

Travel

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the Irish sculptor Patrick O’Reilly and has exclusive rights to produce 21 of Salvador Dalí’s works. Visitors have the opportunity to see lost wax, ceramic and vacuum casting methods up close, which is a fascinating and rare treat (standard visits free, guided tours are available for a fee and must be booked ten days in advance; perseoartfoundry.com).

AFTERNOON

Ride the 130-year-old rack railway up to Monte Generoso (1,704m). On a clear day it’s possible to see the chain of Alpine massifs and the skyline of Milan in the distance, while the summit is home to Fiore di pietra, the flower-shaped building designed by the acclaimed architect Mario Botta. Botta, whose work can also be found in other parts of Ticino, grew up beneath Monte Generoso and as a youngster he would hike up at sunrise to admire and take inspiration from the views. Today his “stone flower” building hosts small art exhibitions and you can also have lunch here before hiking beyond the summit or back down via trails (return ticket €79; montegeneroso.ch).

EVENING

Arrive at the lakeside village of Morcote, which was voted one of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation’s best tourism villages in 2023, and explore. Visit the nearby church, and enjoy wine and olive oil tastings overlooking the water.

EAT AT

Indulge in a tasting menu by the chef Francesco Sangalli, whose creative, refined cuisine shines at Ristorante La Sorgente, located at the Relais Castello di Morcote. Memorable dishes include sustainable halibut ceviche with aioli and salted lemon risotto with wild garlic (seven-course tasting menu €143pp; ristorantelasorgente.ch).

DAY 2

MORNING

Lugano is home to the Museum of Swiss Italian Art. One of the most-visited art museums in Switzerland, it is worth checking out for the building design alone. It contains more than 14,000 works and covers a sweeping timeline from the 15th century to the present day, and it’s also perfectly placed to offer stunning views of the old town’s church spires and Lake Lugano (adult entry €21.90; masilugano.ch).

AFTERNOON

Drive to Locarno, known for its summertime jazz, classical music and film festivals. It’s teeming with history and is also a perfect base for exploring Ascona and Lugano. Historically and artistically the region’s links with Florence and Milan run deep and the best way to learn about them is on a walking tour with Brunella Posca, a local guide (guidesi.ch). Posca will guide you along Locarno’s Via Cittadella (the town was a Roman settlement) through little cobbled streets dotted with boutiques and food stores to the Piazza Grande, which becomes an impressive open-air cinema for the annual film festival, running August 5-15 (locarnofestival.ch). If you’re a fine jewellery lover, head over to Ascona and drop into the goldsmith Carlo Sello’s workshop on Piazza San Pietro (sello.ch).



CHRISTIAN MEINER

From top: Fiore di pietra, the ‘stone flower’ building by Mario Botta on Monte Generoso; views from the outdoor pool at the Termali Salini spa in Locarno; Piazza Grande in Locarno is transformed into an open-air cinema for the town’s annual film festival

EVENING

If you’re ready to unwind, head to Termali Salini, a saltwater spa that’s a short walk from the town centre. The design of this contemporary spa will please architecture lovers while spa aficionados will appreciate its sauna rituals and the outside pool’s mountain views. It’s open

until 9.30pm (from €41.60; aquaspa.ch).

EAT AT

There are lots of restaurants dotted along the lake shore in Locarno and Ascona. Osteria Nostrana is a pretty spot where a dish of linguine gamberi costs €37 (ristoranti-ff.ch).

WHERE TO STAY

RELAIS CASTELLO DI MORCOTE

A vineyard hotel in Morcote overlooking Lake Lugano, this castle functioned as a convent in the 17th century. In 2018 it was transformed into an intimate and stylish hotel, with just 12 bedrooms. The restoration, overseen by its owners, Gaby Gianini and Maurizio Merlo, combines medieval and contemporary architectural features, and includes details like local Arzo marble (B&B doubles from €347; relaiscastellodimorcote.ch).

HOTEL BELVEDERE LOCARNO

A short bus ride from the train station in Ascona, this four-star hotel has so much art both inside and out that it has produced a catalogue. The 90-room hotel is also home to an 800 sq m spa, Mediterranean-style dining at La Fontana restaurant and sweeping views of Lake Maggiore (B&B doubles from €393; belvedere-locarno.com).

VILLA EMDEN

Take a boat across Lake Maggiore from Locarno to the Brissago Islands to access this ten-room hotel. Its botanical gardens were created by a former owner, Baroness Antoinette Fleming-St Léger, wife of the Anglo-Irish nobleman Richard Fleming-St Léger. James Joyce visited the baroness in Brissago while writing Ulysses (B&B doubles from €350; villaemden.com).

GETTING THERE

Aer Lingus flies direct from Dublin to Zurich, which is about a two-hour train journey from Ticino (Locarno). If your visit is to Ticino only, buy a point-to-point ticket from Zurich airport to Ticino then get the Ticino Ticket when you check in to your accommodation. Whether you’re staying in a hotel, hostel or campsite, it offers free public transport throughout the region and discounts at partner attractions. For more info, visit myswitzerland.com.

Catherine Murphy was a guest of Ticino Tourism, ticino.ch