TOP TEN FAVOURITE CITIES NEAR FERRARA

1) VENICE (VENETO)

www.visitvenezia.eu / www.veneziaunica.it

When you are there:

- Visit the Cathedral in San Marco's Square and go up onto the roof. The view is beautiful over the Piazza and the Byzantium mosaics are incredible from this angle.
- Go even higher and see all of Venice from the top of the Bell Tower.
- Take a boat trip to the nearby islands of Murano and Burano, famous for their brightly coloured houses, lace-making art, historical glass blowing factories and culinary traditions.
- Visit the Doge's Palace, one of Venice's most iconic landmarks.
- Take a Gondola through the smaller canals before reaching the Rialto Bridge, rather than from the Piazza San Marco which is so busy. Prices are now fixed so you cannot be taken for a ride!(excuse the pun).
- Visit Santa Maria di Nazareth (Chiesa degli Scalzi), the church immediately on the left as you come out of the train station, before crossing over the bridge. It is very impressive inside and has a tiny shop selling herbs and soaps.
- Why not walk to Piazza San Marco via the Rialto Bridge and catch a water bus back to the station? (Check out all-day 'vaporetto' boat passes to save costs)

IMPORTANT: before your trip, visit www.venicevisitpass.com which explains eveything you need to know about Venice's tourist tax.

Taste baccalà (stockfish), Venetian liver served with potatoes and polenta, squid ink risotto or a very expensive but local delicacy called Moléche' (soft-shell crab) served only in certain months in the year. Order 'Cicchetti' - a small plate of snacks typically served in traditional 'bacari' (bars) in Venice.

2) PADOVA (VENETO)

www.turismopadova.it

When you are there:

- Visit Piazza della Frutta e Piazza delle Erbe which host some of the oldest markets in Italy.
- Visit Piazza dei Signori, which also has a market, but is seen in all its splendour on the other days.
- Go to the Botanical Gardens, just off Piazza dei Signori. From the traditional gardens walk through to the modern-style greenhouses.
- Visit the churches in Padova, including the very impressive Sant' Antonio (which in spite of its size is not the actual cathedral of Padova).
- Go to see Giotto's work and breathtaking colbolt blue ceiling in the Capella degli Scrovegni. It is amazing! (You must book well in advance to see it.)
- Relax with a coffee in the oldest bar in Padova, Caffé Pedrocchi.

Padova and the Veneto region are famous for farm products such as the Paduan hen (Gallina Padovana), goose, capon, guinea fowl and duck. Padova produces excellent white and green asparagus, which are often served with boiled eggs, and several varieties of radicchio. Taste the delicious asparagus or chicory risotto, 'Risi e Bisi' (rice and peas) and 'Pasta e Fasoi' (pasta and beans).

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3) VERONA (VENETO)

www.visitverona.it

When you are there:

- Get a map and wander around, exploring narrow streets and tiny piazzas as well as the main piazza called Piazza Bra.
- Enjoy Verona in the summer evenings and relax in one of the many bars or eat an ice-cream whilst listening to the swallows swooping in the skies.
- You must go to see an opera in the Arena in summer. The atmosphere is incredible! Sit on the stone steps and take a cushion for the full experience!
- Visit Verona at Christmas. The Arena holds an enormous nativity exhibition and an impressive iron comet appears in Piazza Bra. There is also an excellent Christmas market selling handcrafts. Look out for our newsletter!
- Have fun in Verona when it celebrates 'Santa Lucia' from 10th - 13th December. Piazza Bra is filled with stalls selling an array of sweets.
- Climb to the top of Lamberti's Tower in Piazza delle Erbe. What a view!
- Visit Juliet's balcony and her house which are just off Piazza delle Erbe, in Via Cappello.
- Take a romantic stroll along the river Adige and stop off at the Roman amphitheatre on the hill. Look out for performances which take place here, as it is such a beautiful setting.
- Climb up to Piazzale Castel San Pietro - a medieval fortress set high on a hilltop above the city. The panorama is well-worth the effort!
- Check out Castelvecchio where children can play and explore its walls. Walk over the castle's bridge to enjoy some beautiful views.
- Lake Garda is very close to Verona and is certainly worth visiting. Villages such as Sirmione can be visited in a day from Ferrara.

Taste different types of risotto which are typical in the area, as well as polenta, gnocchi and 'Tortelli di Valeggio' (pasta stuffed with beef, pork and vegetables, served with butter and sage). Horse meat is typical too. Don't forget to try Verona's typical Christmas cake called 'Pandoro'.

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4) RAVENNA (EMILIA ROMAGNA)

www.visitravenna.it

When you are there:

- Go on a circular tour of all the churches to visit the early Christian and Byzantine Mosaics:

  Neonian Baptistry

  San Vitale

  Sant' Appollinare Nuovo

  Arcivescovado (Archbishop's Palace)

  Arian Baptistry

  Saint' Appollinare in Classe.

- Visit the Mausoleum of Galla Placida. It is one of the best preserved mosaic monuments.
- Visit the tomb of Dante Alighieri in the Basilica di San Francesco and the tiny Dante Museum.

