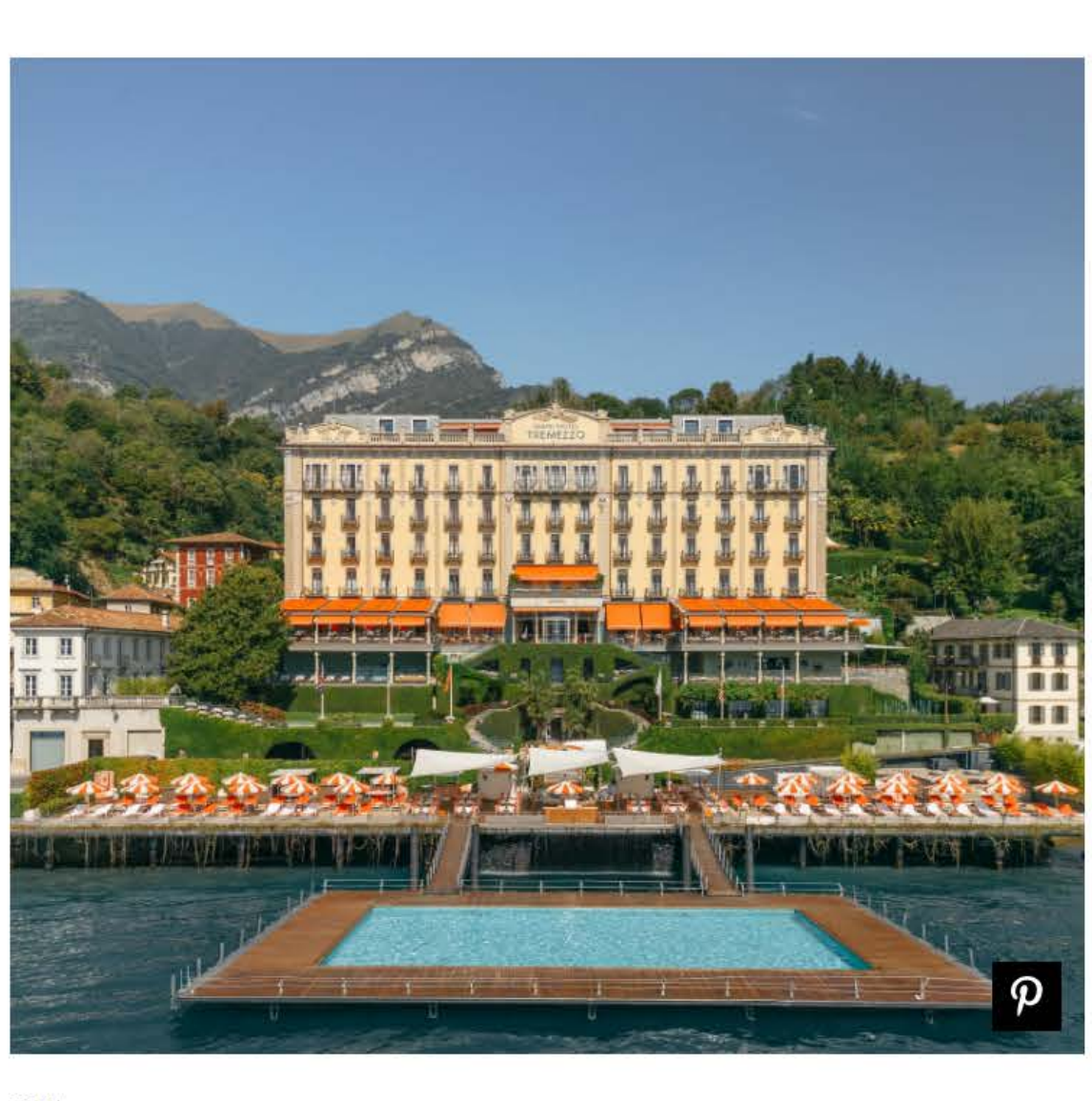

HOTEL

Grand Hotel Tremezzo→

Featured on our 2022 Gold List of the best hotels in the world

In an increasingly rapacious Italian hotel scene, some iconic family-owned properties retain that made-in-Italy, one-of-a-kind elixir that the bigger players can only dream of. The decadent Grand Hotel Tremezzo is decidedly one of these: It has been in family hands since opening in 1910 and comes with Grand Tour charm in spades. Sitting a little back from Lake Como, looking out onto Bellagio, the Liberty-style building conjures a *Grand Budapest Hotel* set, an impression that grows when you enter the formal lobby with its sweeping red-carpet staircase, antique gilt-framed mirrors, and marble-encased bathrooms. I also love the flowers in abundance all over the property. But the hotel still manages to feel intimate