

# Hidden Italy Guided Walking Tour to Trieste and Friuli 2019

(13 days / 12 nights)

With its mountains, plains and seashores less than an hour's drive apart, Italian patriot Ippolito Nievo fondly described Friuli as a "little compendium of the universe". This Hidden Italy special sets about exploring that universe. The tour starts with two days in Udine, an elegant provincial. We then drive north-east into the mountains to a beautifully preserved village above a lake in a quiet valley in the heart of the Carnian Alps, our base for the next four days. From here we go east across the plains to 'Venetian Slovenia', a wedge of beautiful forested hills that forms the frontier between Italy and Slovenia. Our base is a gorgeous riverside World Heritage listed. Our last two nights are in the grand port city of Trieste, a fitting place to end our visit. We'll drop you off in Venice on the last day. Food is an important part of any visit to Italy but this is particularly true of FVG which produces some of Italy's finest goods, including Collio wines, San Daniele ham and Montasio cheese, while the farmers' markets of Gorizia and Pordenone are legendary. The Via dei Sapori is an association twenty of the region's best restaurants and we will follow their trail (there is one in each of the places we visit) using them as a key to unlock the secrets of FVG cooking.

## The walks:

With its pristine forests, national parks and fascinating history, Friuli offers some wonderful walks, including exploring the valleys of the Carnian Alps, skirting lakes and passing through mountain pastures with spectacular views west to the Dolomites; following the historic trails through the hills that hug the Slovenian border, as well as a walk through the vineyards of Collio and a walk on the plateau above Trieste. The walks are from 8 to 12 kms and follow well-marked trails. There are a couple of longer climbs so you'll need a good level of fitness to enjoy the walks (although there will be the option of opting out of the walk and joining the group for lunch). Details of each walk are on the itinerary.

## The accommodation:

The tour starts with two nights in a classic four-star hotel in the centre of Udine and finishes in one of the grand hotels of Italy which is in a palazzo dating from 1727 on the grand Piazza Unita d'Italia, the heart of Trieste, an elegant 4-star hotel steeped in the atmosphere of the city's Austro-Hungarian history. In between, we stay in a beautiful family-run mountain lodge for four nights and another four nights in a romantic little hotel in centre of our gorgeous base in a restored building that dates from the Middle Ages.

## The food:

With its long coast line, fertile plains, unspoilt mountains and ancient traditions, the food of Friuli is as diverse as the region itself and cultivates some of Italy's finest produce. We'll use the 'Via dei Sapori', a group of the twenty finest restaurants in Friuli, to unlock the secrets, not only eating their wonderful meals but also visiting their suppliers: farmers markets, cheesemakers, prosciutto producers, vegetable growers, vignerons.

Tour Dates      6 September to 18 September 2019

Tour Size        7 to 15 people

Tour Inclusions 12 nights' accommodation (see the itinerary for details) in 4-star boutique hotels

All breakfast, and all lunches and dinners listed in the itinerary

All transfers during the tours

All taxes and service charges at the hotels and restaurants

All paid admissions during the tour

7 guided walks

Services of a full-time professional tour guide

## Trieste and Friuli itinerary 2019.

### Day 1:

Prosperous Udine sits on a fertile plain in the middle of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG). With its elegant architecture and refined way of life, Udine has retained much of its past as part of the Venetian Empire. The first two nights of our tour are in a classic 4-star hotel in the centre of the city. After an aperitivo in our hotel, we'll have dinner in an elegant restaurant near the hotel. (Dinner)

### Day 2:

This morning we take a guided walk through the historic centre of the city, starting at the castle and finishing at the Tiepolo Gallery (the great Venetian artist lived and worked for many years in Udine). Lunch will be in a traditional osteria in the centre. The evening is free. (Lunch).

### Day 3:

This morning we leave Udine, driving north across the plains and up into the Carnia Alps, stopping for a lovely walk in the forest and lunch in a mountain lodge on the way. (6.5 kms, 1.5 hrs, [Grade 1](#) click for details)

Our base for the next four days is a small, beautifully preserved mountain village overlooking a lake and surrounded by forests and soaring peaks, twenty kilometres from the Austrian border. Dinner is at our hotel. (Lunch/dinner)

### Day 4:

This morning we walk up to the surrounding forests, contouring around the mountains with beautiful views over the lake before winding down to a neighbouring village where we'll have a delicious lunch (9 kms, 3 hrs, [Grade 2](#) [click for details](#)). After lunch there is the option of following another trail back to the hotel (6 kms 2 hrs, Grade 3, [click for details](#)) or catching the local bus back. Dinner is at our hotel. (Dinner).

