



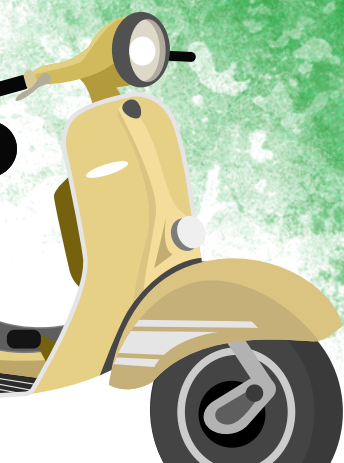
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Bergamo

MY TRAVEL Journal

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Bergamo is a picturesque and historic city in northern Italy, known for its stunning views of the surrounding hills and its rich cultural heritage. As part of the Lombardy region, Bergamo offers a unique blend of medieval architecture, artistic treasures, and a serene atmosphere.

- **Language**

The official language is Italian, and many locals speak the Bergamasque dialect. English is commonly spoken in hotels and major tourist areas, but using a few basic Italian phrases or friendly gestures can enhance your interactions with the locals.

- **Currency**

Italy uses the Euro (€). While credit cards are widely accepted in shops and restaurants, Bergamo still retains a charming tradition of using cash, especially in local markets and smaller cafes. It's advisable to carry some cash for these experiences.

- **Public Transport**

Funiculars: Bergamo is famous for its two funicular railways that connect the upper and lower parts of the city, offering scenic rides and easy access to Città Alta (the Upper Town).

Buses: Operated by ATB, buses efficiently cover the city and surrounding areas, making it easy to explore beyond the city center.

Trains: Bergamo is well connected by train to Milan and other Lombard cities, providing a convenient option for regional travel.

Taxis: Readily available at stands or via local apps. Always ensure the meter is running or agree on a rate for longer distances.

- **Main Attractions**

1. **Città Alta:** The historic upper town, surrounded by Venetian walls, is filled with cobblestone streets, charming shops, and stunning architecture.
2. **Accademia Carrara:** A world-renowned art gallery featuring works by Italian masters such as Raphael and Botticelli.
3. **Piazza Vecchia:** The heart of Città Alta, this picturesque square is lined with cafes and historic buildings, including the Palazzo della Ragione.
4. **Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore:** A magnificent church known for its lavish Baroque interior and impressive tapestries.
5. **Rocca di Bergamo:** A fortress offering panoramic views of the city and the surrounding countryside.

Bergamo is a city of elegance, history, and exquisite taste—enjoy your visit to this enchanting northern Italian destination!

Discovering the Lombardy Region

Lombardy is a picturesque region in northern Italy, nestled in the shadow of the Alps. It is renowned for its vibrant cities, rich history, and being an economic powerhouse of the country. The capital of the region is Milan (Milano), a city pulsating with fashion, design, and the iconic Italian aperitivo culture.

Culture and Heritage

Lombardy is home to some of Italy's most significant cultural landmarks, including the breathtaking Duomo di Milano and the historic La Scala opera house. The region also features the serene Lake Como, famous for its stunning villas and as a retreat for celebrities. Lombardy's culinary scene is equally impressive, known for its Risotto alla Milanese, creamy Gorgonzola cheese, and the crisp Franciacorta sparkling wine. From the tranquil shores of Lake Garda to the majestic peaks of the Italian Alps, Lombardy offers a diverse and enriching experience.

Multiple Choice Questions

- **What is the capital of the Lombardy region?**
a) Rome b) Milan c) Florence d) Venice
- **Which famous opera house is located in Lombardy's capital?**
a) Teatro Massimo b) La Fenice c) La Scala d) San Carlo
- **Which variety of cheese is a specialty of Lombardy?**
a) Mozzarella di Bufala b) Pecorino Romano
c) Gorgonzola d) Parmigiano Reggiano
- **The "Lake Como," a popular tourist destination, is located in which region?**
a) Tuscany b) Lombardy c) Liguria d) Sicily
- **Which mountain range borders the Lombardy region?**
a) Apennines b) Dolomites c) Alps d) Pyrenees

BERGAMO

Welcome to Bergamo!