thanks to its smaller cosy spaces: a cocooning spa with a heated swim-in, swim-out pool and Santa Maria Novella products; an outdoor pool surrounded by a forest of trees and blooming flowers; and tucked-away bars and corner banquettes in the restaurant (be sure to try the gold-leaf risotto). he hotel effortlessly pulls multiple punches, with a covetable shop stocking brands like Bric's Milano, Borsalino, and Chez Dede, and a beautiful vintage wooden boat for lake excursions and to avoid road traffic. But the true pièce de résistance is the floating pool sitting on the lake – cinematic grandeur incarnate with a Lido-like beachfront, bright orange and white umbrellas, and chic custom loungers. *Ondine Cohane*

Price: Rooms from around £860 per night

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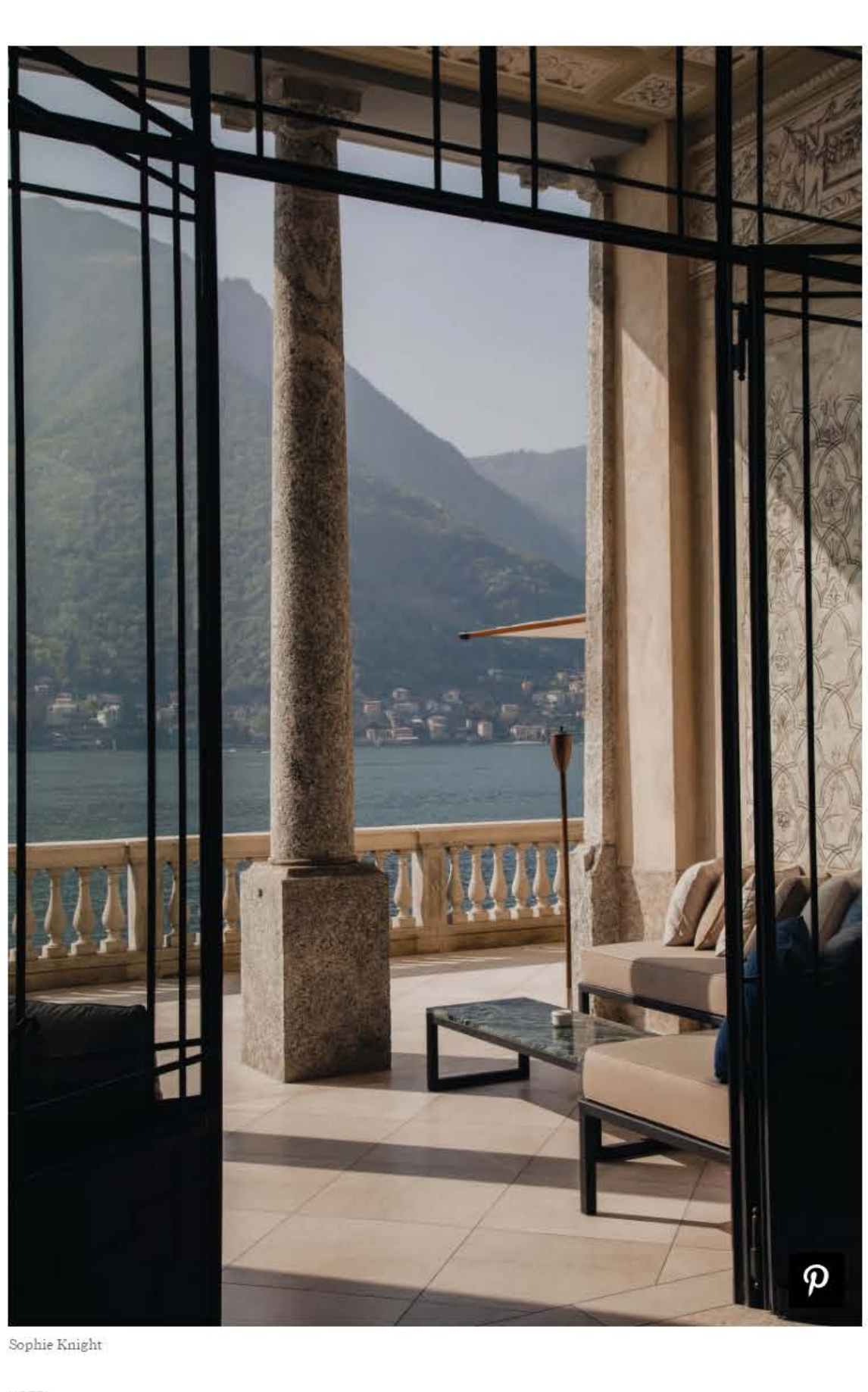

