



NEW 2024 FRIULI AND SLOVENIA



20005

Friuli-Venezia Giulia - Gorizia - Grado

PRICE ON REQUEST. WRITE TO annalisa.massari@itermar.it

1 DAY ARRIVAL

Arrival in Grado. Accommodation, dinner and overnight.

2 DAY GRADO

Breakfast and guided visit of Grado. This island has everything from its traditional, old fishing village and historic town centre, with a labyrinth of alleys and tiny squares; a Y-shaped harbour which acts as the town salon; a seafront which appears suspended between land and sky, where you can enjoy a stroll at any time of the year. In the narrow streets and small squares of the town centre you can breathe the history of what many know as the mother of Venice, given that Grado was founded in the Roman era as an important port in Aquileia's port system. The historic centre is a picturesque maze of 'calli' (streets) and 'campielli' (squares), with traditional buildings dotted with stone walls, small windows, narrow stairways and distinctive chimneys. The old port of Grado, with its characteristic 'Y' shape, first wanted by the Venetians and then by the Austro-Hungarians, is the town's parlour on the sea with bars, cafes, restaurants and shops. The port never sleeps in the typical atmosphere of the seaside town. In the early hours of the morning it is the place where you will see fishing boats returning with fresh fish that you can buy at the fish market, run by the Fishermen's Cooperative and located at the head of the Porto Mandracchio canal. If you pay a bit of attention as you go along the piers, you can identify the symbols used by fishermen since ancient times to mark the nets belonging to them so they wouldn't be mistaken for those of other families. In the afternoon boat excursion to the island of Barbana. The spiritual fascination of sanctuaries is often amplified by the splendid landscapes offered by the places that surround them: this is also the case of the tiny island of Barbana in the Grado lagoon, where this ancient, Marian sanctuary stands, today home to a community of Benedictine Monks from the Benedictine Congregation of Brazil. Tradition says that the Sanctuary of the Beata Vergine Maria dates back to 582 A.D., when a violent sea storm threatened the town of Grado. When the storm subsided, an image of the Madonna, which had drifted on the water, was found on the island near the huts of two hermits. Elia, the patriarch of Grado, had a sepulchre built here to thank the Madonna for saving the town. The island soon became the permanent residence of a community of friars and the destination of frequent pilgrimages. Dinner and overnight.

3 DAY TRIESTE AND MIRAMARE CASTLE

Breakfast and departure to Trieste. A symbol of elegance with its historical buildings, the Roman ruins and the Hapsburg views, Trieste has always been the most multicultural and Middle European of all Italian cities.

Its riches, looking out over the famous port, just a short distance from the Miramare castle, justify the choice of this "little Vienna on Sea" as a holiday destination. Let's start with a panoramic tour by bus to the Roman theatres and high ride to Colle San Giusto to visit the cathedral. Then the visit goes on through the medieval district, the oldest in the city and take a break in one of the historic cafes. Very few people know that one of the most characteristic products of Trieste is coffee; indeed in its port, since the 1700s shiploads of coffee coming from the New World came ashore and headed for coffee roasters all over Italy and Europe. Coffee, is, actually one of the real symbols of the city together with the numerous cafes and the unusual language used for ordering it: if you want an espresso, you must say 'un nero' If, on the other hand, you prefer a caffè macchiato you have to ask for a 'capo'. And finally, the most important thing, if you like your coffee in a glass cup, remember to add to your request '... in B'!

We suggest the visit of the Illy Coffee University to learn much more about Italian coffee.

After lunch and free time the visit goes on to the Miramare Castle, above the sea, is the first glance that you have coming in Trieste driving along the panoramic coastal road. This majestic white castle, the beloved home of Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Habsburg (brother of Emperor Franz Joseph), overlooks the sea and is surrounded by a huge park full of rare and exotic tree species collected by the Archduke himself in his scientific expeditions around the world aboard the frigate Novara. The Castle was built for Maximilian, who fell in love with the view of the small bay and decided to build his home here, where he lived with his wife Charlotte of Belgium. Maximilian and Charlotte were able to enjoy their beautiful castle for only four years or so before leaving for Mexico, where Maximilian was crowned Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, only to be executed by firing squad in 1867. Legend has it that Charlotte, mad with grief, still wanders in the park calling his name. Their home, a splendid example of an aristocratic 19th century residence, retains all its original interior furnishings. The beauty of the castle and the park, together with the sad and romantic story of the young imperial couple, still fascinates tourists all over the world and has made it one of the most visited destinations in Europe. Back to the Hotel, dinner and overnight.

