



# Big, Bigger, and Bellagio

*Inspired by the romantic  
aura of Lake Como,  
Bellagio Resort is betting  
that first impressions  
become lasting ones*

**I**n a city already infamous for its high stakes, one of Las Vegas' newest and most elegant luxury resorts is managing to raise the ante to a new level—proving that having the most slot machines and the best odds is not enough to lure the most visitors.

Bellagio, the crowning achievement of the relationship between Mirage Resorts and the landscape firm Lifescapes International, has changed the premise of which Las Vegas was built on. With its seasonal gardens, extensive pool courtyards and its famed water show, Bellagio is showing that what's outside the casino is just as important as what's inside.

"The goal is to allow visitors to fully immerse themselves into the engaging ambiance of

■ *Left* The romantic shoreline that fronts the Via Bellagio Retail and Restaurant area is an artistic blending of custom rock formations, ambient lighting, and hand-picked trees and shrubs.



■ *Above Top* An airy and light-filled atrium serve as the backdrop for the lobby registration/reception area. Color palettes and accessories change out regularly to compliment the Conservatory Garden. *Above Bottom* The Bellagio's spectacular pool area is really an interconnected village of pools accented by trellises, planted rose arches, and private cabanas. *Opposite Page* An aerial view of the dramatic drive along the lake headed for the porte cochere.

Bellagio, thereby dispensing with the hectic and harried world outside," says Donald Brinkerhoff, CEO/Founder of Lifescapes International. "The first impression usually sets the tone for the experience, so in this way, the landscape design, both the softscape and hardscape, is an essential part of creating and establishing a luxury environment."

The "romantic Mediterranean" gardens of Bellagio include numerous mature Aleppo Pines, Italian Cypress and Fruitless Olives which are spread out in generous

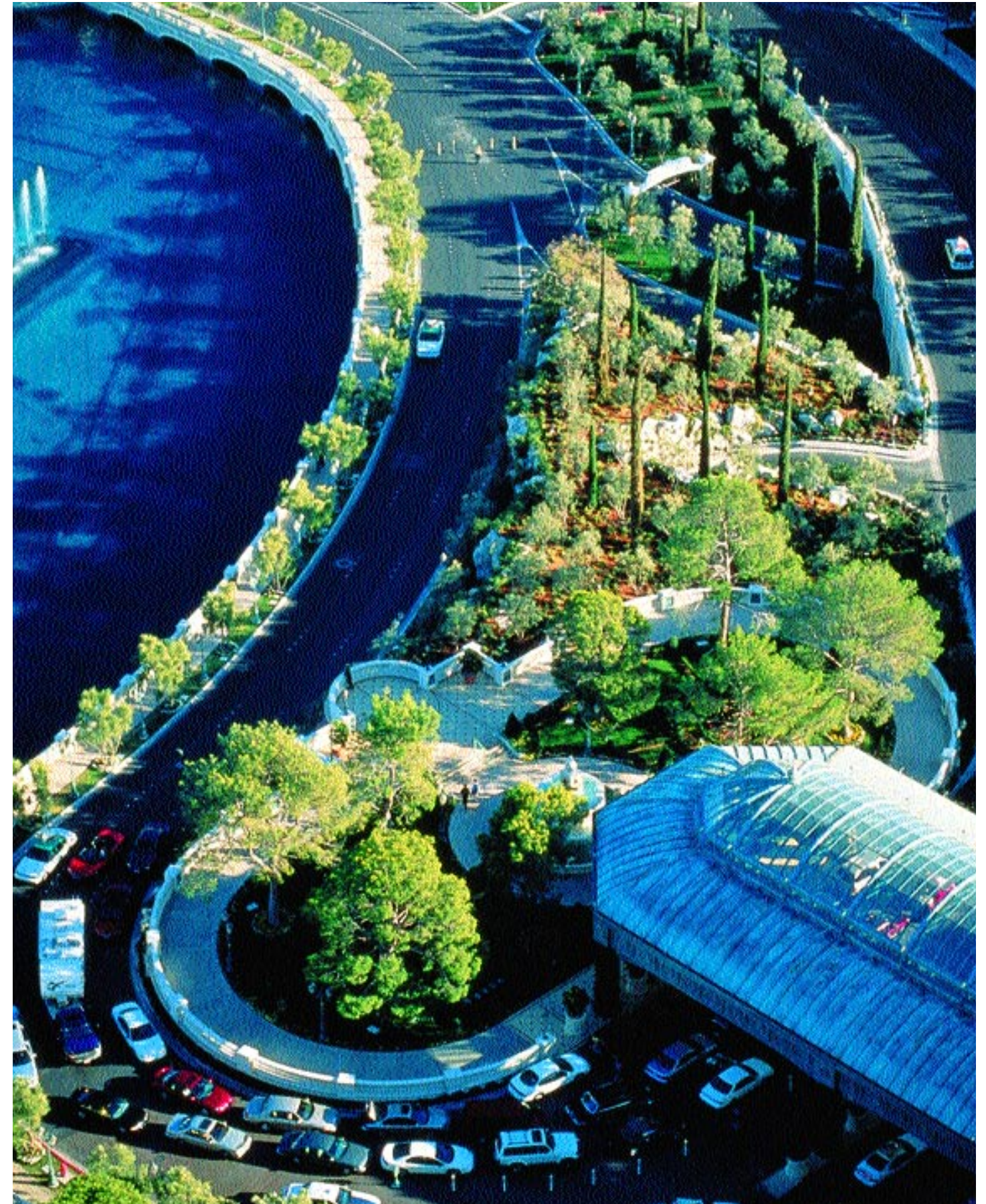
measure throughout Bellagio. Fragrant flowering Magnolia trees, white Privet trees, evergreen Carolina Cherries, and Purple Leaf Plum trees are used to enhance. Lightly scented roses, wisteria, cascading rosemary and candy-sweet honeysuckle vines along with seasonal flowerbeds define the drama and charm that is readily evident as one approaches this 126-acre property.