Sophie Knight

HOTEL

Villa Lario→

With 18 suites (all with views over the lake) accessed sharply from Como's one road, this place feels definitively private, set apart, very much on its own picturesque high pinnacle hanging over the water. Part of a 19th-century property previously owned by the Lombardi family, it has something no other five-star hotel around here can quite claim: a very secluded pontoon that guests can swim off directly, bothered by nothing but the occasional boat dropping somebody off for lunch. (Inexplicably, most hotels don't encourage swimming in Como itself). It's worth coming to eat – just-caught fish; tomatoes from the hotel gardens – even if you don't stay, but there is something particularly authentic about this side of the lake and it would feel a shame to not sleep here too.

Price: Rooms from around £562 per night

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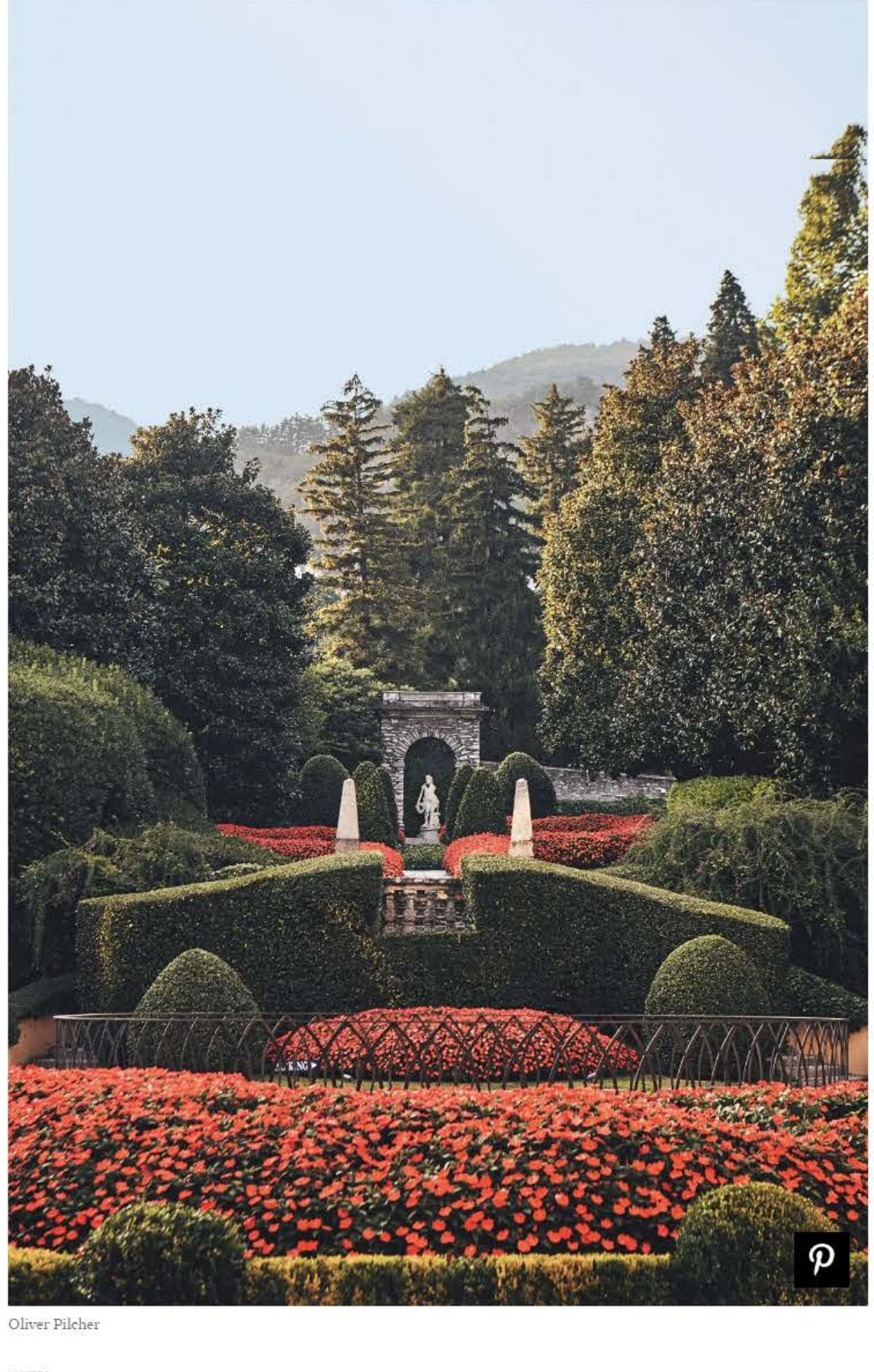