4 DAY GORIZIA AND COLLIO LAND

Breakfast and departure to Gorizia, where you can breathe the atmosphere of a typical border town. Gorizia is as the name suggests, the capital of this province and was part of Austria for almost ten centuries.

~~Starting from the year 1000 Austrian emperors governed this area with their autonomous counties and later~~
starting from the year 1500 it was inherited by the Austrian Empire. These northern influences can be seen

in the architecture. Gorizia was once called by the Austrian nobility who had their second home here, the 'Nice of Austria' because of its mild climate. The town of Gorizia is built around a hill with on top of it a magnificent castle. The castle has been completely restored after the First World War, but it gives you a good idea of how it once looked like in the Middle Ages. You can visit the castle. On top of the hill near the castle you can also visit the War Museum. Gorizia was also called 'città maledetta' (the cursed city), because it was almost completely devastated after the Great War. The city was bombed very often and its liberation has cost many human lives. At the foot of the hill there is the old center with the main square 'Piazza della Vittoria'. Here you find the church of St. Ignazio that was built in the 18th century in Austrian Baroque style and was used by the Jesuits. Around the square you can admire some interesting buildings and villas. Gorizia was divided into two at the end of the Second World War, just like Berlin. The part in Slovenia was called "Nova Gorica". In 2004 the old border crossings have been removed because of the Schengen treaty. You can feel the strange sensation on the Transalpina Square by standing with one foot in Italy and one foot in Slovenia. The visit continues to Collio wine land. The region Friuli Venezia Giulia produces excellent white and red wines that have been exported since the Middle Ages, first only in Europe and now across the entire globe. More than half of the region consists of wine regions. In total there are eight of them. Each area is unique because of the different characteristics of each area's soil (pebbles, sandstone, marl, earth, clay, and karst rock) and location (flat land, hilly areas, close to the sea, or near a river). The most common areas are Collio and the adjacent Colli Orientali. Here the grapevine covered hills benefit from plenty of sunshine, cool temperatures from the Gulf of Trieste and cool winds arriving from the Alps. This region produces mostly white wines. Winemakers from Colli, Orientali, and Collio like to experiment and are among the most advanced winemakers in Italy. They were the first to put a single grape in a bottle. The 'Refosco dal Peduncolo rosso' or the 'Pignolo' varieties can't be found anywhere else in Italy. These two wine areas produce proportionally the most authentic Friulian wines. What about the dry 'Tocai' (nowadays called Friulano because of competition with the Hungarian Tokaj), the delicious 'Ribolla', the spicy 'Malvasia', the sweet 'Verduzzo'? All of these wines can be drunk with a dessert, as well as, a fish dish. Not only are there authentic wines produced here but also the famous Pinot Grigio and Chardonnay, originally coming from the countries north of the Alps, but they found here their ideal natural living conditions.

In Collio area you feel like you're really on vacation. You will see rolling hills with peaks covered with the characteristic cypresses, images you normally relate to when you think of Tuscany or Umbria. If you come in the spring the landscape is scattered with pink cherry trees in bloom. Stop for a visit and wine tasting in a typical wine cellar. Back to your Hotel. Dinner and overnight.

SUGGESTION: option to rent a bright yellow 'vespa'- the typical Italian scooter, the yellow represents the color of the sun, energy, and of course their wines.

5 DAY UDINE AND SAN DANIELE HAM

Breakfast and departure to Udine. The perfect visit of Udine starts on what is called the most beautiful square built in Venetian style, existing on the mainland which is Piazza Libertà. The square is located at the foot of the hill where is also located the old town hall called 'Loggia di Lionello' which resembles a lot to the Doge's Palace. Up on the hill you can visit the castle which hosts a historical art museum. From the top you have a stunning view over the surroundings and the Alps in the north. The museum has a collection of prints, paintings and coins. In the 14th-century cathedral you can admire the works of several local artists but the most famous of them is the Venetian baroque painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, who stayed in Udine several times on the request of the Patriarch. His frescoes are visitable in the Patriarchal Palace, the Cathedral and the little church 'Oratorio della Purità' located opposite the cathedral. In this last church he and his son Giandomenico worked together during his last visit. It is no wonder that Udine is also called the city of Tiepolo. The heart of Udine is called 'Piazza San Giacomo'. This old market place is surrounded by various cafes and shops. While sipping your cappuccino or aperitivo you can enjoy watching the beautiful buildings and people. If you want to see more of Tiepolo's work then you should absolutely visit the Patriarchs Palace, now seat of the Bishop. In the gallery of Tiepolo you see some of his masterpieces. It also hosts a floor completely dedicated to religious wooden art. It is closed from 1 till 3 p.m and on Tuesdays. Departure to San Daniele to have lunch in a typical Prosciutteria. You will taste San Daniele ham with different ageings and local products. After lunch you will visit the factory of the special San Daniele ham. Back to the Hotel. Dinner and overnight.

