

LEONARDO'S SWANS ESCAPE

with acclaimed author, **Karen Essex**

Ferrara, Mantua, Milan

Spring-June 1-12, 2018

Fall - October 12-23, 2018

12 days/11 nights

Day 1 ~ Arrival ~ Bologna

As you exit baggage claim at the airport in Bologna, you will be welcomed to Italy by Art historian Dr. Lorenzo Bonoldi. A private coach awaits to take you to a splendid sixteenth-century palazzo in the heart of Ferrara.

Welcome dinner with Karen Essex. She will introduce the tour and give you some background on her best selling novel *Leonardo's Swans* and the two formidable princesses that inspired it, Isabella and Beatrice d'Este.

Overnight in Ferrara

Day 2 ~ Ferrara ~ UNESCO World Heritage

Spend a leisurely morning recovering from your flight. The birthplace of the Este sisters, and the jewel of the Renaissance of Ferrara is where our story begins.

Lunch in **Palazzo dei Diamanti**, built by Isabella and Beatrice's father, the visionary Duke Ercole d'Este; then we'll take a walk to **Castello Estense**, the private home of Isabella & Beatrice during their childhood.

Overnight in Ferrara





Day 3 ~ Ferrara ~ City Walking Tour

The genuine masterpiece of Ferrara is the city itself — half medieval and half Renaissance — meticulously planned by the mastermind Duke Ercole to reflect a new era of architectural wonder, earning Ferrara the title of Italy's first "modern city." To quote *Leonardo's Swans*, it was "a land of fairytales and miracles." To this day, its captivating ambience is best explored on foot or by bicycle.

Visit the **Palazzo Schifanoia**, **Palazzo Giulio d'Este**, **Palazzo Costabili**, and end at **The Convent of Corpus Domini**, a spiritual retreat for the Duchess and her final resting place.
Overnight in Ferrara



Day 4 ~ Ferrara ~ Mantua ~ Palazzo Te

Hotel check out and transfer to Mantua, *The 2016 Capital of Italian Culture* and *UNESCO World Heritage Site*. Isabella d'Este married into the powerful Gonzaga family, rulers of Mantua during the Renaissance. Their support of art, culture, and music as well as their military strength made Mantua one of the most important Italian city-states, and with the alliance of the Este, it flowered into a gem of the Renaissance.

The **Palazzo Te** is the decadent pleasure palace of the Dukes of Mantua, where they escaped the city to ride, hunt—and have secret assignations. Designed, built, and decorated by Giulio Romano, the star pupil of Raphael, for the leisure time of Federico Gonzaga, the palace's intimate, erotic frescoes will delight and amaze you.

Overnight in Mantua

Day 5 ~ Mantua ~ Ducal Palace

From 1490 to 1519, Marchesa Isabella and her husband, Marquess Francesco II Gonzaga, lived at the center of Italy's complex political landscape while also patronizing the greatest artists of the time. Hailed by Correggio as "The First Lady of the Renaissance," Isabella was muse to many but vainly vied for the attention of Leonardo da Vinci who was under the patronage of her sister Beatrice, Duchess of Milan.

Visit the **Ducal Palace**, home and headquarters of the Gonzaga family for almost four centuries (1328 to 1707), displaying artistic works of Mantegna, Pisanello, and Rubens, as well as precious tapestries designed by Raphael. We will have special access to Isabella's Studiolo, which held her spectacular collection, her Marriage Chamber, and Meditation Grotto.

Overnight in Mantua

Day 6 ~ Franciacorta ~ Wine Tasting

Spend the day like Renaissance nobility, visiting beautiful villages, wineries, and gardens on the hillside of Lake Garda and enjoy dining and tastings in the **Franciacorta**, one of Italy's superb regions for sparkling wine.

