

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Crafted with love, by **secret** Escapes

Italian adventures: opulence and romance from Genoa to Verona

Despite Genoa not placing that high on tourism lists, it offers a plethora of experiences for those who want to experience Italy's northwestern coast. It's home to just as many interesting and fascinating museums as some of its more populated counterparts, such as the Museo di Palazzo Reale or the Genoa Aquarium for the younger ones, and is a rather good destination for pescetarians since Liguria, the region in which Genoa is situated, is well known for its fish produce. Speaking of food, head to the [Bristol Palace](#) and their Ristorante Giotto and order typical Trofie pasta with pesto sauce, string beans and potatoes (washed down with a glass of Millesimato Brut Rose Vigna Dogarina). A member of the Duetorrihotels chain, this gem is tucked away under the arches of Via XX Settembre. One of the most culturally and aesthetically pleasing streets in Genoa, this divine setting is surrounded by fruit and vegetable markets and clothing shops – certainly one for those who like to indulge in a spot of retail therapy.



Porticciolo di Nervi, Genova, Italia

The rest of the hotel is just as impressive. Said to have inspired frequent visitor Alfred Hitchcock into creating the 1958 hit 'Vertigo', the entrance hallway is a rather beautiful and artistic space. Since its opening in 1905, the Bristol Palace has very much been seen as one of the most prestigious hotels in the city, with Genoa's aristocracy and other members of high society favouring its chic vibe over the years for gatherings. It was even occupied during the Second World War and used by the German government, who built a secret tunnel to the port – quite a history. Both Classic and Deluxe rooms are available here, and come filled with comforting amenities including air conditioning, Wi-Fi and soundproofing.

After a relaxing and peaceful stay, turn right out of the hotel and venture past the Piazza De Ferrari fountain towards Ombrello (Umbrella) Street. Take the scenic public lift from Piazza del Portello or, for those who want a gentle stroll, walk up to the Spianata Castelletto platform to observe stunning views of the surrounding streets and port. Hop onto the Art Nouveau lift for views out to sea – the landscape of Italian stone pine and cypress trees is well worth it. With the tragedy of the Morandi bridge collapse in 2018, Genoa is in need of a lot of love – and deservedly so. Put it on your bucket list and pack your bags – but leave space for mementos, including some authentic Genoese pesto.



Image: [Due Torri Hotel](#)

Make Verona your next port of call: a bustling city in the Veneto region of northern Italy, it's known as "The Painted City" as a result of homeowners using their properties to display wealth through wall painting throughout history. As a result, this beautiful place has become one of UNESCO's 53 Italian sites of heritage. During your time here, enjoy a leisurely stay at the five-star [Due Torri Hotel](#). Nestled in the heart of the city, it stands proudly next to the church of Saint Anastasia and is a member of the prestigious Excellence Club of Verona & Lago di Garda Convention Bureau – a seal of quality. It also boasts the best view in Verona from its rooftop; whether your tittle is an Aperol Spritz or prosecco, head up there for magic hour just before sunset for a warming experience.

If splashing out, go for the Sant'Anastasia Presidential suite. Benefitting from an incredible view of Saint Anastasia place and its gorgeous church, its decoration represents the imperial style of the whole property. Rooms and suites come in a range of styles yet all offer the same levels of comfort and luxury. One of the most requested rooms at Due Torri Hotel is the Maria Callas suite, which takes its name from the famous soprano who frequently stayed here whilst performing at the famous Arena di Verona back in the day.



Arena in Verona. Image: [iStock/emicristea](#)

Speaking of the Arena di Verona, ask to go on a backstage tour for a few euros when exploring the city. It is fascinating to see the players running around and the sets being hoisted and fixed into place. Harking back to 30 AD, this Roman amphitheatre is still very much in operation with the famous annual opera festival in the summer months (from June to September). If you aren't averse to crowds, head to Juliet's Balcony next – known of course for its links to the works of Shakespeare and Luigi da Porto, who created the original literary work around 1530. If you're after some respite, head to [Caffe Dante Bistrot](#) on Piazza dei Signori, where you can select a number of cured meats and cheeses to suit your budget and appetite.

If you do venture outside the city on your way back to the airport, plan a trip to the simply wondrous Villa Della Torre vineyard. Allegrini, one of the most well-known Italian wine producers, operate from here; expect luscious landscaped gardens and views for miles, as well as intriguing spaces within the villa itself: an intricate fireplace depicting heaven and hell; the Hall of Mirrors which features the work of the previous owner, Giulio Della Torre; the Nymphaeum (or Cave of Mysteries); and the Fish Pond, which reminds visitors of the importance of water as a life-giving force for the continuation of life. The culinary options are tempting here, too: try the poached eggs in a sumptuous pea gazpacho, roasted vegetables with root vegetable falafel cakes, and a variety of desserts with celery ice cream – a most refreshing way by which to end your journey.

Words by Hannah Ramsden