Bergamo, the jewel of Lombardy and a historic bastion of the Republic of Venice, is a captivating blend of medieval charm, Renaissance elegance, and modern Italian vitality. Divided into two distinct levels, the city is famously split between the hilltop Città Alta (Upper Town) and the bustling Città Bassa (Lower Town). Unlike the coastal expanses of the south, Bergamo is defined by its majestic Venetian Walls—a UNESCO World Heritage site—and its dramatic position at the foot of the Orobic Alps, where ancient cobblestone streets offer glimpses of snow-capped peaks.

If you have time to explore beyond the main squares, we highly recommend visiting the Accademia Carrara and the Rocca di Bergamo. The Accademia Carrara is one of Italy's finest art galleries, housing masterpieces by Botticelli and Raphael, and is located just a short walk from the lower city's center. Meanwhile, the Rocca, a 14th-century fortress, sits at the highest point of the Città Alta. It can be reached by wandering through the medieval lanes or via the iconic historic funicular, which has been connecting the two halves of the city since 1887, offering breathtaking views of the Lombardy plains.

Our journey begins in Piazza Vecchia, the heart of the Upper Town, described by architect Le Corbusier as "the most beautiful square in Europe." Here, the Palazzo della Ragione and the stunning facade of the Colleoni Chapel await your discovery. Enjoy your visit!





Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is the general architectural feel of Piazza Vecchia described in the text?

- a) A mixture of modern skyscrapers and ancient ruins.
- b) A harmonious space that reflects the Renaissance period.
- c) A chaotic but charming commercial district.

2. What is unique about the sundial at the Palazzo della Ragione?

- a) It is located at the top of the Civic Tower.
- b) It is a modern digital installation.
- c) It is carved into the ground and is still functional.

3. Why does the "Campanone" bell strike 100 times every night?

- a) To celebrate the construction of the Angelo Mai Library.
- b) To maintain a historical tradition related to the city's security.
- c) To signal the start of a religious ceremony in the Duomo.

4. How does the atmosphere in Piazza Vecchia differ from the lower city?

- a) It is much noisier due to the large number of tourists.
- b) It is more peaceful because cars are not allowed.
- c) It is more industrial and focused on business.

5. Which building serves as a significant historical library?

- a) Palazzo Nuovo.
- b) Palazzo della Ragione.
- c) The Contarini Fountain.



BERGAMO

The Cathedral of Naples (Duomo)

The Cathedral of Sant'Alessandro, commonly known as the Duomo di Bergamo, is the primary Catholic church in the city. It is dedicated to Saint Alexander, the patron saint of Bergamo, whose remains are _____ within the cathedral, making it a vital site for local _____ and history.

Located in the historic heart of the Città Alta, the Duomo stands in the prestigious Piazza del Duomo, right next to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Colleoni Chapel. The site has deep historical _____, as the current cathedral was built over an ancient church dating back to the 5th century. Throughout the medieval period, the religious identity of the city was divided between two rival cathedrals, but _____, Sant'Alessandro was recognized as the sole seat of the Bishop.

In the mid-15th century, the famous architect Filarete was commissioned to redesign the structure. However, the project _____ numerous delays and changes over the centuries. Parts of the original Romanesque foundations were discovered during modern excavations and can still be seen in the underground museum, which offers a _____ look at the city's early Christian past.

The construction of the current facade was not completed until the 19th century, resulting in a neoclassical style that contrasts with the _____ medieval buildings. Inside, the cathedral is a masterpiece of light and elegance, featuring precious _____ by masters such as Giovan Battista Tiepolo.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, the interior was _____ embellished to reflect the city's devotion to Saint Alexander. One of its most impressive features is the high altar, which is a magnificent example of Baroque craftsmanship. Since the relocation of the saint's relics to this _____, the Duomo has remained the spiritual center of Bergamo, where art and history come together in a peaceful and majestic atmosphere.





The Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore



1. Why was the Basilica originally built?

- a) To serve as a private chapel for the Bishop.
- b) As a result of a promise made by citizens during a plague.
- c) To house the remains of the opera composer Donizetti.

2. What is unusual about the entrance to the church?

- a) It can only be entered through the Bishop's Palace.
- b) It has no main central door, only side entrances.
- c) It is hidden behind a secret wall in the Piazza.

