**French & Italian Gardens**

**PARC MONCEAU – PARIS**
A pyramid is one of the many architectural set pieces and fragments that lie strewn around the Parc Monceau in Paris. They were designed to bring together the landscape and transform it into an illusory landscape by designer Louis Carmontelle who was a dramatist, illustrator and garden designer. Tombs, broken columns, an obelisk, an antique colonnade and ancient arches were all erected in 1769 for Duc de’Orleans.

**PARC DE BAGATELLE – PARIS**
The Parc de Bagatelle is a full scale picturesque landscape complete with lakes, waterfalls, Palladian or Chinese bridges and countless follies. It’s one of Paris’ best loved parks, though it’s most famous for its rose garden, created in 1905 by JCN Forestier. The very first incarnation of Bagatelle in 1777 was the result of a famous bet between Marie-Antoinette and her brother-in-law, the comte d’Artois, whom she challenged to create a garden in just two months. The Count employed 900 workmen day and night to win the wager. The architect Francois-Joseph Belanger rose to the challenge, but once the bet was won, Thomas Blaikie, a young Scotsman, was brought on board to deliver a large English-style landscape. A very successful designer, Blaikie worked in France for most of his life and collaborated on large projects such as the Parc Monceau.

**JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG – PARIS**
Please note this garden is not included in sightseeing but can be visited in free time. The garden was made for the Italian Queen Marie (de Medici), widow of Henry IV of France and regent for her son Louis XIII. The designer of the garden was probably Jacques Boyceau, the Queen’s garden adviser whose book ‘Traite du jardinage’ (published posthumously in 1638) was one of the first...
French books on garden design. The Luxembourg gardens are sunken and were originally surrounded by pots and statues. The design is square with a semicircular apse to provide a focal point at the far side. The ‘parterres de broderie’ in box were among the first in France. This garden is popular with Parisians and considered one of the city’s most romantic gardens.

MONET’S GARDEN – GIVERNY
This is one of the most famous gardens in France created by the famous painter Claude Monet. Through his paintings of the garden from 1901 to 1925 Monet created a wonderful record of his garden, which he considered to be his masterpiece. There are two gardens at Giverny, the flower garden by the house with about seventy separate flowerbeds, a lawn and a long rose-arch tunnel, as well as a water garden. The water garden is located across the road on land bought by Monet in 1893. Here, he created a large oriental pond with peonies, clumps of bamboos and a Japanese bridge, which he painted green instead of the customary red. In the flower garden, long rectangular beds were planted with one variety to create blocks of colour, an idea inspired by a visit to the Dutch bulb fields. Monet was an enthusiastic and original gardener, he allowed poppies and verbascum to self-seed and spread. An abundance of wildflowers makes Giverny a sensuous, romantic and light-filled garden which Monet used as a source of solace and relief from his work.

VILLANDRY GARDEN – LOIRE VALLEY
This amazing garden, nestled in the heart of the Loire Valley, is the work of a Spanish doctor named Joachim Carvallo who restored it in the 20th century. The original Chateau was built in 1532 and the Renaissance gardens were famous in the 16th century, however an 18th century owner thought them old fashioned and put in their place an English style park. Carvallo took his inspiration from the engravings of 16th century gardens by Jacques Du Cerceau and based his garden plan on those of the medieval monastery and its
rigid designs which were organised according to function into the
cloister, the vegetable garden, the apothecary garden and the fruit
orchard. The ornamental gardens are laid out in front of the salon
windows and are dedicated to the theme of ‘love’. This has been
accomplished with sculpted boxwood and flowers of flamboyant
colours. To the right of the canal, on the highest terrace, is the garden
of music, in which lyres and harps of clipped boxwood are dominated
by topiary in the form of chandeliers. Further along the canal near
the apothecary garden is the famous potager or vegetable garden
in which two seasonal crops of vegetables are grown each year in
spring and summer. This garden is 12 acres in size provides a
magnificent and appropriate setting for the Chateau.

