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 A sea of gardens

With Its Heritage of Villas and Flowers, Liguria Nurtures Tradition in Its Gardens and Regional Parks.





Hanbury Botanical Gardens (Mortola, Ventimiglia).

It is a work of art of flowers and colour created by the vision of a man, Thomas Hanbury, who managed to transform 18 hectares of vineyards and olive trees, on the Mortola promontory, in to one of the botanical gardens for the acclimation of exotic plants most famous in the world.

Indeed, the history of Hanbury Botanical Gardens coincides with the life of their creator, who arrived in Liguria in 1866 after a journey across China and was so fascinated by this piece of land close to France. In 1967 Thomas Hanbury bought Palazzo Orengo and decided to turn it into a botanical garden. The project was carried out in collaboration with his brother, Daniel, a pharmaceutical expert, and afterwards with Ludwig Winter, responsible for management and scientific experimentation. Lady Dorothy (Thomas's daughter-in-law) had a strong influence on the structure of the complex, as she highlighted the landscape aspects. After the dark period of WW II, the Gardens were purchased by the Italian State which committed to ensure their conservation for scientific purposes and which, in 2000, turned them into a regional reserve managed by Genoa University. Nowadays all nature lovers visiting these Botanical Gardens can enjoy a series of nice sections, like the Australian Forest, with its eucalyptuses, the Acacias section, the Bamboo, the collections of succulents plants, the Gardens of perfumes, the Italian-style little Gardens, with roses and peonies, the Exotic Orchard, ancient species of citrus orchards, and various pergolas.

*Hanbury Botanical Gardens
C.so Montecarlo, 43 - 18039 (Mortola, Ventimiglia)
tel. 0184.229507*



Villa Hanbury



Pallanca Exotic Garden

Pallanca Exotic Garden (Bordighera, Imperia).

The history of Bordighera is closely linked to the personality of Ludwig Winter, landscape architect, botanist, and agronomist who collaborated in the creation of many gardens, parks, and avenues of the Italian Riviera and the nearby Côte d'Azur.

With his help, Giacomo Pallanca and later his son Bartolomeo, decided to focus on exotic and tropical plant cultivation. The "B. Pallanca" Horticultural and Flower Produce Unit was founded in 1910. In the pre-war period the activity was mainly oriented in the trade and cultivation of ornamental plants and cut flowers, but after the war Bartolomeo restructured the company and focused on the development of a Cactus Nursery.

Family tradition is still alive, in fact, the Pallanca family took an important part in the preparation of the most important Botanical Gardens in Europe - like the exotic section of Montjuich Park and the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle in Merano.

Here visitors will be astonished at the sight of the wonderful cactuses and succulent plants.

More than 3,000 varieties and about 30,000 specimens are on display across the 10,000 sq.m. of the garden. The wide range of plants are placed on vertical terraces.

From there you can enjoy thrilling views of the sea right below.

*Pallanca Exotic Garden
Via Madonna della Ruota, 1 - Bordighera (Im)
www.pallanca.it*

Villa Garnier (Bordighera, Imperia).

The garden of Villa Garnier, built covering 6,000 sq.m., is the result of the genius of architect Charles Garnier who worked with botanist Ludwig Winter. The Palace was the dwelling of the famous French architect, also author of the Paris Opera, and then of his son Nino, a boy of rare intelligence and a botany expert. Olive trees and date palms gave such an exotic appeal to the park that writer Edmondo De Amicis named the villa "Palms Palace", where prickly pears, figs, lemons, loquats, and succulent plants highlighted its Mediterranean character. In the 2,500 sq.m. space open to the public, Mr. Maurizio Lega, nephew of the botanist who had previously cared for the garden, faithfully recreated the original structure of most of the green area. 10 different kinds of palms, and numerous secular trees are currently on display in this garden, among them a specimen of Mexican grass tree (*Nolina Longifolia*).

The garden, which overlooks the gulf and the small port of Bordighera, is a source of unexpected surprises for visitors. It may happen that you pass a column taken from the Tuileries Palace of Paris by Mr. Garnier, who was a great admirer of that building and was commissioned, much to his regret, to demolish it.

Inside the villa, now residence of the Sisters of the Congregation of San Giuseppe d'Aosta, you can admire caricatures of artists hosted by Mr. Garnier as well as a recently restored fresco representing the area as it appeared when the architect was still alive.

Villa Garnier

Via Garnier 11 - Bordighera (Im) - For visits: tel. 0183.290213

Villa Garnier - Viale glicine





Villa Mariani

**Pompeo Mariani Foundation
(Villa Mariani, Bordighera, Imperia).**

In the upper part of Bordighera, the place where many Italian and foreign artists went to live after their retirement, sits the Garden of Villa Mariani - nowadays the Italian main offices of the Pompeo Mariani Foundation.

