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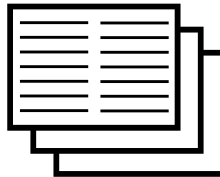
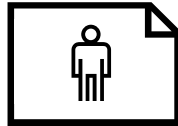
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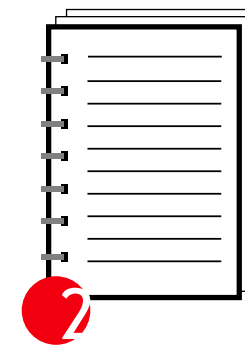
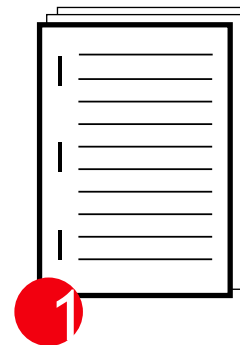
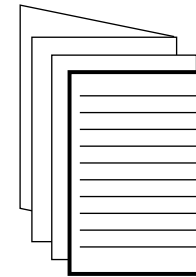
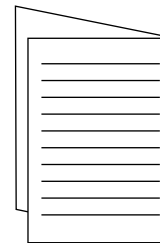
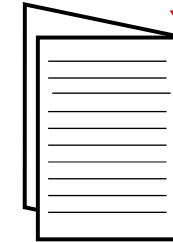
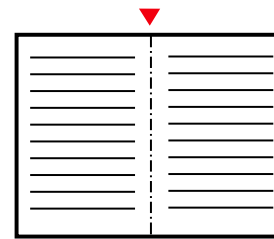
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# assembling the guide



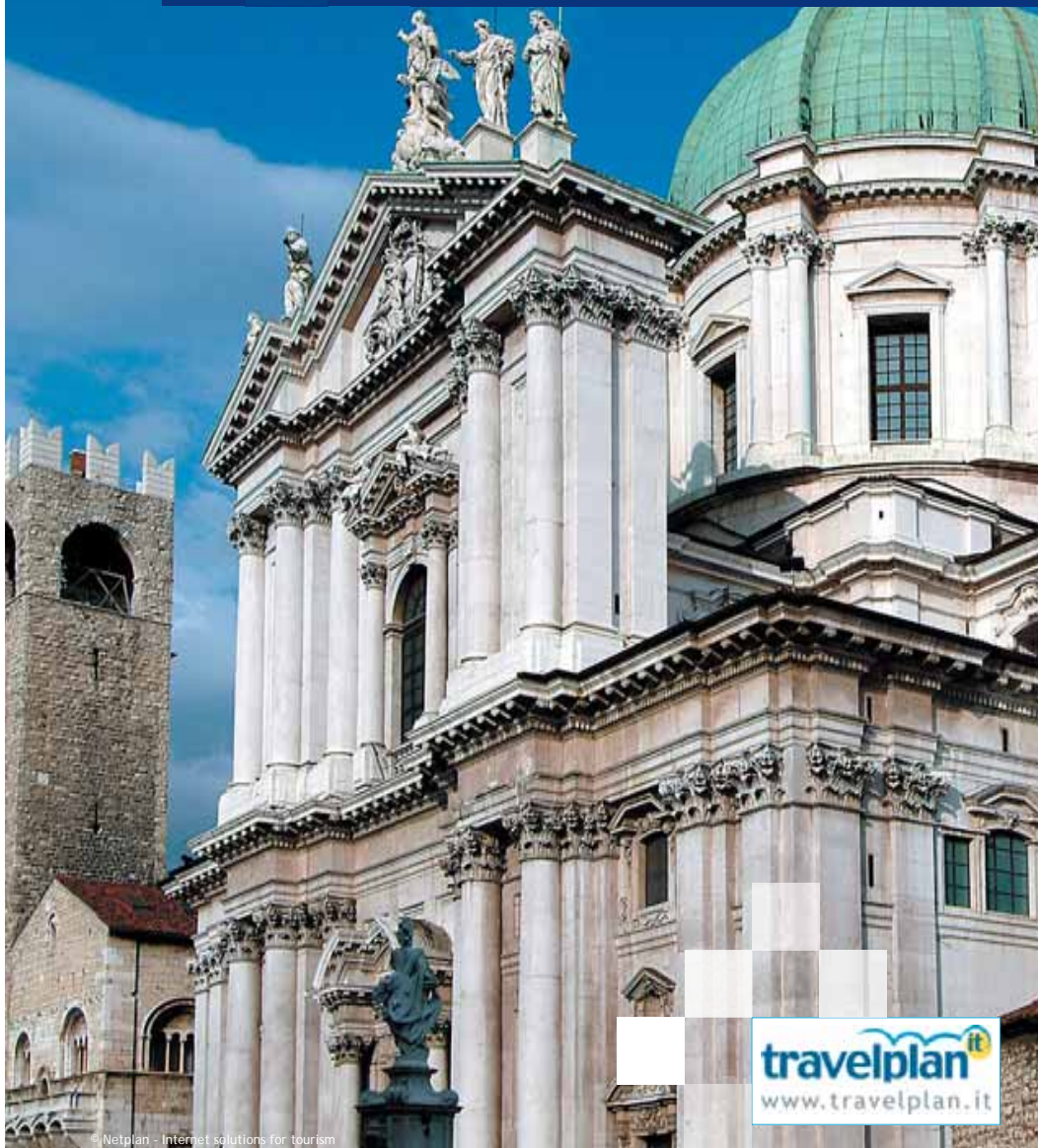
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# THE BRESCIA CITY GUIDE