Oliver Pilcher

HOTEL

Villa d'Este→

Preposterously and hilariously grand, this is where Elizabeth Taylor came to hide out at the start of her affair with Richard Burton. As the great director Mike Nichols later recalled, so long as she wore a large-ish hat, nobody gave her a second glance. Built in 1568 as a summer residence for a wealthy cardinal with a passion for art, the hotel has an immense 17th-century shelled grotto, decorative gardens lapped by water so clear you can see pebbles fall to the distant bottom, and chefs in high white hats inspecting the engraved glass on bridal tables. In the morning, breakfast of Sicilian cannolis and iced espresso is taken as the sun starts its journey across the lake, settling on a flower-plumed promontory beyond. Boats cut through the water, leaving a fizzing trail behind. Everybody sits and watches – wondering where reality leaves off and dreaming begins.

Price: Rooms from around £529 per night

BOOK NOW AT VILLA D'ESTE

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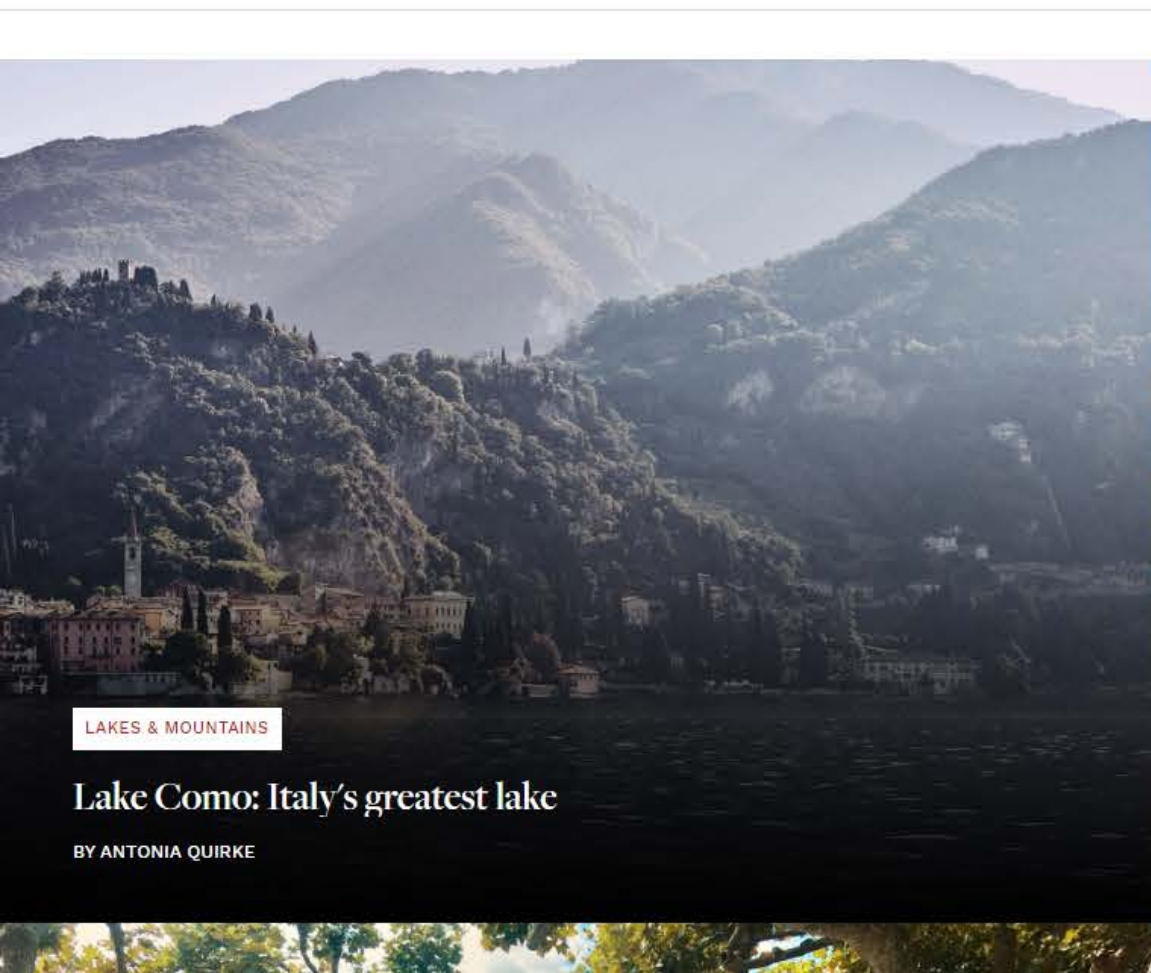

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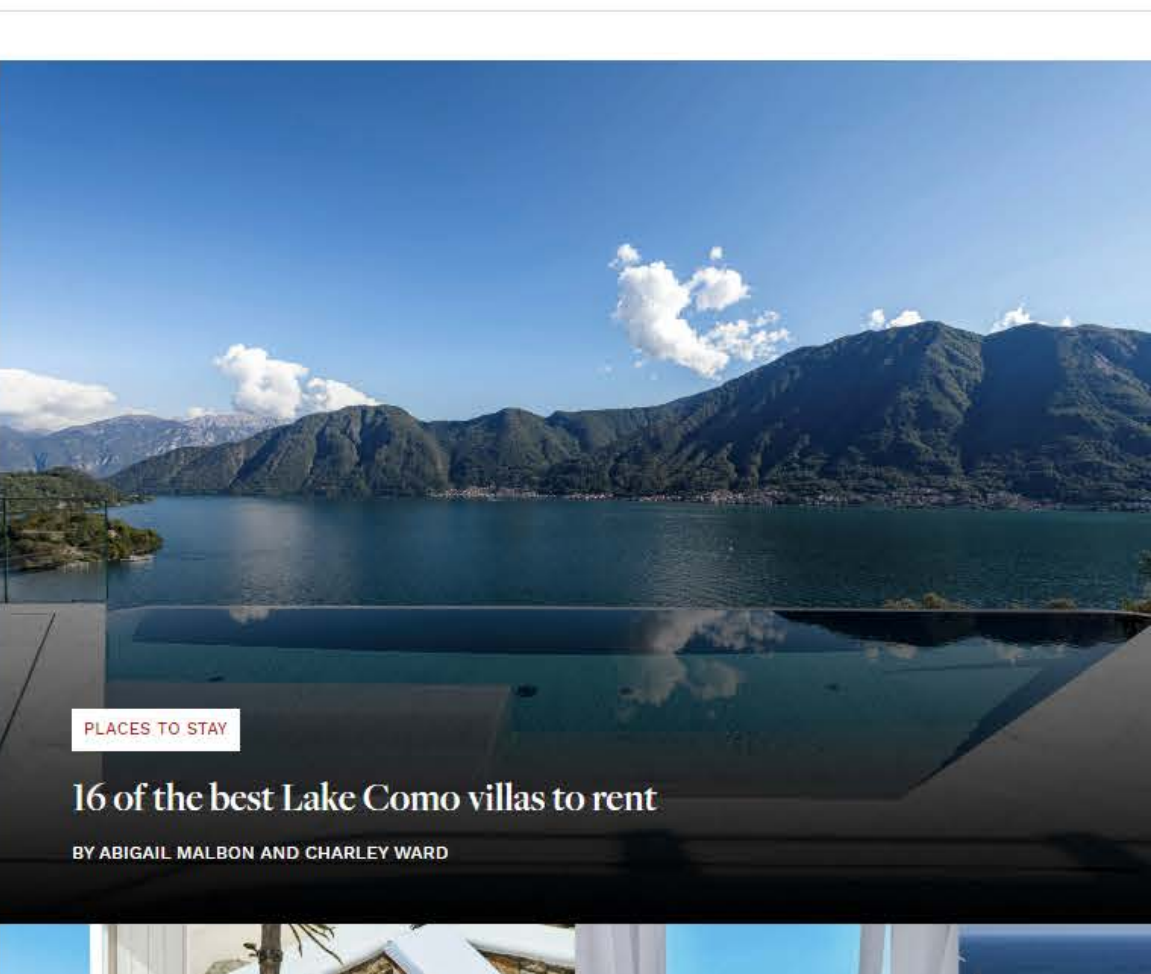
BY ANTONIA QUIRKE