The Cottage, built in 1885 by Charles Garnier for Countess Fanshawe, was placed inside the garden which at that time was called "Moreno". The French artist chose it as his residence in 1909, after architects Broggi and Winter had enlarged it. The so called "Specola Atelier" was built in 1911.

In 1998 Stefania Scevak, Garnier's last heir approved the initiative of Carlo Bagnasco, who suggested opening a Foundation to promote the role of Garnier in the world. The restoration of the "Atelier" lasted two years, in order to leave the original decor unaltered and all the personal working instruments of the architect. Walking through the park, with the 19th century English-style garden, the watchful visitors will catch the marvellous spots already depicted in 1884 by Claude Monet in his paintings. In one of his letters dated 5/2/1884, he wrote: "A garden like that can not be described, it's pure magic, all the plants of the world grow there as if nobody ever took care of them." And still today you can admire palms, oranges, mandarins, lemons, and about 80 specimens of olive trees from 200 to 400 years old here.

*Pompeo Mariani Foundation
Via Fontana Vecchia, 7 - 18012 Bordighera (Im)
www.fondazionepompeomariani.com*



Villa Nobel

Villa Nobel (Sanremo, Imperia).

Recently restored by the Province of Imperia but always faithful to its traditional ancient charm, the garden of Villa Nobel still transmits emotions linked to the central character of the international scientific world.

Because of his poor health, Alfred Nobel took refuge in Sanremo, where he found his "Nest", as he used to call it, which soon became the setting of his famous feats and discoveries. Accessing the Villa from the main entrance in Corso Cavallotti, a small collection of rare botanical species, among which some varieties of Cactuses, are on display, together with 5 different kinds of aloe. Continuing the walk along the two little paths that cross the garden, you can notice 7 different species of palms and, in the green area, some fascinating spots, typical of the ancient times - a bamboo thicket with stone

seats and the cannon placed at the top of the lawn, which recalls the scientist's important experiments. Actually the cannon was donated by Bofors - a Swedish factory which produced war material bought by Nobel - in 1973, for the occasion of the Villa is inauguration after it was purchased by the Province. To understand the charm of the palace, you just need to read the lines of the Ligurian poet Francesco Pastonchi: "an odd mixture of styles, with light whimsies of irons and shows of windows, and a turret covered in little stones as if it were brittle."

The building has kept the original room structure of the dwelling, and, at garden level, an interesting gallery shows the great discoveries of the 19th century, along with the research of Nobel, of course.

*Villa Nobel
Corso Cavallotti, 116 - 18038 Sanremo
www.villanobel.provincia.imperia.it*



Villa Grock

*Park of Villa Grock
Via Fanny Roncati Carli, 38 - Imperia
For guided visits and Info:
Federica Rossi - guardian
mobile phone 339.7691525*

Villa Grock (Imperia).

Recently brought back to its original splendour thanks to the restoration terminated in April 2006, the park and Villa, which belonged to the famous artist Adrian Wettach, stage name Grock, are an interesting mixture of styles, a fusion between clown mime and architecture; a magic world, a mirror where the owner's histrionic character is reflected. When he arrived in the Riviera di Ponente in 1920, Wettach immediately started work on the park, a very costly undertaking that lasted ten years.

The outcome is a complex of several terraces, linked by stairs, which start at the level of the large fish pond. This one includes a delicious little stone bridge which leads to the central little temple and contributes in accentuating the strong spectacular element of the location.

The symbolic Fountain "per Aspera ad Astra" and Fountain "Fons Lucet" are very impressive, built with coloured, and unusually rounded shaped grit. Along the little pebble paved avenues, where you can see the main trees growing in the park (Phoenix, Cedar, Washingtonia, Chamaerops and Cypress), you can see the bizarre monumental illuminating columns.

The park also includes an area dedicated to the Italian-style garden, a wide welcoming colonnade, a hobby laboratory and a big hall for parties.



Villa Piacenza Boccanegra (Ventimiglia, Imperia).

The name of the complex derives from an old toponym which indicated the land between the coast, the homonymous western talweg, the Roman street to the North, and Porta Canarda to the East. This complex tells a unique story of love for the green Ligurian territory. In 1865, Villa Boccanegra was bought by the Bianchieri family from Ventimiglia, then it was passed on to Giuseppe Bianchieri, an eminent politician fond of rose cultivation, a friend of Hanbury and of the botanist Ludwig Winter. As a testament to that passion, a wall of the property is still covered by Banksian roses. At the beginning of the 20th century, the property was sold again and the garden was completely modified. Ellen Willmott, a rich English heiress, fond of botany and owner of the historical English gardens, personally planted exotic species which are still on display. With the Piacenza family, the gardens maintained their ancient splendour. The present 4.5 hectares of the park are developed on terraces overhanging the sea. Nowadays, it includes an olive grove, a roccaille of succulent plants and cultivated trees, while the Mediterranean plants allow the garden to maintain an enormous charm even in the winter period. Among the most important species, you can find the "Senator Lafollette" rose, cultivated in Cannes by Lord Brougham Busby's gardener around 1910, the Arbutus andrachnoides, the Aghatis robusta, which comes from Tasmania, and is the only specimen among the gardens of the area, the Pneumus boldu, and Pistacia lentiscus.