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## History and culture



Brescia: monument to Brescia freedom fighters

Brescia, called “the lioness of Italy,” is a dynamic, hardworking city whose inhabitants are famous for their tenacity and dedication to work.

The city is also able to display a rich heritage of history and art, which spans from prehistoric times to the present. Tourists will be fascinated by the atmosphere created by its airy piazzas and picturesque lanes, its fountains and aristocratic residences, the intimacy of its cloisters and the art treasures waiting to be discovered in its churches and museums.

Brescia's origins can be traced to the Bronze Age, but the city's importance began later when it was the capital of the **Cenomani Gauls of Brixia**. The Cenomani were defeated and absorbed by the **Romans** in 187 BC, but it was only in 49 BC, under Julius Ceaser, that Brescia obtained full Roman citizenship. This was followed by a long period of peace and splendor, in which Brescia became of the major centers of Northern Italy. The city grew thanks to the strength of its economy based

on agriculture, trade, marble quarries and iron mines.

With the disintegration of the Roman Empire in 476, Brescia suffered the scourge of barbarian invasions: Eruli, Ostrogoths and Byzantines. Then Alboin's **Lombards** arrived from present-day Hungary. For two centuries, the city was the site of one of the most important Lombard duchies. Important civil and religious centers were constructed, such as the monastic complex of San Salvatore and Santa Giulia. This was followed by the Frankish domination of **Charlemagne**, which lasted until 888. Following the disintegration of Charlemagne's empire, the city entered a dark period that left few traces.

Between the 12th and 13th centuries, we see the **age of the Communes**, in which Brescia was often engaged in wars with nearby cities or bloodied by civil war. The communes interrupted fighting each other only to unite against a common enemy: the Lombard League was formed and defeated Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa when he descended into Italy in 1176. These centuries were a period of great building activity: a new circle of wall was built and the **Duomo Vecchio** and **Broletto** date from this period.

The 14th and 15th centuries were the **Age of the Signories**: the city came under the domination of powerful noble families such as the **Angioini**, **Visconti** and **Malatesta**.

In 1426, Brescia became a possession of the **Republic of Venice**, and remained such until 1796. Under Venice's liberal rule, the city experienced a period of splendor and economic development: This is the period in which **Piazza della Loggia**, and many churches and noble palazzi were built, and the construction of the new fortified walls that made the city impregnable.

Towards the end of the 17th century, the city began to feel the effects of Venice's political decline. Brescia was an area of passage for foreign troops who sacked and pillaged; the city felt unprotected by Venice. In 1797, Brescia rebelled against

Venice and was included by Napoleon in the **Cisalpine Republic**, but, with the collapse of the Napoleonic empire (1815), Austria incorporated Brescia into its own territory. Austrian domination lasted until 1859: in fact, in that period, the new concepts of liberty and self-determination of peoples spread by the French revolution were in full ferment and Brescia was one of the centers with the most active revolutionary movements. In 1849, the Brescian revolutionaries rebelled and resisted their Austrian masters for ten dramatic days. This was the episode that earned the city the nickname, “**Lioness of Italy**”. Austrian domination ended with the Wars of Independence. Finally, in 1859, Brescia was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy and, from that day on, the city's history has been tied to that of united Italy.

## Churches and Museums



Brescia: the New Cathedral

**The Duomo Vecchio** or “*Rotonda*”: a Romanesque building on a circular plan surmounted by a tambour with conical roof. Its interior consists of a central space formed by eight pilasters that support a majestic dome. From the lower level, one descends to the crypt of San Filastro, constructed using Roman and Byzantine materials from the preceding basilica. The *Rotonda* contains interesting paintings by Romanino and Moretto and the sarcophagus of Bishop Berardo Maggi (1308).

