

1 – RIMINI

Rimini, a city of art whose historic centre encompasses over 2,000 years of history. The remains of the Roman Ariminum are represented by the Arch of Augustus, built in 27 BC and situated at the terminus of the Via Flaminia, and by the Tiberius Bridge, erected over the Marecchia River, begun by Augustus and completed by Tiberius. The bridge, built of Istrian stone, with five arches and in the Doric style, features breakwater spurs to mitigate the flow of the current; the Via Emilia, founded by the Consul Marcus Aemilius Lepidus in 187 BC, begins here. From Roman Ariminum, we move on to the medieval period, with examples of the 14th-century Rimini school of painting, right through to Renaissance Rimini, with the Malatesta Temple, one of the most significant architectural works of the Italian 15th century; its upper section remains unfinished, featuring a marvellous fresco by Pietro della Francesca depicting Sigismondo Malatesta at the feet of St Sigismund.

And then there is the 19th-century architecture of the Amintore Galli Theatre, and the legacy of Federico Fellini and the Fulgor, the legendary cinema immortalised in *Amarcord* and now part of the new Fellini Museum, a network of museums dedicated to the genius of the director, who had his suite at the Grand Hotel, adjoining that of Giulietta Masina ... But Rimini is also a historic seaside town: in July 1843, the Stabilimento Privilegiato dei Bagni was inaugurated, marking the start of seaside tourism. During the economic boom of the 1960s, it embodied the dream of the middle-class family: dozens of small guesthouses, hearty meals and an afternoon siesta after a morning at the beach – traditions that can still be experienced today in family-run establishments. As a counterpoint to the peaceful seaside routine, there is the evening nightlife for the young (or the young at heart...) in Marina Centro, at the Vecchia Pescheria or in the quieter area of Borgo S. Giuliano; not to mention the traditional alternative of the dance halls, where people dance ballroom... And then there is the world's longest New Year's celebrations, from late November to 6 January, with numerous events that transform the city into a stage of lights, music and culture. But Rimini is also a "matchmaker", thanks to the many relationships that begin in bars or discos; a forerunner, Gabriele D'Annunzio, who joined Eleonora Duse in room 302 of the Hotel Villa Adriatica: a scandal in the newspapers of the time!

The local cuisine blends the rural traditions of the hinterland with the bounty of the sea. Thus, fresh egg pasta rolled out with a rolling pin, cured meats and Parmigiano Reggiano are the undisputed stars of the table, alongside passatelli – the festive soup – made using a special mould. Not to be missed is the Piadina or Piada, the bread of the Romagnoli, a focaccia baked on a testo – a slab of refractory clay – which has earned Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status; thinner than in the Forlì and Ravenna areas, it is served with prosciutto and squacquerone, or with wild herbs and vegetables au gratin. The sea also offers blue fish, sole and red mullet, as well as clams, mussels, cannelli and lumachini. Typical of the area is brodetto, a dish featuring various types of fish, stewed with tomatoes and spices. Among the cheeses, squacquerone and the renowned

formaggio di fossa, produced in the valleys of the Rubicone and Marecchia rivers, are obtained through fermentation in ageing pits. Finally, there is the ciambella, the typical Romagna dry cake to be dipped in sweet Albana wine; in terms of wine production, the Colli di Rimini Sangiovese, Trebbiano, Pagadebit and even the Rebola from Rimini are worth mentioning. To experience an authentically local atmosphere, it is well worth popping into the Mercato Coperto, a stone's throw from the Tempio Malatestiano, with over 100 stalls selling fish, fruit and vegetables, bread and meat, and a high concentration of traditional shops, making it ideal for a quality food and wine tour.

Finally, Rimini carries on the tradition of lace and embroidery, a legacy of the exceptionally high quality of the items produced in the late 19th century in Anita Sangiorgi's workshop; a craft still practised today by groups specialising in various techniques, such as macramé, bobbin lace and tatting.