*Villa Piacenza Boccanegra
Via A. Toscanini, 43 - 18039 Ventimiglia (Im)
tel. 0184.229447 - ursulasalghetti.d@libero.it*

Villa Piacenza Boccanegra

Villa Orengo Sella (Latte, Imperia).

In Piana di Latte, towards the sea and very close to the ancient street "Julia Augusta", some big ruins have been recently found, which belonged to an ancient seafront Roman villa. It seems that it was the country house of Giulia Procilla, mother of the Roman general Agricola (1st century A.D.). During the Middle Ages, Piana di Latte was a strategic outpost on the western coast, and for this reason a great number of fortified houses were built as a defensive structure against enemy attacks and against Turkish Barbaresque pirates until the 16th century. In this area you will find Villa Orengo Sella, a beautiful villa, with a central core of towers enlarged at the end of the 16th century to provide better hospitality, traditionally the role performed by countryside dwellings. Visitors will appreciate rows of ancient olive trees which, close to the enclosure wall, contrast with the 19th century park and its numerous exotic specimens. Near the wonderful railing, access to the beach, the landscape changes as you can find the 16th century pergola called "andamento", with its monumental portal dating 1687. Through the portal you can see a little bridge on the left, which in the past used to link the Orengo properties located along the sea to the ones up the Roman street.

*Villa Orengo Sella
Via Romana 39/41, Ventimiglia Loc. Latte (Im)
For visits: Angelica Sella - mobile phone
338.7975076*



Villa Faraggiana

Villa Faraggiana (Albissola Mare, Savona).

The entrance of Villa Faraggiana uncovers a fairy world, with its columns and holm oaks that lead to the elegant exedra, still telling stories of ladies and knights. The Palace is one of the rare examples of Ligurian late Baroque, while the park is an Italian-style garden that is developed on two intertwining levels. The contrast between the undergrowth, which covers the slopes of the hill, and the regular partition of the bushes highlights the red building. The restructuring process developed according to a geometrical

structure, made of orthogonal lines referring to a specific optical centre. The Faraggiana family, founder of an idyllic farm based on the cultivation of cereals, vineyards, olive groves, and silkworms (mulberries were cultivated in the second boundary wall and in the plain), did not modify the 18th century project, but covered the green area in front of the Palace with irregular shaped flowerbeds. Here they placed a central pond and long-stemmed plants, such as citron trees, magnolias, camphor trees, hibiscus, a small citrus orchard and a magnificent

specimen of Pagoda Tree. The two singularly shaped fish ponds, delimited by Tritons and pillars with gargoyles, and the stately statues of Bacchus and Diana are particularly interesting. The Italian-style garden below the Villa's main entrance has been recently designed by the Municipality of Novara (1963).

*Villa Faraggiana
Loc. Villa Faraggiana, 1
17012 Albissola Marina (Sv)
www.villafaraggiana.it*



Villa Negrotto Cambiaso

Park of Villa Negrotto Cambiaso (Arenzano, Genoa).

This park can be considered a jewel box which holds an invaluable treasure: the Liberty Style Greenhouse. Inaugurated in 1931, commissioned by Marquise Matilde Negrotto Cambiaso, and built by architect Lamberto Cubani, this is a mixture of glass and iron in a 19th century English style. Every Spring, inside the greenhouse, the Municipality of Arenzano organises the “Florarte” exhibition, where you can see artworks of Ligurian artists and flower compositions. The Greenhouse is the first step in discovering the garden designed

by Luigi Rovelli, who also designed the park of Villa Brignole Sale Duchessa di Galliera. Rovelli also restored the Villa - which at present houses the Town Hall - upon request of Marquise Luisa Sauli Pallavicino, in 1880. He gave the building the aspect of a castle with towers and an English-style garden, also adding a small lake, river, cascade, and even a cave underneath the seafront entrance of the Palace. It is impossible to evaluate the botanical value of the park, enriched by rare species such as the bald cypress, cocksaur coral tree, plum yew, and cryptomeria, in its varieties “elegans” and “giant thuja”. A feather in the garden’s cap is the big cedar from Lebanon, a true natural monument - because of its huge dimensions. Here you can enjoy the company of peacocks and other birds, as the site is part of the Regional Park of Mount Beigua, where migratory species transit. A traditional local musical band is based in the old stables of the Marquise, and the property now hosts a leisure area for children.

