

Bergamo



Bergamo has very ancient origins: built by the Romans as a fortified citadel thanks to its strategic hilltop position, it has passed through the centuries to the present day, keeping its beauty intact.

Two cities in one: Bergamo is divided into two parts, the lower and the upper. The first is more modern and has been developed mainly since 1800; the second is the historical heart, the soul of the Bergamasco people, built on the hills to dominate the surrounding territory. In the upper town, you can see a collection of clues from the various preceding epochs: from the main street, known as Corsarola, which was the ancient Decumanus Maximus, or the east-west axis typical of all the Roman cities, to the Piazza della Cittadella (the Citadel Square) where the ancient arena stood. Also in Piazza della Cittadella, the Visconti family built their headquarters in 1300, fortifying the area with towers and battlements to render it impenetrable.

But the entire upper town is scattered with buildings, monuments and corners that have remained intact from the past. Walking on the cobbled streets made from ancient pebbles, you can discover enchanting places: San Vigilio Castle, La Rocca military fortress, Gombito Tower, Palazzo della Ragione, Piazza Vecchia, so perfect that it led Le Corbusier to say, "you cannot even touch a stone, it would be a crime."



Protecting such beauty are the Venetian Walls, which have been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since July: Over 6 km of walls dating back to the 1500s, framing the whole upper town. Powerful fortifications that the Republic of Venice erected to protect Bergamo, considered strategic in the geopolitical chessboard of the sixteenth century.

Passing through one of the four gates that serve as openings in the Venetian Walls, Porta Sant'Agostino, leads down to the lower town. Walking on Viale Vittorio Emanuele, a large tree-lined boulevard overlooked by noble mansions, you arrive at the centre of Bergamo, Porta Nuova. Marked unmistakably by two propylaea, which up until just over a century ago, housed a large iron gate, which was used as customs and allowed strangers to access the city, today however, it is the point of reference for those crossing the city along the south-north axis, from the railway station to Upper Bergamo.



Around this fulcrum are the main streets of Lower Bergamo, which retrace the traces of the historical villages, where trade and handicraft businesses flourished for centuries: here, still today, you can find small boutiques or designer stores where to go shopping.

The lower town is not only fun: it is also dotted with churches that guard precious works such as paintings by Lorenzo Lotto or Giambattista Moroni, it hosts the imposing Donizetti Theatre, dedicated to the opera composer symbol of Bergamo throughout the world, and the Accademia Carrara, one of the leading Italian art galleries.

But Bergamo has another peculiarity: it is the only town surrounded by greenery! The Parco dei Colli, measuring 4,700 hectares, entirely surrounds the city area, creating a huge green lung. The Astino Valley is also part of the park, cultivated according to the criteria of bio-diversity and home to the former Monastery, now a place of events, exhibitions and concerts.