6 DAY AQUILEIA AND PALMANOVA

Breakfast and departure to Aquileia, an important city of the Roman Empire and then the main centre for the diffusion of Christianity in Northern and Eastern Europe. It has been a UNESCO site since 1998 due to the importance of its archaeological area and the beauty of the floor mosaics that it safeguards. Among them, the largest and most well-known attraction is the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta, dating back to the fourth century. However, added to this are other precious mosaic remains from the Roman and early Christian ages, which make Aquileia a kind of capital of the Western Roman mosaic. Free time and then the visit continues to Palmanova, a nine-pointed star, which encapsulates the military expectations and the Renaissance dream of an ideal city. It is a pity that when visiting Palmanova it is not possible to make a helicopter flight, because let's be honest this village shows itself from the air at its best. Palmanova was built in 1593 by the Venetians as a defensive bulwark against the invasions of the Austrians and Ottomans

in the late 16th century. Since 2017 Palmanova is on the Unesco World Heritage List because of its defence works. The Venetians didn't want to just build a fortress or castle, no a completely city was constructed from scratch in the shape of a polygon with 9 points with the most modern defence systems. They used moats, bastions, ravelins and ramparts to keep their enemies away. The city was ruled by the Venetians governors whose statues you can see in the main square in the center of the town. Napoleone Bonaparte invaded this area between 1797 and 1813 and left his mark on Palmanova because he added a third ring of fortification called 'lunette di Napoleone' Napoleon's crescents. Also it is said that before Napoleon's intervention Palmanova was called Palma (the emblem of victory) and Napoleon decided to add the word "nova" (new) to it.

If you have the chance to visit Palmanova on a Monday you are lucky because that is the market day and the whole central square transforms itself into a lively place full of various stalls offering all kinds of goods. If you like shopping you are at the right place because only a few kilometers from Palmanova you have the Palmanova outlet full of Italian brands for good prices. Back to your Hotel. Dinner and overnight.

7 DAY ADVENTURE TOUR TO POSTOJNA CAVE PARK AND PREDJAMA CASTLE

Breakfast and departure to Slovenia. Postojna Caves are considered the world's most captivating caves with magnificent cave formations and diverse fauna. Postojna Cave is the only place where you can see the most precious brilliant in the form of a cave formation and also meet the baby dragons. Just like the world above the surface, Postojna Cave boasts towering mountains, murmuring rivers and vast subterranean halls. It is a real challenge for explorers and the cradle of speleobiology. The water slowly dripping down the stalagmite deposits a thin layer of flowstone, giving the Brilliant its shiny white colour. The magnificent five-metre-tall bright-white stalagmite called Brilliant is a symbol of Postojna Cave and the Slovenian Karst. Standing next to it is an ornament-rich column. Take a ride on the underground train and enjoy a 3.7-km-long journey on the world's only double-track cave railway. The wonderful Murano-glass chandeliers hanging from the ceiling of Postojna Cave's Dance Hall make for a fairytale atmosphere. Lunch in the restaurant of the caves and in the afternoon the visit goes on with Predjama Castle. A mere few kilometres from Postojna Cave, the Karst world offers an unforgettable experience in the fairytale world of knights. The impregnable medieval marvel has been perched in the middle of a 123-metre-high cliff for more than 800 years. Behind the largest cave castle in the world, there is a network of secret tunnels, from where the knight Erazem of Predjama would set out on his plundering expeditions. The romantic legend about the rebellious knight Erazem, who withstood the imperial army's siege of the castle for over a year, is an indispensable part of the castle's story. A secret tunnel, a girl's love and affection, and great artfulness – just about everything needed for a compelling story. Natural elements seamlessly interwoven with manmade ones, the result of man's work and nature's creativity has created a pearl of medieval resourcefulness. The world's largest cave castle, listed as one of the Guinness World Records, tells a picturesque story about the times when comfort had to give way to safety, and when the clatter of weapons would often drown out troubadours' songs. It is so special and unique, it ranks among the ten most fascinating castles in the world, and so romantic that many couples choose it for their wedding vows. Back to the Hotel, dinner and overnight.

8 DAY DEPARTURE

