



American Horticultural Society
Travel Study Program

GARDENS OF GENOA, THE ITALIAN RIVIERA & FLORENCE

September 5 – 14, 2017

WITH AHS HOST KATY MOSS WARNER AND
TOUR LEADER SUSIE ORSO OF SPECIALTOURS





Announcing an
American Horticultural
Society Travel Study
Program

American Horticultural Society
7931 East Boulevard Drive
Alexandria, VA 22308
www.ahsgardening.org/travel

GARDENS OF GENOA, THE ITALIAN RIVIERA & FLORENCE

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GARDENS OF GENOA, THE ITALIAN RIVIERA & FLORENCE

Join us for unforgettable experiences including:

- Boboli Gardens, created by Cosimo I de' Medici
- Museum of the Park – the International Centre of Open-Air Sculpture, an open air “botanical art gallery”
- Uffizi Gallery, with work by masters including Botticelli, Michelangelo, da Vinci and Raphael
- Villa Gamberaia and many other villas and palaces with wonderfully designed and tended gardens
- The Italian city of Genoa, with its restored waterfront; Santa Margherita and Portofino, with their colorful charm; and Florence, the beloved Renaissance city

Look inside for more details about this remarkable program...

Please refer to the enclosed reservation form for pricing and instructions to reserve your place on this AHS Travel Study Program tour. For more information about AHS Travel Study Program tours, please contact development@ahsgardening.org or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127. Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.

Designed with the connoisseur of garden travel in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers exceptional itineraries that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of “*Making America a Nation of Gardeners, a Land of Gardens.*”



Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to present our latest American Horticultural Society Travel Study program, “Gardens of Genoa, the Italian Riviera & Florence,” September 5 – 14, 2017. This breathtaking adventure takes us to the exquisite gardens, palaces, art museums, and romance of northern Italy.

Our itinerary begins in Italy’s northwestern port city of Genoa. We’ll experience the many delights of the Liguria region, enjoy the stylish resort areas of the Italian Riviera, and venture into Tuscany, a region filled with some of the world’s most recognizable Renaissance art and architecture. We’ll experience the most splendid capital city, Florence, truly one of Italy’s most beautiful and famous cities. We’ll see the Boboli Gardens, created by Cosimo I de’ Medici; the Uffizi Gallery, home to an astounding collection of Renaissance art; and, villas and palaces with extraordinary gardens, including the well-known Villa Gamberaia and Palazzo del Principe.

Accompanying you on this program as AHS Host is Katy Moss Warner, President Emeritus of the AHS. Katy has traveled extensively, having hosted garden tours for the Society in many countries, including Italy. Her energy, enthusiasm, and passion for travel and gardening – not to mention music and art – are positively exhilarating.

Our tour organizer is Specialtours’ Susie Orso, who has arranged and led dozens of AHS Travel Study programs. Susie, who brings years of experience and insights to bear on this meticulously designed itinerary, has been working closely with Katy to craft this special program which is being offered exclusively to our AHS members. Susie, as you will come to know her, is British by birth and lives in Florence with her Italian husband. It is through her contacts that many of our visits will be possible.

The accommodations selected for our travels are all top-rated. Our first hotel, The Hotel Melià, in Genoa is a contemporary designer property that you will find to be peaceful but centrally located. Our next stop will be the Grand Hotel Miramare in Santa Margherita Ligure, on the water in the heart of the Italian Riviera. Our final nights will be spent at the elegant Hotel Villa Cora in Florence, set in a park that overlooks the Boboli Gardens.

Don’t miss out on the extraordinary experiences that await us on this tour. Space is limited and our Travel Study programs often sell out, so early reservations are advised. A convenient reservation form is enclosed in this brochure.

Katy and Susie look forward to sharing their passion for the beauty and culture of Italy with you.

Most sincerely,



Tom Underwood
Executive Director



WITH AHS HOST KATY MOSS WARNER AND TOUR LEADER SUSIE ORSO OF SPECIALTOURS



Join AHS Host Katy Moss Warner and tour leader Susie Orso for this remarkable garden travel experience.