**The Duomo Nuovo**: construction began in 1604 but was not finished until 1825, when the dome was completed. Due to the slow pace of construction, its style is anything but homogeneous: one notices this immediately in the majestic façade, which has a Baroque lower part and is Neoclassic over the portal. The interior has a Greek cross plan with columns and pilasters supporting an 80-meter high dome. The church preserves many sculptures and paintings from the Renaissance on.

**San Francesco**: an exquisite example of a Franciscan monastery, constructed in the 13th century in a late Romanesque style. Its simple façade encloses a splendid rose window. Even the interior is characterized by a simple style, but it preserves important works, frescoes and paintings including a masterpiece by Romanino. The splendid cloister built in 1394, with its red marble columns, is also worth a visit.

**Santi Nazario e Celso**: This church is worth a visit just for one masterpiece it contains: the Averoldi polyptych by Titian.

**Santa Maria dei Miracoli**: this church is considered a jewel of Lombard Renaissance sculpture. It was constructed to celebrate a miraculous image of the Madonna that was painted on the wall of a nearby house. The sacred image is now kept in the church's apse. The façade was decorated by master sculptors who worked on the construction of the Loggia during the same period.

**Museo della Città - Monastery of Santa Giulia**: this incredible museum is one of the most important complexes of the early middle ages in Northern Italy. Founded in 753 by the Lombard King Desiderio, the monastery was expanded several times until the Renaissance. The complex contains the Basilica of San Salvatore, of Lombard origin, the Church of Santa Giulia, the Church of Santa Maria in Solario, which houses the Treasure of Santa Giulia, and three Renaissance cloisters. Three Roman villas were discovered under the larger cloister, the *Domus dell'Ortaglia*. The monastery area was acquired by the Municipality, which has turned the Church of Santa Giulia into the “*Museo della Città*” where one can follow the history of Brescia from the Bronze Age through to the Renaissance. The museum regularly hosts large art shows.

**Museum of Ancient Arms**: the museum is located in the Castello di Brescia and is one

of the most important collections of ancient arms in Europe. The visitor will find himself surrounded by over 500 weapons and armor fabricated in Italy and Europe from the 15th to the 18th centuries. There are very rare pieces, masterpieces of technique and refinement and many made in Brescia. The museum also contains the remains of a Roman temple found during excavations.

**Pinacoteca Civica Tosio-Martinengo**: this is one of the most important Italian painting collections. The works on display range from the 13th to 18th centuries. The main nucleus consists of paintings by Renaissance Brescian masters such as Foppa, Romanino, Moretto and Savoldo; to these are added masterpieces by Raffaello, Paolo Veneziano, Lotto and others. The Pinacoteca also hosts many works coming from city palazzi and churches. The museum organizes extremely important art exhibits on a regular basis.

**Museo del Risorgimento**: the museum traces the history of Italian Unification from the end of Venetian domination until 1870. The collection contains a great many canvases, prints, letters, announcements, decrees, coins and knickknacks from that period.

## Historical buildings and monuments



Brescia: the Venetian Loggia

**Tempio Capitolino and Teatro Romano:** the temple, constructed in 74 BC enclosed the ancient forum on its north side. A marble staircase leads to the temple façade, formed by 6 columns. Inside the temple, there were 3 cells with marble floors.

On the side, there is the theater, constructed in the 1st century BC and renovated in the 2nd century. The theater stands on a hill, in the Greek style, and hosted as many as 15,000 spectators.

**The Castle:** it is located on the top of the Colle Cidneo, in a scenic position overlooking the city.

This was the settlement of the city's first inhabitants and later the Romans built an enormous temple on the site.

It is one of the most important fortified complexes in Italy and was constructed in various stages beginning from the 12th century to the Venetian period.

It is a true fortified citadel with towers, bulwarks, buildings, courtyards, drawbridges and cellars that can be visited and that house

the **Museo delle Armi Antiche** and the **Museo del Risorgimento**.

The gardens are also worth a visit and, in the summer, the Brescians transform them into a much loved meeting point.

**Piazza della Loggia:** the piazza was designed in 1433, commissioned by the mayor, Marco Foscari, to give the Brescian nobility a new place to gather.

The piazza became the center of the city's political and economic life. It was not completed until a century later. Gradually, the Loggia, Monte Vecchio and Monte Nuovo di Pietà, with its porticos and clock tower were constructed.

The **Loggia** was the city's public building and is the city hall today. Some of the greatest architects of the day contributed to the design, such as Sansovino and Palladio.

The ship's keel dome was destroyed by fire in 1575 and it was only in 1915 that it was decided to rebuild it in lead following the original design. The rich sculptural decorations adorning the palazzo are also worthy of note.

The **Monte Vecchio di Pietà** is the oldest building on the piazza and is an example of the Venetian Renaissance style.