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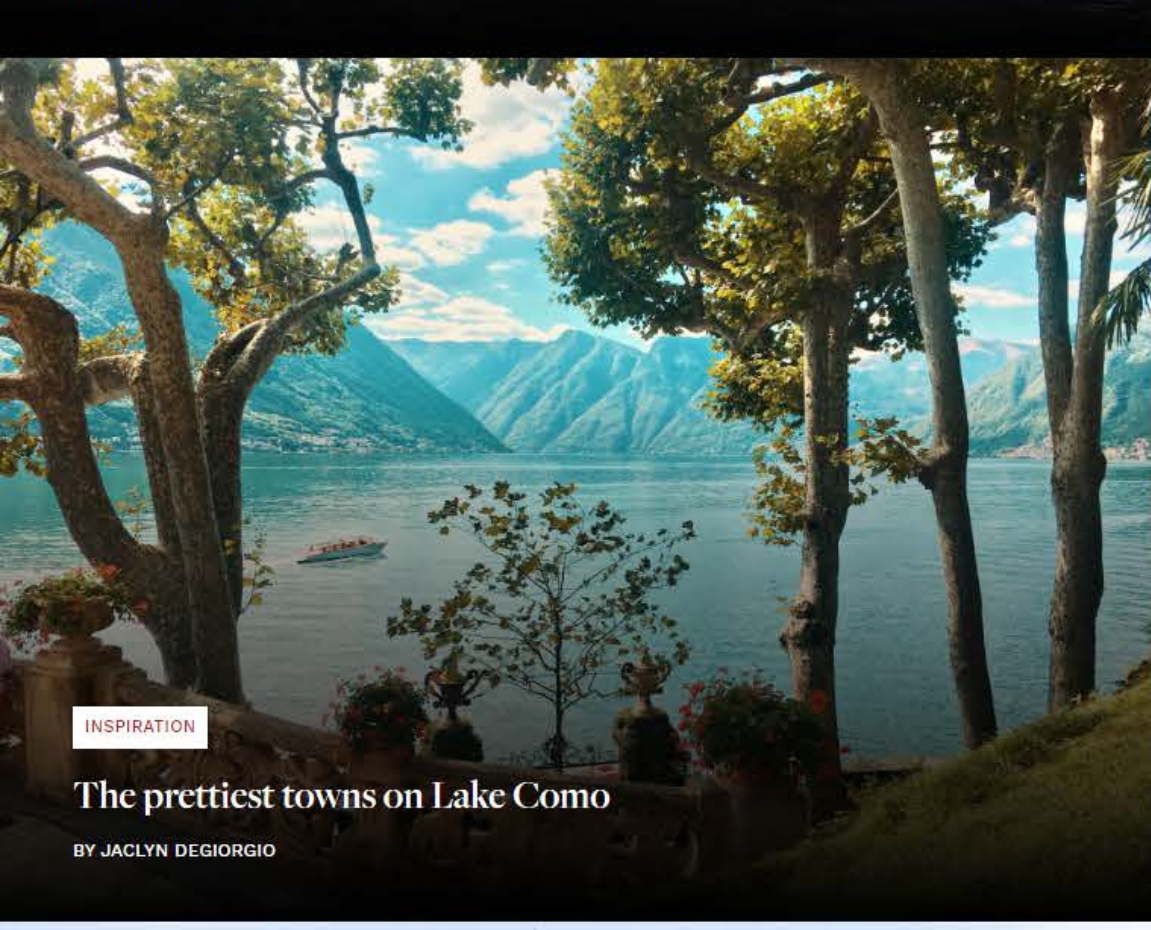