3. How does the interior differ from the exterior?

- a) The outside is simple Romanesque, while the inside is highly decorated Baroque.
- b) The outside is golden and flashy, while the inside is very dark and sober.
- c) Both the inside and outside are in the same Renaissance style.

4. What are the "intarsie" designed by Lorenzo Lotto?

- a) Large statues of red lions located at the gates.
- b) Elaborate golden frescoes on the high ceilings.
- c) Detailed wood panels showing scenes from the Bible.

5. What does the text say about the foundation known as the MIA?

- a) It was a group of architects who built the "Gate of the Red Lions."
- b) It was the organization that kept the church independent from the clergy
- c) It was the name of the plague that affected Bergamo in 1133.

The Castle of San Vigilio: Bergamo's Strategic Guardian

Read the following statements and decide whether they are True (T) or False (F).

- The Castello di San Vigilio is located at an altitude of approximately 496 meters.
- The castle was originally built by the Republic of Venice in the Middle Ages.
- The castle was a key part of Bergamo's defensive system, including the Venetian Walls.
- Today, the castle is still used as an active military base for the Italian army.
- Most visitors reach the castle by using a second funicular from the Upper Town.
- The secret underground tunnels were used by civilians to hide during the 19th century.
- The castle was completely destroyed in the 19th century, leaving no structures standing.



Porta San Giacomo

Read the following statements and decide whether they are True (T) or False (F).

- Porta San Giacomo is made of the same grey stone as the other Venetian gates.
- The gate was completed at the end of the 16th century.
- The Lion of Saint Mark on the gate represents the city's historical link to Venice.
- Historically, the city gates were kept open all night for the citizens' convenience.
- In the 18th century, the wooden drawbridge was replaced by a permanent stone bridge.
- The gate is oriented towards the north, offering views of the Alps.
- The white marble of the gate changes its appearance under the sunset light.



Legends and Mysteries of Bergamo

Behind the elegant stone walls and medieval streets of Bergamo lie stories that have been passed down through generations. These legends blend historical facts with supernatural elements, adding a layer of mystery to the city's atmosphere.

The Ghost of the Visconti Castle

One of the most famous legends takes place in the Castello di San Vigilio. Local lore says that the castle is haunted by the spirit of a Spanish soldier who fell in love with a local noblewoman. Because their love was forbidden, he was imprisoned in the secret underground tunnels. To this day, some locals claim that during stormy nights, you can hear the faint sound of his armor clanking against the stone walls as he searches for his lost love.

The Miracle of the Three Hearts

In the heart of the Upper Town, near the Piazza Vecchia, there is a curious story about the Colleoni Chapel. Bartolomeo Colleoni, a famous military leader, was known for his strength and pride. Legend has it that he was born with a rare physical condition: three testicles (which he proudly displayed on his family coat of arms). It was considered a symbol of extreme bravery. Local tradition says that touching the golden coat of arms on the chapel's gate at midnight brings good luck and fertility, which is why the brass is so much shinier than the rest of the gate!

The "Screams" of the Romanesque Columns

At the entrance of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, there are white marble lions. Legend says that during the construction of the church, the builders struggled to move the massive stones. A mysterious old man appeared and helped them move the heaviest blocks with supernatural ease. When the church was finished, he disappeared, leaving only the statues of the lions as a reminder. Some say that if you place your ear against the stone during a full moon, you can hear the "echo" of the ancient builders' songs.

Exercise: Use the vocabulary words above to complete the sentences.

1. The Knight was awarded a medal for his incredible _____ during the battle.
2. Many people believe the old abandoned house on the hill is _____.
3. The family's _____ featured a golden eagle and two swords.
4. According to local _____, the lake was created by a giant thousands of years ago.
5. She was a wealthy _____ who lived in a palace in the center of the city.



A Taste of Bergamo: Tradition on a Plate



The gastronomy of Bergamo and the surrounding Lombardy region is a reflection of its history and geography. Unlike the light, olive-oil-based dishes of southern Italy, the cuisine here is hearty, designed to sustain farmers and mountain dwellers through cold winters. It relies heavily on butter, cheese, meat, and cornmeal.