It is decorated with ancient Roman stones found during excavations for the construction of the piazza and arranged in the façade by the city government of the time.

On the side opposite the Loggia, in the center of an elegant Venetian portico, you will find the **Clock Tower**.

This 14th-century tower houses a precious mechanical astronomical clock, plated in gold, portraying the sun and the signs of the zodiac. On the top of the tower, you can see two statues nicknamed "*i macc de le ure*" (the madmen of the hours), who strike the hours on the bell.

**The Broletto:** dominated by the 11th-century *Torre del Pégol*, the monument is one of the most important Medieval Lombard palazzi.

What you see today, is the result of various superimposed buildings: the stone part is the oldest, while the terra cotta parts is latter. The palazzo also incorporates the façade of the preceding Romanesque church of Sant'Agostino.

**The Mercato dei Grani:** it is located in Piazzale Arnaldo, one of the most fascinating piazzas of Brescia. The palazzo was used as a grain market and is a magnificent example of how public utility can be combined with great esthetic concepts.

The piazza's tall statue commemorates Arnaldo, a 12th-century monk condemned to death as a heretic for having publicly condemned the corruption of the Brescian clergy.

In the piazza at the corner with Porta Venezia, you will find Zilioli, one of the city's most famous pastry shops, which is a good place to take a break.

## Eating and Drinking



Brescia: polenta e osei

The most representative dish in the Brescian culinary tradition is *casonsèi*, large ravioli stuffed with Parmigian cheese, spinach and eggs.

Other popular dishes are *strangolapreti* ("priest stranglers"), elongated dumplings made of spinach, bread, eggs and cheese. From Mantua, we have the tradition of *tortelli di zucca*, stuffed with pumpkin, almond cookies, fruit mustard, raisins and pine nuts. A real delicacy! Also not to be missed, especially in the fall and winter, is *polenta taragna*, made from buckwheat, cream cheese and butter.

Among the soups, *mariconda* is typical: bread and egg dumplings flavored with nutmeg and Parmigian cheese and cooked in broth.

Among the meats, Brescian gastronomy offers tripe, *lepre in salmi* (wild hare), mixed kabobs and *uccelli scappati* ("escaped birds"), which, the name notwithstanding, is actually pork wrapped in sage leaves.

Also, typical, *manzo all'olio*, a very popular braised beef dish.

One dish much loved by Brescians is *polenta*

and game birds, which is eaten during hunting season.

Lake Iseo fish is highly-prized: try the baked tench with polenta. And for those with strong palates, there's *lumache alla bresciana*, snails cooked with spinach and seasoned with abundant grated Parmigian cheese.

**Cheeses:** from the mountains, we have puina (a cow's milk ricotta), *rosa camuna* and the goat's milk cheeses, while the plains provide *robiola* and *quartiolo*; from the Lake Garda area, we have the famous *formagella di Tremosine*.

A very aromatic cheese called *bagòss* deserves a special mention; it is made from the milk of cows that have grazed in the summer mountain pastures, rich with wildflowers and aromatic herbs, and then aged for two years.

**Wine:** perhaps due to the influence of Venice, the Brescians are notoriously great wine-lovers and there is certainly no lack of production in Brescia: from Barbera, Marzemino, Schiava and Sangiovese grapes come the DOC reds such as Botticino and Cellatica.

The hills of Lake Garda have two areas of DOC cultivation: Lugana, a dry white, and Garda Classico, which can be white, red or rosé.

Even more famous are the wines of Franciacorta, an area south of Lake Iseo: whites, rosés and reds, or a prestigious sparkling wine. Franciacorta DOCG is the most prized Italian sparkling wine, produced from Chardonnay and/or Pinot nero and/or Pinot bianco grapes.

The characteristics of Franciacorta wines are: fine, persistent perlage; deep straw yellow color with greenish highlights; a mellow, but decisive, scent of yeast accompanied by delicate hints of dried fruit and cloves; pleasantly flavorful and fresh in the mouth.

## Shopping



Brescia: wine is always a good buy

The long porticos that lead from Piazza della Loggia to Corso Zanardelli and Corso Palestro are the favorite places for Brescians to go strolling: this area has the most famous shoe and clothing stores and jewelry shops for every need.

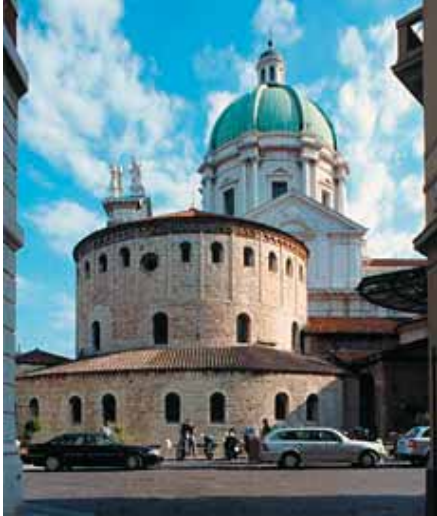
Antique shops and art galleries, on the other hand, are found in the elegant area between Via Trieste, Via Tosio, Via Cattaneo and Via dei Musei.