CHATEAU CHENONCEAUX
This beautiful Chateau on the Cher River dates back to the 16th
century and was built from 1556-9, shortly after the estate was
given to Diane de Poitiers by her lover Henri II. The garden dates
from this time but the space is divided differently and the topiary
of clipped yew, parterre of santolina and use of bedding plants
is more like a 20th century planting, rather than Renaissance.
This romantic Chateau stretches across the Cher River with a
197 foot gallery built over a series of arches. A magnificent
avenue of Plane trees leads to the symmetrical gardens.

SAINT ANDRE ABBEY GARDENS
This ancient site is now a model Provencal country garden –
a great opportunity to discover the French regional style of
gardening. The dry stone walling of the retaining walls is typical.
Privately owned by Mademoiselle Roseline Bacou, former curator
of the Cabinet de Dessins at the Louvre. The garden was redesigned
by two imaginative women, Elsa Koeberle and a Russian artist
friend, Genia Lioubov in 1920s. You enter via a fortified gate from
the west. In the heart of the garden is a formal rose parterre, edged
with grey santolinas and organised in fan shapes. Judas trees,
oleanders and viburnum provide other focal points, as do wonderful
vistas. The garden is a series of ruins from the original abbey
buildings turned into garden spaces that mix formal settings and
ever wilder shrubberies. There is a fire garden, so called because
it’s so protected from the mistral that bonfires can be safely lit here.
On the upper level, the promenade overlooks the parterre,
reached by a narrow path between high walls with bands of
hypericum and ceratostigma at their feet.

SERRE DE LA MADONE
This 15 acre garden was created in the 1920s by Major Lawrence
Johnson who also created the famous Hidcote garden in England.
He spent his winters here and his summers at Hidcote. It was
bought in 1999 by the Conservatoire du Littoral and has been
restored by Gilles Clement. It is one of the most beautiful gardens
in Europe along with the ‘twin’ garden, Hidcote. Johnson excelled
in layered masses of shrubs, bulbs and flowers. Whole banks and slopes of plantings, such as starry pink Amaryllis belladonna rising from carpets of blue plumbago. From his plant forays to the Far East he brought back the rare mahonias M. siamensis and M. lomariifolia that have now self-sown throughout the garden. He collected double-flowered tree peonies and wisterias from Japan. The house sits at the top of the garden with steps leading down to fountains and sculptures which create a strong central axis. Two open, rectangular pools lie at the heart of the garden on the same level where an elegant ‘orangerie’ faces an equally distinguished eighteenth century statue – one of the garden’s Madonnas, sometimes known as Mrs Johnston.

VILLA EUPHRUSSI DE ROTHSCCHILD

A series of different style gardens planted with numerous species and features carefully framed viewpoints out to the harbours on both sides. The garden provides the setting for a pink Italianate villa, housing fabulous collections with Baroness de Rothschild bequeathed to the Institut de France for the Academie des Beaux-Arts. Baroness Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild transformed this site just before World War I. Her villa was completed in 1912, however she abandoned the villa and garden in 1915 when she got divorced and moved to Monaco leaving funds for the upkeep of her collections. At one point 35 gardeners are said to have worked energetically here, dressed as sailors with red-pomponned berets. Today there are three gardeners to maintain this grand old garden on which active restoration began in 1987. There is a remarkable wealth of adaptable ground covers displayed among the rare specimens. The canal linking hill and villa, edged with colourful annuals and spreading into a round basin which reflects the facade, provides the garden’s most photographed axis. Stroll through the Spanish Garden to the Italian, then the Lapidary Garden and onto the Japanese Garden. This garden reflects the fashions of the time it was created.
EXOTIC GARDENS
This is the most visited garden on the French Riviera, receiving half a million visitors each year. It was designed by Prince Albert I of Monaco for variety in pattern, texture and colour. Set on a steep hillside you ‘travel on a journey’ through grottos and over bridges discovering beautifully designed cactus gardens planted with cacti from Mexico and western Africa.

