



 **Villa Nobel** In 1890, Alfred Nobel, the world-famous scientist and inventor of dynamite, bought a magnificent large villa along Corso Cavallotti. The following year, he moved there to enjoy the beneficial effects of sea air, which did wonders for his health, which was quite poor. He spent the last five years of his life in Sanremo and died here on 10 December 1896. At this time, he decided to establish what would later become the Nobel Prizes, with a dedicated section in the interesting museum in the villa, which is open to visitors. In this city in the Italian Riviera he wrote a nice letter to a dear friend of his, Baroness Bertha von Suttner, informing her of his intention to establish a peace prize. Incidentally, she was the first woman to receive it in 1905. The villa enchants visitors: from the main street one can admire the magnificent facade, with its unusual Moorish-style turret, and the lush, well-kept park. It is now owned by the Provincial Administration of Imperia, which hosts conferences and major international exhibitions here.

Garden of Palazzo Bellevue In the late 19th century, Sanremo became a winter elite tourism destination, with visitors coming from all over Europe. In order to meet the needs of such a unique clientele, splendid hotels were built, which are still standing and can be admired in this picturesque city in the Italian Riviera. These include the impressive Hotel Bellevue, built in 1894 based on a design by Architect Pietro Agosti, who later became the respected Mayor of Sanremo. With its elegance and sophistication, this hotel satisfied the tastes of aristocratic guests: in fact, it offered spacious and sumptuous reception halls, large stately rooms and suites, a renowned restaurant and lodgings for the servants that always accompanied the illustrious guests of the Italian Riviera. At the time, the renowned guests loved visiting stunning gardens with an exotic charm, which is why the Bellevue was embellished with an extraordinary park that still stretches out from Corso Cavallotti. The luxuriant exotic plant species in the park entice visitors and lead them to the splendid building of the former hotel which, unlike many others, has no gates around it. After the Second World War, the deposed king of Egypt, Faruq, stayed at Hotel Bellevue and enjoyed the city of Sanremo; in fact, he went to the Casino quite regularly. Today, the complex is owned by the Municipality of Sanremo, which bought it in 1963 and converted the building, which is now the seat of public administration. The park was then renovated in 1988, when the charming fountain with water games was built, which can be clearly seen from Corso Cavallotti. Several specimens of *Aracaria bidwillii* can be found, with superb poise due to the unusual shape of the linear verticillate branches ending with sharp, rigid leaves.

Garden of Villa Zirio Not far from Ormond Park there is a villa built by a lawyer, Giovanni Battista Zirio, and designed by the architect Berenger before 1868. This magnificent building features precious decorative elements and serves as an ideal backdrop for the panoramic loggia and the majestic tympanum at the top of the splendid facade. Notable artists such as Filippo Ghersi and Gio Batta Novaro were responsible for the interior, while the frescoes are by Francesco Semino. It is one of the most well-known and beloved villas in Sanremo, since in 1887 it hosted the heir to the German throne, Frederick III, who decided to spend a few months in this coastal city, due to serious health problems, and chose Morell Mackenzie as his personal doctor. Apparently, the mild climate improved the already weak health of the future ruler until 3 March 1888, when he received the news that his father Wilhelm had died. Frederick III then abandoned Sanremo and went back to his beloved homeland, which proclaimed him emperor and he died there after only three months as regent. The sovereign's stay in our beautiful city is commemorated with a monumental plaque visible to passers-by from the Via Aurelia. In the villa, the first lift by the company Stigler-Otis, which was installed to make it easier for important guests suffering from serious illness to move about, is still working. Another important guest stayed at Villa Zirio, namely Richard Wagner, who was not yet famous, and whose presence is documented in a beautiful print dating back to 1868, in which he is portrayed together with Von Kettel in a charming spot in the park. This is proof that the garden was already very lush at that time, although Ludovico Winter's contribution is to be considered posthumous. This wonderful garden is of great environmental value because of its beautiful plants such as *Washingtonia robusta* and *Washingtonia filifera*, *Phoenix canariensis* and *Cycas revoluta*. In particular, two *Ficus macrophylla* extraordinary examples of living monuments, are worth a special mention.

Garden of Villa Ormond When strolling along Corso Cavallotti, visitors are enchanted by the wonderful park surrounding Villa Ormond. The property, formerly owned by the Rambaldi family, was bought by a wealthy tobacco merchant as suggested by his wife, who was fascinated by the colours and climate of the Italian Riviera. Marie Marguerite preferred Sanremo to chilly Switzerland and she found peace and relief here, despite her health being quite poor. Therefore, out of love for his wife, Michel Luis Ormond had a splendid villa built, based on a project by Architect Rylé, as well as the large park which, at the time, was already crossed by the road and railway line. Today, visitors can still admire this extraordinary landmark of Sanremo, which dates back to the early 20th century. The magnificent Villa Ormond was a noble residence and hosted the Prussian emperor, the Duke of Aosta and Princess Elisabeth of Austria. This lovely property was then purchased by the Municipality of Sanremo in 1928, after Marie Marguerite, by then a widow, had passed away three years earlier. In the park, the *Aucuba japonica*, with more than 70 plant species from five continents, is worthy of note. These include the monumental *Phoenix reclinata*, a splendid specimen introduced here in the 19th century by the botanists that were the first to create the acclimatisation gardens in the Italian Riviera. The beautiful palm trees, which tower majestically over the buildings, along with the many plants of exotic origin, create a lush and fascinating oasis. In a picturesque spot in the park there is the famous Japanese Garden, born out of the friendship between Sanremo and the city of Atami, which is a pleasant reminder of the East and its philosophy. The mild climate of the Italian Riviera allows remote species to develop, as well as the spread of monstrous specimens of the sinuous and gigantic *Ficus macrophylla* or the odd *Yucca elephantipes* with a robust, wrinkled trunk resembling an elephant's foot. The trunk of the beautiful *Nolina longifolia* is covered by a wrinkled, corky bark, with tufts of leaves at the tips of the branches and upright panicles with hundreds of white flowers, creating a striking decorative effect.

The wonderful world of exotic plants in the gardens of Sanremo

 The gardens of Sanremo offer an environmental heritage of considerable interest from a naturalistic, environmental and historical point of view. In fact, they are the symbol of the great transformation of Western Liguria, in the late 19th century, from agricultural land, intended especially for olive and citrus groves, into gardens embellished with exotic species introduced by botanists and gardeners from all over Europe, almost forming a huge acclimatisation garden in the Italian Riviera. A walk in the gardens of Sanremo becomes a delightful opportunity to take an imaginary journey through various continents where numerous plant species grow wild, as well as to discover odd shapes, bright colours, alluring and intriguing scents, and interesting adaptations to the environment. The wonderful world of exotic plants in the gardens of Sanremo.



*Il meraviglioso mondo
delle PIANTE ESOTICHE
nei giardini di Sanremo*

I giardini di Sanremo costituiscono un patrimonio ambientale di notevole interesse sia dal punto di vista naturalistico-ambientale che storico. Sono infatti il simbolo della grande trasformazione del Ponente Ligure, a fine Ottocento, da territorio agricolo, destinato a olivi e agrumi in particolare alla creazione di giardini arricchiti da specie esotiche introdotte da botanici e giardinieri provenienti da tutta Europa, quasi a formare un immenso giardino di acclimatazione in Riviera. Una passeggiata nei giardini di Sanremo diventa una piacevole occasione per compiere un viaggio immaginario nei vari continenti dove le specie crescono spontanee, ma anche un contatto con forme curiose, colori intensi, profumi attraenti e accattivanti e interessanti adattamenti all'ambiente.

