



National Trust for Historic Preservation

National Trust Tours

Palladian Villas of Veneto

September 16 - 21, 2024

From \$2550.00

Veneto is one of Italy's wealthiest regions, reflected in the extravagance of the grand villas and their stunning gardens. Many of the grand villas we visit were designed by Andrea Palladio, one of the most influential individuals in the history of Western architecture.

Join us as we discover no fewer than six glorious villas on tour. The first on our list is one of the most recognisable buildings of the Renaissance the Palladian Masterpiece, **Villa Rotonda**. The UNESCO World Heritage Site was designed for elegant entertainment and is definitely one for art lovers — lavishly decorated with stucco and frescoes. We are honoured to be shown round by the owner himself, Count Valmarana.

A short walk along a leafy lane takes us to an outstanding architectural and artistic site, the **Villa Valmarana**. The surroundings were designed to suit different tastes, ranging from an Italian garden with a dovecote and well, to a pagoda in the woods. The villa is owned by a different branch of the Valmarana family, and we are privileged to be shown round by one of them before enjoying dinner in a room decorated with frescoes by Tiepolo.

It's easy to get lost in the beauty of **Villa Barbarigo** at Valsanzibio — not least because of the large maze within its gardens, but also thanks to its charming rabbit island. The exceptional Baroque gardens have been described as some of the most entertaining gardens in Italy. Amongst our visits to the remaining villas, we also enjoy some free time in the beautiful little town of **Asolo** "The City of a Hundred Horizons" is famous for its mountain settings. The Medieval walled town has long been favoured by the literary minded amongst us — including Ernest Hemingway and Robert Browning, who dedicated his poem 'Epilogue to Asolando' to the rural idyll. Our **farewell dinner** is a special affair, hosted by yet another member of the old Italian nobility, the Godi Malinverni family.

Finally, there is the delightful private garden of **Le Paradis des Papillons**, a French-owned Italian garden in the English style!

Tour Highlights

- Guided tour of Villa Rotonda with Count Valmarana
- A tour of historic Vicenza, known as *la città di Palladio*
- The gardens of Villa Barbarigo, the most complete historical garden in Europe
- Giambattista Tiepolo's grand frescoes at Villa Valmarana
- Famous mazes at Villa Pisani
- Palladio's final masterpiece, the family chapel at Villa Barbaro
- Two dinners hosted by Italian aristocrats

Itinerary

Day 1

On arrival at Venice Marco Polo Airport on September 17th, we are met by a local coach and guide and depart for a visit to the grand gardens of **Villa Pisani**, in Stra, near Venice. When Alvise Pisani was elected Doge of Venice in 1735 he commissioned a grand villa to reflect his powerful status and originally the area behind the villa was filled with French parterres. These were replaced by a long pool of water which now dominates the garden, with the palace at one end and an ornate pavilion, converted into luxurious stables, at the other. Avenues provide further views along the length of the garden while a hexagonal belvedere overlooks the avenues in all directions. High walls enclose Pisani's impressive array of greenhouses, where prize winning camellias were once grown.

We continue to our hotel in **Schiavon**, near Vicenza. In the evening we enjoy a welcome drink followed by dinner.

Day 2

Today, following breakfast, we will be joined by a local guide for a walking tour of **Vicenza's** historic city centre, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Exterior views include the Corso Palladio, Palazzo Thiene, Palazzo Barbaran, Palazzo Chiericati, the Basilica Palladiana, the Duomo, while entrance is included to the wonderful **Teatro Olimpico**.

After some free time in Vicenza, we visit the nearby **Villa Rotonda**, which was designed by Andrea Palladio around 1570 and became one of the most recognisable buildings of the Renaissance. Situated on the top of a hill just outside the town of Vicenza, the Villa Capra is called the Villa Rotonda, because of its completely symmetrical plan with a central circular hall. In 1994 UNESCO designated the building as part of the World Heritage Site. We are honoured to be shown round by the owner, Count Valmarana himself.

