

STAR
WARS

AFICIONADO MEMORIES

A TRIP TO NABOO...

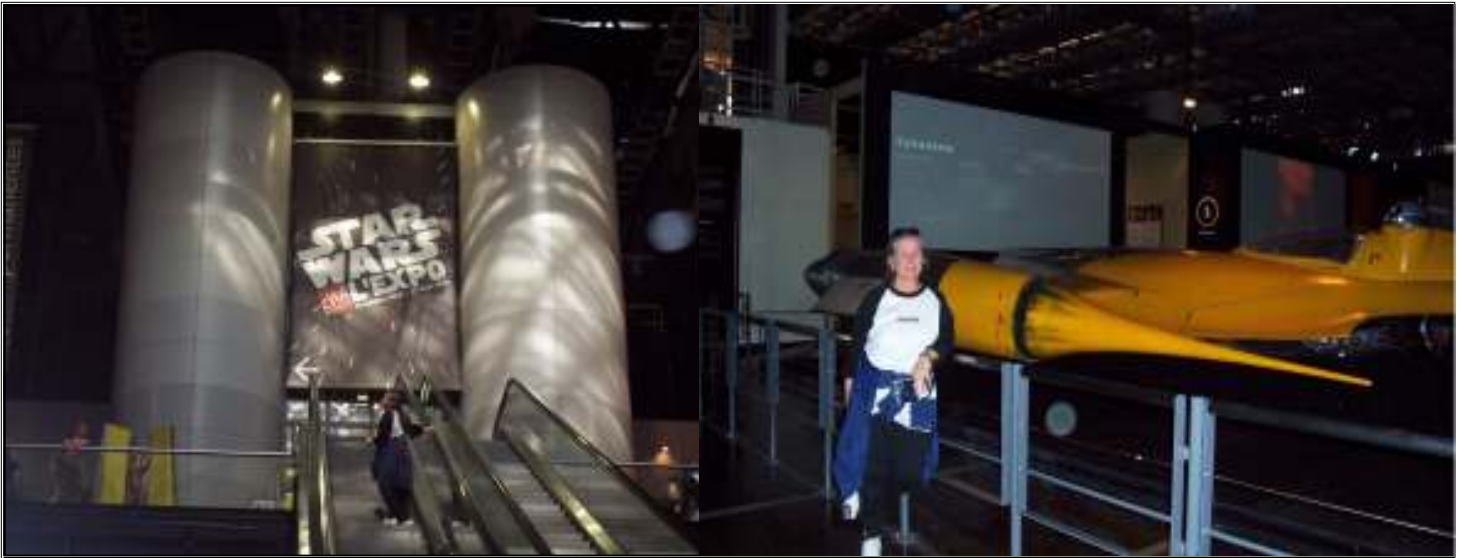
By Linda Pellerito



It was a cold and rainy night...actually it was an incredible 4-day visit to the Lake Retreat – the Villa Balbianello. Anticipation was never so sweet, well, except awaiting C3 and the premiere of *Revenge of the Sith*. The dream began when I discovered that there was a real location from *Attack of the Clones*, that this was no blue screen. I began my research in late 2002 and just kept revisiting the FAI site



Above top: the Varykino Lake House in all its beauty, as seen in STAR WARS EPISODE II: ATTACK OF THE CLONES. Above: Angie and me-A promise made and kept, from my daughter to me. "I promise you, Mom-we will get there."



Above top left: Stairway to the Stars-La Guerre Des Etoiles!! Above top right: the Naboo Starfighter-- THIS is why my VW bug is yellow!!

www.fondoambiente.it/english/Properties/index.htm,

attaching photos in emails to my daughter, Angie, who is a super traveler – down to the last Metro, she can get us everywhere in Europe – that and her fluent French. Four years later we are there! With just one backpack each we arrived in Paris for a few days, where we discovered the French *Star Wars* Exhibit was still going on so we hopped another Metro to the extreme east side of the city where we saw the full-sized Naboo Starfighter (a

favorite ship of Padme Amidala's (the Battle for ending scene). Of course nearly as "Dressing a but there was you could put ROTJ as Jabba's The next day we journey to Mont caught the train Cote d'Azure, where we stood in on the red carpet Hayden, Natalie,