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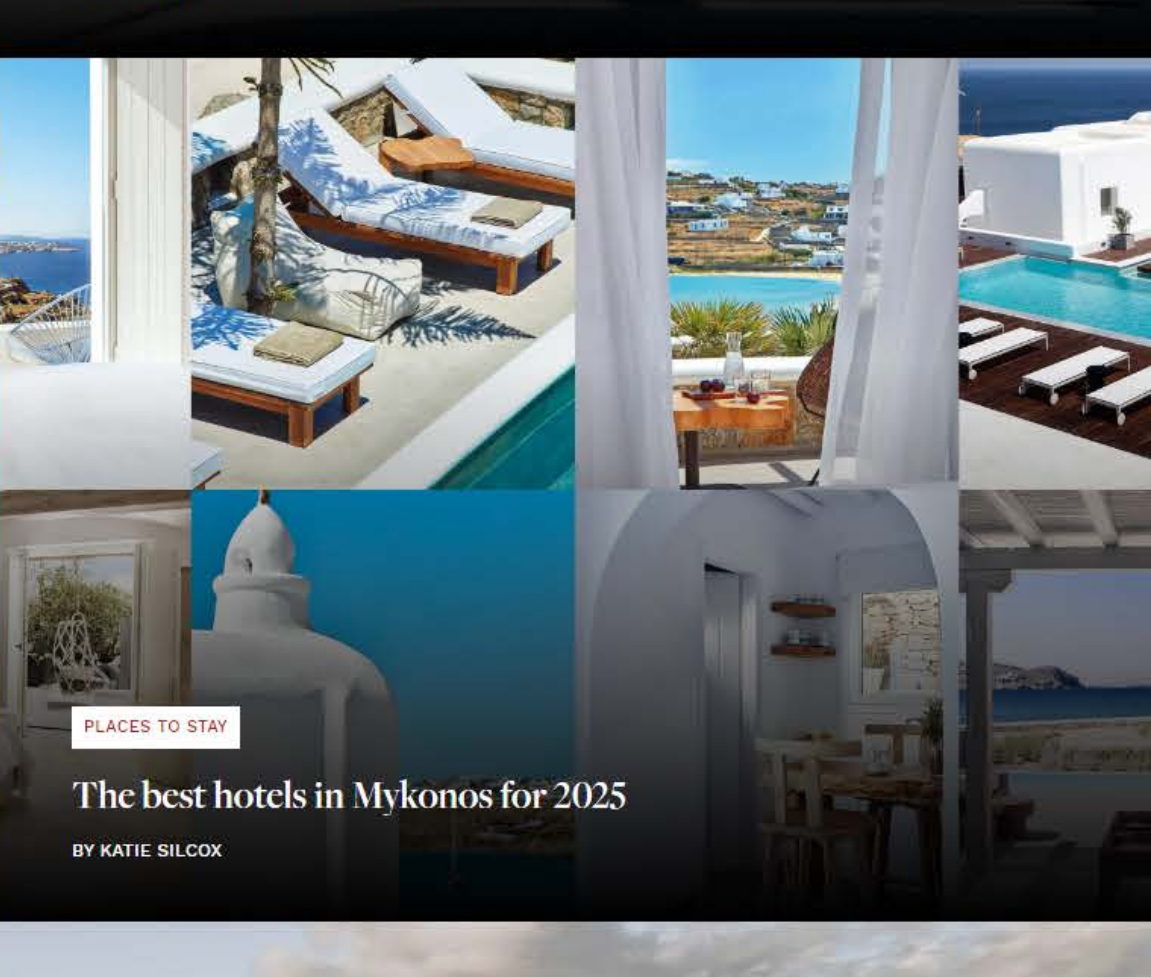