We return to the hotel in the afternoon and in the early evening transfer to the **Villa Valmarana**, an outstanding architectural and artistic site belonging to the Valmarana family taking its name from the statues of dwarves (*nani*) which decorate its garden wall. The Villa's surroundings are designed to suite different tastes and functional needs, ranging from an Italian garden with dovecote and the well, the walk through the hornbeam and the pagoda in the woods. The family still lives Valmarana Villa, which is widely considered the top expressive painting of the eighteenth century and the highest testimony of the genius of Tiepolo, and we are privileged to be shown round by a member of the family. This privilege is extended as we enjoy dinner in a room adorned with Tiepolo's frescoes.

We return to the hotel after our meal.

Day 3

Today, following breakfast, we visit the gardens of **Villa Barbarigo** at Valsanzibio. The gardens were created for Antonio Barbarigo during 1665-69 and with their carefree atmosphere and garden 'rooms' full of surprises have been described as one of the most entertaining gardens in Italy. One of the most striking features is a series of ascending pools decorated with statues and fountains, and in one case a graceful Watergate which has Diana, goddess of hunting sitting astride the pediment with her dogs close a hand. There is also a large and effective maze, a charming rabbit island and various *giochi d'acqua* (water tricks) which provide further unexpected amusement.

On our way to our next stop we will make a brief photo stop outside the **Villa Vescovi** in the Euganean Hills. Dating from 1535, this was the summer retreat of the Bishops of Padua.

Day 3 (continued)

After an opportunity for lunch (not included) in **Arquà Petarca** we visit the private garden of **Le Paradis des Papillons**, near Padua. Created by a passionate young garden designer, this unusual, naturalistic garden supports not just the butterflies that give the garden its name (the owners are French), but a wide range of other animals including ducks, chickens, peacocks and rabbits. The garden itself takes its inspiration from English gardens and is filled with a wonderful range of plants.

We return to the hotel.

Day 4

After breakfast today we depart for a visit to the gardens of the **Villa Barbaro**, in Maser. The Villa was built by Andrea Palladio for Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro during 1560-68 as a farmhouse at the centre of an agricultural estate and has the unique attraction of being the only Palladian villa in Veneto to retain some of its original garden. The garden was laid out in front of the villa and Palladio's great achievement was to unite the villa, garden and surrounding landscape and seemingly create a single architectural structure. As the gardens at the front were essentially a public space, Palladio also designed a secret garden behind the villa, a small enclosed courtyard dominated by a magnificent nymphaeum, decorated with statues of classical gods.

After some free time in the beautiful little town of **Asolo**, where the poet Robert Browning and the explorer Dame Freya Stark once lived, we return to the hotel to freshen up before we depart for dinner at the **Villa Godi Malinverni**. We are met on arrival by a member of this aristocratic family who will show the villa before we sit down to eat.

Later we return to the hotel.

Day 5

After breakfast we transfer to the lively university town of **Padua**, where we visit the **Orto Botanico di Padova** (Padua Botanic Garden), which was established in 1545, making it the oldest university botanical garden in the world. During the 19th century a series of greenhouses were built, and one of them now contains the garden's most famous possessions, a dwarf fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*) from 1781. The garden is surrounded by a circular wall (and a moat to keep out plant-stealing intruders!) and divided into quadrants, within which various beds are arranged. Despite 19th century alterations to the site, this remains one of the finest examples of a 16th century botanical garden in Italy, with a fine collection of plants from around the world. The modern greenhouses are also fascinating and have been developed to a very high standard by the University of Padua. They show us some of the major eco-systems of the world.

We also visit the **Scrovegni Chapel**, home to one of the most amazing works of art you are ever likely to see. Giotto's amazing series of frescoes depicting the life, death and resurrection of Christ is a masterpiece in the history of painting in Italy and Europe in the 14th century, and is considered to be the most complete executed by Giotto in his mature age.

After some free time we transfer to Venice Marco Polo airport where the tour concludes.

Included in the price

- Four nights' bed and continental breakfast at the 4-star Sweet Hotel, Schiavon
- Four dinners
- Comfortable coaching in Italy
- Visits to the Villas Rotonda, Valmarana ai Nani, Barbarigo, Barbaro and Pisani; Orto Botanico di Padova and the private garden Le Paradis des Papillons; Scrovegni Chapel in Padua and the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza
- Services of a Brightwater Holidays tour manager

Not included -

Single room supplement - \$275.00