Great bargains for lovers of antiques can be found at the *mercato dell'antiquariato*, held in Piazza della Vittoria on the second weekend of the month.

It is one of the most important and varied in all of Lombardy. In Franciacorta, the ancient wrought iron art continues to live in the craft workshops.



## Hotels and lodgings



Brescia: the Old and the New Cathedral

As an important economic center, Brescia offers an excellent selection of hotels. Depending on your budget, you can select from a great variety of hotels in Brescia, from 5-star luxury to simple 1-star garni hotels. Other types of lodgings, such as apartments and bed & breakfasts, are not very common due to the predominance of business travel. On the other hand, those who would prefer to stay outside of town have an embarrassment of choices: traditional tourist areas, like Franciacorta or Lake Garda, offer a rich variety of lodgings: hotels de charme and historic residences, comfortable holiday farms and bed & breakfasts, or even vacation apartments and campsites.

## Events



Brescia: the Mille Miglia car race

**Fair of San Faustino and Giovita, 15 February.** The city's largest fair, in honor of the city's patron saints. As many as 800 itinerant vendors, from all over Italy, invade the old town center with their stalls for an entire day.

Another entertaining and absorbing tradition is the **Rogo della Vecchia**, in the middle of Lent: a scarecrow full of firecrackers, Catherine-wheels and fireworks is burned accompanied by the applause of the crowd. The scarecrow represents the evils of daily local and national life.

**International Piano Festival from April to June.**

Founded in 1964, it held in Brescia in the Teatro Grande and in Bergamo at the Teatro Donizetti. Each edition has a theme and the title of the 2005 edition was "Brahms: Symphonies and Concerts".

**Mille Miglia in April and May.**

A recreation of a historic automobile race.

The route starts from Viale Venezia in Brescia and wends its way along the streets of half of Italy. The historic competition began in 1927 when Renzo Castagneto inaugurated the Freccia Rossa race that was run for 27 editions until 1957. Today, the competition is an incredible procession of antique cars and an excellent occasion to see the jewels of the most prestigious auto manufacturers as well as a world class that features the participation of many personalities of the international jet-set, and the world's of entertainment and sports.

**Centomiglia beginning of September.**

An international regatta that has been held on Lake Garda since 1951. The most prestigious European sailing competition on internal waters with hundreds of teams participating. The regatta's departure and arrival point is the little port of Bogliacco, which is transformed into an international yachting center during the event.

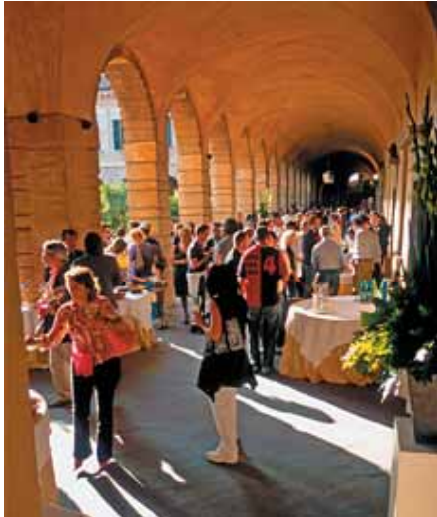
**La Giostra di Brescia mid-September.**

An historic reenactment of the celebrations held in 1497 on the occasion of the Queen of Cyprus's visit to her brother. The two days of the celebration include a procession of historic costumes, flag-tossing performances, horse races and, most of all, the opportunity to browse in the Medieval Market.

**Festival of Franciacorta 17-19 September 2005.**

The festival's sixth edition will be held in the 16th-century Abbazia Olivetana of Rodengo Saiano. The festival has booths where you can taste more than eighty varieties of Franciacorta wine accompanied by an expert who provides advice on the best food combinations. There are guided tours of wine cellars and numerous other events. The festival is also a unique occasion for discovering the most enchanting places in Franciacorta.

## La Dolce Vita



Brescia: wine tasting in Franciacorta

Brescia offers a variety of opportunities for spending a pleasant evening characterized by cheer and good food. Moreover, university students give this industrious city a verve that is significantly lacking in other Lombardy cities, except for Milan.

However, it is on the weekend that life explodes on the city's piazzas and streets.

In the old town center behind the **Piazza della Loggia**, **Piazza Paolo VI** and **Piazza Vescovato**, there is a large concentration of restaurants, wine bars and cafés.