Park of Villa Negrotto Cambiaso
Negrotto Cambiaso Palace - 16011 Arenzano (Ge)
Department of Tourism and Culture - tel. 010.9138201/301/316
turismo@comune.arenzano.ge.it

Villa Brignole Sale, Duchessa di Galliera (Genova Voltri).

The park of Villa Brignole Sale (commonly known as Villa Duchessa di Galliera after the noble woman who gave this place its splendour in the 19th century) extends for 250,000 sq.m behind Genova Voltri and represents one of the biggest green areas of the western side of the town. The Palace, which is very important from an historical and architectural point of view, overlooks a formal garden designed on a wide terraced area. The main building is the result of the collaboration of accomplished artists who built the Shell Room and the Small Theatre; and other artistic elements such as the “Latteria”, Castle, the Caves, the Café, and the water games which are scattered along woods and glades, alleys and small paths. Professional workers were hired to build the monumental complex which was designed to host special guests from all over Europe.

The Park was built by Giuseppe Rovelli who created three different areas: the Italian garden, the romantic woods, where every plant or architectural element appears to be spontaneous and accidental, and finally the glades where pens are located. The enormous area and the environmental variety create the conditions for various and interesting ornamental plant species, both spontaneous and exotic, to grow. Some examples are plane trees, laurus glandulifera, magnolias, citron trees, and mimosa. Here you can also find olive groves, and some small vineyards and fruit trees.

Villa Duchessa di Galliera
Vico Nicolò da Corte, 2 - Genova Voltri
For visits: Coop. DAFNE - tel. 010.2473925 - info@dafnet.it

Villa Duchessa di Galliera





Villa Durazzo Pallavicini

Villa Durazzo Pallavicini (Genova Pegli).

The park, commissioned by Marquis Ignazio Pallavicini, was designed and built between 1840 and 1846 by Michele Canzio, the scenographer of Carlo Felice Theatre: the outcome is a very original theatre itinerary made of green scenes linked to one another by a three-act narrative theme. The itinerary, characterised by elegant scenes, a combination of nature and architecture, curls along the sets of the Viale Classico, the Coffee House, the Triumph Arch, the House of the Hermit, and the Big Lake with its Chinese Pagoda and Diana Temple, the Flora Garden and the Gazebo of Roses. There are also very precious plant specimens like the monumental camphor tree close to the cedar of Lebanon, palms, monkey-puzzles, cork, and the collection of ancient camellias. The park also includes the botanical garden "Clelia Durazzo Grimaldi" founded in 1794.

In 1840, the complex was profoundly modified by Ignazio Pallavicini and, later on, by his daughter Teresa.

Since 1928 the villa belongs to the municipality of Genoa which brought it back to its original splendour. The two 19th century greenhouses are the most sophisticated examples of the Genoese botanical culture, which characterised scientific circles at the beginning of the 19th century.

The new botanical garden offers a vast overview across the wonders of the plant world biodiversity. Several "rooms" help understand biological mechanisms, ecological systems, and curious morphologies.

*Villa Durazzo Pallavicini
Via Pallavicini, 13 - Genova Pegli
tel. 010.666864 - 010. 661330
ass.prolocopegli@libero.it
www.villapallavicini.net*

Villa Brignole Sale (Genoa).

When Giulio Sale bought this stately building in 1584, he transformed it into a cultural centre and summer residence for important personalities of that time. The park then became the setting for balls and musical events, a tradition continued by the heirs of Giulio Sale, Geronima and her husband Gio Francesco Brignole.

Three centuries later the Brignole Sale dynasty ended and Duke Melzi d'Eril became the new owner of the complex: he removed all the furnishings from the Palace and sold it. In 1882 the Villa was bought by the Congregation of Marcelline Nuns and was converted into a school still in use today. The Italian-style garden of the Villa is characterised by a quadrangular basis. In the middle of the flowerbeds, long-stemmed plants, palms, and magnolias grow which have now replaced the original bulbous plants. Original marble statues and the herringbone patterned brick flooring give a peculiar appearance to the ensemble. The park is developed across three levels: the access way to the lemon-house; the sloping grass, bordered by four wide green flowerbeds, and a plain area below, where you can find a wooded alley and an area with the original fountain gargoyles, which belongs to the wide elliptical fish pond. At the sides of the alleys you can find four caves with traces of an ancient shell decoration.

