



# Day Trips from Venice

## Riviera Brenta p161

See where 18th-century Venetian elites gambled away their summers in Palladian-style villas.

## Padua (Padova) p163

A vibrant university town with a treasure trove of fresco cycles from its medieval golden age.

## Vicenza p167

Palladio's adopted home is defined by the architect's classical restraint, while its countryside is dotted with his elegant villas.

## Prosecco Country p171

Share a glass of *prosecco* with hard-working locals in one of the Veneto's most underrated areas.

## Verona p174

Romeo and Juliet were fictional, but Verona's real history lives on in its Roman arena, Romanesque churches and Renaissance churches.

## Verona's Wine Country p180

Valpolicella yields some of Italy's biggest, boldest reds, while Soave delivers crisp, refreshing whites.



# Riviera Brenta

## Explore

Every 13 June for 300 years, summer officially kicked off with a traffic jam along the Grand Canal, as a flotilla of fashionable Venetians headed to their villas along the banks of the Brenta. Every last ball gown and poker chair was loaded onto barges for dalliances that stretched until November. The annual party ended when Napoleon arrived in 1797, but 80 villas still strike elegant poses along the Brenta, and six of them are now open to the public at various times of the year.

## The Best...

- ➔ **Sight** Villa Foscari
- ➔ **Place to Eat** Osteria da Conte (p162)
- ➔ **Place to Drink** I Molini del Dolo (p163)

## Top Tip

All the villas along the Brenta show their best architectural face to the river, where boats arriving from Venice would dock. Even today the best way to experience the riviera is on a flat-bottomed riverboat.

## Getting There & Away

- ➔ **Boat** Organised boat tours leave from both Venice and Padua.
- ➔ **Bus** ACTV's Venezia-Padova Extraurbane bus 53 leaves from Venice's Piazzale Roma about every half-hour, stopping at key Brenta villages en route to Padua.
- ➔ **Train** Venice-Padua services stop at Dolo (€3.40, 25 minutes, one to three per hour).
- ➔ **Car** Take SS11 from Mestre-Venezia towards Padua and take the A4 autostrada towards Dolo/Padua.

## Need to Know

- ➔ **Area Code** 041
- ➔ **Location** 15km to 30km west of Venice

## SIGHTS

Many visitors opt to self-drive around the Riviera Brenta, but its network of cycling routes also makes it a great place to explore on two wheels.

### VILLA FOSCARI

HISTORIC BUILDING

(041 520 39 66; [www.lamalcontenta.com](http://www.lamalcontenta.com); Via dei Turisti 9, Malcontenta; €10; 9am-noon Tue & Sat Apr-Oct) The most romantic Brenta villa, the Palladio-designed, Unesco-listed Villa Foscari (built 1555-60) got its nickname La Malcontenta from a *grande-dame* of the Foscari clan who was reputedly exiled here for cheating on her husband – though these bright, highly sociable salons hardly constitute a punishment. The villa was abandoned for years, but Giovanni Zelotti's frescoes have now been restored to daydream-inducing splendour.

### VILLA WIDMANN REZZONICO FOSCARI

HISTORIC BUILDING

(041 547 00 12; Via Nazionale 420, Mira; €10; 9am-noon Tue & Sat May-Oct) To appreciate both gardening and Venetian-style social engineering, stop just west of Oriago at Villa Widmann Rezzonico Foscari. Originally owned by Persian-Venetian nobility, the 18th-century villa captures the Brenta's last days of rococo decadence, with Murano sea-monster chandeliers and a frescoed grand ballroom with upper viewing gallery. Head to the gallery to reach the upstairs ladies' gambling parlour where, according to local lore, villas were once gambled away in high-stakes games.

### VILLA BARCHESSA VALMARANA

HISTORIC BUILDING

(041 426 63 87; [www.villavalmarana.net](http://www.villavalmarana.net); Via Valmarana 11, Mira; adult/reduced €6/5; 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, by appointment during winter) Debuting on the riviera in the 17th century, Villa Barchessa Valmarana was commissioned by Vicenza's aristocratic Valmarana family. You'll find

## BRENTA BY BIKE

The scenic Riviera Brenta plains make an easy, enjoyable bicycle ride, and you can speed past four boats along 150km of cycling routes. **Rental Bike Venice** (p243) is a friendly bike-rental outlet with branches in many Veneto towns offering mountain and city bikes, plus pre-loaded GPS units (€10), guided tours (€80 per person), roadside assistance and advice in English on itineraries and local restaurants.