2 – FERRARA

Ferrara, the "first modern city in Europe": in 1492, Ercole I d'Este commissioned the architect Biagio Rossetti to incorporate a vast area north of the existing town into the urban centre, according to a plan that was innovative for its originality and rationality at the time and which – in honour of the Duke – took the name "Addizione Erculea". The Este family's patronage, which had been practised since the 13th century, represents a significant example of cultural promotion in Italy, capable of combining political visibility with aesthetic pursuit; over the centuries, the court hosted artists such as Pisanello, Mantegna and Titian, and poets such as Ludovico Ariosto. In the refined Este court, the wife of Duke Alfonso II d'Este, Margherita Gonzaga – a talented singer and dancer – had personally selected an all-female ensemble in the late 16th century to form the Concerto delle Dame or "secreto" – because it was reserved for a select few guests; highly influential composers of the time, such as Claudio Monteverdi, Luzzasco Luzzaschi and Gesualdo da Venosa, wrote pieces specifically dedicated to this elite consort.

Inextricably linked to the duchy is the city's rich cultural heritage, which makes it a prime destination for cultural tourism; even the most hurried visitor cannot overlook the Cathedral of San Giorgio, Via delle Volte, the Castello Estense, the Palazzo dei Diamanti, and the Certosa Monumentale. A stroll around the city walls, lined with the greenery of the embankments and ramparts, stretching for some nine kilometres, offers one of the most complete circuits in Italy, a significant testament to military architecture between the 15th and 17th centuries. But Ferrara also features in 20th-century culture: it was the birthplace of the director Antonioni, to whom the city dedicates an exhibition space, and is celebrated in Giorgio Bassani's novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, which inspired De Sica's 1970 film of the same name. The events depicted in the film, centring on a wealthy Jewish family from Ferrara, indirectly bear witness to the deep-rooted and long-standing presence of the Jewish community in the city. Traces of this past can be glimpsed on a tour of the former ghetto, which still houses the synagogue today, and along Via Mazzini, home to the community's commercial and social activities. The



National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah also offers visitors a tour dedicated to Jewish history in Italy.

On the last Sunday in May, the city holds one of the oldest Palios in Piazza Ariostea – in fact, four distinct races: the green race for the “putte”, the red race for the “putti”, the white race for the donkeys and the yellow race for the horses, contested between the four districts within the city walls and the four villages situated outside them. The event is accompanied by flag-waving and musical competitions, in which representatives of the eight districts compete in seven distinct disciplines.

In the field of traditional crafts, some Ferrara artisans have revived the Renaissance technique of graffito ceramics, a fascinating engraving practice using primitive colours; some workshops specialise in the construction and restoration of musical instruments, linked to the ancient musical traditions cultivated at the Este court; finally, worth mentioning is the working of leather and hide.

The region offers local specialities such as Voghiera garlic, Po Delta IGP rice and the “violina” pumpkin; the pumpkin flowers are used to make tasty fritters, whilst the boiled flesh is used as a filling for cappellacci (*caplaz* in the Ferrara dialect, *a reference to the typical straw hats worn by local farmers*). The local cuisine also boasts the Ferrara-style pasticcio – a shortcrust pastry filled with short pasta, white ragù, béchamel sauce, mushrooms and grated truffle – as well as cappelletti and the typical twisted bread (the Ferrara-style “coppia”). Among the desserts are zuppa inglese, *brazadela* (so called because it was carried in the innkeepers’ arms) and *tenerina*. Special mention goes to the *salama da sugo* PGI, a sausage of ancient origin, stuffed with a mixture of minced pork treated with red wine, salt, black pepper, nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon; after maturing for at least 6 months, it is cooked while suspended in water over a gentle simmer.

Until the 12th century, Ferrara was lapped by the main branch of the River Po, which then shifted further north following the Ficarolo flood of 1152; the river’s dynamics and its floods are indirectly evidenced in the historic centre by the monumental *padimetro*, which indicates the river’s historical flood levels as measured at the nearby Pontelagoscuro hydrometer.