*Villa Brignole Sale - Istituto Marcelline
Via San Nazaro, 20 - Genoa - tel. 010.3620360 - marcelline@libero.it*

Villa Brignole Sale





Palazzo del Principe

Garden of Palazzo del Principe (Genoa).

Palazzo del Principe is the first example of Genoese Renaissance style and the most important 16th century monumental complex of the city. It was the residence of the admiral of Charles V, Andrea Doria, who had the palace built and decorated between 1521 and 1540. Actual Lord of the city, even if in a republican system context, Doria wanted the building to represent his power: this building is the only example of a "Royal Palace" in the history of the Republic of Genoa.

Wonderful frescos by Perin del Vaga and magnificent tapestries enrich the interiors of the Palace, whereas the external areas are characterised by the 1530 garden, which Giovanni Andrea I, who succeeded Andrea Doria, had completed by the beginning of 17th century. The first project

of the garden was designed with a regular disposition of flowerbeds, and fountains like the Neptune Fountain, carved by Taddeo Carlone in 1599, but in the 19th century it was transformed according to the English Romantic park pattern. Damaged during the WW II, the garden has recently been restored in its central part, and its 16th century plan has been recovered. Partially based on the historical descriptions of the garden, the botanical species have been chosen among the ones adopted in Italy between 1500 and 1600 (among which the first botanical tulips). Palazzo del Principe has always been the property of Doria Pamphilj heirs, and since 1995 has been opened to the public.

Palazzo del Principe
Piazza del Principe 4, Genoa
www.palazzodelprincipe.it



Villa Pallavicino "delle Peschiere"

Villa Pallavicino "delle Peschiere" (Genoa).

When Tobia Pallavicino, banker and ship-owner of the Spanish fleet, died in 1581 he was the owner of the building in "Strada Nuova" and of the Villa delle Peschiere - which still belongs to his noble family. The two-level garden - allegedly designed by Galeazzo Alessi - is perfect to enjoy the complete view of the city. 4 wide fish ponds are placed at the sides of the building, while behind it you can find a pond decorated with a Triton statue.

One level below the ground floor a cave opens through a Doric style Serlian arcade. Giovan Battista Castello has presumably designed this cave with its two nymphaeums, covered by fragments of stalactite and rocks. The surface of the cave and of the vaults of the atrium, excluding some niches, are covered by a mosaic of oval glazed pieces, quartz, pebbles and coloured stones, corals, shells, and parts of stucco.

The 16th century flora of the garden has changed during the years and almost all the trees and shrubs you can see at present are from the period between 1800 and 1900.

Nowadays, the building houses the headquarters of an insurance company.

Villa delle Peschiere
Via S. Bartolomeo degli Armeni, 5 - Genoa
tel. 010.83331
plfgenova@plferrari.com



Villa Groppallo allo Zerbino

Villa Groppallo allo Zerbino (Genoa).

Located in a panoramic position overlooking Genoa, Villa “Lo Zerbino” was built in the second half of the 16th century by the Balbi family, after which its ownership passed to the Durazzo family in the 18th century and then to the Groppallo family. The Renaissance style garden features a wide fish pond with two beautiful original statues on both sides. The two levels of the garden intersect a little wood, in which a specific itinerary will lead you to spectacular vistas of the city and the building. At the end of the path, you will reach the so called “Orti Zerbiniani”, an important and complex example of artificial caves. In this place the mysteries of nature are explained on one hand by complicated mythological scenes, and, on the other hand, recalled through the material used: shells, calcareous and mother-of-pearl concretions, coloured little stones and stalactites.

Villa Groppallo “allo Zerbino”, as well as Villa Rosazza “allo scoglietto” were made by Tagliafichi, one of the most appreciated neo-classical architects of Genoa.

The close link between buildings and landscapes pursued by the Genoese urban culture, reached its climax in the walls painted by Domenico Piola and Gregorio De Ferrari: who represented a fantastic image of nature - creator of changing shapes - that transfers inside the Palace artificial concretions once only visible in the cave.

Villa Groppallo allo Zerbino

Passo allo Zerbino, 1 - 16122 Genoa - tel. 010.8602333

Botanical Garden of Pratorondanino (Masone, Genoa).

“You can’t pick a flower without disturbing a star”: this is the warning that welcomes visitors when they start the itinerary studied by GLAO (the Ligurian Lovers of Orchids). More than a park it is a “thousand climates garden”, or a “botanical brochure”, as critics defined it. The Province of Genoa, in collaboration with volunteers of GLAO - who are in charge of the scientific aspects and for maintenance in general - offers visitors a science centre where adults and children can go in depth into all scientific aspects linked to the garden.