Above: Cannes May 2006-Best in Show. Opposite: George, Sam (The Man!!), Natalie (in her best V FOR VEN-DETTA style), Ian and Hayden at the Cannes SITH premiere in May 2005.

mine), a few of *TPM* costumes Naboo and the Celebration this wasn't extensive as the *Galaxy*" exhibit interactive fun: yourself into barge explodes. continued our St Michel, then down to the including Cannes the exact place George, Rick, Samuel, Anthony



Above top right and left: A Field of Dreams—soon to be “developed.” Future visits will require the aid of CGI from INDUSTRIAL LIGHT AND MAGIC. Opposite right: George Lucas supervises the picnic scene with Hayden and Natalie.

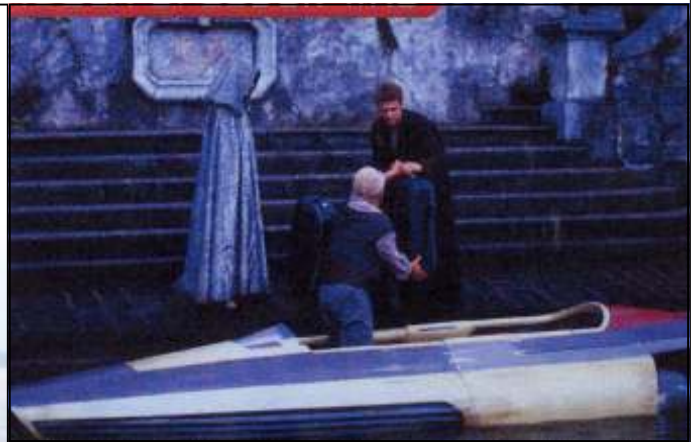
and Ian were one year before for the premiere of *REVENGE OF THE SITH*. Venice was no longer an option due to the Italians and French also being on holiday so I nervously agreed to Angie’s exciting alternative—to head back up north to Interlaken and parasailing in the



Alps! Breathtaking in so many ways. Immediately after the parasailing, we boarded a train to the city of Como, which took the entire afternoon/evening to reach. Incredibly *Sound of Music* scenic en route.

Saving the best for last we arrived in the city of Como too late for the last bus to Lenno so after a very expensive cab ride, and trying to see the lake in the dark and again, *anticipating*, we arrived at our hotel, which turned out to be the very same one the crew from *AOTC* had stayed. We were immediately greeted with news that our guide, Gigliola Foglia, called to make arrangements for EARLY the next morning – our first tour of the Villa. I had found the contact information to Gigliola in early 2003 after discovering her on The Padawan’s Guide website www.padawansguide.com/tourguide.shtml, then saved it for 3 years more and was stoked that she was indeed still doing *Star Wars* Tours of Lake Como. Gigliola arrived promptly at 9:00 a.m.

with a Padawan braid in her hair! How cool and the first indication that she indeed knows her *Star Wars* plus she was on the set when they filmed in 2000. First we went to the picnic site – and Angie said jokingly, “We traveled across the Atlantic to photograph *grass?*” “Ahh, but it’s THIS grass!” was voiced by Gigliola and me almost simultaneously. Gigliola said she hadn’t seen the costumes at all and was overwhelmed when Natalie stepped out from the changing area in the incredible Picnic Gown...Trisha Biggar, who was also present, appreciated Gigliola’s reaction: just stunned at the beautiful combination of the perfect girl in the perfect dress filming the perfect saga. We stomped through the long grass and Gigliola was



Here's hoping for a Special Edition of *ATTACK OF THE CLONES* that includes all the cut scenes including the departure for Tatooine (showing Padme and Anakin with boatsman Paddy Accu). Sweet Gondola!!