The Golden Staple: Polenta

If there is one food that defines the region, it is **Polenta**. Made from yellow cornmeal, it was once the "bread of the poor." Today, it is a versatile side dish served with almost everything. In Bergamo, you must try *Polenta Taragna*, which is enriched with local cheeses like Branzi or Formai de Mut and plenty of butter, giving it a rich, creamy texture.

Iconic Pasta: Casoncelli alla Bergamasca

The crown jewel of local pasta is **Casoncelli** (*Casonsei* in local dialect). These are handmade stuffed pasta shells, but unlike the sweet pumpkin tortelli of neighboring Mantua, Bergamo's version has a unique savory-sweet filling. It typically contains meat, breadcrumbs, raisins, and even pieces of pear. They are traditionally served "swimming" in sage-infused melted butter and topped with crispy pancetta.

A Paradise for Cheese Lovers

The valleys surrounding Bergamo are world-famous for their dairy production. This region is the birthplace of **Taleggio**, a soft, aromatic cheese with a pinkish rind. You will also find **Gorgonzola** and **Strachitunt**, an ancient blue cheese that is a true local delicacy. These cheeses are often enjoyed at the end of a meal or melted into a rich risotto.

Sweet Traditions

To finish your meal, look for **Polenta e Osèi**. Don't be fooled by the name—it's not actual cornmeal and birds! It is a famous sponge cake shaped like a mound of polenta, covered in yellow marzipan and topped with small chocolate birds. It is a masterpiece of local pastry making.

Complete the sentences using the words from the text above.

1. Rice is a dietary _____ for more than half of the world's population.
2. After a long hike in the mountains, we enjoyed a _____ beef stew.
3. This sauce is _____ with cream and white wine to give it more flavor.
4. I prefer _____ snacks like olives or nuts over sugary cookies.
5. Eggs are incredibly _____ because you can cook them in so many different ways.

Lake Iseo and Val Camonica

Just a short drive from Bergamo, the landscape transforms into a breathtaking mix of deep blue waters and rugged mountains. This area, comprising Lake Iseo and Val Camonica, offers a perfect blend of outdoor adventure and some of the most significant archaeological sites in Europe.

Lake Iseo: A Hidden Gem

Lake Iseo is the fourth largest lake in Lombardy, but it is often considered the most romantic due to its peaceful atmosphere. Its most famous feature is Monte Isola, the largest lake island in South and Central Europe.

The island is a car-free zone, making it a paradise for hikers and cyclists. For centuries, the local economy relied on fishing and the production of nets. Today, visitors can still see traditional wooden boats, called *naècc*, and enjoy fresh lake fish in the charming restaurants of Peschiera Maraglio.

Val Camonica: The Valley of Signs

Heading north from the lake, you enter Val Camonica, a long valley that stretches into the heart of the Alps. This valley is world-famous for being the first site in Italy to be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site (in 1979).

It is home to one of the world's greatest collections of prehistoric rock art. More than 140,000 figures and symbols, known as the Rock Drawings of Val Camonica, were carved into the stone over a period of 8,000 years by the Camunni people. These engravings depict scenes of daily life, hunting, and religious rituals, providing a unique "stony library" of human history.

A Modern Landmark: The Floating Piers

In 2016, Lake Iseo gained international fame when the artist Christo created The Floating Piers, a yellow walkway that allowed people to "walk on water" from the mainland to Monte Isola. Although the installation was temporary, it put Lake Iseo on the map for contemporary art lovers worldwide.



Reading Comprehension: Multiple Choice

1. What is a unique characteristic of Monte Isola?

- A) It is the smallest island in Italy.
- B) It is a place where cars are not allowed.
- C) It is famous for its marble production.

2. Why is Val Camonica historically significant?

- A) It was the site of the first Venetian fortress.
- B) It contains thousands of prehistoric rock carvings.
- C) It is the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance.

3. What was the purpose of Christo's "The Floating Piers"?

- A) To create a permanent bridge for local residents.
- B) To protect the lake from environmental pollution.
- C) To create a temporary artistic experience of walking on water.



**Access to
the unit:**