Many of the impressive trees that are plentiful throughout Bellagio were actually salvaged from the old Dunes golf course. "After the Dunes was imploded four years ago, and we were about to start construction on the site, I had a conversation with Steve Wynn (owner of Mirage Resorts) about the trees that remained on the property," explains Brinkerhoff. "I suggested that we assess the viability of these trees since I believed they could be re-introduced at Bellagio." By being proactive on the tree conservation, Lifescapes rescued over 300 trees that are now used in the gardens of Bellagio.

Situated along the rocky edge of the resort's shoreline, the retail village of Bellagio, known as Via Bellagio, communes with its lake and fabulous fountain. The restaurants and elegant shops represent some of the most exclusive names in haute couture and cuisine in the world including Tiffany & Co., Hermes, Armani, and Le Cirque.

At the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Flamingo, two bridges give easy access to pedestrians who desire to cross above the traffic below. Pedestrians can opt to use either escalators or elevators to reach their shopping and dining destinations at the corner of the Piazza, which marks the entrance to Via Bellagio. As visitors and guests approach this entrance, groves of olive trees, pines, and white blooming Magnolia trees welcomes everyone to the port cochere. In this area, a European garden, with formal hedgery and a hand-carved water fountain provides a soothing environment.

At the hotel reception area, an atrium garden greets Bellagio's guests and visitors.





Set to complement the seasonal gardens of The Conservatory, Little Gem Magnolia trees are placed in large European-sculpted urns which create the centerpieces within this view garden. Harvest colors of bronze-leafed trees and fragrant white flowers also reinforce this autumnal beauty. Fully mature New Zealand tree ferns, each over fifty years old, frame the urns that sit within the two matching fountains, along with verdant settings of majestic Kentia Palms. Placed at the foreground of the fountains are numerous Italianesque urns filled with masses of Diffenbachia and Arazilia plantings. Groupings of Spathyllum foliage are on top of the central urn sculptures within the fountains themselves.

"The living heart of the resort is the Conservatory of Bellagio, where festive and seasonal gardens are featured throughout the year," says Brinkerhoff, "all within the protection of a domed atrium protected by a greenhouse glass

ceiling." A different garden drama is played out regularly supported by new plantings and accessories.

Integral to the design scheme are hundreds of bright yellow sunflowers which are dappled throughout the Harvest grasses, which explode with contrasting fall colors. Rust and yellow chrysanthemums cascade from the colossal cornucopia which stands as high as a one-story building and encircles the pond in the foreground. Floating in the pond are romantic candles supported and surrounded by autumn leaves. Tall Southern Russet Magnolia trees with fragrant autumn roses planted at the base artfully caress either side of this festive garden setting and provide a verdant framework.

Tall Italian Cypresses dot the perimeter pathways of the Conservatory while majestic magnolias provide symmetry to the garden overall. There are four distinct planting areas that define the glass enclosed Conservatory. As guests and

■ *Left* Unusual Italian Olive trees caress the banks of Bellagio's own lakeshore. *Above* A nostalgic gazebo is the dramatic vertical focal point of this summer theme in Bellagio's Conservatory Garden.

visitors enter the garden from the hotel lobby, they may proceed to the left side, and enjoy the pleasures of the spa and salon or proceed onto the art gallery, which features many important Impressionist and Contemporary artworks. Alternatively, guests may decide to enter the garden and walk to the right where they will be able to enjoy views of the Cafe Bellagio or make arrangements to enjoy an evening meal at Aqua.

