

October 2021

Postcards from Lake Como

A photo journal and travelogue

Hannah Cai



Video journal



<https://youtu.be/ebfbhyl6nkY>

Day 7

We woke up tired but ready to take on our final full day in Italy. Grand Visconti Palace treated us to restful sleep, a dreamy view of the garden, and breakfast pastries galore (more in Miles across Milan). Whole wheat croissants aren't common in the States, but I'm all for a baking reformation that brings the croissant integrale to light.





By now, we were well versed in Milan's metro system and made our way efficiently to Milano Centrale for a ticket to Varenna-Espino. That Sunday morning, the TrenItalia was packed with students talking to one another in English with varying European accents. En route, we saw glimpses of Italian Sundays. From what I could tell, Sundays are for soccer games, church, and day trips for outdoor activities, like hiking, biking, and running.

As the train climbed higher altitudes, we saw massive mountains with palm trees, hillside towns, each with its own campanile, and pastel buildings with laundry air-drying on the balcony. Apartment windows were generally very simple, but others were framed with decorative casing.









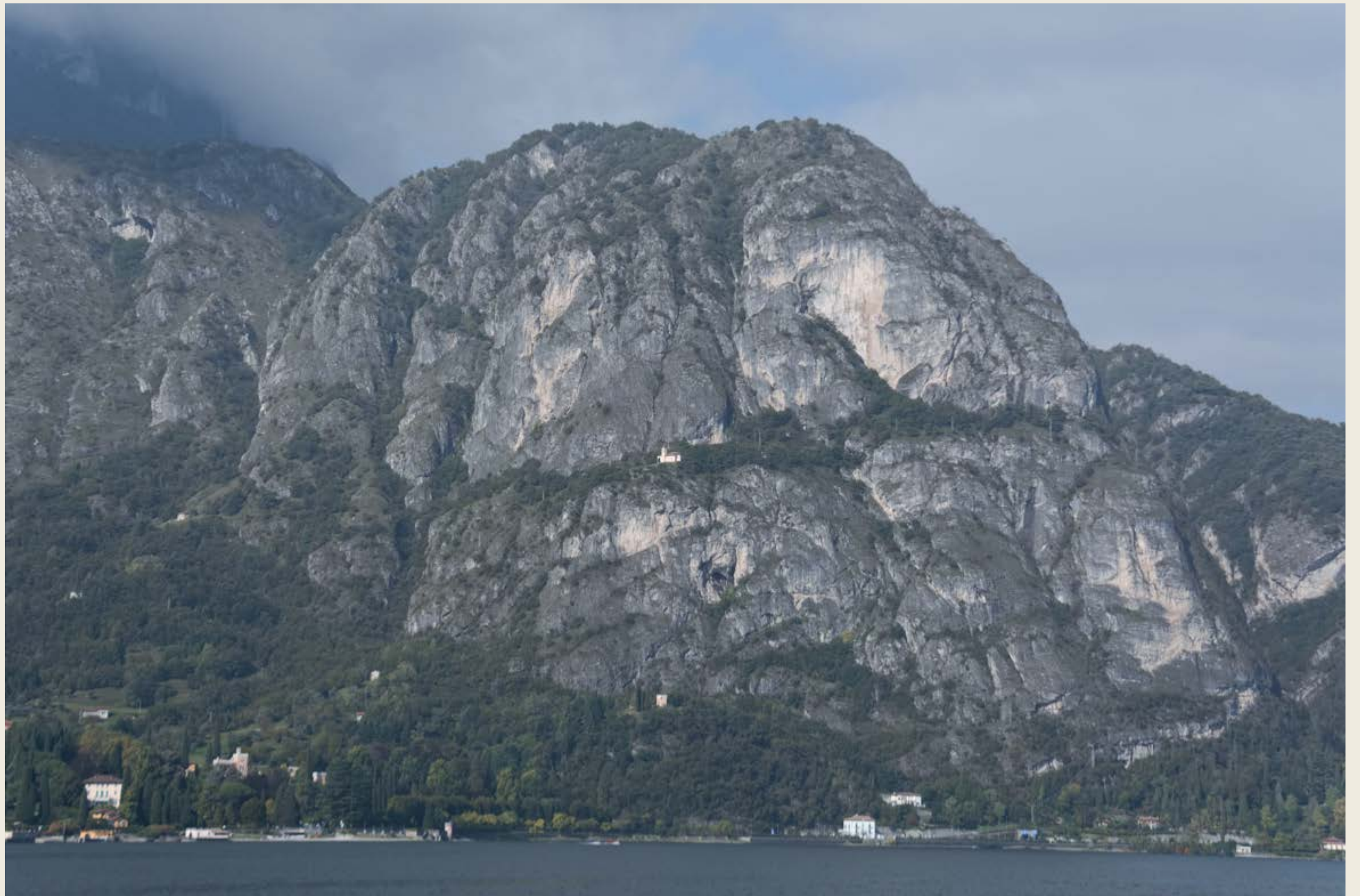
















If Venice is dreamy and romantic, then Lake Como is soothing and refreshing. It's a get-away destination for those pursuing tranquility and a breath of fresh air. Once we arrived at Varenna, we caught a ferry to Bellagio and walked around its winding cobblestone streets, each lined with colorful stores and hotels. It was early October, yet flowers, succulents, and wisterias crawled along every spare spot. Beautiful dogs - schnauzers, terriers, and an Australian shepherd mix - quickly drew clusters of fans.















Mom bought earrings from the jovial Javier!





Lake Como is the place to relax, shop, and repeat. The hospitality in Lake Como was warm and generous. We stopped for tiramisu and our first gelato of the day. I still crave the Mediterranean, a mix of vanilla with almonds, pistachio, honey, and figs.





The first signs of autumn



We trekked to an old fishing village

















After a few hours in Bellagio, we took the ferry back to Varenna, where we had our favorite gelato of the trip (and second of the day) at La Passarella (blueberry cheesecake and "Lake Como," coffee with chocolate, cocoa, and toffee) while sitting on cobblestone steps. As we chased the gelato dripping down our fingers, we overheard Italian kids ask their parents for flavors, like nocciola and stracciatella. Hearing their voices chirp these lyrical words was precious.



As well known as Bellagio is, Varenna seems to be the preferred choice for lakeside dining among Italian families, students, older couples, cyclists, and foreign visitors.



We took a long walk to Villa Monastero's botanical gardens, where the lush greenery and lakeside views confirmed that I prefer outdoor activities over museums, churches, and art galleries. Villa Monastero is also a conference center with overnight rooms - can you imagine waking up in a place like this?



