



Gastronomic Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Superb food and wine in Italy's less frequented north east

12–18 May 2025 (ML 686)

7 days • £3,770

Lecturer: Marc Millon

A cultural melting pot of Italian and central European influences, from rich mountain fare to the freshest seafood.

Some of the finest wines in Italy are from the gently rolling Collio hills.

A full spectrum of gastronomic experiences, from cheese and ham at the tables of their producers to the region's finest 2* Michelin restaurant.

Regions on the border are often the most complex and interesting in terms of gastronomic culture, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia is no exception. A centuries-old history of strife and changing allegiances has resulted in a delicious melting pot that simmers with the flavours and scents of Venice, elsewhere in Italy, Austria and Slovenia. The coffee culture of Trieste is as sophisticated as that found in the old-world cafés of Vienna; dishes such as *la jota* – a dense and delicious sauerkraut, bean and pork stew – are redolent of Central Europe; pastries and baked goods are Austrian-inspired with an Italian accent; and the wines are simply among the most exciting not just in Italy but in all of Europe.

After World War II, Friuli's vineyards destroyed once more in fierce fighting, a collective decision was made to concentrate on quality through the cultivation and production of a range of varietal wines from both indigenous single grape varieties (Ribolla Gialla, Friulano, Picolit) as well as international (Sauvignon, Pinot Nero, Cabernet Sauvignon). There is tradition but also innovation, experimentation with unusual blends, natural wine-making and more.

Mountain traditions include the curing of meats in those high, rarified places where the air is dry and clean, perfect for the production of Italy's sweetest cured ham, *prosciutto di San Daniele*, as well as mountain cheese-making traditions such as the summer transhumance. Polenta, the staple of the north, is still widely enjoyed here, sometimes cooked outdoors in remote mountain huts. Meanwhile, down on the Adriatic, there is fish and shellfish to enjoy, as well as art and history in towns whose histories pre-date even the Romans.

Gastronomic Friuli is a voyage into flavours from another world, another era, yes, but it is



Wine and artichokes, watercolour.

also a pointer to the future: a demonstration of how, out of adversity, an industrious region has learned to embrace European harmony and its past, not least through its richly delicious culinary heritage and history.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 1.00pm from London Heathrow to Venice (British Airways). Drive to Udine for the first of four nights.

Day 2: Udine, San Daniele del Friuli. In Udine, visit the main *piazza* with its Gothic and Renaissance loggias. Visit and lunch at an artisanal *prosciuttificio* in San Daniele, home of the lightly salted, sweetest and most delectable of all cured hams. A tasting at a distinguished *grappa* producer follows. Evening wine tasting given by the lecturer.

Day 3: north of Udine, Cormons, the Collio. Discover the inner workings of a traditional polenta mill, where grains are still refined according to age-old tradition. Continue on to a superb one-star Michelin restaurant for lunch, and visit their vinegar production. Afternoon wine tasting at one of the most prestigious wineries in the Collio region.

Day 4: Cividale, Capriva del Friuli. Cividale is a charming town in the hills bordering Slovenia. See some of the town and sample the delicious local cake (*gubana*) before continuing on to a local dairy farm where everything is produced organically. There is a rustic lunch and cheese tasting in the hills where the cattle graze, before returning to Udine for some free time. Dinner this evening is at Agli Amici on the outskirts of Udine, which holds two Michelin stars.

Day 5: La Laguna di Grado. After a brief stop at Palmanova (with its unusual star fort design), today is focused on Friuli's coast – the captivating lagoon around Grado is a tranquil haven for birds, and dotted with tiny islands where fishermen once lived in traditional straw huts (*casoni*). Journey across the lagoon by private water taxi (c. 45 minutes) to enjoy a simple lunch of the freshest fish before travelling on to Trieste, where the next two nights are spent.

Day 6: Trieste. When the Austro-Hungarian empire was at its height and Vienna was the coffee drinking capital of Europe, it was through Trieste that coffee beans arrived from around the world. The city developed its own sophisticated coffee culture and today remains a centre of importance for the Italian coffee

Gastronomic Friuli-Venezia Giulia
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industry. A tour of some of its historic, old-world cafés is interwoven with the city's literary and cultural history.

Day 7: the Karst. Some of the most interesting and idiosyncratic wine producers in the region are based on the limestone plateau (the 'Karst') that runs between Slovenia and the Trieste area. Wine tasting and traditional local snacks (*osmizza*) before continuing to Venice airport. Fly to London Heathrow, arriving c. 6.00pm.

Lecturer

Marc Millon. Wine, food and travel writer. Born in Mexico, he was raised in the USA before studying English Literature at the University of Exeter. Together with his wife, he has pioneered a series of illustrated wine-food-travel books including *The Wine and Food of Europe*, *The Wine Roads of France*, *The Wine Roads of Italy*, *The Food Lover's Companion to France* and *The Food Lover's Companion to Italy*. He is also the author of *The Taste of Britain* and lives in Devon, where he is closely involved with the food scene of the West Country. Marc is a certified Vintality International Italian Wine Ambassador, and has a weekly show on Italian Wine Podcast, *Wine, food and travel with Marc Millon*. His most recent book, *Italy in a Wineglass*, was published in April 2024 and tells the story of Italy through its wines.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,770 or £3,510 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,110 or £3,850 without flights.

Suggested train itinerary: London – Paris – Stuttgart – Munich – Udine: c. 17 hours.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus 320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 4 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. **Astoria Hotel Italia, Udine** (hotelastoria.udine.it): a well established 4-star hotel located on one of the principal squares in the centre of town. **Savoia Excelsior Palace, Trieste** (starhotels.com/en/our-hotels/savoia-excelsior-palace-trieste): a majestic 4-star hotel overlooking the Bay of Trieste, set in a historic building with 19th-century architecture. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? There is quite a lot of walking on this tour. A good level of fitness is necessary. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 59 miles.

Gastronomic tours. On a tour that focuses on food, wine and cooking traditions, we regret that participants with special diets may not have the same gastronomic experience as those with no restrictions. Please discuss your requirements with us before booking.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.