PRINCESS GRACE ROSE GARDEN
On the slope to Fontvieille and adjacent to Fontvieille Park, this beautiful rose garden was inaugurated in 1984 by the Sovereign Prince and his family. It is an extraordinary collection of roses displayed along a network of interesting walkways. There are 4,000 roses and more than 150 varieties represented.

VILLA LA GAMBERAIA
This privately owned garden is rich in history. Set on the hillside of Settignano with extraordinary views of Florence and the surrounding Arno valley, the Villa Gamberaia is renowned for its splendid gardens, celebrated throughout the world by leading landscape architects and garden historians. The characteristic elements of the garden are the row of cypresses, the bowling green, nymphaeum, grotto garden, parterre and lemon terrace. Edith Wharton wrote of these gardens in ‘Italian Villas’ (London 1903) describing them as ‘probably the most perfect example of the art of producing a great effect on a small scale’ because it combines in an astonishingly small space, yet without the least sense of overcrowding, almost every typical excellence of the old Italian garden; free circulation of sunlight and air about the house; abundance of water; easy access to dense shade; sheltered walks with different points of view; variety of effect produced by the skilful use of different levels; and finally breadth and simplicity of composition’.

BOBOLI GARDENS – FLORENCE
Please note this garden is not included in sightseeing but can be visited in free time. The Boboli Gardens, situated behind the Pitti Palace in Florence, is a complex agglomeration of distinct features by many different designers. Today it is Florence’s City Park but the estate was bought from the Pitti Family by Eleanor of Toledo, Cosimo de Medici’s wife in 1549. A stroll along the Cypress Avenue takes you to the serene and beautiful Island Pond or Isolotto. Created by Alfonso Parigi in 1614, this room is based on the Maritime Theatre at Hadrian’s Villa. In the middle is the jewel in the Boboli crown, an oval basin with a small island in the centre. Here, stands the Fountain of the Ocean by Giambologn (1550) with Neptune and other sea gods below representing the Nile, the Ganges and the Euphrates. Statues of other mythological figures, including Perseus and Andromeda, rise out of the water. Up some steps is the Knight’s garden. The terrace is full of peonies, Banksian, Tea and Bourbon roses. The view of the farmland and medieval
towers gives you an idea of what the landscape of the Arno would have looked like before the fifteenth century. On your way you will pass the Amphitheatres, where the Medici family staged plays.

VILLA LANTE
This is one of the most perfect and seductive gardens of the Italian Renaissance, where water is the ultimate philosophical instrument, used to re-tell the story of man’s ascent from the Golden Age to the Age of Civilization. From the primeval grotto covered in moss and fern at the summit of the garden, the waters flow through a series of extraordinary fountains, rills and pools into the openness of the grand lower parterre. This masterpiece is the work of architect Vignola who, in 1568, was commissioned by the wealthy and refined young cardinal, Gambara. The villa itself is rather inconveniently split into two separate buildings for the sole purpose of accommodating the design, an eloquent affirmation of the commitment of both architect and cardinal to the Renaissance garden ideal.

BORGHESE & SECRET GARDENS – ROME
Please note this garden is not included in sightseeing but can be visited in free time. Cardinal Scipione Borghese was the nephew of Pope Paul V, who completed the building of St. Peter’s in Rome. He was a man of great power and wealth and, in 1605, he started to buy land on the Pincian Hill in order to lay out a garden. Girolamo Rainaldi designed the formal gardens and Bernini provided many of the sculptures. John Evelyn remarked in 1644 that it ‘abounded with all sorts of the most delicious fruit and Exotique simples, fountains of sundry inventions, groves and small rivulets of water’. Almost everything was swept away when a fashionable Scottish landscape painter, Jacob Moore, was employed in 1787 to ‘extend it to double the size and to plant trees in groups in a picturesque manner which they were not acquainted with such as weeping...
willows’. Now it is a huge public park covering over 198 acres and offering every imaginable attraction including Rome’s zoo and the annual international horse show.

