

Contemporary & Old Masters of Northern Italy

an exploration of the past and future of Italian art

This art-historical tour is designed to contrast some of the major Italian masterpieces of the past (Leonardo, Giotto, Correggio, Titian) with the modern and contemporary things to come (the Biennale, the Guggenheim Venice collection, the Triennale design museum). Moving across Northern Italy from Milan to Venice, this tour makes stops in lesser-known but highly important locations like Parma and Padua along the way.

Aside from the wealth of artistic beauty that participants will see, this tour also makes sure that we enjoy the good life that Italy has to offer: time for lingering in *cafés*, eating in hand-picked *osteria* that offer exquisite regional food made according to traditional recipes, and drinking the wonderful wines that Italy produces.

MILAN



Milan is the most fashionable city in Italy, where celebrity-watching (be it soccer players, Hollywood stars who come for a couple of hours on an Armani mission, or Italian starlets) is par for the course. But while sipping a glass of *Prosecco* in a fancy *café* or trying the newest sushi bar has its appeal, Milan offers much more culturally than many people expect: with its museums, galleries, and theaters, Milan is a perfect first stop in Italy.

The Last Supper

Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece is one of the most famous images in the world. Da Vinci used an experimental technique and instead of painting it on a wet wall, he did it when the wall was dry. That is partly the reason why the colors are not as vivid as they once were, despite a recent restoration

project that lasted 22 years. But it retains the aura and mystique of great, transcendent art.

Triennale Museum

La Triennale di Milano is a contemporary museum that hosts exhibitions and events in design, art, music, media arts, and cinema. After the old world splendor of Leonardo, the Triennale offers a glimpse into the present and future of art and design not only in Italy, but in the world.

Teatro alla Scala

The most famous opera house in the world has hosted them all: Pavarotti and Carreras, Callas and Domingo, Nurejev and Bolle. La Scala still keeps the reputation of having the toughest crowd in the world for debut artists. If they are acclaimed here, they will be anywhere else. We will have a guided tour of the theater, including its backstage workshops. (For anyone interested in attending a performance, we can help with booking tickets, though the tickets themselves are not included in the tour.)

Duomo

Made of pink marble, the Cathedral is the symbol of the city, and its Gothic facade remains a thrilling spectacle for all new arrivals in the town. Besides visiting the inside, the most amazing thing to do is to go up to the rooftop, surrounded by pinnacles and spires, where you'll enjoy a view over the town and can get a close-up view of the protector of the city: *la Madonnina*, a copper statue celebrated in many local songs and stories.

Brera Museum

Home to what seems an endless collection of Old Masters from all across Europe, the Brera Museum is an opportunity to really soak in some of the most important paintings in the history of western art. Highlights include Mantegna, Raphael, Rubens, and Caravaggio.

VENICE



It is hard to describe a city like Venice, even if it has been shown in thousands of movies and documentaries. The atmosphere that it exudes - be it on a foggy autumn day, in the bright sun, or during the *acqua alta* (high waters) when San Marco Cathedral is reflected in the waters below - is unique and mysterious. Venice is a magical town where getting lost while walking the narrow alleys is inevitable, and part of the fun.

The Venice Biennale

The most important contemporary art exhibition in the world, the Biennale takes place on odd years in Venice and hosts international artists of major import. You will get a taste of what is to come in the art world as you walk through the pavilions and contemplate the freshest art scene around.

Peggy Guggenheim Museum

This valuable modern art museum hosts the personal collection of the Guggenheim heiress who lived in Venice for 30 years and who collected, over the years, an impressive quantity of artwork. The collection includes Italian futurists, American modernists, cubism, surrealism and abstract expressionism, all in her lovely villa on the water's edge.

PADUA



Padua is every bit as elegant and refined as its more famous neighbor Verona. It is one of life's little pleasures just to stroll around on its cobblestone streets and admire the unexpected monuments that suddenly pop out from around a corner, like the astonishing Prato della Valle or the quaint Piazza delle Erbe. Go back in time and imagine speaking with the great minds of the past while having an *espresso* or a glass of local Soave sitting at a table of the famous Caffè Pedrocchi, the favorite of the French novelist Stendhal.

Cappella degli Scrovegni

200 years before Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Giotto painted this amazing masterpiece of mural frescoes. It is considered Giotto's most complete series of frescoes and offers the visitor vivid colors, light, emotion, and spirit in the evocation of the stories of the Virgin Mary and Christ. An absolutely unforgettable, awe-inspiring experience.

PARMA



Parma is a jewel that you will be glad to have discovered. Known almost exclusively for its food (and rightfully so, with specialties like *prosciutto* and *parmegiano-reggiano* cheese), Parma is much more than that: a fascinating mix of elegance (women wearing Prada stilettos while biking through downtown is quite usual), art, architecture, and music (the composer Giuseppe Verdi and the conductor Arturo Toscanini were born here). But you will especially enjoy the warmth and hospitality that people from this region are famous for.

Duomo

The Cathedral might not startle you when looking at it from the outside, but when you see its fresco series on the inside, we guarantee that your first word will be "Wow." Particularly notable are the *Assumption of the Virgin* by Correggio and the *Descent from the Cross* by the sculptor Benedetto Antelami, considered a masterpiece of its kind.

Teatro Farnese

Built entirely with wood (and almost completely re-built after being bombed in WWII), Teatro Farnese is a masterpiece of acoustics and engineering. As early as the sixteenth century, it was already used for the theatrical representation of naval battles by flooding the floor and sending in real boats.

Food and Wine tasting

It isn't called the "Food Valley" for nothing. It's hard to beat Parma when it comes to its cuisine. You will see so much prosciutto and salami that your mouth will water every time you will pass by a deli. From Culatello to Salame di Felino, from Coppa to Mortadella, you will become a quick believer in the Parmesan motto: no part of the pig should go to waste. All of the food will be washed down with glasses of Lambrusco (sparkly red wine) and Malvasia (sparkly white wine), all rigorously of local production.