Two significant planting beds flank a central garden colonnade filled with carpets of flowers and full flourishing Napa Valley grape vines which embrace artistically sculpted hedges. At each corner, Tuscan-inspired urns are filled with sprays of flowers and lush greenery. The actual area of the central garden features additional magnolias and boxwood hedges. The large hopscotch planting stages mirror one another with their checkerboard of sunflowers and specimen citrus trees.

"Bellagio guests will be overwhelmed by the beauty and abundance of the Conservatory's color, fragrance, volume, and texture as they promenade beneath lush canopies featuring layers of romantic miniature yellow roses atop variegated yellow and green Algerian ivy," says Barbara Brinkerhoff. These trellises are supported by finely detailed columns that augment the romantic ambiance of the garden while providing definition to the mosaic-patterned pathways.

High above, and descending towards the garden below, is an equally magnificent Fall proclamation. From the Conservatory's glass enclosed ceiling, hundreds of yards of custom-made silk banners and ribbons accentuate the beautifully ornate framework of the impressive dome structure above. These warm and richly autumn-colored arrangements of cascading fabric swaths all come together, above the cornucopia accented by immense lemon centerpieces, which also feature groupings of Harvest wheat and purple grape clusters.

The extensive pool courtyards provide full-service amenities for guests to enjoy. There are

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■ Above Dense and brightly colored florals cascade down from the gazebo and frame the garden bridge in the Conservatory.

six distinctive garden pool experiences that are easily accessible from a number of locales within the resort. Relaxing pools, soothing spas, garden vista cafes, and private cabanas are accented by artfully formed citrus, topiary, and parterre gardens. Throughout the Bellagio pools, Mediterranean fountains, European hand-carved pottery, lush landscaping, and artistically re-created paving are visible, indisputable elements of the resort's scenic back-

drop.

The pool courtyards maximize guest comfort as well as delight visually and enchant aromatically. Balkan series geraniums are generously planted throughout in a riot of pinks, reds, and oranges; and are complemented by pink roses and subtle lavender. Twelve sculpted arches separate the distinct pool areas. Each arch is accented by hand-carved, three-dimensional artpieces. With



■ Above Hardscape and softscape are joined seamlessly in Bellagio's unusual pool area. Custom designed fountains and intricate designs compliment the roses which are abundant throughout.

an emphasis on elegance and convenience, snackbars and poolside bars are located in each themed courtyard, easily accessible by guests and hotel personnel.

Lifescapes wanted to give the gardens that defined each pool area a true Italianesque appeal. Italian Stone Pines were part of an ideal plan to accomplish this ambience. However, there were no Italian Stone Pines available at the size and breadth required

to support the imagery of maturity desired. Instead, Aleppo Pines, which are bushy by nature, were sculpted to aesthetically resemble Stone Pines.

Guests can easily reach the romantic pool courtyards either from a raised belvedere from the arcade walkway or a central promenade that provides shade with pines and dwarf Swan Hill olive trees. Symmetrically elegant parterre gardens banded by hedges

complement the artistically tiled pools. Each courtyard features its own heated spa for rest and rejuvenation.

Private cabanas for guests who desire a discreet and private pool experience are plentiful. Over 30 cabanas are ensconced in cloister-like settings and protected by olive trees, Aleppo pine trees, and multitudes of terra cotta pots with apricot and bronze variegated flax. The planting material is geranium-based and has an equally pleasant color palette. A wedding chapel is situated by the primary courtyard but is also private and enclosed with extensive interior plantings.

According to Brinkerhoff, "The attention to design detail and pool area personality makes Bellagio's six pool courtyards a distinct departure from the gargantuan, wide open pools of many Las Vegas resorts. The courtyards' very existence is testimony and acknowledgment that guests' preferences are highly individual and their tastes must be addressed seriously—it is our job to create garden experiences that exceed even their expectations."

**Project:** 126-acre property in Las Vegas, Nevada

**Size of Landscaped Area:** 30 acres

**Hardscape:** Colored and stained concrete, granite pavers, carved limestone, bronze accents, mosaic-lined basin

**Softscape:** Palms, pines, magnolias, privets, flowering shrubs, seasonal flowers; thematic interior garden settings include seasonal plants, fragrant flowers, and parterre garden hedges

**Approximate Cost:** N/A

**Landscape Architect:** Don Brinkerhoff of Newport Beach, California-based Lifescapes International

**Project Architect:** Atlandia Design & Furnishings Inc./The Jerde Partnership (Fountain Design- Wet Design in Universal City, CA)

**Project Contractor:** Marnell Corrao Landscape Contractor: Valley Crest