

# ROMEO & JULIET *revisited*

THE STARS FIND IN FAVOR OF THIS  
SEA RAY-OWNING COUPLE IN ITALY

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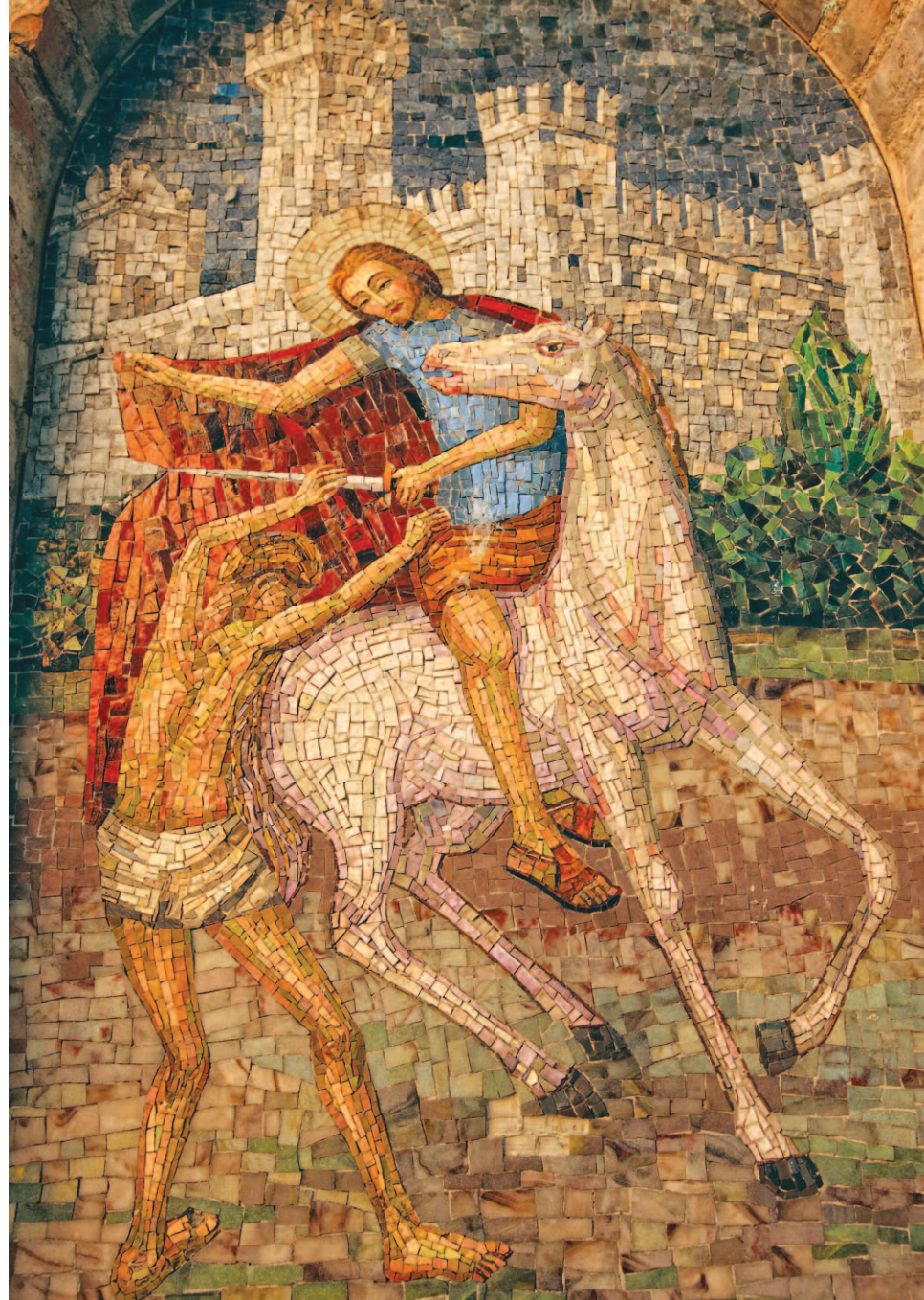


Private villas, ancient fortresses and the Gruppo del Baldo mountain range rim romantic Lago di Garda, a favorite getaway for Daniele Vantini and wife Valery Zenatelli on their 335 Sundancer.

**I**N FAIR VERONA WHERE WE LAY OUR SCENE—WAIT; SCRATCH THAT—IN FAIR LAGO DI GARDA... That's better. For had Romeo and Juliet run away a mere 25 kilometers to the west, they'd have found themselves in this fairy-tale lake region where bastions of medieval castles built into the morainic hills rise from the shoreline. Lakeside cafés provide an intimate setting—not to mention flavorful fare—and narrow, cobblestone streets winding through a string of villages offer an excuse to walk arm in arm. Surely, had they ventured here, the tragic lovers would have uncross'd the stars and lived happily ever after.

Alas, hindsight is 20/20. But Lago di Garda (Lake Garda) has become the getaway spot for another Italian couple—a pair that thankfully doesn't have to contend with ancient family grudges. "It's a shame we're already married," says Valery Zenatelli, flashing a mischievous grin at her husband, Daniele Vantini. In romantically accented English, Valery hints at wanting to exchange vows and honeymoon all over again, but with this duo, the original honeymoon is far from over. She cuddles up to Daniele at the helm of their Sea Ray 335 Sundancer, *Valery IV*. "This is our fourth Sea Ray," she says, explaining the boat's name, "but I'm the only Valery," she jokes.

