

Lugano in a different mood

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LUGANO IN A DIFFERENT MOOD



A popular meeting place for holidaymakers and local people—the cafe's on Lugano's Piazza Priforma. This and the other pictures are by courtesy of SNT0.



This sausage shop imparts a distinctly "southern" ambience.

The very word Lugano conjures up a serene blue lake, gorgeous sunshine and an azure sky. Well, like anywhere else the weather cannot be guaranteed. We recently spent a week there, and although we did get two really beautiful days, the rest of the time was rainy, dull and grey. Yet the holiday was an unqualified success.

The journey on the Gotthard Express (with an excellent lunch in the dining car) is an adventure in itself. In one hour it races through the tunnel and down the Southern ramp of the Alps, on which the altitude between Airolo and Biasca drops nearly 1,200 m. Every time one is fascinated by the technical achievement as much as by the national phenomena.

Again and again, too, the visitor is enchanted by the town of Lugano. It is sheltered by the two watchful mountains Monte San Salvatore and Monte Brè. Its churches, palaces, hotels, attractive houses and gardens stretch along the over 3 km long lake promenade. The old town with its alleyways and arcades is the business centre, and picturesque villages are glued to the hillsides. In the background one can see the snow-capped peaks.

We don't want to lose many words about the excellent tourist facilities, the "made to measure" package arrangements, the golfers' Lugano stay and lots of other financially attractive facets of a holiday there. Nor about bathing, tennis, hiking trails, coach trips and Lugano's night life. We want to tell you how to have a fabulous time in Lugano when the weather lets you down.

Of course, we could have visited a great many buildings of historic and artistic value, churches and museums, but that was not our way. All we wanted was an undemanding and relaxing time. And we did have it.

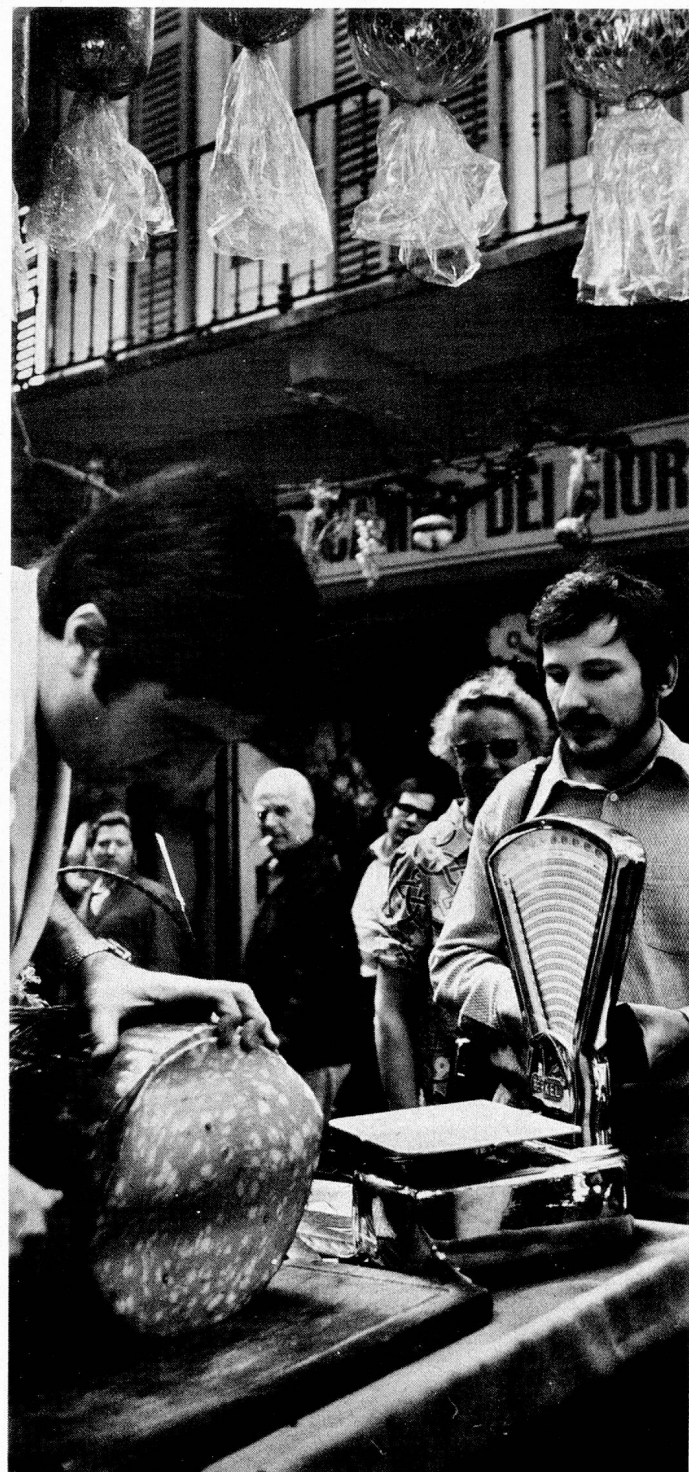
We walked in the rain above Lugano near the wooded parts of Sorengo — what a refreshing smell of wet trees and flowering shrubs! We saw secluded villas and almost subtropical gardens.

We took the red funicular railway up the Monte San Salvatore (912 m) on a drizzly afternoon and had a superb view of the whole panorama from the Lago Maggiore to the Plain of Lombardy. The towns and villages looked sleepy, almost eerie. The water was a dark grey and the mountain tops were barely visible in the mist. There was something mysterious in it all, yet truly majestic. And the flora was splendid and colourful. The coffee and *grappa* and the apple flan tasted good at the summit restaurant!

Of course, we walked in the old town, proverbial haven for sweethearts. We bought our souvenirs and sauntered through the flower gardens along the lake front — brimful with bright azaleas and other beautiful plants.



Lugano, famous for its sub-tropical vegetation, has a wealth of places of cultural interest such as San Lorenzo Cathedral pictured here. In the background is Monte Bre, easily reached by funicular railway.



A slice of this giant mortadella sausage—here seen on sale in the old quarter of Lugano—would fill several sandwiches.

But the most wonderful relaxation, even in the rain, were our boat trips. On the top deck under a canvas canopy we were sheltered, and we glided along the picturesque shores, under the Melide causeway (no, we did not visit the famous "Romantica" nor the "Swissminiatur"), past the Italian gambling place of Campione, Bissonne (where we ignored the fine Ticinese Museum), and on to Morcote. There we walked up the hundreds of steps to the famous church and later had a *polenta* cooked in a copper cauldron outside an arcade inn. The *coniglio* (rabbit) tasted good, and the *merlot* even better. What portions, too!

One day we went by boat to Ponte

Tresa, where the river of the same name forms the frontier between Italy and Switzerland. The little lake is part of the Lago di Lugano, connected by a small isthmus. Such peaceful shores and pretty weekend homes.

On the last day we went to Gandria, the old fishing village with its artists' colony, its narrow lanes and terraces. We had a lovely lunch on a little covered balcony perched high above the water. We went on to Italian Porlezza where the street market was the biggest attraction. Cheap leather goods, tasty cheeses and superb fruit and the most gaudy ornaments, vases and pottery I have even seen anywhere. On that

particular route, one crossed that arm of the lake several times and Italian and Swiss customs officials accompany the boat.

We returned past pretty Castagnola with its many fine houses, and back to the Cassarate part of Lugano. From there we walked home along the front for the last time. Not even the noise of the traffic managed to spoil our serenity. We were well content and rested.

Next morning we left Lugano in driving rain and embarked on the interesting journey back. Gratefully we said "arrivederci" and never mind the weather.

M.M.