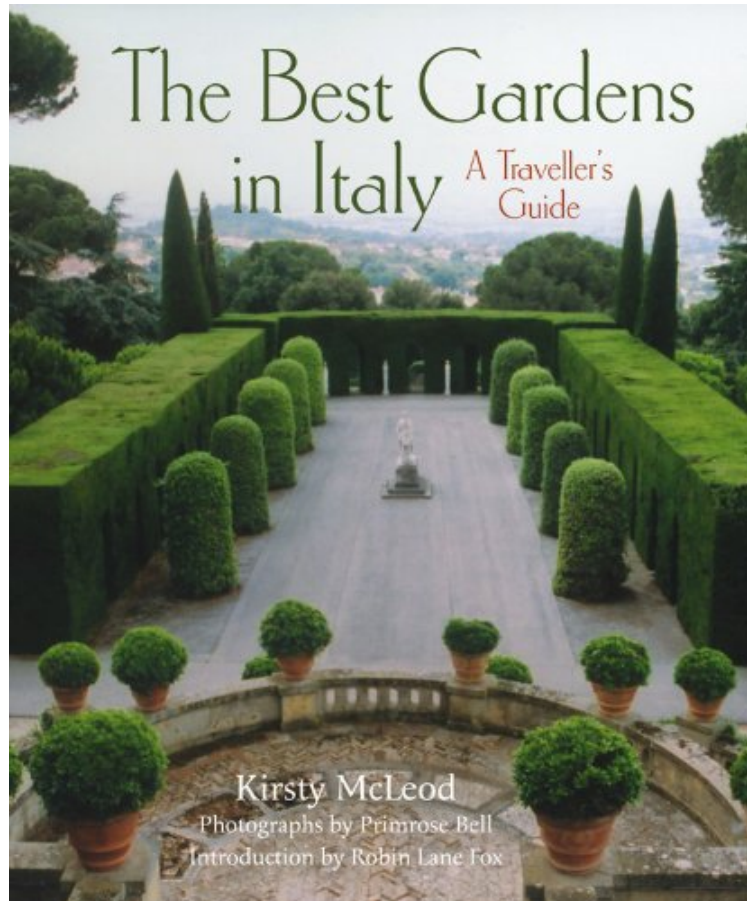


The Best Gardens in Italy: A Traveller's Guide

Kirsty McLeod

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Kirsty McLeod : The Best Gardens in Italy: A Traveller's Guide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Best Gardens in Italy: A Traveller's Guide:

11 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Great BookBy AmauriIt was a present for a friend who is a landscape designer and he loved it, very good quality and extraordinary pictures6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Italy: Cradle of the European GardenBy The Garden InteriorIt is a commonplace that growing plants changed human history forever. When our ancient, hunter-gatherer forebears began the practice of agriculture, we changed from hand-to-mouth subsistence herd-followers to something more social and sustainable. Civilization and culture were possible and entered in. And agriculture, or course, led to gardening – first for food and medicine and cosmetics, and later for beauty and art and inspiration. The antecedents of gardening are various – China, Persia, Islam – but the western garden as a source of beauty and pleasure is largely an Italian matter. Because the magnificent gardens of Italy are the ancient ancestors of European gardening, they are necessarily very old; part ruined castles and part castellated ruins, there is a lot of atmospheric crumbling going on here. Most of them date from the great efflorescence of the Italian Renaissance in the 1500s and 1600s. They began for the most part as ostentatious

statements of wealth, power and taste, and their Italian bones are classical ones: a design of closed perspectives, formally clipped box and laurel and topiary, spraying fountains, statuary and hardscape everywhere, sweeping symmetrical staircases, elaborate parterres and mazes, etc. This formal garden design structure was subsequently bequeathed to the gardens of Renaissance France, which added tremendous contributions of plantsmanship and color, and then to England, which added a strong vein of romance and relaxed and natural style. And then the garden esthetics of France and England (and Germany and Austria too) re-evangelized antiquarian Italy. In many cases, the great garden patrimony of Europe in Italy was rescued, re-built and re-imagined. This fascinating story is all told here, cascading down the centuries like the water cascading down the shell-basins of ancient Italian water-gardens. This gorgeous book begins with the stupendous garden villas of the northern Italian lakes, such as Castel Trautmansdorff, often called Italy's most beautiful garden. It then moves through the three most important Italian provinces: the wealth of the Veneto (Venice), the beauty of Tuscany (Florence) and the majesty and power of Lazio (Rome). And so on down the peninsula to the ancient and much drier gardens of Campania (Naples) and Sicily, with their distinctive palms, succulents and yuccas. McLeod's informative and lively prose never disappoints and the book is beautifully graced by more than 450 photographs by Primrose Bell. All in all, more than 150 gardens are featured in over 260 lovely pages. It is the job of a critic to criticize, after all, and my one complaint about this otherwise very pleasing book is its rather small format. I suppose that is meant to make the book into the "traveller's guide" it is subtitled to be, so that you can fit it into your suitcase. But it would have been so much better, though probably much more expensive, in a larger, coffee-table format, instead of being painfully squeezed into this present format. The delightful pictures are too small to fully appreciate and even the type font has been miniaturized. Still, it is crammed with useful information and great beauty, and if this book does not inflame in your breast a great passion to travel to Italy, then you have a very hard heart indeed.

Italy's gardens speak to us all. In the history of gardening they are the bridge between our world and the ancient world. Their harmony, symmetry and serenity are at once inimitable and universally copied. During the past few years Italy has awoken to a realization of its gardens. In a gardening renaissance, interesting new gardens are being created all over Italy, and there has been exemplary restoration of some historic gardens. In this pioneering new book, Kirsty McLeod and Primrose Bell celebrate over a hundred of the finest Italian gardens open to the public. They take the reader with them on a journey to these gardens: they explore their history and context, and we meet the owners, hear the stories behind the gardens, and learn how they were made and how they are maintained.

"It's perfect...for planning a trip, since it's arranged round the places where you might stay" - The Independent