

CITIES OF THE RIVER PO

TURIN, PAVIA, CREMONA, PARMA,
MANTUA & FERRARA

Manuta

OVERVIEW

From its source high in the Cottian Alps, the River Po weaves its way across the fertile plains of Northern Italy before reaching its vast delta in the Adriatic Sea. The poet Virgil called it the King of Rivers and it has for centuries been the lifeblood of the Italian economy.

Led by Dr Jeni Ryde, this new 18-day tour follows the Po from Turin to the Adriatic, exploring the beautiful Renaissance cities of Parma, Mantova and Ferrara as well as smaller gems such as Cremona, Pavia, Sabbioneta and Comacchio.

Along the way we discover the extraordinary architectural and artistic legacy of visionary family dynasties such as the Visconti, the Farnese, the Gonzaga, the Este and the modern day Agnelli and enjoy the spectacular scenery of Lombardy and Emilia Romagna.

The tour is rounded out with the exceptional cuisine of Northern Italy, where varying terrain ensures a superlative gastronomy and wide selection of local wines.



TOUR LEADER

Dr Jeni Ryde is a linguist and art history specialist with over fifteen years experience leading tours to Italy, Spain, France and Portugal. She is passionate about art, design and architecture both ancient and modern and particularly enjoys how both complement each other.

TOUR DATES

April 24 - May 11, 2025 | 18 Days

TOUR PRICE

\$13,870 per person, twin share
\$2,980 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Turin (4 nights), Pavia (2 nights),
Cremona (2 nights), Parma (3 nights),
Mantua (3 nights), Ferrara (3 nights)

INCLUSIONS

17 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners. Best available tickets to **2** performances (schedules permitting). Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

ITALY



DETAILED ITINERARY

Start & Finish

The tour starts at 7.00pm on Thursday 24 April, at the Grand Hotel Sitea, Turin. The tour ends after breakfast on Sunday 11 May, at the Princess Art Hotel, Ferrara.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Ancient Egypt in Turin

Admire Turin's grand squares and exceptional galleries and museums, including the outstanding Egyptian Museum, considered one of the finest collections of Egyptology in the world.

Medieval Cremona

Experience the outstanding medieval architecture of Cremona and enjoy an evening concert in the city famous as the home of Antonio Stradivari.

Ducal Parma

Explore the city of Parma, a ducal capital that flourished under the Farnese family, and enjoy the beautiful Coreggio frescoes that illuminate the city's ecclesiastical buildings.

Renaissance Mantua

Enjoy the elegant art and architecture of Mantua, where magnificent Renaissance palaces commissioned by the cultured Gonzaga dynasty are decorated with frescoes from Andrea Mantegna and Giulio Romano.

Nature on the Po

Relax on a private cruise on the Po Delta, an exceptional river-lagoon habitat and birdwatcher's paradise, recognised by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve in 2015.

Thursday 24 April

Arrival

We meet tour leader Dr Jeni Ryde at 7.00pm in the hotel for welcome drinks, followed by dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Turin (D)

Friday 25 April

Augusta Taurinorum

After a talk in our hotel this morning we set off in search of Augusta Taurinorum, the ancient Roman Garrison town on which modern Turin was founded. Our walking tour includes a visit to the Cathedral, home to the controversial Turin Shroud (although the chapel is not accessible from the Cathedral itself). We also explore the Baroque city with its expansive and elegant series of squares and colonnaded streets. In the afternoon we have a guided visit of the excellent Museo Nazionale del Cinema housed in Turin's iconic architectural landmark, the Mole Antonelliana named after its architect Alessandro Antonelli. We end our visit with spectacular views of the city from the tower's panoramic observation terrace. Overnight Turin (B)

Saturday 26 April

Medieval Staffarda

Our coach trip today takes us south of Turin into the mountains, for a walk in the fresh air and spectacular alpine scenery before a visit to the Abbey of Staffarda. Despite a ransacking by the French army in 1690, this austere beautiful abbey, founded by the Cistercians in 1135 at the mouth of the River Po, remains one of the most complete medieval monastic complexes to be found in Italy. After a break for lunch in the town of Staffarda, we visit the noble residence of Castello della Manta for its delightful fifteenth century fresco cycle, before heading back to Turin for an evening at leisure. Overnight Turin (B)

