



CICERONI
T R A V E L

VERDI, VILLAS, GARDENS & WINE VERONA & THE VALPOLICELLA

TUESDAY 13 – SUNDAY 18 JULY 2021 (6 DAYS)

TOUR DIRECTOR: JAMES HILL

£2950

- Enjoy Verdi's *Aida*, *La Traviata* & *Nabucco* at Verona's magnificent Roman amphitheatre
- Private visits to & lunches in several handsome villas, gardens & vineyards in Valpolicella
- Discover historic Verona on a gently paced morning walk
- 'A Day on the Lake', exploring the privately-owned Isola del Garda
- 4* country hotel in quiet surroundings in Valpolicella wine country



Grezzana, Verona, Villa Arvedi

OVERVIEW

Can there be anything more exciting on a warm July evening than to sit in the great Roman Amphitheatre of Verona as the orchestra prepares to launch into one of Verdi's marvellous operas? Equally stimulating are the summer delights of the country villas and gardens of the Valpolicella wine region. These sit tantalisingly close to the civic munificence of one of Northern Italy's most delightful cities, Verona.

Verona owes its origins to the Romans, an important stop on routes to the north and west. Much remains to be seen from this era such as the Amphitheatre (the venue for the Opera Festival) and the city's urban plan. Today's city is organised round two major medieval squares, the Piazza delle Erbe and the Piazza dei Signori, built on top of their Roman predecessors. These charming spaces, together with the surrounding streets and alleys, have palaces and monuments of outstanding beauty, testifying to the wealth of its native aristocracy. From Medieval times there are many churches to be seen, including the city's cathedral and particularly San Zeno with its fine paintings, including Andrea Mantegna's *San Zeno Altarpiece*.

Further delights await us in the hills to the north of Verona, in the Valpolicella. We shall visit some of the most important producers of Amarone and Valpolicella Classico at Villa Mosconi Bertani and Villa Serego Alighieri, where we shall enjoy tastings and private lunches. Horticultural enthusiasts will enjoy our visit to the seventeenth century Villa Arvedi garden, where we shall be the guests of Count Allegri-Arvedi for lunch within the splendid Baroque grotto of the villa's garden. The formal garden at Villa Rizzardi will come as an unexpected treat, as we contemplate its remarkable box amphitheatre whilst the gardens at Isola del Garda lie secluded in a remarkable private Lake Garda island setting.

The included operas this year will be the late Franco Zeffirelli's spectacular production of Verdi's *Aida* on the third night, *La Traviata* on the fourth, again by Zeffirelli; and an extraordinary production of *Nabucco* on the fifth night by Arnaud Bernard. All included seats will be reserved in the First Sector Stalls offering good sight of the stage and reasonable sound quality.

Based at the comfortable 4* **Hotel Villa Quaranta** in the Valpolicella wine region, it enjoys a semi-rural setting just a few miles to the north-west of Verona. This seventeenth century vineyard is now a hotel and spa owned by the Tommasi family, themselves renowned local wine producers. The hotel has a restaurant, a large swimming pool and adjoining spa with many treatments available. Thus, we shall be perfectly placed amidst the gentle surroundings of vine-draped hillsides, villas and gardens, to take advantage of easy access to Verona.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Tuesday 13 July – We fly from Gatwick to Verona, arriving in the mid-afternoon and transfer by coach to **Ospedaletto di Pescantina**, Verona, staying for five nights at the 4* **Hotel Villa Quaranta**. There will be a group dinner in a local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Wednesday 14 July – We drive the short distance into **Verona** to spend the day in this marvellous city. Rising to prominence under the Romans, Verona's ancient past is reflected by the magnificence of its **Amphitheatre**, easily admired during each opera. Crossing the Roman **Ponte Pietra**, we begin with Verona's **Cathedral**, a heady mix of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, complemented by a masterpiece by Titian. A visit to the Dominican church of **Sant'Anastasia** will lead us to the splendid **Piazza delle Erbe** and the **Piazza dei Signori**, the civic heart of Verona. After lunch (not included) and some free time to explore, we visit one of northern Italy's most important Romanesque churches, the **Basilica of San Zeno**. Its highlight is the famed **San Zeno Altarpiece** by Andrea Mantegna. We return to our hotel after which the evening will be free.

Day 3: Thursday 15 July – We spend today exploring the wine, villas and gardens of the **Valpolicella**, beginning at the **Pojega Garden** at **Villa Rizzardi**, laid out in the late eighteenth century, a masterpiece of Italian garden design. It is a combination of gallery-like perspectives, formal hedging and a stunning 'green amphitheatre'. We continue to the nearby vineyard **Villa Mosconi Bertani**, beautifully located in a gentle valley. Our private visit will include the eighteenth-century house, gardens and vineyard, followed by a wine-tasting lunch in the villa. We return to our hotel to rest and then drive into Verona for dinner (not included) and our first performance of our week, Verdi's **Aida** in Franco Zeffirelli's spectacular production. After the performance, we return to our hotel.

Day 4: Friday 16 July – Following a leisurely breakfast we leave the hotel late morning and travel the short distance to **Villa Arvedi**. Fine baroque interiors, one of the oldest formal gardens in Italy and a private group light lunch in the spectacular Baroque **Grotto** of the villa's garden – all these elements will combine to provide a memorable occasion. After time in the afternoon to rest, we return to Verona for our second opera, Zeffirelli's production of Verdi's **La Traviata**, after which we return to our hotel.

Day 5: Saturday 17 July – We leave our hotel mid-morning and drive westwards to the eastern shores of **Lake Garda**, where our private boat will take us to the privately-owned **Isola di Garda**. A member of the Cavazza-Talbot family will host our visit around the fine terraced garden which hugs a striking neo-Gothic villa dominating one end of the magically-placed little island. We return via our boat for lunch (not included) and some free time at the pretty lakeside village of **Torri del Benaco** after which we return to our hotel to rest. In the evening we return to Verona for our concluding group dinner. Tonight's performance will be Verdi's **Nabucco** in an extraordinary production by Arnaud Bernard.

Day 6: Sunday 18 July – After our final night at the opera, we leave late morning to visit the **Serego Alighieri Vineyard**. Wine has been made here for generations, a fact well-known to the great poet Dante's son, Pietro, who bought the estate in 1353. Our visit will explore some of the Veneto's most prestigious wines, complimented by a light group lunch on site. We continue to Venice airport for our flight to London Gatwick.

The Operas: The three featured operas this year will be Verdi's **Aida** on the third night, **La Traviata** on the fourth and **Nabucco** on the fifth night. All three operas are included in the visit cost and all seats will be reserved in the **First Sector Stalls** - these offer good sight of the stage and reasonable sound quality. However, please be aware that we are not able to choose individual seats or specify particular rows. You can upgrade to **GOLD** seats for £35 per ticket; and to **PLATINUM** (the central seats of the first 20 rows) for £79 per ticket.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2950 **Without flights** £2790 **Deposit** £650

Single Supplement £225 in Standard Room or £285 in Deluxe Room (Double for Sole Use)
Double / Two sharing are in Deluxe Rooms

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at 4* Hotel Villa Quaranta

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA2598** Depart London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1125**, arrive Verona **1430**

Return: **BA2585** Depart Venice **1745** arrive London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1900**

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with water, wine and coffee, tickets for 3 performances in First Sector Stall seats, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of our local tour manager, James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Gatwick, 3 dinners & 2 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

