

Location: STRESA

The distance from Orta San Giulio to Stresa, on Lake Maggiore, was too long for a day walk so we were given a couple of options to shorten the distance by being transported to closer villages. We chose to be dropped off at Gignese because its major attraction was an umbrella museum. Apparently, the village in times gone by was famous for the umbrellas made by the locals. The many umbrella makers ran what we now call a cottage industry, and this is a photo of what the workshop looked like in a person's home. I was a little sceptical about visiting the museum, but I have to admit it was fascinating to look at a 100-year history through the use of one object.



Globalisation was happening a long time ago as evidenced by the impact on the design of umbrellas by non-European countries. I was interested to read that on the emancipation of women in the 1930's the design's become more practical, flamboyant and colourful.

Another interesting exhibit was in relation to Neville Chamberlin and the umbrella he took to Munich to broker peace. This is the



said umbrella. The curator at the time wrote to Chamberlin requesting the umbrella for his museum, the request was politely refused as there had been numerous requests and Chamberlin felt that it would be unfair to favour any museum and therefore kept the said umbrella for himself.

Appeasement at all costs.

The exhibit consisted of the photo, the request and the refusal. There were also some cartoons from the period making fun of Chamberlin and his umbrella.

Time was getting on, so we pulled ourselves away from the museum and started our walk.

Our initial destination was an Alpine Garden on the North side facing Lake Maggiore. This garden had views over the lake while being surrounded by 100's of Alpine plants from huge fir trees to tiny succulents. There were many examples of plants which we see in our gardens at home. These are a small sample.



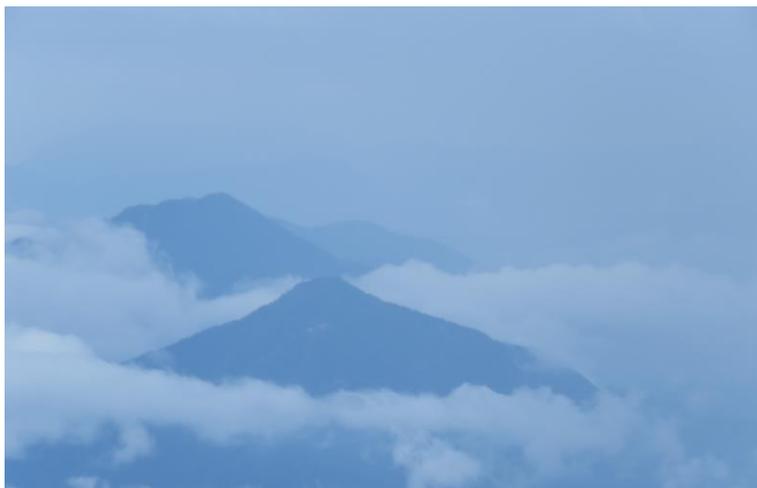
After enjoying a tranquil lunch we walked down to Stresa entering the village along a grand lakeside boulevard which was serviced by many upmarket hotels, many displaying styles from times gone by. Ernest Hemingway stayed at this Hotel where in room 105 he partly wrote



Farewell to Arms. This is now called the Hemingway suite and is the most requested room, perhaps if I could have stayed in the room some of his writing skills would have been absorbed from the atmosphere and these blogs would be better written.

Alas our hotel was not so grand with only small glimpses of the lake from the breakfast room, but nevertheless a nice place to stay.

There is great choice for walks around Lake Maggiore and on the next day we opted to take the cable car to Mount Mottarone take in the view and walk back down to Stresa. The cable car ride was exhilarating and scary (do we place too much faith in our engineers?) but we arrived at the top safe and sound. On a good day you get 360-degree views including Mont Blanc and the whole of the lake. Unfortunately, it was not a good day as this photo attests.



It was disappointing as you can St Bernard's pass from the mountain top where we will be crossing in a couple of weeks.

Great things are done when men and mountain meet but today was not our day.

The walk down was a lot tougher than expected, very steep and lots of loose very sharp stones. It isn't the mountains that wear you out it's the pebble in your shoe.

As we enjoyed the Alpine gardens so much yesterday, a slight detour with a bit of bush bashing, found us back at a great lunch spot. This is our first selfie with my new camera, we will try to get better at selfies. The lake is great in the background though. We enjoyed our lunch while engaging in conversation with a few French couples. There are a lot of French visitors around the lakes. At this stage we were very tired because of the difficulty of the walk so we cheated and caught the cable car down at the half way mark, spectacular views over the lake as we whooshed down the mountain.



Our next day in Stresa had us heading off to Belgirate the next village along the lakeside. We were attracted to this walk as it promised lots of woodland and forest, which turned out to be true. On our way out of Stresa we got diverted by the local market but as like all these markets they are not selling anything different to all the other markets, but the fruit and vegetables were excellent. Along the path there were several of these abandoned houses, two story two room homes built into the side of the hill. Such a shame for all the effort and skill that went into constructing these houses to be wasted as the homes are slowly taken back by the forest. At the front of each house was a previously cleared area which looked as if it was the kitchen garden area.

As we made our way to the village we came across this small church in a glade, another building no longer used but at least maintained. Again we can be thankful for the church builders as they have left us with paths to walk on.



On arriving at the village, we settled in for a late lunch at one of the many lakeside eateries. Carol enjoyed a pasta while I munched my way through a fish dish. As we were paying our bill we enquired of the staff where we could catch a taxi back to Stresa. He said that the taxi drivers charge too much (15 Euros) and that he would drive us back. We protested but he told us that he does it all the time as the walk is very popular and people can't get back to Stresa. An English couple who we had met at the church overheard the conversation and told us they were

going to catch a bus back. Our waiter walked us to the bus station checked the timetable then as we were hoping on the bus 15 minutes later came back to make sure we were ok. I didn't even take note of the restaurant's name, so I can't repay this spontaneous display of human kindness by a bit of free advertising

The next day we woken by the sound of buzzing bees, it was a practice session for the world cup of motorboat racing on the lake. We caught a ferry to our next destination, so I was able to get a close-up photo of the very loud motor boats.



As in the past I will be imbedding literary quotes into the blogs, there are two in this blog to make up for the omission in the first blog.

I am reading Emma by Jane Austin, I just can't wait to find out if Frank Churchill will fall in love with Emma or the shy retiring and vaguely unwell Miss Jane Fairfax. Or heaven forbid fall for the unsuitable (only in position not looks and countenance) Miss Harriet Smith.