Included by the Italian Touring Club among the “Green Museums” (Musei del Verde), the garden of Pratorondanino is an alpine botanical garden, with several species of alpine flora coming from different environments, places, and nations. The green area is divided into three main rocky habitats: calcareous, siliceous, and serpentinous. Among the alpine plants some species are threatened by extinction and deserve special attention, like the Turban lily, *Wulfenia Carinthiaca* and Alpine Sea Holly. In the garden it may also be interesting to view the *Cypripedium* orchids, Evergreen, and Saxifrage collections, as well as an itinerary dedicated to living vegetal fossils. The admission to the garden is free and can be complemented by videos and lessons about environment history and the alpine flora varieties.

Botanical Garden of Pratorondanino:

Pratorondanino - Campo Ligure (Ge) - tel. 010.5499827

Botanical Garden of Pratorondanino



Park of Villa Serra a Còmago (Sant'Olcese, Genoa).

At the beginning of the 19th century the Serra family bought this property from the Pinelli family. Afterwards, in 1851 Marquis Orso restored the building in Tudor style, including a medieval tower and an English-style park, according to projects detailed on the John Claudius Loudon encyclopaedia. Since 1982 the complex has been managed by the Villa Serra Consortium - formed by the municipalities of Genoa, Sant'Olcese, and Serra Riccò - which terminated restoring the garden in 1992 and the villa in 2001. Since 2004 a restaurant and small hotel have been set in the area of the 18th century stables and of the Gothic revival tower. The park, located in the valley floor of the Còmago river, consists of three lawns and a lake. The alternation of wide glades and trees create beautiful views of the cottage, shells, and buildings. A second lake provides water in the direction of the cottage, and then becomes a winding streamlet. The 19th century hunger for the exotic led to the addition of sequoia, tulip trees, taxodium, magnolias, liquidambar, citron trees, and pagoda-trees to the green. Along the entrance way stand century-old specimens of plane and yew trees, and the big Holm oak, which is right in front of the villa. In 2005 a collection of hydrangeas - the only one in Italy - was added, with more than 1,300 plants and more than 170 old and new varieties which bloom from May to September. Villa Serra provides catering services and offers its spaces for the organisation of exhibitions and events.

The park is also equipped with playgrounds, pic nic areas, and a theatre.

Park of Villa Serra a Còmago.

Via Carlo Levi, 2 - 16010 Sant'Olcese (Ge)

www.villaserra.it

Villa Serra



Parks of Nervi

The parks complex of Nervi (Genoa).

The present complex of the parks of Nervi - consisting of the Serra, Gropallo, and Grimaldi parks - was originally a farming area shared among three owners and then gradually modified in the 19th century according to the stylistic features of the romantic English-style gardens. The outcome is a space structured in green areas which are still separated but linked by the same sea framework: in each area the arrangement of long-stemmed plants and bushes creates spectacular effects, almost "visual telescopes" from which you can admire the beauty of the coast.

Every garden includes other miniature gardens, corners, belvedere, stop points, water surfaces decorated with plants and flowers, woods and rocky areas that recall the inland. The eastern side of the park - property of the Grimaldi-Fassio family - was turned into a rose-garden with about 800 varieties of roses on display, some of which took part in the famous international competition "Rosa Rifiorante" (Blooming Rose).

Due to the building of the railway, started in 1872, and to the wild growth of trees and bushes, the spectacular effects have partially been hidden.

At present you can only gain access to the sea through some underpasses.

The parks of Nervi, including the three villas, were bought by the municipality of Genoa in the last century. Villa Luxoro, which is very close to the complex but is not part of it, is at present the only villa with a direct access to the sea.

Parks of Nervi

Via Capolungo - Genova Nervi - tel. 010.3203495 - www.parchidinervi.it



Park of Portofino Museum

Museum of the Park – International Centre of Open-Air Sculpture. San Giorgio Castle (Portofino, Genoa).

In Portofino, overhanging the sea, in the natural framework requested by Baron Mumm at the beginning of the 20th century, is situated the multi-level Museum of the Park.

The garden, which was originally an outbuilding of the overlooking Castle, goes back to the beginning of the “short century”, when the baron planted a variety of ferns and rare plants of pittosporum, imported from Japan.

After that, exceptionally big camellias and impressive blossoming oleanders were planted which benefited from the local microclimate, a unique treasure of the peninsula.

This open air “botanical art gallery” houses the largest Italian museum of monumental natural sculptures.

The collection of artworks by the most important international artists, requested by Daniele Crippa, features one hundred-twenty sculptures of different sizes and materials (bronze, marble, glass, steel...) often specifically created to harmonise

with the magic of the location. Names like Beuys, Rotella, Pomodoro, Fontana, Cucchi, Arman, Spagnulo, Atchugarry, Conti, Guttuso, De Camargo, Iommi, Hirsch, Poirier, Vautier, Spoerri e Thun give prestige to the precious collection, but the list is continuously updated. In fact the Museum keeps buying new pieces to enrich the exhaustive biennial catalogue. During spring and summer, the area hosts cultural meetings and events. Since 2004 the Museum has worked with Fundación Argentina - Museo del Parque arranging training courses, in collaboration with Unicef offices of Genoa, to support the future of the youth in that nation.