3 – BRESCIA

Brixia fidelis reads the municipal coat of arms featuring the rampant lion, but also “Lioness of Italy” in the poems of Aleardi and Carducci, following the 10 days of rebellion against the Austrians in 1849. Brescia also features in recent history with the 1974 Piazza La Loggia massacre: the explosion of a bomb during a demonstration against neo-fascist terrorism caused the deaths of eight people and injured a further 102.

At the mouth of the Val Trompia where it meets the Po Valley, close to the iron mines that sparked its metallurgical tradition, on the road linking Milan and Venice, the Roman

Brixia became a Lombard duchy in 650 and then a commune from the 11th century onwards; it was subsequently contested by various ruling houses: the Scaligeri, Visconti and Malatesta families, until the long rule of the Venetian Republic from 1428.

The urban fabric has suffered the ravages of the last century, with the demolition work carried out between 1926 and 1932 to Piacentini's design in Piazza della Vittoria, which obliterated the ancient quarter of the Lombard curia ducis, followed by the destruction caused by the bombing of the Second World War. However, Piazza del Foro is the civic centre of Roman Brixia, the most significant Roman archaeological site in the region; the Museum Complex of S. Salvatore and S. Giulia, converted into the City Museum following a skilful restoration, houses the Winged Victory – a large bronze statue from the 1st century AD – and important finds from the Ortaglia domus. This complex and the Capitolium archaeological area have been included on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2011.

Art lovers should not miss a visit to the Tosio Martinengo Civic Art Gallery, significant for its collection of Brescian Renaissance paintings, whilst a walk up Cidneo Hill leads to the 14th-century castle, offering sweeping views from the square with the Mirabella Tower. A must for wine tourism enthusiasts is a tour of Franciacorta, renowned not only for its DOCG wines but also for the artisanal production of spirits, liqueurs and bitters.

On 15 February, the Feast of Saints Faustino and Giovita, the city's patron saints, is celebrated; the streets of the historic centre are filled with numerous stalls selling handicrafts, food, toys, household goods and clothing. The festival is preceded on the preceding Sunday by the ancient medieval tradition of the Galero Rosso: the cardinal's hat, a symbol of the saints' protection over the city, is presented in Palazzo Loggia by the parish priest of San Faustino to the Mayor, symbolising the bond between civil and religious authorities.

Situated between the plains and the mountains, the local cuisine draws on and transforms the produce of the surrounding area: hence the Grana Padano PDO; the Nostrano Valtrompia PDO and Bagoss PAT cheeses; extra virgin olive oil from Lake Garda; and "violino" ham (also made from goat and sheep) – so called because it is cut by hand as if holding that musical instrument.

And more: Brescian *casoncelli* and *bigoi* – a sort of thick spaghetti served with *pestöm*, a paste of coarsely chopped fresh salami; in the province of Brescia, it is used to dress pasta, ravioli and *casoncelli*, in place of butter. And more: Brescia-style rabbit; beef in oil; Brescia spit-roast – made up of many varieties of meat; and, last but not least, corn polenta with mountain potatoes. Among the desserts are castagnaccio and *persicata* – a solid peach jam. The province is renowned for its DOC wines: Cellatica, Curtefranca, Franciacorta, Botticino, Capriano del Colle, Garda and Riviera del Garda, San Martino della Battaglia.

Brescia's centuries-old tradition of metalworking can be fully appreciated with a visit to the Musil – "Lodovico Giordani" Iron Museum, featuring a historic forge complete with hearth, hammer, anvil, tools and a charcoal kiln to evoke the atmosphere of this ancient craft.



On the eve of its 100th anniversary, last but not least, the 1000 Miglia represents a powerful symbol of identity for the city, linking it to a passion for motors; this is only counterbalanced by the irony of the saying that petrol flows through the veins of Brescians instead of blood...



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