



Villa Sola Cabiati, Lake Como, Italy

SET on the shores of glamorous Lake Como, this pristinely preserved Baroque villa is picturesque enough to house a Disney princess—or you and 11 of your nearest and dearest.

Once the summer abode of the noble Serbelloni family, Villa Sola Cabiati features sweeping, swirling frescoes of Virgil's *Aeneid* in pretty pastel hues plus antique furniture, including a bed once slept in by Napoleon.

Although you can't sleep in M. Bonaparte's canopied bedstead, there are six

suites available, which are equally opulent and recently redecorated. Claw-foot tubs and vintage vanities sit resplendent in the accompanying bathrooms.

The 16th-century lakefront landmark also comes with a host of modern amenities. There's a 24-hour butler service, dedicated housekeepers and a personal chef who can organise anything from a candlelit dinner to a poolside barbeque in the manicured, camellia-scented gardens. Despite the architecture and artefacts, it's all rather comfortable.

Should you want to escape, there's a private dock and water limousines courtesy of the nearby Grand Hotel Tremezzo; the nearby town of Bellagio is a short cruise away. Alternatively, ask the chef to pack you a picnic and head to Isola Comacina, Lake Como's only island. *Nicole Trilivas* *Elegant resorts* (01244 897441; www.elegantresorts.co.uk) offers three nights at Villa Sola Cabiati from £18,220, based on 12 people sharing on an all-inclusive basis. Flights and transfers can be arranged at an additional cost.

Pinkmead estate, near Cowes, Isle of Wight

IF it weren't for the fact that the place itself is so beautiful, I'd be tempted to say that getting to the Pinkmead estate was half the fun. Catch the Red Jet ferry to Cowes and, from there, a smaller boat, captained by Dave the boatman, to Pinkmead's private jetty. Only a delightful stroll separates you from the house, a 24-acre estate previously owned by Henry VIII and Oxford University. It's been in the O'Dell family for three generations.

The estate has only recently become available to hire, on an exclusive basis. There's a three-bedroom main house that's been beautifully furnished. Its crowning jewel is the huge garden room, complete with an electric baby-grand piano, and views across to the River Medina. A separate summer house, dubbed the Kitchen Garden, comprises a kitchen, dining area, cinema projector and a glass-walled bathroom, where you can soak in the tub while looking out for red squirrels playing on the grass. Finally, there's a boathouse, with canoes you can take out onto the water and a garage that's been converted into a private yoga studio and gym.



This is the spot for anyone wanting a sheltered, dog-friendly paradise. It was pretty unbeatable, even in bad weather—Biblical-style rain fell on our second day—and, after a morning splashing through the woods in wellies and raincoats, our group was only too glad to snuggle up in front of the log burner, play board games and mix the odd drink using Pinkmead's very own gin. *TK* *Mulberry Cottages* (01227 464958; www.mulberrycottages.com) offer three nights from £1,600 or seven nights from £2,700