

LAKE COMO BY DESIGN

Visionary Bianca Passera elevates the heady experience of Lake Como

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Third generation owner of Lario Hotels, Bianca Passera, stands on the balcony of the former 19th century Vista Palazzo, Como's first five-star hotel.



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Why are some destinations like Lake Como inherently winning bets for the ultimate travel experience? Lario Hotel owner, Bianca Passera will simply tell you that her successful formula is having a unique combination of stunning landscape, rich history, and cultural wealth. In other words, half the battle of creating a fabulous escape for travellers is already won without trying. That's not to say Ms. Passera doesn't try. Her hotels, especially her most recent launch of the only five-star hotel in Como, Vista Palazzo Lago di Como, are the talk of the lake as it were, because of their attention to old school hospitality, even as she moves the needle forward in terms of riveting design.

Bianca Passera enjoys a classic Riva boat on Lake Como

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View of the famed lake from Villa Flori.

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Vista Palazzo is born out of a restored 19th-century gentian style palazzo overlooking the lake.

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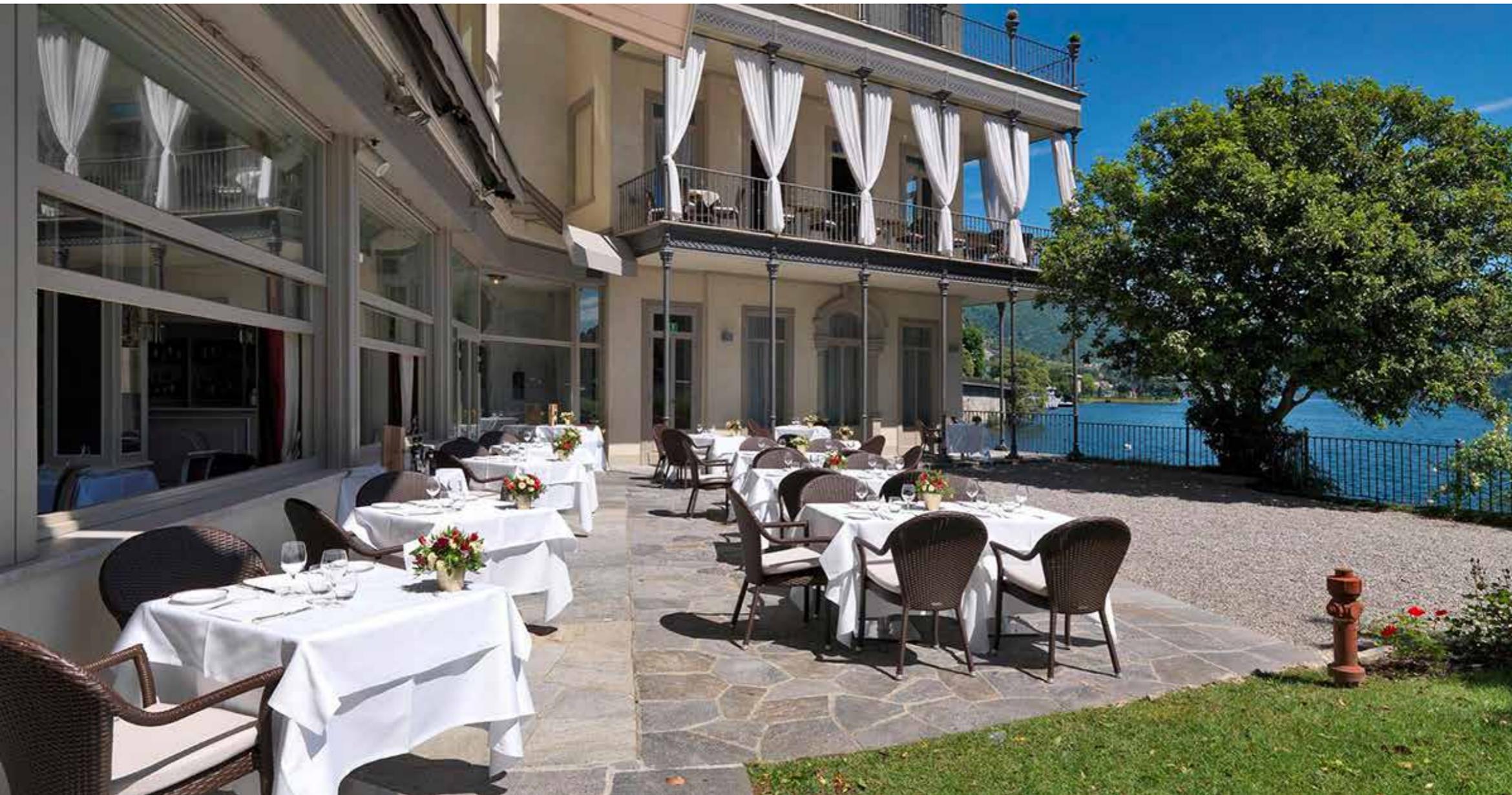
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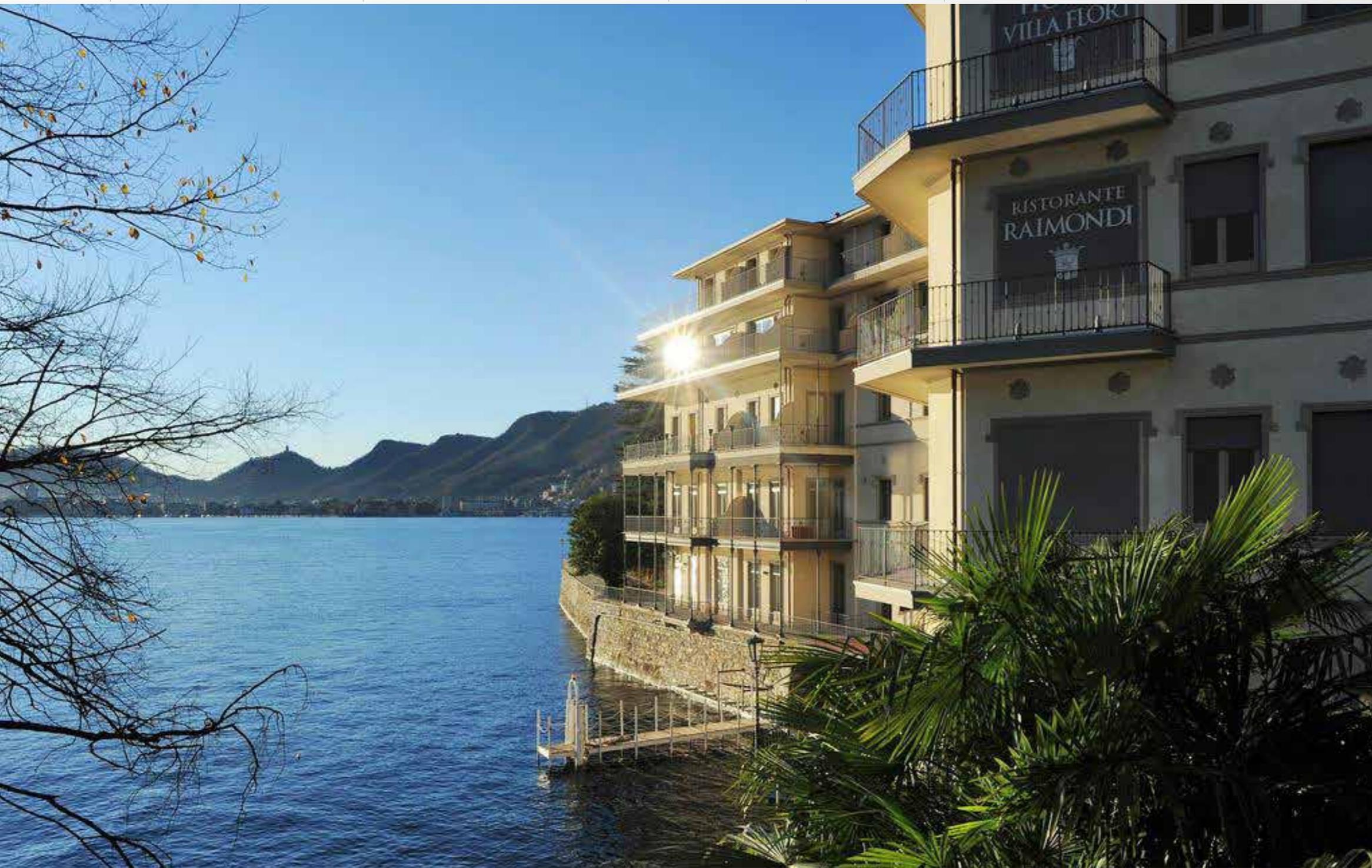


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Guests can dine al fresco at the lakeside Villa Flori.