The easiest route for sampling the flavor of Brescian "movida" is simply from **Via dei Musei** to **Via S. Faustino**.

And don't overlook scenic **Piazzale Arnaldo**, which has lately become the most "in" place for an aperitif.

By now, it's become a well-established trend in Lombardy's cities: in the evening between 7:00 and 10:00, the young people meet in nightspots to sip abundant glasses of **pirlo** (white wine with Campari or Aperol) accompanied with appetizers and other snacks.

Brescia has two important venues for a night at the theater: the **Teatro Grande** is the city's temple for classical music and opera, while the prose theater is the **Santa Chiara**, built in a former convent.

In Brescia, there's no big problem continuing the evening late into the night but the places tend to be outside the center.

In the summer, it's a tradition to walk up to the castle to enjoy the loveliest view in Brescia and spend the evening at the tables of the cafés.

The province has a great many famous discos, with the majority in **Desenzano** and **Sirmione** on **Lake Garda**.

## A special day



Brescia: aerial view of the Loggia

This itinerary is intended for those who have little time to spend but who don't want to pass up an opportunity to discover the city. The itinerary includes a night in a **Brescian hotel** of your choice. This way, you can enjoy a real Brescian evening, immersing yourself in the good food and the pleasure of living, without having to worry about leaving.

**Morning.** The itinerary begins from the Church of **San Francesco**, one of the loveliest churches of the city, with its frescos and splendid 15th-century cloister.

Then, following **Via Martiri della Libertà** and **Via Fratelli Porcellaga** we reach **Piazza Vittoria**, built in 1932 in monumental Fascist style.

It is here that the cars gather every year before the start of the famous **Mille Miglia**. We take the street on the side of the Post Office to reach the lovely **Piazza della Loggia**, the city's living room and the heart of Renaissance Brescia.

In the piazza, one is struck by the beauty of the palazzi, such as the **Loggia**, which was the

city's ancient city hall, the **Monti di Pietà** and the **Torre dell'Orologio**. Take a look at the precious astronomical clock portraying the sun and signs of the zodiac.

From **Piazza della Loggia**, we cross **Via Beccaria** to **Piazza Paolo VI**, where three important city monuments are located: first, the **Broletto**, Brescia's Medieval city hall; the building still houses public offices, today. Immediately below the **Broletto**, you will find the **Duomo Nuovo** and **Duomo Vecchio**, called the **Rotonda**, which was constructed in a Romanesque style on the remains of a Paleo-Christian basilica.

We recommend visiting the impressive interiors of both churches, which contain important works of art.

The morning can end here, perhaps taking the famous shopping stroll under the porticos that lead from **Piazza della Loggia** to **Corso Zanardelli**.

As it is well known, the Italians like to take a long lunch break; why not adapt to this custom and select one of the many **restaurants** and **trattorias** in this part of the center?

It's an excellent opportunity to sample a plate of **casonséi** or a selection of excellent **Brescian cheeses and deli meats**.

**Afternoon.** We continue the day, emerging into the heart of the Roman Brescia. From **Piazza Paolo VI**, we head down **Via dei Musei**, the ancient Roman decuman, which leads to the **Tempio Capitolino**.

It was ordered built by the Emperor **Vespasian** between 73 and 74 AD. A little further on, you come to the **Teatro Romano**, of which little remains today.

There are several beautiful Renaissance palazzi along **Via dei Musei**, such as **Palazzo Maggi**, **Palazzo Uggeri-Ganassoni** and **Palazzo Martinengo Cesaresco**.

A short distance from the theater, you will come to the incredible **Santa Giulia** complex whose walls, cloisters and basilicas contact a large part of the city's history.

Inside, the city has installed the **Museo della**

**Città**, which documents the evolution of Brescia from prehistory to the Renaissance. After this visit, why not take a lovely stroll that leads from the center to the **Castello**? The most characteristic way to get there is the Contrada Sant'Urbano pedestrian mall that climbs towards the hill from Piazzetta Tito Speri.

This enormous castle is a true fortified city, which is worth visiting for all its secrets. For those with more time, the Castello houses the **Museo delle Armi Antiche**, one of the most important collections in Europe, with over 500 weapons and suits of armor from the end of the 14th to the 18th century.

**Evening.** After an entire day immersed in art and culture, now's the time to relax and give yourself over to the pleasures of the palate. You might start with a good cocktail in **Piazzale Arnaldo** and then move on to one of the many restaurants and nightspots in the streets and piazzas of the center.

## From Franciacorta to Lake Iseo



Franciacorta: wine cellars

The proposed itinerary will take you from Brescia to **Lake Iseo**, crossing the gently rolling **Franciacorta** area.