reminded that George had requested the farmer who owns the site to let the grass grow very long for the filming – actually Gigliola was full of little tidbits from the filming – just enjoyed her so much. Next we were on to the steps featured in the cut scene of leaving for Tatooine – Padme is in the cloak/hood she will wear on that dry planet and Anakin is assisting the pilot of the small gondola. Natalie was not feeling terrific as she had gone for a swim in the lake and developed a severe ear infection, delaying filming (they were scheduled for only a 4-day shoot) making George “grumpy”. Gigliola also said Natalie refused to change into Trisha’s beautiful costumes in the public toilet/restroom – Gigliola said she was correct in that refusal as it was not a pleasant place to be in the hot days of late summer, so arrangements were made to open a small, interesting building close to the water’s edge. We climbed back into Gigliola’s car (yes, she even picked us



Two shots taken from the lake of the beautiful Villa Balbianello. A true STAR WARS pilgrimage!!

up at the hotel and chauffeured us around the *Star Wars* sites) we were at last off to the Villa.

Gigliola had previously arranged boat transport to the amazing, wonderful, beautiful Villa the second we that had from our hotel, goose bumps was just magical as I once we instinctively, I the wedding about a dozen could even anywhere else. crook in that the exact spot. pointed out that balustrade/ owner had that is repeated perimeter of



Déjà vu with a twist!!-above, May 2006, and below, September 2000 respectively. With added droids, too!!



Balbianello. From rounded the bend blocked the site I was covered in and near tears – it incredible and as had hoped. And docked, almost made a beeline to site - and took photos before I consider going There it was – the branch that marks Gigliola also within the fencing the original placed a design around the the side of the Villa

that faces the lake – George was originally going to digitally remove it but decided that it actually looks like a heart with an “A” and a “P” in there – do you see it? Next in importance (to me, anyway) was the awakening from the nightmare/decision to leave Naboo scene. This was filmed in the loggia the forever now associated with *AOTC* tri-arched loggia.....and of course I had to do the hands clasped behind the back ala Anakin/Vader pose. We had also paid to see the interior of the Villa – very little related to *AOTC* but we did see the window Padme looks through to see Anakin and her father



Opposite left: The triple-arched loggia always triggers a Vader stance from STAR WARS fans. Above: the original shot from ATTACK OF THE CLONES. Below right: Feeling that he could see the initials A and P in the location's symbol, George decided not to CGI remove it from the finished movie.

talking and also the room that served as Padme's bedroom.



Gigliola mentioned that when she showed up for

one of the days of filming in a purple dress, George seemed upset – evidently there's a superstition surrounding the color purple – it's considered unlucky during a shoot. Another little piece of info Gigliola shared: the holy man who marries Anakin and Padme is actually a local dentist! He just had the right look for George.

After over two hours at the Villa, Gigliola had to leave for a college graduation – we said goodbye knowing that I would be emailing her when I returned home. Angie and I stayed for nearly four hours longer – I just didn't want to leave. It was the perfect day to be there – overcast, sort of haunting.....think of the way the balcony/loggia scene looked with rain on the ground, etc. The next day the Villa was closed, however I convinced

Angie that I just had to Thursday, back we was a sunny day and Anakin's first scene at also a sunny day, I look of our earlier visit covering the entire sky grays. I repeated the previously taken but of mini-videos of the digital camera (try to the end of the journey running out of storage



A rainbow appeared during the filming of the wedding scene. It had rained incessantly the day before and was still raining that morning. And then...magic!!

return again, so on went....but it even though Padme and the Lake Retreat was preferred the mystical with misty clouds in variations of dark same journey I had this time I took a couple wedding site with my send) – since I was at I no longer feared or batteries.

Alas we had to eventually leave – we had only this last night at the hotel then we had to return to the city of Como for an early morning train connecting with a flight back to reality. We chose the water way, slower but it gave me time to say goodbye...it seemed appropriate, recalling Padme's final journey.

I'll remember this wonderful trip forever and there's nothing like wanting something so badly, anticipating it for years and having the experience reward you with just what you wanted.....not even a second of disappointment.

It was all there.

This dream will not fade in time.

Linda Pellerito - Villa Balbianello - May 1st – 5th, 2006

