

Italy / From Mantua to Venice

Aboard Ave Maria

Characteristics:

Operator: GIROLIBERO

Tourtype: guided

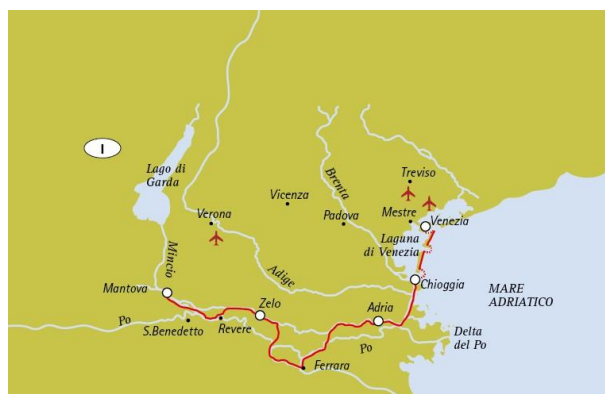
Children: yes

Regions: Adriatic Sea, Emilia-Romagna, Ferrara, Lombardy, Mantua, Mediterranean Sea, Po, Veneto, Venice

Countries: Italy

Benefits:

- 7 overnights
- Full board (breakfast, dinner and a self-made packed lunch)
- Coffee and tea and other hot drinks on board
- Sheets and towels
- Courtesy kit
- Daily short cleaning + mid-week cabin cleaning service and towel change
- Travel Guide, Maps, Roadbook
- English speaking tour leader within an international group
- Second tour leader with a minimum of 25 people
- Guided visit in Venice and Mantua
- Visit of a cheese factory with tasting of typical Grana Padano
- Visit of Carousel and Street Entertainment Museum
- Harbour charges
- Bus transfer Ferrara-Adria
- Boat excursion in the Nature Reserve of the Mincio Park



Additional costs:

- 85 EUR Girolibero bike
- 195 EUR Electro-bike
- 85 EUR child trailer
- 15 EUR helmet
- Beverages on board
- Museums, fees and extras in general
- Ticket for public transportation in Venice
- Tips
- Everything not included in the section "included in the price"

Discount:

- 100 EUR bunk bed cabin (below deck)
- 250 EUR 3rd/4th adult in the cabin
- Children reductions: 100% 0-2 years, 50% 3-6 years, 30% 7-10 years Discount only applying if child is occupying 3rd or 4th bed in the cabin. 4th bed only available in the superior cabins.

Tour description:

Blending nature, culture and fine cuisine, this leisurely bike and barge tour along the River Po offers more than just a taster of Northern Italy. It explores celebrated cities of art, one of Europe's prime Nature Reserves, and a wealth of tucked-away rural hamlets, rewarding our daily rides with authentic regional dishes back on board. The tour starts in Mantua - in its heyday a major city state crowned by the Italian Renaissance - progresses to Ferrara and culminates in Venice. Along the way: Adria, once a key Roman port; the natural wonders of the Po Delta, famed for its birdlife; and colourful Chioggia, gateway to the Venetian lagoon. Finally: the glory of Venice herself.

1. Mantua

We welcome you aboard your new home-from-home from 4.30 p.m. onwards, and then regroup for the introductory briefing - at 6.30 - with your tour leader, skipper and crew, along with a first refreshing aperitivo. After dinner we can stroll into town and savour the historic centre at its most evocative: Benvenuti a Mantova!

2. Mantua round tour (35 km)

A day dedicated to the discovery of this little visited cultural gem, its three picturesque "lakes" formed by the Mincio, and its surrounding countryside - once a City State ruled by the Gonzaga family and now considered by many as Italy's "Sleeping Beauty".

A cruise on a local barge lets us discover a waterscape rich in birdlife, lilies and other aquatic flora. This afternoon we meet our Mantuan guide for a walking tour of the historic centre, and enjoy the rest of the day in town, at our own leisure.

3. Mantua - Zelo (50 km)

After breakfast, we set sail from the "lakes" of Mantua and cruise through the lush wetlands that lead to Governolo Lock, where Mantua's River Mincio flows into the Po.

Here, we saddle up and follow the broad sweeps of the levee towards Ostiglia, renowned for its medieval fortress and fierce fighting in 1945, as the Allies drove Hitler's forces back.

Next: Bergantino, home of the distinctive Museum of Fairground Rides and its collection of street organs, all expertly restored (and thunderous!). This village is also in the heartland of Grana Padano - the arch-rival of Parmesan - and a visit to the local cheese factory, sampling some well seasoned Grana, is de rigueur. We catch up with our Ave Maria in Zelo, a sleepy village on the Canal Bianco, the waterway which runs parallel to the Po.

