

GRAND// PRIX

From fast rides to fabulous food, here's what makes LOMBARDY so unique

By Mona Buehler

BRESCIA

You're in a cute 1930s Aston Martin, zipping through stone villages surrounded by glacial lakes, snow-capped mountains and hillsides flecked with olive groves and lemon trees. A classic Maserati passes with a honk, and a cherry-red Ferrari roars up from behind. No, you're not in a scene from *The Italian Job*—you're cruising in the Mille Miglia, the annual 1,000-mile Italian vintage auto race from Brescia to Rome and back.

Every May, this medieval city an hour east of Milan hosts the ultimate auto-aficionado experience, rallying hundreds of classic rides from around the world. Owners of cars from Bentley to Bugatti—even shiny new Ferraris—pose for photographs in Brescia's town square while waiting



The legendary Mille Miglia celebrates Italian cars and vintage autos.

JOSH RUTHNICK

EVERYBODY LOVES ITALY

It's been 11 years since *Everybody Loves Raymond* creator Phil Rosenthal took his beloved sitcom to Italy to shoot its hourlong Season 5 premiere. We talked to Rosenthal about the trip. — Jim Colucci



Watch!: Where did you first get the idea to take *Raymond* to Italy?

Phil Rosenthal: During the first season, I asked Ray [Romano] what he was going to do on his hiatus. He said he was going to the Jersey Shore. I said, "Why don't you go to Europe?" He'd never been—even to Italy, where his family had been from. He said, "Nah, I'm not really interested in other cultures." Even his own! So I said, here's a show: Send this guy over to Italy as Ray Barone, and bring him back as Roberto Benigni, after he's been transformed by

the magic. So I started asking CBS each year if we could do this, and they said, "No, no, no, no." And the fifth year they said yes.

Watch!: Conveniently for a foodie like you, of course.

Phil: This was quite a scam I pulled. Because first, of course, I had to go and scout, and I brought my wife and a few people from the crew. But it wasn't money for nothing. The locations we found started dictating the story. You see a gelato shop next to the water, and you think: What if

Scaligero Castle, below left, is one of the best-preserved castles in Italy, while both the casks and vineyards at Bella Vista winery, below right, are sights to behold, too.



to begin the legendary drive south. Learn about Mille Miglia history from owners Maurella Musatti and Chiara Morandini over homemade *casonsèi* at Trattoria Al Fontanone near the Santa Giulia Museum, or dine at trattoria Pizzeria Plaza and watch the parade of gas-pedal pushers cruise by.

LAKE GARDA

If you're nautically inclined, Italy's largest lake is perfect for boating, sailing and water sports. Channel your inner 007 by chartering a high-speed Riva boat at the lake where the opening scene from *Quantum of Solace* was filmed, and stop in stunning Sirmione for a charming lakeside experience. After lunch at Palace Hotel Villa Cortine, a dunk in the hot

springs at Aquaria at Terme di Sirmione, and exploring the fortified Scaligero Castle, you'll be ready visit to The Vittoriale, the bizarre home of poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.

LAKE ISEO & FRANCIACORTA

Cool your engines here, because these locales are more about walking and quaffing. First stop: picturesque Monte Isola, the largest inhabited lake archipelago in Europe. Accessible only by boat, the island maintains its quiet charm and healthy atmosphere by forbidding motor

vehicles on the island—visitors and locals alike get around on foot, bike and moped. Enjoy local delicacies such as perch, smoked sardines and polenta at Restaurant Vittoria.



Across the southern banks of the lake, venture to the rolling Franciacorta hillside for wine tasting at Bella Vista winery. If you have a soft spot for sparkling wine like Blair Waldorf (*Gossip Girl*), be prepared to fall in love with Franciacorta sparklers, made using the same traditional *méthode champenoise* bottle fermentation techniques as France uses.

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Robert fell in love with the beautiful gelato girl? Here's a restaurant inside an idyllic park—maybe this is the spot where Ray starts to "get" Italy. Or Rome's Spanish Steps. You start thinking of the lines each character would say. Debra would find it gorgeous, and Ray would see it as steps. "We have to climb all the way up? Is there a Spanish Elevator?"

Watch!: In what areas did you shoot? Here Ray's name is actually "Romano," and you went to Rome.

Phil: Ray wasn't clear where his family came from, but his wife still had family in Sicily. And after we finished, they went to Sicily, and had



the exact experience as in the script we'd just shot, with tiny, cramped arrangements, and life imitating art. Apart from Rome, to mix it up a little, we wanted a scene in bucolic countryside. We found a lake about 40 minutes north

called Lago di Bracciano. And a little perfect town there called Anguillara.

Watch!: Speaking of life imitating art, did Ray the actor have the same epiphany?

Phil: We all had such a beautiful time together, and sure enough, Ray followed his character exactly. After shooting each night, when we would go for dinner, you could see him go "Oh, my God!" We'd have a glorious meal, then we'd have to try some pizza, then he'd need gelato, then he'd find another pizza and we'd have to have some of that, and then some more gelato. He became completely enamored.