

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-29/il-sereno-is-lake-como-s-best-new-hotel-and-europe-s-most-luxurious>  
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## Il Sereno Is Europe's Most Luxurious New Hotel

Didn't snag an invite to crash with George and Amal Clooney at their villa in Lake Como this summer? Shrug it off. All the cool kids are staying somewhere else this year anyway.

Opening on August 1, Il Sereno Lago di Como is one of 2016's most hotly anticipated hotel debuts—and perhaps the buzziest, most stylish new place to stay in all of Europe. It's a spinoff of the exclusive Le Sereno in Saint Barthélemy, built by the same owners; it's on the edge of a cliff in a quiet and secluded Como town called Torno, set on the southwestern corner of the glamorous, horseshoe-shaped lake.



Poolside at Il Sereno Lago di Como  
Source: Sereno Hotels

But this isn't just another Lake Como grand dame, filled with century-old antiques or crushed velvet window drapes. This is Lake Como for the next generation. It's less Oscar de la Renta and more Alexander Wang.

The hotel's 30 suites run upwards of \$800 per night and are already sold out for the first few weeks. For those who can get in while it's still peak season, here's a primer on the hotel's most impressive design features. Pocket the intel and your fellow jetsetters will think you're already a regular.

## Custom Pieces Everywhere—including Some You Can Buy



The rooms at Il Sereno Lago di Como.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

Milan-based designer Patricia Urquiola is known for many things. She's designed furniture collections for Louis Vuitton and B&B Italia, has work in New York's Museum of Modern Art, and earned royal distinction in her home country of Spain. She's been called "the most important female designer in the world today" by the CEO of the Italian home design brand Boffi. So when you tell an interior design aficionado that you're sleeping in rooms of her design, as you will at Il Sereno, their ears will perk up, guaranteed.

Owner Luis Contreras and his partners gave Urquiola two main mandates: create the same open concept feel that makes the St. Barths property so special, and use as many local artisans as possible. (Milan, after all, is less than 40 miles away—and the countryside between the fashion capital and Como is home to many of the world's best furniture makers.)



The floating, copper-encased stairwell in the lobby.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

In the airy, living room-like lobby, Urquiola and a local builder have created a 22-foot-tall walnut wood staircase where each step looks like it's floating in mid-air. As if it wasn't dramatic enough, the whole thing is shrouded by a boxy structure made from copper pipes.

Nearly all of the furniture in the lobby and suites comes from top Italian names like B&B Italia, Cassina, and Molteni—much of it purpose-designed by Urquiola and then manufactured locally. “Even the mattresses for the bed are made a few miles from Como,” said Contreras in an interview.



The lobby, including Urquiola's Silverlake armchairs.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

The most special pieces to look out for: geometric “Silverlake” armchairs designed by Urquiola and produced by Moroso (test-drive them in the lobby and buy here for \$1,700, if you so desire); and sculpted wood tables in all of the suite's terraces. They tables are made in

Botswana—one of the few exceptions to the all-Italian rule—and run a cool \$7,000. The tally for 30 of them: nearly a quarter-million dollars.

## The Chicest Way to Get to Dinner in Bellagio



Take in the Lake Como architecture from your custom Riva boat.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

No trip to Como is complete without zipping around the lake, James Bond-style, in a gleaming, all-wood motorboat. Il Sereno has two of them, custom-designed by Urquiola and crafted by boatbuilding legends at the 250-year-old Cantiere Ernesto Riva. Their distinctive feature? Extra tall cabins, so you can comfortably stand up to take in the scenery. Use them to zip up to Bellagio, a half hour north of Torno town—no license needed.

## The Most Serene Place for Sundowners in All of Como



Il Sereno's main terrace.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

Sit on the hotel's main terrace, lined with plush couches and nest chairs in ivory and wood tones, and you'll have picture-perfect views in every direction. Straight ahead: the wide open expanse of Lake Como, with terracotta roofs peeking out from the mountains along its shores. Above you: open skies, or retractable shades in a brilliant white fabric. And behind you: *Le Mirroir Vert du Lac* ("The Lake's Green Mirror"), one of two vertical gardens created for the hotel by world-class botanist Patrick Blanc. It's made up of 2,000 individual plants and more than 130 individual species, according to Contreras.

## Where VIPs Will Stay—and a Quick History Lesson



A lakeside view of Villa Pliniana  
Source: Sereno Hotels

About a half-mile from Il Sereno, the Contreras family is operating another, more traditional exclusive-use property called Villa Pliniana, which also bears design from Urquiola. It dates to the 16th century and is set on 18 lakefront acres, with 19 bedrooms and three stand-alone villas on its grounds. (The whole place sleeps 39 guests.) If you're thinking "celebrities and their entourages" or "wedding of the century," you're spot on—not least because of the villa's incredibly history.



Villa Pliniana, from above  
Source: Sereno Hotels

According to a rep for the hotel, the villa's site was noted in the history books as early as the first century A.D., when Pliny the Elder wrote about a fountain in its courtyard. Among its later admirers: Napoleon and Lord Byron. Leonardo da Vinci and Percy Shelley both wrote about its beauty. Said Percy in a letter to a friend dated 1818, *"On one side is the mountain, and immediately over you are clusters of cypress-trees of an astonishing height, which seem to pierce the sky. Above you from among the clouds, as it were descends a waterfall of immense size, broken by the woody rocks into a thousand channels to the lake. On the other side is seen the blue extent of the lake and the mountains speckled with sails and spires..."*



Inside Villa Pliniana  
Source: Sereno Hotels

Not checking in with 38 of your closest friends and family? No matter. Get a glimpse of the spectacular property while you're sailing around the vicinity.

## A Gift for Each Guest

Those fabulous silk scarves in each room aren't just decorative objects. They're made with local silk, in patterns designed by Urquiola—just like all the staff uniforms—and serve as souvenirs to take home. Beats stealing the bathrobe.



The gardens at Villa Pliniana.  
Source: Sereno Hotels

By Nikki Ekstein