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The art nouveau gem Grand Hotel Tremezzo on the banks of Lake Como is the perfect snapshot of Italian luxury and romance.  
*By Sophie Tedmanson.*

Water and mountain views across the Flowers Pool at Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como, Italy.

EDITOR: MARK SARBAN

There is a quaint little blue chapel on the banks of Lake Como, in the Villa Melzi Gardens at Bellagio. It would make the most perfect wedding location, if not for the fact you can only fit a few people in it at a time. Instead it is best to admire the little gem on a day trip to the area.

I was urged to visit this chapel by Valentina De Santis, CEO of the Grand Hotel Tremezzo (GHT), a grand hotel indeed that is one of Lake Como's oldest, most luxurious and most romantic. De Santis grew up in the hotel, which has been in her family for more than 40 years and was previously run by her parents; she has fond childhood memories of playing behind the reception desk as glamorous couples arrived to check in.

I first spotted the chapel from the balcony of our suite at the GHT ... okay, I'll admit it, while sitting in the Jacuzzi on the balcony of our suite, which overlooks the entire lake to the front and stunning mountains to the back. With quirky features reminiscent of its cinematic namesake Grand Hotel Budapest, art nouveau GHT is eclectically designed in a myriad of clashing colours that explode the senses, but still manage to work. That is, once you have digested the red-rose-lined entranceway on the first floor and stopped to snap up some lollies from the dispensers adjacent to the lift. There is much to admire about the divine GHT, not least dining on *riso, oro e zafferano* (gold leaf and saffron risotto) in the romantic La Terrazza restaurant, with its stunning views of the lake and mountains, where Greta Garbo famously used to dine (the GHT loves its connection to "*la Divina*" so much there is even a suite named after her), or while the afternoon away in the sun at the hotel's floating pool and beach that blends into the sparkling blue lake water. If you feel adventurous, book the GHT's wooden speedboat for a tour of the sights of the lake, and make sure you stop off at Isola Comacina for some pasta or gelato, then check out the extraordinary Villa del Balbianello, the location of many a movie scene. Back on land, take a wander through the exquisitely manicured gardens of Villa Carlotta next door. It is one of the many exquisite residences on the lake, including Villa Sola Cabiati – a grand, fresco-filled aristocratic residence adjacent to the GHT that once belonged to a family of dukes and with which the De Santis family has also recently announced a partnership to utilise it for weddings and events.

You cannot miss a pampering session at the T Spa, which has the all-marble Hamman Suite – perfectly suited to couples – and incredibly divine spa treatments (check out the stunning terrazzo tiles and make sure you take a post-spa dip in the internal infinity pool before sprawling on one of the loungers that overlook the lake).

Lake Como is one of those places that in reality is as stunning as it appears in pictures: from the snow-capped mountains to the bluest lake water, to the twisted pollarded plane trees that line the banks. It is tranquil and serene, and the Grand Hotel Tremezzo is perfect for a romantic sojourn, or simply somewhere to stop and stare out at the water across to the little blue chapel. ■  
Go to [www.grandhoteltremezzo.com](http://www.grandhoteltremezzo.com).



Perfectly positioned sun loungers on the Greta Suite balcony.



La Terrazza restaurant and its lake aspect. Above: bird's-eye view of the floating pool.



The opulent rose-lined lobby.



A drawing room of the 16th-century Villa Sola Cabiati, which the hotel offers for weddings.



The facade of the art nouveau Grand Tremezzo Hotel, founded in 1910.