Sunday 27 April

Modern Turin

Our day begins with a guided visit of the outstanding Museo Egizio, one of the oldest collections of Egyptian artefacts in the world. After lunch we drive to the avant-garde Linghotto



building, famous as FIAT's first factory with its rooftop test track. As founders of the iconic FIAT Motor Company, the Agnelli family name is inextricably linked to modern Italian history. After Linghotto became obsolete in the 1970s the building was repurposed by the architect Renzo Piano and includes an exceptional art gallery, the Scigno or casket, displaying works from the Agnelli family's private collection. After our visit, there is free time to visit Eataly Lingotto, the food destination that celebrates Italy's Slow Food Movement that was founded in Turin. Overnight Turin (B)

Monday 28 April

Vercelli and Italian gastronomy

We depart Turin today and continue along the Po to Vercelli, the heart of rice production in Europe and best known for the cultivation of high quality arborio rice, the basis of the iconic risotto dish. Here we have lunch and a tour of one of the rice farms, viewing first-hand the production of this Italian staple. After our visit we continue to Pavia, a city which as Ticinum had been key to the Roman defense of upper Italy and whose wealth and renown grew under the rule of the Visconti family in the 14th century. Overnight Pavia (B, L)

Tuesday 29 April

Pavia

Under the Visconti Dukedom, Pavia became an intellectual and artistic centre and its university, founded in 1361, attracted scholars from across Europe. Our morning tour takes us to the university's historic centre, the city's remarkable medieval noble towers and the outstanding churches of San Michele and San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, built in striking Romanesque style. In the afternoon we transfer by coach to the Certosa di Pavia, a stunning ecclesiastical complex built as a family mausoleum and monastery by the Visconti family. Overnight Pavia (B)

Wednesday 30 April

Piacenza and Culatello di Zibello

This morning we depart Pavia for Cremona, birthplace of Antonio Stradivari, master luthier and creator of the world's most famous violins. En route we stop at the small city of Piacenza with time for lunch and a walking tour of the historic town centre. In the afternoon we visit a producer of *culatello di Zibello* - one of Italy's most in-demand cured meats, rarely sold outside the area. The humidity provided by the River Po is the secret ingredient to this delicacy, providing the perfect environment for ageing the product. Arriving in Cremona there is time to check in and freshen up before dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Cremona (B, D)

Thursday 1 May

Cremona

Our walking tour takes us through the historic heart of Cremona this morning, visiting the Cathedral and Baptistry square, one of the most beautiful ensembles of architecture in Northern Italy. In the Cathedral we see the extraordinary





frescoes of Pordenone and enjoy stunning views across the countryside from the adjacent bell tower. This afternoon we visit to the excellent Museo del Violino, which includes pieces by famous Cremonese luthiers, before heading to the Archaeological Museum, an extraordinary collection housed in the former church of San Lorenzo. This evening we have a concert at the Teatro Ponchielli, where Mozart once performed (schedule permitting). Overnight Cremona (B)

Friday 2 May
Fontanellato

We head to Parma today, stopping en route in the town of Fontanellato, dominated by the Rocca di Sanvitale - an extraordinary moated castle. The interior includes an excellent fresco cycle by Parmigianino depicting Diana and Actaeon and an optical chamber which enabled a Sanvitale lord to spy on his subjects as they went about the village. After lunch we continue to Parma, stopping en route to visit a producer of the famous prosciutto di Parma – the ubiquitous face of Italian cured meat around the world. Arriving in Parma we enjoy a meal at a local restaurant. Overnight Parma (B, D)

Saturday 3 May
Parma and the Farnese

Our walking tour this morning includes the spectacular Baptistry and Cathedral complex where the artwork includes Correggio's masterpiece, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, and the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista, decorated with more of Correggio's stunning fresco work. The focus of our afternoon tour is the Farnese Palazzo della Pilota, where we enjoy the superb art collection in the National Gallery, the wonderful Farnese library and the jewel in the crown, the Farnese Theatre, one of only three extant Renaissance Theatres. Tonight, we enjoy a concert in the historic Teatro Regio (schedule permitting). Overnight Parma (B)

Sunday 4 May
Parma and the Magnani Rocca Foundation

This morning we visit the monumental Convent of San Paolo, containing more extraordinary frescoes by the prolific Correggio. We then take a short journey outside Parma to visit the Magnani Rocca Foundation situated in the beautiful Villa Magnani surrounded by landscaped gardens. After lunch in the Villa's restaurant Bistrot, we enjoy a guided visit of the Foundation's outstanding private collection of old masters and modern art including works by Titian, Monet, Dürer and Morandi. Overnight Parma (B, L)