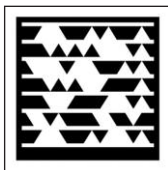




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The walled town of Lazise's colorful ancient frescoes and mosaics, narrow cobblestone paths (where motorized vehicles are limited) and café-lined port provide a respite from Verona city life.

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Daniele maneuvers the Sundancer away from the fuel dock at Motomar International, the lakeside Sea Ray dealer in Peschiera del Garda. He bought a 180 Sport, 225 Weekender, 275 Sundancer and the couple's current 335 there. "We buy a new Sea Ray from Motomar every two years," Daniele says. "We make our holidays on the lake and live on it." Valery chimes in, rattling off a long list of activities the couple enjoys, including cycling and hiking in the mountains. They store their bikes at the dealership and make it a point to visit and get a ride in every weekend. Of course, the active pair is not averse to just gawking at the mesmerizing scenery.

Lago di Garda, nestled in a moraine valley, shimmers a beautiful aquamarine reminiscent of the clear seas that splash Italy's shores. The Italian Alps, mainly the Gruppo del Baldo mountain range, loom over the narrow, northern section of the lake, which is the largest in Italy. The mountains create a microclimate with mild Mediterranean weather all year round.

Fragrant vineyards and lemon and olive groves flank the villages around the lake's southeastern rim and give that region its name: the Olive Riviera. The quaint towns boast souvenir shops, an abundance of gelato-tasting options and, perhaps best of all, those fantasy-inducing medieval fortresses that dominate the shoreline. Whether two-wheeling it down the roads that drop switchback-style into the villages or cruising from harbor to harbor on an amenity-filled Sea Ray, the views are sublime.

From Lazise's small port, the two take in the 14th-century Scaliger Castle (which now hosts concerts and festivals) towering above the walled fishing village. The walls were intended to ward off Austrian invaders. Lazise became the first free commune in Italy—made so in 888 A.D. The town's history follows a path soaked in bloodier feudal lore, however. Rule changed hands a few times before it became part of the Kingdom of Italy in the 19th century.



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(Previous spread) The Mincio River, Lago di Garda's only outlet, flows through the village of Peschiera del Garda. (Here, clockwise) The sleek, modern lines of the 335 Sundancer contrast with the medieval-style architecture, quaint shops, wooden fishing boats and elaborate promenades along the pristine lake.



*"We like the interior, the design and the lines... Sea Ray is perfect."*

Overlooking the water, the 12th-century Church of San Nicolò, dedicated to the patron saint of waters and navigators, provides a backdrop of tea-stained walls and colorful ancient frescoes that contrast with the sleek lines of the Sea Ray.

The gleaming 335 Sundancer appears otherworldly and fit for a modern-day emperor next to the vivid blue, yellow and orange wooden fishing boats tethered in the port. Anglers ply the waters for pike, perch, trout, chub, eel, shad, the *lavaret* white fish, *bleak* (a small carp) and *carpione del Garda* (a species of salmon indigenous to the lake).

Weaving around the tiny boats, Daniele explains his preference for the luxurious yet practical Sea Ray brand. "We like the interior, the design and the lines," he says. "Sea Ray is perfect."

With the region's long list of incredible architecture worth a gaze, a full castle-hopping tour takes several afternoons. Crumbling ancient citadels sit atop cliffs alongside restored or newly built private estates with turrets as impressive as their medieval counterparts. Brides and grooms exchange vows in many of the chimerical structures, making Lago di Garda a hotspot for extravagant destination weddings.

Thus the "lake effect" on Garda is not of stormy weather, but of coupled bliss. Valery and Daniele behave much like newlyweds—always stitched to each other's sides despite the ample space onboard. With the Sea Ray anchored beneath an elaborate private villa perched precariously on a steep hillside, the two flash flirtatious smiles. A breeze carries the fresh scent of nearby cypress trees, which appear like giant upside-down gelato cones spiking the incline. Other boats bob in the distance as families picnic and swim in the mystical location. Another Sea Ray approaches the 335 Sundancer, carrying friends of the couple. A young girl joins Daniele and Valery onboard, exchanges hello kisses and then rouses

Daniele to take a plunge into the inviting water. After a countdown, they dive in perfect sync and swim to their respective sterns, laughing about the refreshing temperature of the lake.

Beautiful Lago di Garda and a lazy afternoon spread out before the couple. What's next? Perhaps a soak in the sulfur springs piped into the spas in Sermione—a long peninsula that juts out from the lake's southern shore. Locals claim the peninsula has therapeutic properties for both physical and mental ailments. In the 19th century, a Venetian named Procopio sought the thermal spring said to emanate from the bottom of the lake. Using now-ancient diving equipment, he dove to the thermal springs and inserted a tube. Today, a network of pipes draws the spring to the town and its retreats.

On the peninsula's tip sits another beautiful Scaliger family castle—this one with a moat that now serves as a kayaker's haven rather than a barrier to the palace. The remains of the Grotto of Catullus—an ancient Roman villa—beckon visitors, as well.

Of course, Valery and Daniele could spend the day meandering between any of the village's many boutiques, relishing the contrast of modern-day fashions—Versace here, Gucci there—displayed in store windows against the backdrop of quaint alfresco cafés decked with red-checkered tablecloths.

Clouds rolling in from the north interrupt the couple's planning, and Daniele pulls up anchor and points the bow toward Peschiera del Garda. Roiling gray puffs chase the 335 Sundancer, and Daniele throws over the throttle as if he were leading a charge to storm a fortress. By the time the sprinkles begin, the couple is secured in a slip, uncorking a bottle of vino.

They toast their good fortune and surmise that not even a storm could spoil their fun. For never was a story found more swell, than the tale of Valery and her Daniele. SRL