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Ms. Passera is probably one of the most fluent in everything Lake Como—she was born here and spent her childhood exploring towns like Bellagio with her family. She remembers sunsets from the port of Bellagio being the most beautiful, beyond compare. Now she brings her children, and hotel guests, to the same spot to soak up all the beauty.

Most of the recently refurbished rooms at Villa Flori feature balconies overlooking Lake Como and the Swiss Alps.

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Villa Flori's Lobby.

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The 2nd floor bar at Villa Flori has a delightful terrace overlooking Lake Como.

“I wanted them to share the experiences that I had here in Lake Como,” says Ms. Passera. “And I do the same for friends and guests that come to the region and don’t know Lake Como. There are villages like Torno and others that are still unknown by tourism specialists. They have unparalleled views and I hope they stay a secret.”



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Delicate stucco work, floral frescoes, parquet floors, and antique furnishings have been preserved.

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The stairwell of Vista Palazzo Lago di Como restored to its original grandeur.

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Lario Hotels is a heritage brand and linchpin in keeping Lake Como a class act. Pessera's grandfather opened their first hotel in 1920 when the idea of "luxury" was simply a part of their business model's DNA. They were known, and are still known, for their outstanding restaurants, and when Bianca took over the business in 2013, she continued this standard and renovated Villa Flori and Terminus. Later, a fourth generation of the family, her nephew Luigi, joined her to open Vista Palazzo Lago di Como in the beating heart of Como city - which comes as a relief to travellers who want to be closer to the activity of a main city of the lake, but still want to have exquisite quarters to call home for the night.

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An original dining room at Villa Flori features restored Stucko ceilings.

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There was a void in Lake Como tourism that Bianca felt needed to be addressed. Before Vista Palazzo Lago di Como, five-star hotels didn't exist, which she saw as a growing problem given a renewed interest in the lake district. In a growing fad, famous actors began acquiring homes in the area, well-heeled individuals who remember the old school "luxury" and grand European Tour mentality, of which Lake Como was a heady part.

Guests enjoy drinks on Vista Palazzo's private 4th floor terrace.

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“To be honest, Lake Como, particularly the city of Como, lacked a 5-star luxury experience, and Como deserves it,” says Ms. Passera. “From Como you can make wonderful boat trips of nature because in 15 minutes by cable car you get to the Brunate peak. From there you can reach walks and trails immersed in the almost unexplored greenery and culture because there are architectural routes told by Giuseppe Terragni and the rationalist movement. Not to mention a bevy of ancient history and outstanding shopping.”

Vista Palazzo uses local Italian materials such as Dedar fabrics, Italian marbles, indigenous woods, and custom Italian furniture.

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Vista's s private 4th floor library is reserved for guests.

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What makes a five-star Como hotel is clever planning with outstanding designers. Ms. Passera believes that a memorable hotel must have a distinguished design imprint, and she worked with architects and designers to make that happen. She worked with Dedar to invest striking colours and patterns in the fabrics of Vista Palazzo Lago di Como. Precious marbles in a kaleidoscope of rich colours, mahogany wood detailing by Minotti and lighting fixtures by esteemed Italian brand, Artemis, set the tone for Ms. Passera's new 18-room Vista Palazzo Lago di Como. It was a vast project completed last year, and she slept little and worked 60-hour weeks.

Bedrooms at Villa Flori offer unparalleled views of Lake Como.

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Still, Ms. Passera finds time for other interests. She runs her own packaging agency in Milano, helps with affairs at the Como Silk Museum, and sits on the board of Villa Erba, a magnificent exhibition space in Cernobbio. A Bocconi University graduate, she is trained and tested to take on projects that open people's eyes and enrich their lives. Charity is also a priority for this polyglot, who created a project called Siticibo, which collects excess food from canteens, restaurants, and so on to be distributed to the poor. Siticibo started as a small Milano based outreach project and today is in most cities throughout Italy. Balance is Ms. Passera's Midas touch and whether it's outstanding hotels or charity work, everything she touches turns to gold.

Villa Flori transports guests to a bygone era.

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