*Museum of the Park – International Centre of open-air sculpture
Molo Umberto I - 16034 Portofino
www.museodiportofino.it*



Villa Durazzo

Park of Villa Durazzo (Santa Margherita Ligure, Genoa).

On the hill that overlooks Santa Margherita Ligure, the 17th century residence built by the Durazzo Marquises enjoys a lovely position on the Tigullio Gulf. The small "Citrus orchard" situated on the terraces facing the sea between the enclosure wall and the balustrade, is the most ancient centre cultivated with oranges, lemons, and grapefruits: green settings for those who come from the beach to the villa. The lay-out of the "Italian-style garden" was developed by the Centurione family in the 19th century. The park is characterised by the geometric lines of the box bushes adorned by several Cycas (included some rare male cones of *Cycas revoluta*), and by a specimen of *Encephalartos lehmannii*. The itinerary is bordered by hydrangeas, magnolias and different varieties of *Hidrangea japonica*, among which Countess Lavinia Maggi. In 1998 the property has twinned with the "Hanbury Botanical Gardens" of Ventimiglia. In the 20th century, Alfredo Chierichetti designed the "Romantic English Wood", where holm-oak, cypresses, camphor trees, lime trees and pines mix with a wide variety of palms, among which *Phoenix canariensis*, *Washingtonia filifera*, and Chilean Wine Palm, in a charming mixture of exotic and Mediterranean flora. The park is enriched by statues, fountains, and flower pots and is crossed by black and white pebble paved paths leading to the terrace located in front of the villa: here precious floral mosaics extend the idea of green right to the entrance of the house. You can't miss the "Secret Garden of the Centurione Princes", a small jewel mounted in the green, a hidden hideaway for lovers in the 19th century.

Park of Villa Durazzo
Piazzale San Giacomo, 3 - 16038 Santa Margherita Ligure - www.villadurazzo.it

La Cervara (Santa Margherita Ligure, Genoa).

Cervara Abbey, overhanging the sea between Santa Margherita and Portofino, is nowadays a refined location for events, conferences, business meetings, concerts, private parties, and weddings. Founded in 1361 by a small group of Benedictine monks, its almost seven centuries of history have been an alternation of moments of splendour and periods of decadence, mirrored by the gradual architectural transformations of the complex. Of particular account is the only Ligurian example of monumental Italian garden, which is developed on two levels linked by pergolas and steps. In the lower part, box bushes clipped in geometric shapes such as cones, surround the 17th century marble fountain representing a putto. The Plants, leaning against the walls or placed along the edges, are an integral part of the garden together with the vineyards of the ancient pergolas. Among the various species, you can find colourful strelitzia, citrus, oleanders and Aleppo pines, a century-old pepper tree and rose capers. On the Eastern side of the lower garden, the pergola is covered by an ultra centenary violet wisteria of monumental size. The upper part is characterised by octagonal pillars covered by Star Jasmine which, during the bloom give off a delicious fragrance.

La Cervara Abbey
Lungomare Rossetti - via Cervara, 10 - 16038 S. Margherita Ligure (Genoa) - www.cervara.it

La Cervara





Villa Rocca

Botanical Park of Villa Rocca (Chiavari).

The botanical park of Palazzo Rocca sits in the centre of the nice village of Chiavari. Access can be gained through the historical centre or from the hill entrance. The Rocca family bought the palace in 1903 and commissioned the works of the park, designed by Genoese architect Polinice Caccia five years later. The terraced garden, rich in rare and precious species brought by the Rocca family from South America, offers different views on the town and the sea.

The ideal itinerary starts from the Greenhouses, perfectly restored according to the original project: the most famous is known as “la bananiera” which is very tall to accommodate the length of banana trees. Continuing the visit, you can find a holm-oak wood, water games inside an artificial cave, the Little Temple of Music and the Tea little villa. This structure, created to entertain families, has to be restored, but you can still admire the sophisticated wrought iron balustrades, the decorations, and frescos on the ceilings.

The paths, that follow the original design along the park, maintain the decorations of cobble stone pavement and the original stone benches.

In the rear of the Palace you can still find an Italian-style garden with box bushes, geometric flowerbeds and a small citrus orchard, where events and cultural meetings are hosted.

The complex houses a Municipal Art Gallery.