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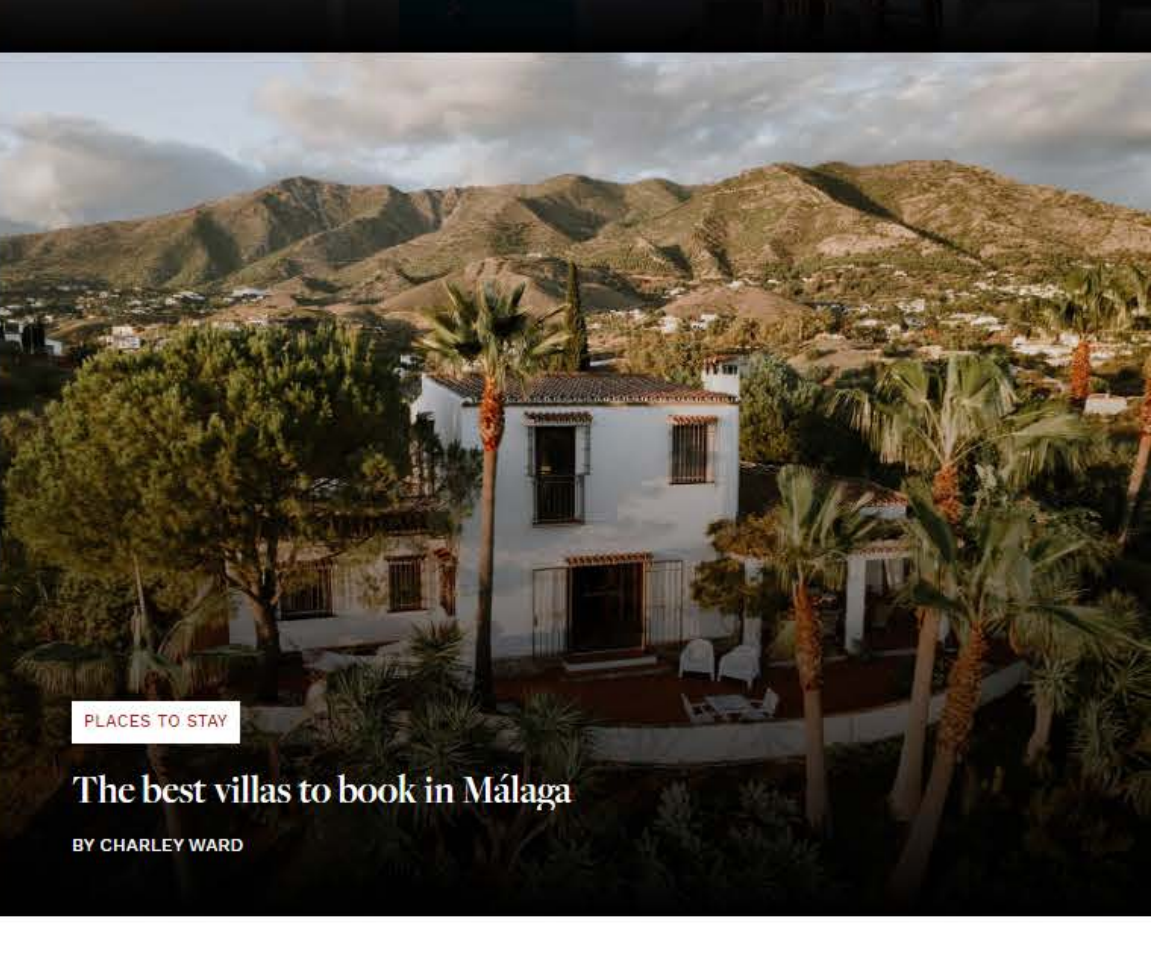

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