Monday 5 May
Lunch beside the River Po

We depart Parma today and head towards Mantua, stopping to visit a parmesan cheese producer en route, whetting our appetite for lunch at an excellent local restaurant beside the River Po in Viadana. After lunch we continue on through the flatlands of the Po Valley, arriving in Mantua in the late



Teatro Farnese



Mantua



Ferrara

afternoon. The evening is at leisure. Overnight Mantua (B, L)

Tuesday 6 May Mantua and the Gonzaga

We spend the morning exploring the early Renaissance monuments of Mantua, many built for the Gonzaga family under whose rule the city enjoyed a long period of political prestige and cultural splendour. We visit the Ducal Palace, a vast agglomeration of medieval and Renaissance structures now housing fine works of art, including Andrea Mantegna's celebrated *Camera degli Sposi* or 'bridal chamber'. We also see the early church of Sant'Andrea, designed by Leon Battista Alberti, and the later Teatro Bibiena, which embodies many ideals of Renaissance humanism and scientific endeavour. The afternoon and evening are at leisure. Overnight Mantua (B)

Wednesday 7 May The Palazzo Te and Sabbioneta

This morning we have a guided tour of the Palazzo Te, an extraordinary pleasure palace on the outskirts of Mantua. The Palazzo's exceptional decor is the work of Giulio Romano, a student of Raphael's and one of the finest Mannerist painters of the 16th century. The afternoon is dedicated to the nearby walled town of Sabbioneta, a gem of the Renaissance, where the highlights of our guided visit include the superb 100 metre long Galleria degli Antichi, renowned for its heavily frescoed walls, and the remarkable Teatro All'Antica by Vincenzo Scamozzi. Overnight Mantua (B)

Thursday 8 May Ferrara and the Este

Today we travel to Ferrara, seat of the Este family and the last of the old Ducal capitals along the Po before it reaches the Adriatic. En route we visit the small town of San Benedetto Po. Listed amongst the most beautiful towns in Italy, it grew up around the Abbey of San Benedetto in Polirone, a major Benedictine abbey complex and one of most visited religious monuments in Lombardy. After lunch we continue to Ferrara, enjoying a panoramic tour around the magnificent walls of this beautiful city before arriving at our hotel in the historic centre. After checking in we take an orientation walk of the city centre, completing the day with a degustation of local products and wine at a nearby locale. Overnight Ferrara (B, D)

Friday 9 May Musei e Palazzi

We spend the morning exploring the medieval centre of Ferrara including a walk through the Jewish quarter and a visit to the cathedral. After lunch we enjoy a guided visit to the outstanding Palazzo Schifanoia where we view one of the most important 15th-century fresco cycles in Italy, a glorious work painted by Francesco della Cossa and others depicting the court of Borso d'Este. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure. Overnight Ferrara (B)

HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. Hotels are a comfortable four or five-star standard.

Turin, Grand Hotel Sitea

(4 nights)

grandhotelsitea.it

Pavia, Hotel Moderno

(2 nights)

www.hotelmoderno.it

Cremona, Hotel Delle Arti

(2 nights)

www.dellearti.com

Parma, Starhotels du Parc

(3 nights)

www.starhotels.com

Mantua, Hotel Casa Poli

(3 nights)

www.hotelcasapoli.it

Ferrara, Princess Art Hotel

(3 nights)

princessferrara.it

WEATHER

We can look forward to mild spring weather for our trip, with temperatures ranging from cool to mild throughout. Daily maximums will sit around 16-20°C degrees, dropping to 9-12°C degrees at night. Some rain can be expected.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Three

This tour is among our most physically demanding. This is a long tour with a fair amount of walking, which would require a good level of overall fitness. Activities may include travelling long distances, walking on difficult terrain, climbing stairs, embarking and disembarking boats and long days of touring.

Saturday 10 May

The Po Delta

We spend a full day exploring the magnificent Po Delta, an extraordinary wetland area recognised by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve in 2015. Our first visit is to see the exceptional frescoes at the Abbey of Pomposa before we head to the town of Comacchio, founded in the early Medieval period and famous for its marinated eel industry. Known as 'little Venice' the town is built on a lagoon and a series of small islets, connected by bridges. In the afternoon we enjoy a private boat tour on the lagoon before returning to Ferrara. Tonight, we gather for a farewell dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Ferrara (B, D)

Sunday 11 May

Departure

Our tour concludes this morning, after breakfast in our hotel. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

sharon@academytravel.com.au



info@academytravel.com.au



academytravel.com.au