A must see favourite are the four ‘secret gardens’ on either side of the Borghese Villa. They are small garden rooms that were originally built behind high walls for the owner and his private guests to stroll around. Today we can enjoy them from outside by peeping through the fence, rather than being inside these confined spaces. They have been restored to create gardens evoking 17th century Roman gardens both in terms of plants and flowers cultivated and in the layout and shape of the compartments. The first secret garden has maintained its original character as a citrus garden planted with flowers stemming from traditions of the late sixteenth century. The second garden is a classic seventeenth century flower garden and the third is a garden dominated by bulb flowers. The fourth was a slip garden or area for plant propagation for the other three, a feature common to many gardens of the time and still present in a number of historic gardens today.

**VILLA D’ESTE – TIVOLI**

The Terrace of the Hundred Fountains is the best-known feature of the spectacular Renaissance gardens at Villa d’Este. The fountains are arranged in tiers of three, their effect depends upon their scale, their geometry and the element of repetition on every level. The villa was built on a steep hillside for Cardinal Ippolio de’Este, who was a knowledgeable collector and antiquarian with ambitions to the papacy. His architect was the humanist and classical scholar Pirro Ligorio, to whom the terrace of the Hundred Fountains is usually attributed. Ligorio was a painter, architect and archaeologist who had an immense influence on the garden design of the Renaissance. He established a style of integrated house and
garden design that remained the cornerstone of Italian architecture for 250 years. These gardens are among the best preserved and as a result much of our understanding of Renaissance garden design comes from the Villa d’Este.

Ninfa
The history of Ninfa is like a fairytale. This once prosperous town ruled by popes, princes and princesses is today a twenty acre garden with fabulous magnolias, wisterias, irises, exotic trees and five hundred different types of rose. It was created by the Caetani family, who were gifted Ninfa by Pope Boniface VIII in 1297. Its golden age lasted 600 years during the Middle Ages, when it played an important role as a link between Rome and Naples. After lying in ruins for 500 years it was restored in the twentieth century by Prince Gelasio and his English mother, Ada Wilbrahram who wanted to create a romantic garden from the ruined town that was overgrown by ivy, thorny blackberries and thick wild vegetation. Whilst this garden today looks natural, it has a small team of gardeners overseen by Lauro Marchetti who weed, cut and fertilise all year round. Chemicals aren’t used in the garden, but mulch is. Water is supplied from a lake behind the old town wall and a subterranean spring with clean water flows into the winding River Ninfa which brings water to every corner of the garden. The last of the Caetani family died in 1977 which ended more than 600 years of family ownership. Ninfa then passed to the Roffredo Caetani Foundation, a private foundation who own and manage this peaceful Italian oasis.

La Mortella Garden – Isle of Ischia
In the 1950s the English composer, the late Sir William Walton and his Argentinian wife, Susana, bought this lava-crusted land with breathtaking views across the Bay of Naples. Here they built an ambitious garden, La Mortella, meaning the place of Myrtles, with the help of English landscape designer Russell Page. It was to be a peaceful oasis where they could relax and Sir William could continue to compose his music. Once the lava had been gradually hacked away, they were able to work with the fertile volcanic soil underneath and gradually built terraces up the steep slopes. Because the island had no water in the 1950s, the initial plantings were palm trees and tough succulents that would survive dry conditions. Once the island had communal water, they were able to put in fountains and water features and plant tree ferns and cycads. One of the main features of the garden is the Victoria amazonica hothouse built specially to house the world’s largest water lily originating from the Amazon swamps. In the south of the garden is the Walton’s home carved onto the rock face. It’s here that musical concerts are often held celebrating Sir Williams music. The garden climbs the steep terraces that lead to a mystical and diverse garden plateau with an Oriental feel and spectacular views. There is a Thai tea house garden and also a memorial to Sir William on a pyramid shaped rock.