Overnight in Mantua

Day 7 ~ Mantua ~ Milan

Hotel check out and transfer to Milan, the seat of power of Duchess Beatrice d'Este and her husband, Duke Ludovico "Il Moro" Sforza, the patrons of Leonardo da Vinci, under whom he executed his most important works.

Check into luxurious five-star accommodations in the heart of the city and prepare for an unforgettable evening at **La Scala Theater**.

Overnight in Milan

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Day 8 ~ Milan

Enjoy private guided tours to the **Duomo**, the Gothic wonder that took nearly 600 years to complete, and the **Palazzo Reale**, the sweeping palace that is now a cultural center.

Later, prepare for an elegant evening *aperitivo* at **Castello Sforzesco**, one of the grandest citadels in Europe, and the former fortress and residence of Duke Ludovico and Duchess Beatrice. In addition to delicious appetizers and drinks, we will have exclusive access to rooms decorated by Leonardo himself.

Overnight in Milan

Day 9 ~ Milan

View the **House of Cecilia Gallerani**, one of “Il Moro’s” mistresses and subject of Leonardo’s painting **Lady with an Ermine**.

Tour **Santa Maria delle Grazie** and Leonardo’s **The Last Supper**, symbol of the splendor of the Renaissance in Milan. On the opposite wall, discover the surprises in the **Crucifixion** by Montofano. Here you will learn what inspired Karen to write Leonardo’s Swans.

Lunch in the **Vineyard of Leonardo**, a gift presented to the artist for his service by “Il Moro” Sforza.

Overnight in Milan



Day 10 ~ Pavia

Today, we’re off to the peaceful countryside of Pavia to marvel at the marble cenotaph portraying Ludovico and Beatrice, the site of a moving solo conversation in Leonardo’s Swans between Isabella and the cold marble form of her dead sister, Beatrice. This funeral monument, once in Milan, is now located in the stunning **Certosa of Pavia**, the shrine of the devotion of the Visconti and Sforza families.

Overnight in Milan



Day 11 ~ Genius of da Vinci

Discover Leonardo da Vinci, artist, architect, and inventor, and view working models of his machines and digitalized restorations at **Leonardo3 Museum**.

See the **Atlantic Codex**, the largest collection of drawings by the Tuscan master in the entire world at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.

Lunch in a local trattoria before visiting the **Brera Pinacoteca**. A tour dedicated to Leonardo's Swans is not complete without viewing the **Pala Sforzesca**, the altarpiece portraying the duke and duchess of Milan. Admire the beautiful headdress of Duchess Beatrice, so fashionable in fifteenth century Milan.

Farewell Dinner in the Canal District of Milan where Leonardo's genius is apparent in the lock system of the canals that flow through the city.

Overnight in Milan

Day 12 ~ Departure ~ Buon Viaggio

Breakfast and check out before transferring to Malpensa Airport.



Blaine Brown and Elizabeth Condelli

Let us know if you wish to extend your visit and relax on one of the magnificent Lakes to experience the enormous beauty of Northern Italy.

Leonardo's Swans Details

Five Star Renaissance Experience

DATES: June 1 - 12, 2018 (12 days/11 nights)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: Limited to 10 Lovers of Italian Renaissance

MEALS: All Inclusive in Local Trattorias (local wines) and 1 Michelin Star Experience.

CHAUFFEUR: Exclusive Driver and Luxury Vehicle Provided

TOURS: Private with English Speaking Guides

EXPERIENCES: Franciacorta Wine Tasting, La Scala Opera, Aperitivo at Sforza Castle

ACCOMMODATIONS: Selected Historical Luxury Palazzos, and Manors and Hotels

PRICE: \$10,400.00 per person (Double Occupancy)

\$1600 Single Supplement

Note: Airfare and local city taxes are not included.

A 25% deposit is required to reserve your spot on the guest list.

**FOR DETAILED INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS
PLEASE CONTACT**

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*Itinerary subject to change. If unforeseen circumstances occur and changes need to be made, replacement events will be equally as marvelous as above.