

ITALY'S SECRET FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA

TUESDAY 10 – MONDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2024 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: CHARLES FREEMAN

£2725

- Visit one of Italy's most interesting & unspoilt regions
- Remarkable blend of Italian & Habsburg history
- Marvellous selection of monuments across the centuries
- Aquileia & Trieste
- Visit based in Udine, a charming Medieval & Renaissance town
- Very good local food & wine



Piazza Liberta', Udine

OVERVIEW

Your first question will undoubtedly be “Where is Friuli-Venezia Giulia?” Nestling underneath the Dolomite Alps and bordering both Austria and Slovenia, this largely rural area is a veritable cornucopia of artistic and natural treasures.

Romans, Goths, Byzantines, Venetians and the inevitable Habsburgs have all left fine buildings, many in superlative condition. Wonderful late Roman mosaics at Aquileia, marvellous frescoes by the Tiepolo family in Udine, faded Habsburg villas garlanding idyllic Trieste – all these and more await the connoisseur traveller. The area is renowned for its white wines which, together with the marvellous regional cuisine, will amply complement the visual treats which we shall see.

‘Friuli’ is an ancient territory straddling Italy’s border with Austria and Slovenia, its people reflecting this varied cultural mix. ‘Venezia’ proclaims Venice’s long-established territorial ambitions towards Friuli, as it worked to exterminate any threat to its naval and trading power, while also protecting its own expansion from likely Habsburg interference. Finally, it is said that ‘Giulia’ refers to the role played by Julius Caesar in the conquest of this part of the ancient Roman world. From this complex military and political history, a strong visual culture emerged, energised by all those who came to settle amidst the area’s mountain valleys and fertile plains.

This will be the focus of our seven-day visit when we shall be based in the delightful town of Udine, within easy reach of all that we shall see. There are ancient Roman remains, fine medieval churches and monasteries full of sculptures, mosaics and frescoes. During the Renaissance, local artist Giovanni da Udine made his name in Rome working with Raphael, returning home with a new and decorative approach to the arts. While the area was under Venetian influence in the eighteenth century the famous Tiepolo family were much employed painting delightful frescoes in churches and palaces. In short, there is no shortage of lovely places to explore.

Guided by noted historian, writer and expert on Mediterranean culture, Charles Freeman, we shall be based at the **4* Hotel Astoria** in Udine. It is ideally situated in the heart of this historic town and is surrounded by handsome piazzas full of bars, restaurants and stylish shops.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 10 September – We fly early afternoon from London’s Heathrow to Venice, arriving in the afternoon. We transfer by coach to **Udine** in nearby Friuli, staying for six nights at the **4* Hotel Astoria** where there will be a little time to rest followed by a group dinner in a local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Wednesday 11 September – We begin our week focusing on antiquity, close to the coast: **Aquileia** was a bustling Roman city, which in time became the seat of a Patriarch, a church official of great importance. This twin heritage of secular Roman and early Christian endeavour is reflected in a splendid array of sites. The most interesting include the fine **Basilica** which has the most important mosaic pavement of its type in Italy; a large early **Baptistry** and an **Archaeological Museum** with some very good contents reflecting the maritime origins of the site. We continue to nearby **Grado**, where we have a group lunch. Grado is a fishing town on the Adriatic but in antiquity it too played an important role in history, reflected in two fine early **Churches**. All in all, today's visits will be a magical introduction to a mysterious world. We return to Udine and the evening will be free.

Day 3: Thursday 12 September – Pre-Roman in origin, **Udine** came to prominence in early medieval times - the hill at the centre of today's city offered an ideal fortified site to control the old Roman road which ran by it. Udine grew prosperous, reflected in the many buildings of interest we shall see. Our day will include the **Duomo** which is medieval in origin, and the **Castello**, sitting on its hill and now home to an **Art Gallery**. After a group lunch, we visit Udine's **Diocesan Museum and Tiepolo Gallery**. Seventeenth century in date, it contains frescoes by the Tiepolo family, Giambattista and his son, Giandomenico, and their followers. The father was the last of the great Baroque decorative painters, while his son ushered in a lighter, Rococo style. The evening will be free.

Day 4: Friday 13 September – **Trieste** lies on the Adriatic coast and is a city of strong contrasts: though now in Italy, it is not Italian in either looks or culture. Indeed, it is more a place shaped by the Habsburgs – more Viennan-on-Sea? We begin at the **Duomo of San Giusto** and the nearby **Citadel**, both dominating the city from their lofty hill-side perch. Nearby, there is also the small, very interesting **Archaeological Museum**, where there is a memorial to the founder of art history, the eighteenth-century scholar JJ Winckelmann, tragically murdered in Trieste in 1768. Down in the city centre, there will be some free time for lunch (not included) after which we drive along the coast to **Castello di Miramare**, the seaside villa home of the Habsburg couple who became the ill-fated Emperor and Empress of Mexico, Maximilian and Carlotta. We return to Udine where the evening will be free.

Day 5: Saturday 14 September – This morning we visit two delightful villages, beginning at **San Daniele dei Friuli**, famed for its cured ham and containing one of the loveliest frescoed churches in these hills. After coffee, we continue to **Spilimbergo**, a town much used as an Imperial "stop off" between Austria and Italy. Our walk will take us through the old quarter visiting the **Cathedral**, ending with a group lunch within the walls of the old **Castello**. We return to Udine where the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free.

Day 6: Sunday 15 September – We drive to **Cividale di Friuli**, a delightful town, starting with the so-called **Lombard Temple**, in essence a rare, early medieval church decorated with marvellous sculptures in stucco. The **Duomo** is also of interest and the town's **Museum** is one of the best in the area. After lunch (not included), we *might* just be able to pop across the nearby border into **Slovenia**. We return to Udine and have our final group dinner in one of Udine's best restaurants.

Day 7: Monday 16 September – We leave Udine for the final time and drive westwards towards Venice. En route, we shall visit the peaceful Benedictine **Abbey of Sesto Reghena**. We continue to the pretty village of **Roncada** where we have our final group lunch. We continue the very short distance to Venice airport for the return flight to Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2725 **Without flights** £2565 **Deposit** £395

Single Supplement £170 (Single Superior Rooms with French Bed)

Hotel 6 nights with breakfast at 4* Hotel Astoria

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA468** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1415**, arrive Venice **1725**

Return: **BA469** Depart Venice **1710**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1825**

Price includes 2 dinners & 4 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Charles Freeman & our local tour manager, James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 4 dinners & 2 lunches



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