*Botanical Park of Villa Rocca - Department of Parks and Gardens
Via Parma, 378 - Chiavari - tel. 0185.302929*



Villa Marigola

**Villa Marigola
(San Terenzo, La Spezia).**

At present the offices of the Carispe Conference Centre are based in Villa Marigola, but in the past this charming building was the summer residence of the Olandini Marquises. A variety of different views, a dense and diversified green, and the fragrance of the maquis are mixed with the flavour of sea breeze. The big terrace was the centre of the 18th century complex and traditionally housed the

“citrus orchard” with its citron, lemon, chinotto and orange trees.

With its traditional olive trees and vineyards the Park stretched to the beach and the “white house”, memory of Percy Shelley who made it everlasting. From the first half of the 19th century the architectural history of the villa and of its garden started to be in tune with the new Romantic and afterwards Decadent culture. The Mediterranean maquis became gentler and the paths suddenly

ended on natural balconies and windows overlooking the Gulf of Lerici, creating surprising effects.

Arnold Boecklin influenced the structure of the cultivated landscape by introducing an important stratification in two corners of the garden: the “sacred wood”, and “the myth of Pan”, where you can feel the enchanted atmosphere.

The present structure of the Villa and its park was set at the beginning of the 20th century when the last owner, ship-owner

from Lerici Bibolini, charged Ettore Cozzani and architect Franco Oliva to enlarge the building.

The two men created a new Italian-style garden where the precise symmetry of the classical tradition met the elegance of the late Liberty style, in a singularly Ligurian interpretation.

*Villa Marigola
Via Biaggini, along Lerici coastal route
San Terenzo - Corso Cavour, 86 - 19121 La Spezia
tel. 0187.773318 - www.villamarigola.com*



La Marrana, Park of Environmental Art (Marrana-Montemarcello, La Spezia).

Culture and nature are closely linked in the Park of Environmental Art La Marrana, created by the collecting passion of Gianni Bolongaro and his wife Grazia (niece of Alfonso Marino, who donated part of his Italian 19th century artworks to the Capodimonte Museum) who wished to increase the value of the Regional Natural Park of Montemarcello Magra.

In 1997 the exhibition “Il Giorno d’Oro” by Persian artist Hossein Golba was inaugurated, since then 18 artists have presented 34 works including installations, audio and video performances, and sculptures perfectly in tune with the mood of the place; some of these international artists are Luigi Mainolfi, Joseph Kosuth, Jannis Kounellis, Ettore Spalletti, Vedovamazzei, and Mario Airò. To better understand the spirit of this exceptional and unusual location, artists are always invited to visit and stay in the area, so as to experience the environmental features of the place and learn about the history and culture of the Park. Therefore, some of the displayed art pieces are the outcome of feelings and impressions which emerged during the authors stay. The following lines of Goethe’s poem “Sommer”, shown at the entrance of the Park itinerary, perfectly represent the sense of their stay: “the land and the wood and the rock/ and the gardens have always been for me/just space/ and you, my love, turn them/ into a place.”

*Park La Marrana - environmental art
Loc. Marrana - Montemarcello (La Spezia)
www.lamarrana.it*

Botanical Garden of Montemarcello (Ameglia, La Spezia).

The botanical garden of Montemarcello stands on Mount Murlo, 365 m a.s.l., in the promontory of Caprione and was established in 1999. The 6.000 sq.m botanical garden, is located in the heart of the Regional Natural Park of Montemarcello-Magra.

It is a unique structure, that you can discover through a guided itinerary across the most representative local species of flora, with the extraordinary view of the Apuan Alps and the mouth of Magra river in the background. The structure includes a stop point and a small area equipped with multi-media for welcoming visitors and to offer educational activities.

An itinerary called “ the walk of senses”, with illustrated boards, has been created for children. The botanical garden is divided into 5 sections: the “Gariga”, composed of low shrubs and aromatic herbs; the “Mediterranean Maquis” with evergreen shrubs and lianas; the “Pine Forests of Aleppo Pine”, where you can also find evergreen sclerophyll, such as holm-oak, mastic tree, Phillyrea, strawberry trees and alaternus; the “Oak-wood” mostly made of Turkish oak in the cooler areas and Durmast oak in the warmest ones; and the “Plants of the Popular Tradition” such as the common fig. The Mediterranean flora also includes Ligurian protected species such as the iris “nano”, the Chinese sacred lily and several wild orchids. The presence of the white cistus - one of the symbols of the park - deserves particular attention, as this area represents the farthest habitat limit.

*Botanical Garden of Montemarcello
Località Monte Murlo
Comune di Ameglia (Sp)
[www. parcomagra.it/ortobotanico.asp](http://www.parcomagra.it/ortobotanico.asp)*





Villa Pallavicino "delle Peschiere" - Genoa

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