Itinerary Highlights

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4 – TRAVEL DAY,
DEPART THE U.S. FOR GENOA, ITALY**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5 – GENOA (D)

Benvenuti! We arrive at Genoa's Christopher Columbus airport and meet up with our host Katy Moss Warner, tour leader Susie Orso and fellow travelers. We transfer to our first accommodation, the Hotel Melià. We'll take lunch on our own in one of the city's wonderful *ristoranti*. Then we'll get oriented with a tour of Genoa, itself a World Heritage Site. Via Garibaldi is a treasure, adorned with 16th- and 17th-century palaces, the era when Genoa was a world, seafaring power. Among them is Palazzo Lomellino dating from 1653, where we'll see the secret hanging garden in a visit specially arranged for American Horticultural Society members. We'll stop afterward for a drink in a private garden. Taking in the views here is a stunning way to end our first day before we head back to the hotel for welcome drinks and dinner.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 – GENOA (B, L)

We begin with a visit to the Palazzo del Principe and its formal gardens. They were the creation of Andrea Doria, a naval commander who in 1529 began the construction of this wonderful villa overlooking the Gulf of Genoa. The fountains, pergolas, statues and parterres are brilliantly integrated. Then it's on to the city's rejuvenated port area. A monumental effort by architect Renzo Piano, a native of Genoa, has transformed the harbor into a major tourist attraction. There are shops, restaurants and museums to enjoy and explore. Afterward, we hop on the coach to Montaldeo for a private lunch at Castello di Montaldeo. Our return to Genoa features a visit to the beautifully maintained private garden of a hunting lodge. An independent dinner this evening gives us the chance to sample some of Genoa's fine restaurants.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7 – SANTA
MARGHERITA LIGURE (B, L)**

We'll have some leisure this morning to explore Genoa before we leave by coach (with luggage) for a visit to a private garden. We'll take lunch in a restaurant in the city before we continue to Nervi and visit another private garden. Santa Margherita

Ligure is our ultimate destination as we begin our three-night stay at the Grand Hotel Miramare. The limited number of sea-view (not coincidentally *miramare* means sea-view) rooms will be given on a first-come-first-serve basis. And while this is certainly a compelling reason to book as soon as possible, worry not because the rooms that don't have sea views overlook the hotel's beautiful gardens. To end our day, we have dinner on our own in one of the seaside restaurants in Santa Margherita.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8 – SANTA
MARGHERITA LIGURE (B, D)**

We depart this morning for the Abbey of Cervara, dating from 14th century. This setting is memorable, from the garden to the views of the bay. The garden has two levels, adorned with boxwood hedges (*Buxus sempervirens*) and pergolas, as well as a large variety of plants including bird of paradise (*Strelitzia spp.*), citrus trees, oleander, Aleppo pines, a pepper tree, and rare pink capers. We return to Santa Margherita and have the privilege of visiting the private gardens of Andrea Fustinoni, the owner of hotel Miramare. This afternoon we can unwind in the hotel gardens and swimming pool, sit by the sea or take a walk into town before we return for an *al fresco* dinner at the hotel.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 – SANTA
MARGHERITA LIGURE (B, L)**

Take a deep breath, because a memorable day is ahead. We leave by boat for Portofino, one of the most enchanting tourist spots in the world, envied for its beauty and charm. After arrival, we'll visit the Museum of the Park – the International Centre of Open-Air Sculpture. In the early 20th century, Baron Mumm planted camellias and oleanders here as well as ferns and rare plants imported from Japan. Today this open-air "botanical art gallery" houses the largest Italian museum of sculptures: 120 works of different sizes and materials, many specifically created to harmonize with this location. We will have some leisure time in Portofino; surely, taking photos against the backdrop of its colorful architecture will be a priority, as will soaking in its atmosphere. Then we'll regroup to enjoy lunch in the impeccably maintained gardens of the Hotel Splendido. A private garden and a meeting with its owner, who created it, is our next delight. We return by boat to Santa Margherita and dine on our own.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 – FLORENCE (B, L, D)

We leave (with luggage) for Pietrasanta, a town of Roman origin; in fact, part of its Roman wall still exists. While you may have never heard of Pietrasanta, it's supremely important in the world of art. The Master himself, Michelangelo, recognized the beauty of its marble and made good use of it. We'll retrace Michelangelo's steps with a walk through the historical town. There are many art galleries and shops to explore (it's been called the "City of the Artists" and "Small Athens" for its marble studios and monuments) and we'll make a special stop at the sculpture studio of Nicola Stagetti, who happens to be a good friend of our AHS tour host, Katy Moss Warner. Nicola and his fellow artists create sculptures for houses and gardens; today they kindly allow us to tour their studio. We'll stop for lunch at Ristorante Pinocchio before we continue on to our final accommodation, the luxury 5-star Hotel Villa Cora in Florence, situated in gardens close to the medieval city walls. We dine at the hotel.