This itinerary is best completed in two days; you can select a **hotel in Franciacorta** or a **hotel on Lake Iseo** for a stay characterized by relaxation and charm.

For those who prefer a different lodging arrangement, Franciacorta has comfortable **bed & breakfasts** or **holiday farms**.

Franciacorta is the sunny, morainial amphitheater that extends south of Lake Iseo.

It is a territory of gently rolling hills, cultivated with vineyards and dotted with medieval villages, ancient abbeys, castles, Renaissance palazzi and 18th and 19th-century patrician villas that, today, often house wineries.

In effect, from the 17th century on, Franciacorta has been the privileged summer resort of the Brescian and Milanese nobility, which built scores of villas here, surrounded by marvelous gardens.

Franciacorta's history is also linked to the presence of great monasteries, which in

the Middle Ages owned vast estates and reclaimed and cultivated the land. The name, "Franciacorta" seems to have been derived from "Francae Curtes," i.e., the medieval villages under the protection of monasteries that enjoyed an exemption from taxes.

**Wine:** the cultivation of grapes on these hills has very ancient origins, as evidenced by prehistoric discoveries and the writings of Latin authors.

In 1570, Brescian physician Gerolamo Conforti, wrote in *Libellus de Vino Mordaci* about a wine "with little bubbles" produced in Franciacorta.

**Rodengo Saiano**, a village of Roman and Lombard origins is worth a visit for its magnificent **Abbey of San Nicola**.

The abbey was founded in the 10th century by Cluniac monks.

The three large cloisters, refectory and a gallery with works by great 16th and 17th-century Brescian artists are all worth a visit. Inside, there is a wrought iron museum, a typical Franciacorta craft, and the production of liqueurs made from herbs grown by the monks.

In Ome, not far from Rodengo, we recommend a visit to the **Maglio Averoldi** an ancient forge, now a museum, where you can learn the history and methods of working iron.

**Passirano**, a castle completely surrounded by countryside, is the best preserved fortification in Franciacorta.

It was built in the 10th century to defend against Hungarian invasions and has a trapezoidal plan and cylindrical side towers. Today, it belongs to the Marchesi Fassati di Balzola house the winery's cellars. The inside is not open to the public.

**Bornato: Villa Orlando** is a Medieval fortress with crenellated walls, towers, moats and drawbridge, inside of which a Renaissance villa was constructed. There is an admission charge.

**Provaglio d'Iseo** the monastery of **San Pietro in Lamosa** is one of the most interesting Romanesque complexes of Brescia. It was founded by Cluniac monks in 1803 who came to cultivate the land.

The monastery was an important center for swamp reclamation and the spread of culture. It was also a refuge for travelers and the needy. The Church of San Pietro and the cloister are worth a visit.

The monastery is a jumping-off point for visiting the **Torbiere del Sebino**, a nature refuge that was gradually created, beginning in the 18th century following the extraction of the peat.

The excavations created numerous water basins and hundreds of swamp animals and plants made it their habitat. To visit the peat-bogs, just follow the routes consisting of marked trails, bridges and bird watching stations.

Just a short distance from the peat-bogs, you will find **Corte Franca**, the heart of Franciacorta, a municipality consisting of four villages: Borgognato, Colombaro, Nigoline and Timoline. You can see vineyards surrounding patrician villas that house famous wine cellars.

Some of these can be visited, such as **Palazzo Lana-Berlucchi** in Borgognato and **Palazzo Torri** in Nigoline, with its frescoed rooms and period furnishings. You can only see the outside of **Palazzo Monti della Corte** in Nigoline, with a rustic façade decorated with wrought iron, and **Palazzo Ragnoli** in Colombaro.

A few kilometers from Corte Franca, you will find romantic **Lake Iseo**. The road runs along the lake to the town of Iseo, that in the past was the market port for the entire lake.

It is pleasant to stroll through the medieval lanes of the center, past stores and restaurants, without overlooking the Romanesque parish church of Sant'Andrea (12th century).

**Monte Isola** - From the dock of Sulzano, it only takes the boat a few minutes to reach Monte Isola, the largest lake island in Europe, with an elevation of more than 400 meters above the surface of the lake.

The tiny village of **Peschiera Maraglio** is its main port, but all the island's picturesque villages have maintained their past fascination intact, with narrow lanes and interior gardens. On Monte Isola, you can follow charming itineraries on foot or circumnavigate the island by the bus leaving from Peschiera Maraglio.

The island prohibits automobile traffic. All the island's hamlets have good trattorias specializing in serving lake fish, like sardines, chub and tench.

From Iseo, you can take an excursion 60 km north along the lovely **Valcamonica** to the **Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri** in Capo di Ponte.

