



OPERAS, VILLAS, GARDENS & WINE VERONA & THE VALPOLICELLA

MONDAY 4 – SATURDAY 9 JULY 2022 (6 DAYS)

TOUR DIRECTOR: JAMES HILL

£2675

- Enjoy spectacular productions of Verdi's *Nabucco* & *Aida* at the Verona amphitheatre
- Private visits & lunches at two handsome villas & gardens
- Discover historic Verona & Palladio's La Malcontenta near Venice.
- Private visit to Isola del Garda on Lake Garda
- 4* country hotel in Valpolicella wine country



Villa Arvedi near Verona

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, for whom it was 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 layout of 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 Mantegna's *San Zeno Altarpiece*. For those with a secular or romantic agenda, there is also, of course, the supposed house of Juliet. However, you may find the reality of today's tourist embrace somewhat challenging!

Further delights await us in the hills to the north of Verona, in the Valpolicella. We shall visit one of the most important producers of Amarone and Valpolicella Classico at Villa Mosconi Bertani, where we shall enjoy a private lunch at the exquisite eighteenth century villa, accompanied by a choice selection of the estate's wines. Horticultural enthusiasts will enjoy our visit to the seventeenth century Villa Arvedi garden, where we shall be the guests of Contessa Allegrì-Arvedi for lunch within the splendid Baroque grotto of the villa's garden. After the busy life of the city, Verona's Giusti Garden will come as a welcome green oasis. Finally, the formal garden at Villa Rizzardi will come as an unexpected treat, as we contemplate its immaculate parterres and remarkable box amphitheatre.

The two featured operas will be Verdi's *Nabucco* on the fourth night and the spectacular *Aida* on our final night. Both operas are well suited to the Arena's great performance space. We shall be based at the comfortable **4* Hotel Villa Quaranta** in the Valpolicella wine region, which enjoys a 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, whose ordered vines grow all over the Valpolicella. The hotel has a good 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: Monday 4 July – We fly from London's Heathrow to Venice, arriving in the late 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 the hotel restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Tuesday 5 July – This morning we drive the short distance into **Verona**. 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 within through its richly decorated side chapels, one of which features a masterpiece by Titian. We continue to the historic centre via the Dominican church of **Sant'Anastasia** and the splendid **Piazza delle Erbe** and the **Piazza dei Signori**, the civic heart of Verona. Following some free time for lunch (not included), we visit one of northern Italy's most important Romanesque churches – the **Basilica of San Zeno**. The church's highlight is the famed **San Zeno Altarpiece** by Andrea Mantegna. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Wednesday 6 July – This morning we return to Verona and the eastern side of the historical centre of Verona to visit the delightful **Giardini Giusti**, laid out in the sixteenth century behind the owner's town palace. Parterres, cypress tree avenues and grottoes form an Italian garden idyll, rarely matched according to travellers such as John Evelyn. After a coffee break, we travel the short distance north of the city close to the village of **Grezzana** to visit **Villa Arvedi**. Fine baroque interiors, one of the oldest formal gardens in Italy and a private group lunch in the spectacular Baroque *Grotto* of the villa's garden – all these elements will combine to provide a memorable occasion. We return to our hotel where the remainder of the afternoon and evening will be free.

Day 4: Thursday 7 July – We spend the day exploring the wine, villas and gardens of the nearby **Valpolicella** beginning at the **Pojega Garden** at the vineyard **Villa Rizzardi**, laid out in the late eighteenth century, and a masterpiece of Italian garden design. It is a combination of gallery-like perspectives, formal hedging and a stunning 'green amphitheatre'. We continue to nearby **Villa Mosconi Bertani**, beautifully located in a gentle valley. Our private visit of the eighteenth-century house, gardens and vineyard will be followed by a wine-tasting lunch in the villa, the centre of one of the premier wine-producing estates in the area. We return mid-afternoon to our hotel for rest after which we return to Verona for dinner (not included) and this evening's performance of Verdi's **Nabucco**. Following the performance, we return to our hotel.

Day 5: Friday 8 July – Following our late night at the opera, our half-day of activities is decidedly leisurely. We depart mid-morning and drive westwards to the eastern shores of **Lake Garda**, where we travel by private boat 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 little island. We return by boat to the pretty lakeside village of **Torri del Benaco** for lunch (not included) after which we return to our hotel to rest. In the early evening we return to Verona for our final group dinner, after which the evening performance will be **Aida**. We return to the hotel after the performance.

Day 6: Saturday 9 July – Our final day ends on a high note! We depart our hotel mid-morning and travel to the village of **Mira** south of Venice. Delightfully situated next to the Brenta Canal, Palladio's **Villa Foscari detto La Malcontenta** is one of the architect's most accomplished villa commissions completed for the Venetian Foscari brothers in 1560. Following our visit to the villa, we shall have our final group lunch in the nearby village of Mira. In the early afternoon we drive the short distance to Venice airport and our afternoon return flight to Heathrow.

The Operas: The two featured operas will be Verdi's **Nabucco** on the fourth night and Verdi's **Aida** on the fifth night. Both operas are included in the visit cost. For the two included operas, all seats will be reserved in the **First Sector GOLD** and 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 **First Sector PLATINUM** seats for a supplement of £50 per opera, per person.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2675 **Without flights** £2520 **Deposit** £575

Single Supplement £225 in Standard Room or £295 in Deluxe Room (Double for Sole Use)

Upgrade to 1st Sector PLATINUM: £50 per opera

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at 4* Hotel Villa Quaranta

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA2584** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1330**, arrive Venice **1645**

Return: **BA2585** Depart Venice **1715**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1830**

Price includes 2 dinners & 3 lunches with water, wine and coffee, opera tickets for 2 performances in stall seats at operas of your choice, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of our local tour manager, James Hill

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



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