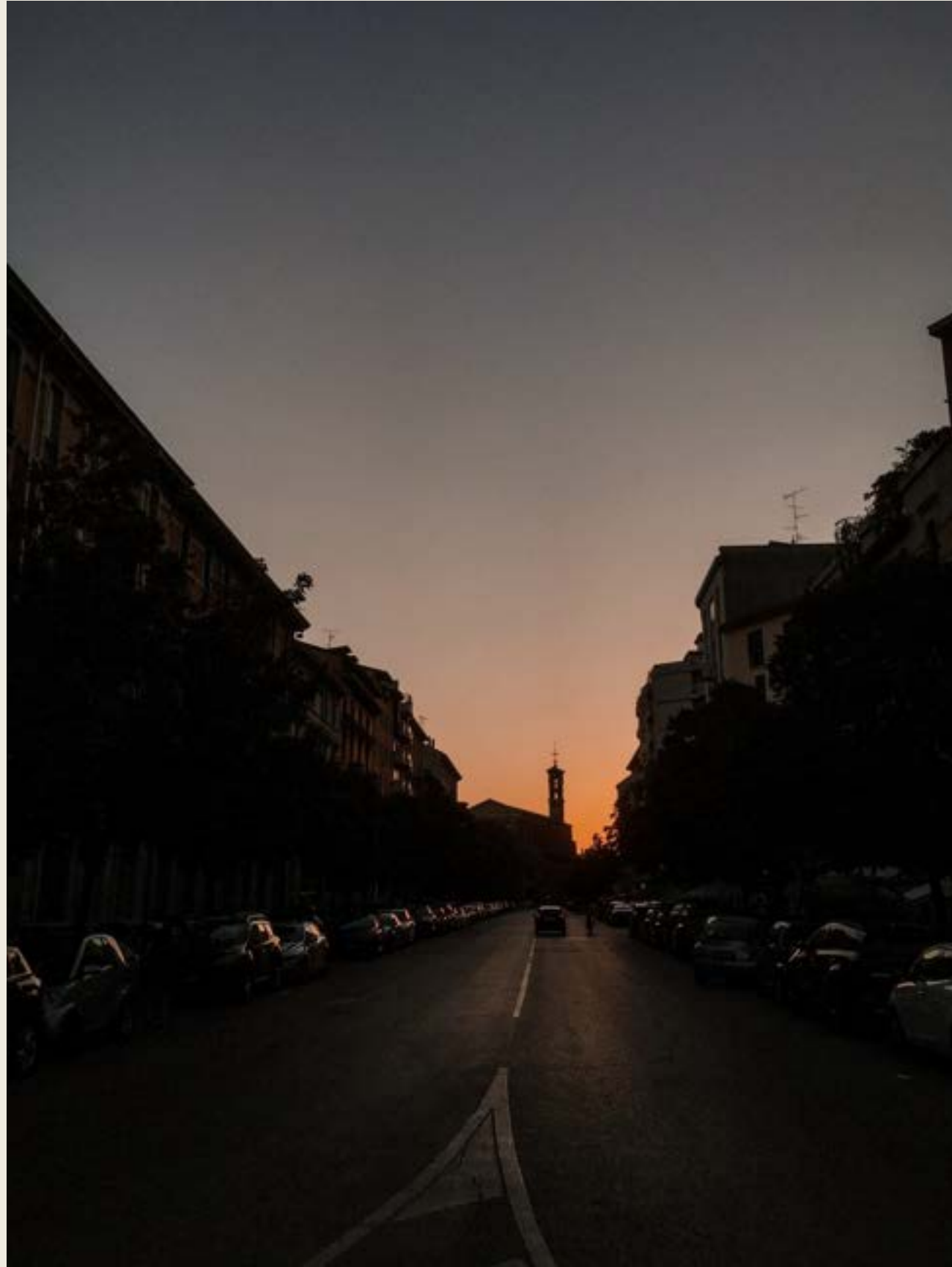






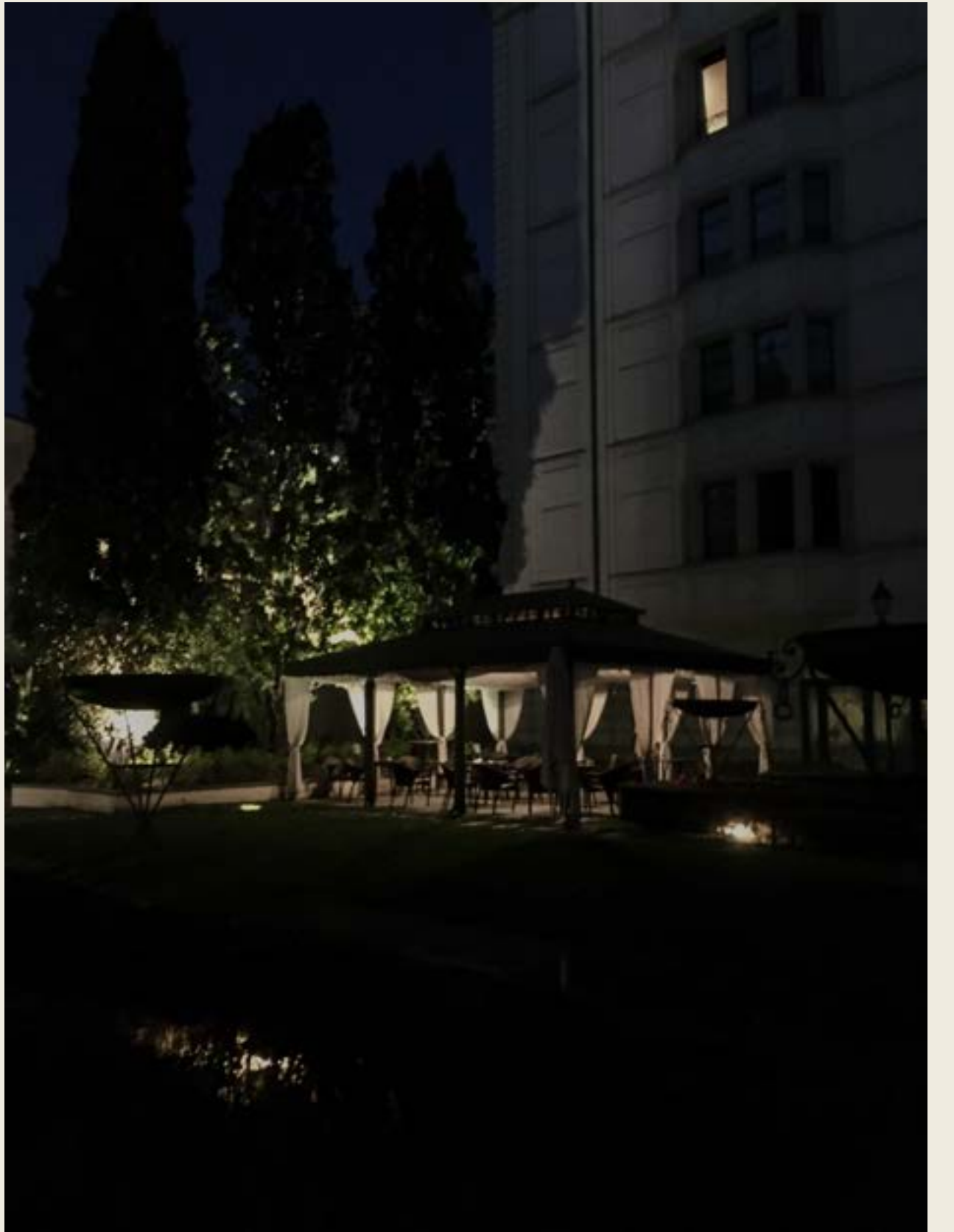


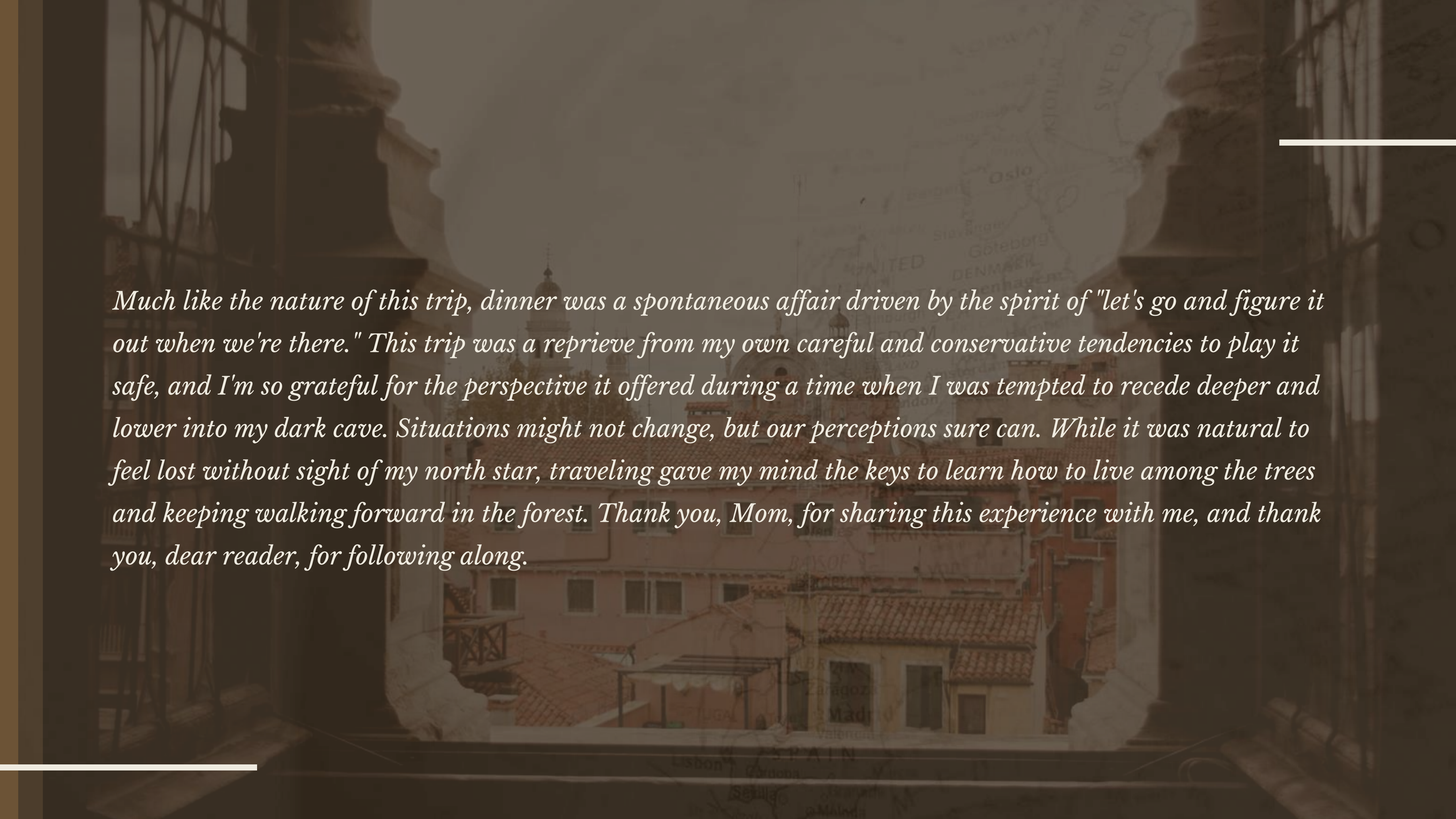
Back in Milano.



We finished the long day wanting a convenient dinner, which wasn't easy to find on a Sunday when most restaurants are closed. Still, we managed! From the comfort of our hotel room, we watched the sun set over our spread: Trapizzino's Polpetta al Pomodoro and Polla alla Cacciatora, a big grocery store salad for 2€ (Can you believe?! And no soggy greens!), a Weißbier, and maccheroncini with truffled beef ragout, our first experience with hotel room service.





The background of the page is a faded, sepia-toned photograph of a city street scene, likely from a European city, showing buildings with tiled roofs and a street view. Overlaid on this is a faint, light-colored map of Europe, with various country names like 'OSLO', 'SWEDEN', 'DENMARK', and 'UNITED' visible. A white horizontal line is positioned in the upper right corner of the page.

Much like the nature of this trip, dinner was a spontaneous affair driven by the spirit of "let's go and figure it out when we're there." This trip was a reprieve from my own careful and conservative tendencies to play it safe, and I'm so grateful for the perspective it offered during a time when I was tempted to recede deeper and lower into my dark cave. Situations might not change, but our perceptions sure can. While it was natural to feel lost without sight of my north star, traveling gave my mind the keys to learn how to live among the trees and keeping walking forward in the forest. Thank you, Mom, for sharing this experience with me, and thank you, dear reader, for following along.

For more photos and thoughts:

iPhone Photo Journal: Viaggio a Italia

Fieldnotes from Italy

Miles Across Milan

Dreaming of Venice

Postcards from the Venetian Lagoon



Thanks for following along!

hannahclaudia.blogspot.com