Protected by listing on UNESCO's World Heritage list, the Capo di Ponte rock carvings are the largest open-air museum of rock art in Europe. Over 30,000 figures are carved onto hundreds of rocks ranging from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age.

If you want to stay overnight in the area, we recommend **Boario Terme**, one of the largest spa resorts in Italy, with many hotels and a modern 140-hectare facility in a park.

## Brescian Lake Garda: the atmosphere of the Belle Epoque



Lake Garda: Desenzano

This itinerary is best completed in two or three days; you can select from a list of **Lake Garda hotels** for a stay characterized by relaxation and charm. Those who prefer a different lodging solution can stay in a comfortable **bed & breakfast** or **apartment on Lake Garda**.

The itinerary wends its way through the most fascinating scenery of Italy, the western shore of Lake Garda, called the Riviera dei Limoni, which has fascinated poets and writers such as Catullo, Joyce, Goethe and D'Annunzio. The south side of the lake is characterized by gentle hills. This is the birthplace of some of Brescia's most famous wines, such as *Lugana*, white, and *Garda Classico*, white, red or rosé. As one climbs gradually towards the north, the landscape becomes increasingly harsh and severe until reaching the steep walls at the north end of the lake.

**Sirmione** is located on a narrow peninsula that extends about 4 km into Lake Garda, one of the most enchanting places on the lake, and where one can enjoy a splendid view of

the two shores. It is worth visiting the **Rocca Scaligera** which was built in 1250 by Mastino I della Scala, Lord of Verona, as a fortress to protect the lake and a landing for the fleet. You enter the town over a drawbridge and can follow the narrow lanes of the center to the archeological site at the end of the peninsula. The **Grotte di Catullo** are one of the most interesting archeological areas in Italy: olives and cypress trees surround the remains of a large imperial age villa; it is the largest, best preserved villa in Northern Italy.

**Desenzano** was an important lake port in Roman times. Its center opens on to the large with a charming little port and rich palazzi overlook the large piazzas and pedestrian-only streets. The village has a strong Venetian imprint: in fact, the "Serenissima" took possession of Desenzano in the 15th century, making it an important commercial center. A maze of narrow lanes rise towards the medieval **castello**, constructed in the 10th century to protect against barbarian incursions.

The road rises towards Salò through a lovely hill area called Valteniesi. In **Moniga**; we recommend a brief visit to the **castello**, on the best preserved on the southern shore of Lake Garda.

**Salò** is an elegant resort on the shores of a splendid bay. It was founded in Roman times with the name of Salodium. Its old town center is a true jewel, a tight labyrinth of lanes and small piazzas crowned with a splendid lakeside promenade. We recommend a visit to the **Duomo**, constructed in the 15th century in a late Gothic style, with many important works inside; in addition, its worth seeing the **Palazzo della Magnifica Patria** and the **Palazzo del Podestà**.

In **Gardone Riviera**, you will experience the atmosphere of a late 19th-century resort, where the nobility and bourgeoisie of all

Europe selected this resort to relax in its aristocratic residences. Gardone has an especially mild climate that has allowed the area to be transformed into a true botanical garden, where citrus trees, cypresses and olive trees coexist with palms, citrons and agaves.

Gardone di Sotto is the center of society life with cafés, stores and fin-de-siècle hotels. Gardone di Sopra has the **Vittoriale**, the museum-residence of the eclectic poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio. It is an extraordinary abundance of Art Nouveau buildings surrounded by a large park that the poet built between 1920 and 1938 to house the mementos of his life: works of art, antique books and rare and precious objects.

**Gargnano** is the favorite port of sail boaters. The winds always blow strong in this area of Lake Garda: it is no accident that the most important regatta on internal European waters, the **Centomiglia**, takes place here.

**Tignale and Tremosine** are located on the lake's plateau and hinterland and provide one of the most beautiful views of the lake. They are small villages surrounded by tableland greenery planted with olive and fruit trees. There is a stunning route along the lakeshore road that goes to Tremosine running along the deep ravine of the Brasa torrent. Don't miss the *Terrazza del brivido* (terrace of shivers), suspended 350 meters above the lake.

**Limone** - citrons and lemons are grown here, thanks to the mild climate it has had since time immemorial. Today, the area lives solely on tourism and many lemon-houses have been abandoned, but the unmistakable terracing for their cultivation has become a definitive element of the landscape.

The itinerary ends in **Riva del Garda**, a picturesque town with an ancient look. The city is a busy tourist area with a good selection of hotels, restaurants and many

opportunities for sports and entertainment. The central piazza is very lovely, surrounded by Lombardy-Venetian style buildings. The most important city monument is the **Rocca Scaligera**, a castle built by the Veronese Della Scala family in 1124.



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