4. Zelo - Ferrara - Adria (50 km by bike + 60 km by bus)

This morning we cross the Po and ride southwards through a patchwork of farmland, orchards and hamlets, as far as Ferrara. Under its ruling family, the Este, this city state attracted architects, artists and scholars for centuries, pioneering town planning principles that have been emulated worldwide ever since. To this day, Ferrara University ranks among the best, and the town is dubbed the "Cycling Capital of Italy".

A private bus and trailer then take us back to our floating hotel in Adria, an ancient Roman port once washed by the sea which bears its name. Adria is also renowned for its Etruscan and Greek heritage. An after-dinner passeggiata into town for a well-earned grappa or gelato is in order.

5. Adria - Po Delta Nature Reserve - Chioggia/Pellestrina (40 km)

After a short cruise, we cycle into the delta of the life-giving Po. This unique wetland is the prime reserve in Europe for herons and home to a sizeable colony of flamingos. Weather permitting, as we continue towards Chioggia, we can also enjoy a break at a fine-sand beach nearby for a dip in the Adriatic - not forgetting a hot savoury piadina! Also known as "Little Venice", the colourful fishing hub of Chioggia is a great place to "go local", and what better way than by making your own bigoli for dinner? This quintessentially Venetian type of

pasta is at its best when made fresh, and a delicacy served with a creamy baccalà sauce.

6. Chioggia/Pellestrina - Venice (30 km)

Venice beckons, but first another world altogether: Pellestrina, the first of two islands we traverse today - a humble and tranquil fishing backwater, picturesque as ever with its cottages, boats and nets. A short island-hop by ferry lands us on the Lido. Fashionable in high society ever since the Belle Époque, the Lido di Venezia is now home to the International Venice Film Festival and its galaxy of stars. After rejoining our Ave Maria, an unrushed cruise takes us to our final destination. After dinner we can savour Venice at night, now free of the crowds and at her most romantic: Benvenuti a Venezia!

7. Venice

After breakfast - and perhaps following a wander off the beaten track with your tour leader - we all meet up with our Venetian guide for a tour through the historic centre. Christened La Serenissima ("The Most Serene"), the Venetian Republic held sway over much of the Mediterranean (and beyond) for centuries - both as a military power and a beacon of culture, her explorers reaching as far as China and Newfoundland. After your guided tour, you have the afternoon free to enjoy the city at your own pace.

8. Venice

Departure after breakfast.

The programme has been planned to feature navigation along the Fissero/ Bianco canal, which runs parallel to the Po river and connects Mantua to the Adriatic Sea. Due to organisational reasons, weather conditions or provisions issued by local authorities, the itinerary may be subject to some changes before and/or during the holiday. Issues with high and low water, as well as logistic obstacles such as officially ordered - previously not announced - repair work on locks or bridges can modify some of the daily stretches or overnight stays and may even request a transfer by bus. These decisions are only taken by the boat's captain.

Route profile

Total Length: 205 km

Total vertical up: 20 m

Terrain: 95% tarmac, 5% unpaved

This cycling tour is largely along the flats of the Po plains, and the daily stages vary from 25 to 55 km - mostly on tarmac cycle paths along rivers and canals, or quiet country roads. The boat is moored at night and typically sets sail after breakfast, meeting up with the bikes in the afternoon. Some parts of the itinerary are undertaken by boat, to allow easier access onto cycling paths or simply to enjoy the cruise.

Easy cycling in mostly flat areas, with only few short climbs and descents. Little effort required, suitable for most people.

The tour is also suitable for children. If the child one day does not want to cycle, he/she can stay on board with one of the parents.

AVE MARIA

Modern and highly appointed river barge, launched in 2011.

The boat Ave Maria is equipped with:

4 Superior Double cabins (three of these can accommodate up to 4 persons adding 2 bunk beds) above deck, approx. 11 m²;

10 Standard Double cabins (three of these can accommodate up to 3 persons adding 1 bunk bed) below deck, approx. 11 m²;

3 bunk bed cabins (also available as Single cabins) below deck, approx. 7.5 m².

All cabins enjoy sizeable windows (the ones in the Superior cabins can also be opened), comfortable low beds, en-suite facilities, air conditioning and safety box. Bed/bunk size is 2.00 x 0.80 m. Most of the double beds can be separated into two single beds.

The air-conditioned living area measures 11 x 7.5 m and is divided into two parts: the Restaurant (up to 33 seats) and the Lounge (up to 28 seats).

Extra features:



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2 sundecks

Free hot drinks machine (including Italian ground coffee)

Free wi-fi in the common areas

Large 55" screen in the lounge for video

Dedicated bike storage (for approx. 40 hanging bikes)

Hair-dryers (limited number) available on request

Complimentary courtesy kit: soap, shower gel, shampoo, hair conditioner

<https://www.boat-and-bike.com/tour/italy-from-mantua-to-venice.html>