

Hidden Italy Guided Walking Tour to Trieste and Friuli 2017

(13 days / 12 nights) - \$6,490 AUD per person

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** 1 September to 13 September 2017
- Tour Size** 7 to 15 people
- Tour Cost** \$6,490 AUD per person
(two people sharing a double room)
(single supplement for a double room for single use \$750 AUD)
- 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.

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 one of Udine's oldest historic osterias. (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 an elegant restaurant near the castle. 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 hut on the way. (4 kms, 1.5 hrs, [Grade 1](#) click for details)

Our base is a small, beautifully preserved mountain village overlooking a large lake and surrounded by forests and soaring peaks 20 kilometres from the Austrian border. Dinner will be had in our hotel. (Lunch/dinner)

Day 4

This morning we leave our hotel and walk up into the surrounding forests, contouring around the mountain with beautiful views over the lake before winding down to the neighbouring village where we'll have a delicious lunch. (10 kms, 3 hrs, [Grade 2 click for details](#)). After lunch there is the option of following another trails back to the hotel (6 kms 1.5 hrs [Grade 2](#) click for details) or catching the local back. Dinner is at our hotel. (Lunch/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, 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), and hopefully to the local prosciutto makers and an artisan brewer (subject to availability). In the evening we have dinner at the excellent 'Via dei Saponi' 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 detour into Slovenia to visit wonderful Lake Bled, where we'll go for a short walk and have lunch, afterwards taking a traditional boat out to the island. After settling in to our hotel, the evening is free. (Lunch)

Day 8

Today we drive to a pretty neighbouring town. Setting out from here, we climb up a hill to a spectacularly placed church and continuing from there along country lanes through the rolling hills and vineyards to a beautiful family-run restaurant only two kilometres from the Slovenian, one of the finest in FVG. After lunch, we walk back to the town and a lift back to our base. (12km, 3 hrs, [Grade 2](#) [click for details](#)) The evening is free. (Lunch)

Day 9

This morning, we will take a guided tour of the town we are staying in. 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. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2007. After lunch we will go up into the surrounding hills to the heart of Friulian cooking thanks to the third of our 'Via dei Saponi' restaurants, tucked away in tiny hamlet in the valleys above our base. Rigorously using only '0 kilometre' ingredients, like all the 'Via dei Saponi' restaurants, Teresa's cooking celebrates local produce. After the cooking lesson at the restaurant and a stroll in the surrounding forests, we'll settle down to dinner. (Dinner)

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. (6 kms, 3 hrs, [Grade 2](#) click for details) We'll have a delicious lunch in a mountain hut. After lunch we will visit some other sites along the ridge. Back at our base, our dinner is in an excellent local restaurant. (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 busier 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. (4 km, 1 hr [Grade 1](#) click for details). After a light lunch, we go on to Trieste. Our hotel is an elegant 4-star hotel on the city's famous Piazza Unita d'Italia. The evening is free. (Lunch)

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 celebrated 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, you will be able to continue your holiday. The nearby Trieste railway station is connected by fast trains to Venice, Milan and Florence.