

# Sun-Kissed in LAKE COMO

A weekend at CastaDiva Resort and Spa on Lake Como, Italy, takes you back in time, to the opulence of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, save for the creature comforts of the modern traveller, discovers SHIBANI BAWA

**A** long, winding drive along Lake Como brings you to the front porch of Casta Diva ([castadivaresort.com](http://castadivaresort.com)), a beautiful luxury resort that has claimed an enviable spot in Hollywood's hideaway resort town.

In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, the main villa on the estate today, known as Villa Roccabruna, was owned by a famous Italian soprano opera singer, Giuditta Pasta. She invested the first money she earned on redesigning the former casino to look like the Scala Opera Theatre in Milan, where she found success. While here, she drew the attention of the crème de la crème of the Italian elite such as playwright Vincenzo Bellini who wrote Norma, an opera just for her, the first act of which was called Casta Diva.

Almost 200 years later, an eponymous resort in the same spot has fashioned itself



A private cruise on Lake Como is a must-do while here.



The restaurant L'Orangerie offers stunning views of the lake.

## LUXE FIND

Villa Roccabruna has a lovely Bellini Bar that attracts a swish set till the wee hours. Your cocktails are accompanied by the freshest salads, handmade pastas, and decadent desserts. The main draw, however, is the waterfront L'Orangerie which has a gorgeous verandah for romantic candle-lit dinners.

after the legacy of the singer, with an opulence of velvet drapes in shades of purple and red, ornate cornices, and gold-framed mirrors.

Nine guest villas with 73 rooms sprawl across the lawns while Villa Roccabruna houses the concierge desk that is overlooked by a striking portrait of Giuditta, and a foyer with a sweeping staircase that leads you to the spa and four classical CastaDiva Suites on the floor above. Each villa is named after an opera singer and is fashioned in neoclassical or modern architecture. If exclusivity is your call,

FROM ABOVE: BORIS STROUJKO/ALAMY; COURTESY OF CASTADIVA RESORT AND SPA



From left: L'Orangerie, serves Italian cuisine with a modern twist; floor-to-ceiling windows are a primary feature of the suites at Casta Diva.



## WHEN IN ITALY

Take a boat ride to Bellagio island, also known as the Pearl of Lake Como. Have your captain point out all the 'celebrity villas' on route. Be the quintessential Italian for a day with a stop at an aperitivo bar like Bar Il Molo ([barilmolo.it](http://barilmolo.it)) for an Aperol Spritz, take a day out shopping for Italian leather bags from ateliers like Arte e Moda ([bellagiolakecomo.com](http://bellagiolakecomo.com)), then gorge on wood-fired pizzas at Ristoro Forma Gusto ([Salita Antonio Mella, 13, Bellagio CO](http://Salita Antonio Mella, 13, Bellagio CO)).

book one of the two private villas that come with private housekeeping, butler services, and chef. Villa Norma, at the farthest end of the estate, offers a 360-degree view of the lake, and is accessible via a separate dock. This three-bedroom villa is a thing of dreams: spread over four floors, it comes with a fully-serviced kitchen, a lakefront Jacuzzi, a games room with a pool table, a wet bar, a terrace, and a sun-kissed private garden. At dusk, as the crystal blue waters of Lake Como turn to liquid gold, relax on one of property's lake facing benches and drift back in time with the last burning embers of the day and the whisper of the masters of opera on the breeze. ■

COURTESY OF CASTADIVA RESORT AND SPA (2)