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 – FLORENCE (B, L)

In survey after survey, tourists name Florence as their favorite international city. And if you've never been, you'll find out why. A guided walking tour in the city brings us to the recently re-opened Opera del Duomo Museum. In this intimate space we'll see the actual bronze "Doors of Paradise" by Ghiberti, Donatello's dramatic "Mary Magdalene" and a pietà by Michelangelo. The latter is his last complete sculpture and, poignantly, the aging artist featured his likeness as Nicodemus. We next visit the gardens of Villa Le Balze designed in 1913 in the style of 15th-century Italian Renaissance gardens. A curious feature is that when in any one of the seven formal gardens, we can merely get a glimpse of the next garden; only when we enter it can we view it fully. We'll hear how this historic villa saw conflict in the Second World War. We'll head to lunch at Villa San Michele, but first, perhaps a relaxing drink in its gardens. Our next treat is a visit to the gardens of Villa Gamberaia, where we'll meet with landscape architect and garden designer Mariachiara Pozzana. This 17th-century villa has one of the most renowned gardens in Tuscany and is blessed with extraordinary views of Florence. It has the elements of a classic Italian garden with its water parterre, bowling green, *limonaia*, grotto, and *nymphaeum*. Edith Wharton, in *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, said of Villa Gamberaia: "It combines in an astonishingly small

space...almost every typical excellence of the old Italian garden." We complete our busy day with dinner independently, but a hearty sampling of Florence's sublime gelato is strongly suggested.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 – FLORENCE (B, L)

We leave by coach for Villa La Pietra, one of the grandest of all villas of Florence, for a private visit. Surrounded by acres of olive groves, on our arrival we'll travel down a magnificent avenue lined with cypress. The gardens were laid out in 1904 by Arthur Acton, who created garden rooms with statuary and roses. In the recently restored kitchen garden, we'll see terracotta pots with lemon trees, vegetables and scented flowers. We continue to Arcetri to visit the gardens of Villa Capponi. Once again we're fortunate to be accompanied by Mariachiara Pozzana. The garden is composed of a lawn in front of the house and three outdoor rooms: the lemon garden, the secret garden and the rose garden. We'll stop for a buffet lunch at Villa Suor Maria Celeste before we leave for the gardens of Villa Bardini. A major restoration project conducted by Mariachiara has brought this garden overlooking the city of Florence back to life. Afterwards, it's time to enjoy drinks and stunning views on the terrace of Palazzo Gondi before we break for dinner on our own in one of Florence's restaurants.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 – FLORENCE (B, D)

Like a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, we have an extraordinary agenda for our last full day in Italy. We begin with the world-famous Uffizi Gallery. In addition to work by giants such as Giotto, Michelangelo, da Vinci and Raphael, the amazing Botticelli room will dazzle you. Next we visit the famed Boboli Gardens, created for Eleonora di Toledo, the wife of Cosimo I de' Medici, in the mid-16th-century. The gardens feature statuary and fountains, grottoes, *nymphaeums*, and garden temples. The gardens were enlarged in the 17th century to their present extent of 111 acres. At the center of the amphitheater is an 18-foot-high ancient Egyptian Boboli obelisk. On the hillside above is a double ramp, leading to the "Fountain of Neptune" by sculptor Stoldo Lorenzi. We continue on to Villa Torrigiani, created in the English landscape style. The opulent 16th-century villa sports an amusing and surprising ensemble of grottoes, nymph temples, flowers, masks, and secret water games intended to make you feel as if you were in a magical place. We'll enjoy drinks on the terrace before lunch independently. This afternoon will be at our leisure to soak in all that we've experienced today and to say goodbye to this city of the Renaissance. Then we'll gather for drinks and our farewell dinner in the hotel.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 – DEPART FLORENCE, ITALY, FOR THE U.S. (B)

We leave for Florence airport for return flights to the U.S., unless, of course, you've wisely decided to extend your stay.

While no revisions of this itinerary are anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice that may become necessary.