### Day 5:

Our village and its twin neighbour form a German-speaking enclave in the heart of the Friulian Alps, its population descended from Austrian deserters who took refuge here in the 13th century. Today we explore their rich heritage walking from one village to another, including a guided visit to both villages, a visit to the excellent community museum, the gorgeous church of San Osvaldo (patron saint of the Venetian goldsmiths). In the evening we have dinner at an excellent 'Via dei Sapori' restaurant in our village. (Dinner)

### Day 6:

This morning after a steep initial climb, we follow the mountain ridges above our village, passing through forests with spectacular views down across the valley to the beginning of the Dolomites on the western horizon. We'll have a light lunch in a charming agriturismo before returning to our base. (9 kms, 4 hrs, [Grade 2](#) [click for details](#)). Dinner is at our hotel. (Lunch/dinner)

### Day 7:

Today we drive east heading to the beautiful hills that form the border between Italy and Slovenia staying in a gem of a town founded by Julius Caesar, it was an important Lombard capital (6th century) and then seat of the powerful Patriarch of Aquileia (8th century) and is now a buzzy market town. On the way, we way we do a spectacular drive through the Julian Alps, stopping for a beautiful walk through forest under the second highest peak in the range. We'll have a lazy lunch at a lovely mountain lodge. After settling in to our hotel, the evening is free. (Lunch)

**Day 8:**

This morning, we will take a guided tour around our base, which was founded by Julius Caesar, became an important Lombard capital (6th century) and then seat of the powerful Patriarch of Aquileia (8th century) and is now a buzzy market town. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2007.

After lunch we will drive up into the surrounding hills for a cooking lesson hosted by the third of our 'Via dei Saponi' restaurants, which is tucked away in tiny hamlet in the valleys. Rigorously using only '0 kilometre' ingredients, like all the 'Via dei Saponi' restaurants, Teresa's cooking celebrates local produce, giving traditional cooking a modern twist. After the cooking lesson, we'll settle down to dinner. (Dinner)

**Day 9:**

With an early start today, we visit the centre of the Collio wine district, one of the premier wine producing regions of northern Italy, before going for a lovely walk along country lanes through the rolling hills and vineyards and olive groves above the town. We'll have a long lunch in an excellent trattoria two kilometres from the Slovenian border. (11 kms, 3.5 hrs) The evening is free. (Lunch)

**Day 10:**

Today we go on one of the most extraordinary walks in the Hidden Italy repertoire: a spectacular itinerary along the ridges that form the border between Italy and Slovenia. With breath-taking mountain views, since ancient times, this border has an extraordinary past as the line where West meets East. Most recently it was part of the tragic history of modern Europe as one of the most bitterly contested fronts in WW I and as part of the 'Iron Curtain'. A local guide will accompany us, revealing its fascinating history. (8 kms, 3 hrs, [Grade 3](#) click for details). We'll have a delicious lunch in a mountain hut. Back at our base, the afternoon is free. We regroup for dinner at a wonderful osteria on the edge of town that has been in continuous operation since the 14th century. (Lunch/dinner)

**Day 11:**

Today we transfer to Trieste, the capital of FVG. For two centuries the main port of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Trieste is a busy commercial centre with many vestiges of its rich history and intellectual traditions. On the way, we will visit a spectacularly placed castle (still inhabited by its illustrious owners) with views along the coast to Trieste. We then take a lovely walk through a nature reserve above the cliffs. (3 km, 1 hr [Grade 1](#) click for details). Our hotel is an elegant 4-star hotel on the city's famous Piazza Unita d'Italia. The evening is free.

**Day 12:**

This morning we will go on a guided tour of the fascinating city's centre, starting in Piazza Unita d'Italia then wending our ways through the old town up to the castle with its huge views of the gulf before finishing in the 'new' town, laid out by Empress Maria Teresa of Austria.

The afternoon is free to do some shopping in this elegant city; take a ferry across the gulf to a beautiful little port that is a remnant of Venetian times or a ride on the historic cog-wheel train up to the limestone plateau above the city. In the evening we finish our tour of FVG with a marvellous dinner in the fourth of our Via dei Saponi restaurants, in a small square behind the old port. (Dinner)

**Day 13:**

After the breakfast, we will transfer you to nearby Trieste station, which has direct connections to Venice and the rest of Italy.