



FAI

ENGLISH

The Garden

The luxuriant garden that frames Villa del Balbianello is created vertically. From the huge plane trees pruned in candelabra shapes alternating with wisteria and ivy vines, that greet the visitor who has just moored at the marina, we pass to an ample terrace bordered by laurel and boxwood bushes, and finally to a sloping path that leads along the English-style lawn to the open portion of the Loggia.

Numerous statues complete the picture: having to take into account the steep and irregular grounds, the garden can be seen as a loose compromise between the strict geometry of an Italianate-style garden and the monumental nature of a French park.

The Loggia, true heart of the garden, dominates from the uppermost end of the path providing a double panorama: on one side the Tremezzina, centre of the Lario so admired and lovingly described by Stendhal, on the other the bay known as Durini's, or Diana's, that stretches towards Comacina Island.



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Since its foundation in 1975, FAI has drawn inspiration from the National Trust for England, Wales & Northern Ireland, and is affiliated with INTO – the International National Trusts Organisation.

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- **takes care** of special places in Italy for the benefit of all generations, both present and future
- **promotes** education on, love for, and knowledge and enjoyment of Italy's environment, landscape and historical and artistic heritage
- **supervises** the protection of the landscapes and cultural assets, in the spirit of Article 9 of the Italian Constitution

Villa del Balbianello

INVITATION TO VISIT

Brief historical introduction

The Villa and the Loggia were built in the last years of the 1700s when Cardinal Durini acquired the Punta di Lavedo, a romantic peninsula on the shoreline of lake Como. He did this in order to build a quiet summer residence where he could indulge in literary pastimes. Until the 16th century, the place had been home to a small franciscan friars' group, whose presence is marked only by the narrow facade of the church characterized by twin bell towers. When the Cardinal died in 1797, the Villa was already composed of two connected square structures and an elegant loggia, which functioned as the ideal bridge between the library and the music room. The Villa was inherited by the patriot Luigi Porro Lambertenghi, Durini's nephew, who transformed the Villa from a place for serene meditation to a haven for masons (from prison, Silvio Pellico wrote nostalgically of his days there). In voluntary exile in Belgium, Luigi sold the property to his friend, Giuseppe Arconati Visconti.



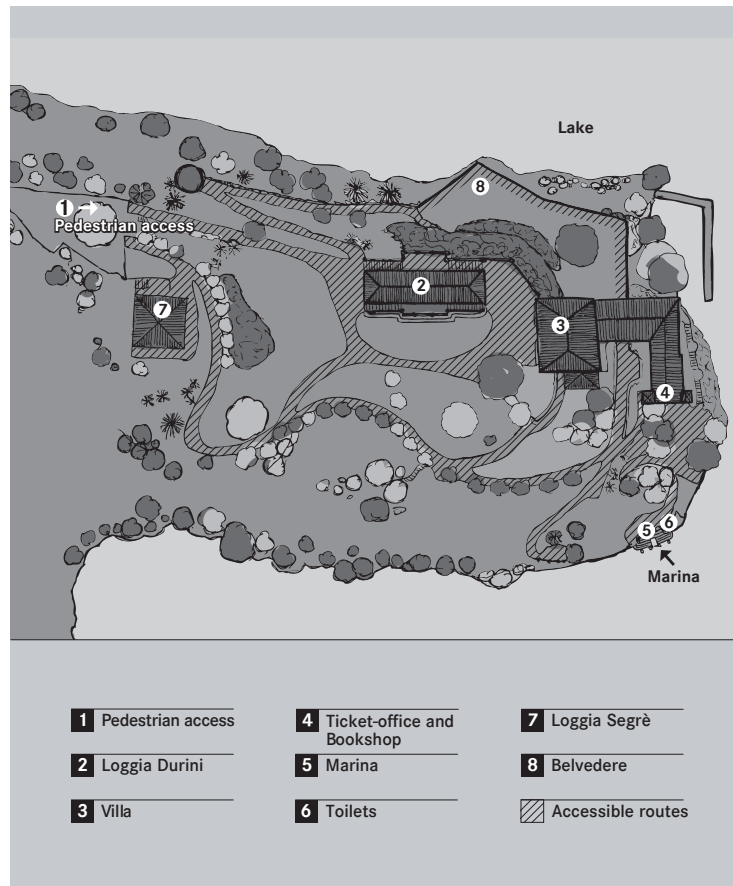
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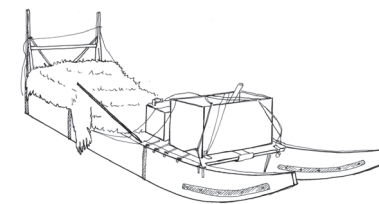
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Along with his wife, Costanza, he turned the Villa into a prestigious summer salon, whose guests included Berchet, Giusti, Manzoni and Gianmartino Arconati Visconti, Giuseppe's son, who enriched the Villa with the stone parapet that defines the terrace. But the family was slowly dying out, and the Villa was abandoned for thirty-nine long years before it was acquired, in 1919, by the American general Butler Ames, who commissioned important restorations in an attempt to save the precious decorations that once belonged to the Arconati. After the general's death, his heirs sold the Balbianello property to Guido Monzino, a prominent Milanese businessman who was also a fervent collector and dedicated explorer. The Villa was again restored and in part turned into a private museum, where Monzino scrupulously collected and catalogued his travel memoirs, art pieces and souvenirs of the famous expeditions he participated in. These include the one to the North Pole in 1971, and the conquest of Mount Everest in 1973. After Monzino's death on October 11, 1988, in accordance with his will, the Villa, its splendid furnishings and the magnificent gardens on the Lavedo peninsula were left to FAI, along with a trust fund that today still helps to cover its maintenance costs.



The Villa - The interiors

The interior of the Villa, which extends over several levels, is decorated extremely harmoniously with English and French furniture from the 18th and 19th century, precious tapestries, oriental carpets and Italian lamps and chandeliers. In some of the rooms, Monzino also installed display cases, in which he personally arranged rare and ancient objects from lost African civilizations (like the Dan and Dogon masks), the Aztec and the Teothuacan culture, as well as Cycladic idols in Parian marble, Mayan terracotta figures and Chinese ceramics from the Tang and Ming dynasties (in the Green Room). There is also a very rare collection of paintings created on glass (18th century, venetian school), which grace the Guest Room, Monzino's Mother's Apartment and the corridor leading to the Fumoir (the floor of this last room was lowered by a metre in order to install the 18th century boiserie, which originally hung in a French castle). In the attic area, some rooms were converted to house Monzino's private museum, which contains the equipment used during his expeditions, as well as photos, memoirs and some rare travel souvenirs.



The Loggia



Perched on the highest point of the peninsula of Lavedo, it offers extraordinary views of the lake from two sides. It is characterised by two enclosed structures placed on either side of the building: the library and the music room (now known as the Map Room). The library contains more than 4,000 volumes, mostly on geography and travel, that Monzino carefully collected over the years. Today, it is one of the most complete and valuable collections of books devoted to alpinism and polar exploration. An extensive collection of maps of all descriptions - old and new - is conserved in the music room, and also a rare collection of old prints of lake Como.