Eat piadina in Ravenna! The 'Ca' de Ven' restaurant in Via Corrado Ricci 24 (near Dante's tomb) comes highly recommended for its piadine and other traditional dishes.
There are also lots of kiosks along the streets which sell delicious piadine.

5) COMACCHIO (EMILIA ROMAGNA)

www.visitcomacchio.it

When you are there:

- Cross over 'I Tre Ponti' (the Three Bridges).
- Visit the new Ancient Delta Museum which has all the local treasures and shows how this area has developed over time.
- Take a ride on the gondolas run by the locals for free.
- Visit the Eel Pickling Factory Museum to get to know the history of fishing in this area.

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- Choose from a variety of boat trips to visit the River Po and the Comacchio lagoons. The Po Delta is full of wildlife and the Salines of Comacchio are a must! Visit the website: www.podeltatourism.it to find out more.
- Comacchio is an excellent destination at Halloween, Christmas, Carnival time and in the summer as it has really well-organised events for everyone.

Don't miss the eel festival (Sagra dell'Anguilla) in September / October.

6) MANTOVA (LOMBARDIA)

www.comune.mantova.it

When you are there:

- Go to San Giorgio's Bridge and admire the view of the city. (Coming from Ferrara by car you will automatically cross over this bridge.)
- Explore Mantova's beautiful piazzas and gardens. 'Giardini di Belfiore' is especially pretty.
- Pay a visit to the Basilica di Sant' Andrea.
- Palazzo Ducale with Mantegna's beautiful frescoes is enchanting.
- Enjoy Palazzo del Te and its interesting museum.
- Take a boat trip on one of Mantova's three lakes. There are short and long trips available.
- Go inside the Bibena Theatre which is small but breathtaking. (Closed at lunchtime).

Try 'Tortelli di zucca' (a variation of Ferrara's Cappellacci, as the Mantovan ones have amaretti inside), 'Bigoli con le sardelle' (a type of spaghetti with fish and garlic) and a cake called Elvezia (a cake made from egg white, sugar and almond paste).

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7) VICENZA (VENETO)

www.vicenzae.org

When you are there:

- It is an interesting city to simply walk around and admire.
- Stop off at one of Palladio's most important villas called Villa Rotonda.
- Visit Palazzo della Ragione in the main square, which hosts art exhibitions.
- Go to see Teatro Olimpico, a Roman style theatre, which is still used today.
- Palazzo Chiericati, which is a Renaissance-style building designed by Palladio, is home to the Civic Museum and large art collection.
- Visit the nearby hills called 'Colle Euganei'. Excellent white and red wine come from this region and there are some great agriturismi and trattorias where you can eat well and cheaply.

Taste 'Bigoli co l'arno' (thick spaghetti with duck) and baccalà (stockfish) served with polenta. Book a wine-tasting tour of this area!

8) BOLOGNA (EMILIA ROMAGNA)

www.bolognawelcome.com

When you are there:

- Climb up the famous towers, Torri degli Asinelli e Garisenda, if you have the energy!
- Visit Piazza Santo Stefano which has some amazing buildings around it.
- Go to Piazza Maggiore where you can visit Neptune's fountain – another historical landmark of the city.
- Pop in the Cathedral of St. Petronio in Piazza Maggiore, which is Italy's fifth largest cathedral and is named after the patron Saint of the city. The size of the cathedral is truly impressive but to fully appreciate it you need to go inside. It has 22 chapels and two organs dating back to 1476 and 1596.

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TOP TEN FAVOURITE CITIES

- Walk around the medieval market area and Loggia dei Mercanti off Piazza Maggiore in Via Rizzoli, Piazza della Mercanzia, Via Drapperie and Via Pescherie. All these tiny alleys used to be buzzing with trade and local activities.
- Explore the university area (Via Zamboni, 15 minutes on foot east of the Towers) which also hosts a variety of fascinating museums including the Astronomy Museum, the Anatomy Museum, the Physics Museum, the Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of Zoology. Bologna's university is the oldest in Europe and dates back to 1088. (Check opening times of museums)
- Visit the fascinating Anatomical Theatre inside the Archiginnasio building just off Piazza Maggiore (Piazza Galvani). You can just imagine the gruesome dissections of animals and bodies which took place in those days. It is free to visit but check the opening days.

- If you like motorbikes then you will love the Ducati Museum in Via Antonio Cavalieri (10 minutes by bus or taxi from the station).
- Take a stroll in Italy's oldest Botanical Gardens which is run by the university. It is free to visit and is in Via Irnerio, 42.
- Drive, cycle, walk or take a tourist train up to the Sancturay of San Luca, another symbol of Bologna which is perched on the top of the local hills. There is a pizzeria / restaurant at the top making it an ideal destination for lunch and a rest while enjoying fantastic views. For further information about how to get there and the distances, visit the above website: https://www.santuariodisanluca.it/eng/
- While exploring the streets of this fascinating city, look out for the porticoes which are an important historical and architectural feature of Bologna.

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Taste Bologna's very own mortadella, green lasagna, 'Tortellini in Brodo' (fresh pasta filled with pork, mortadella and ham, typically served in a broth), 'Tagliatelle alla Bolognese' or 'al ragù' (known in England as 'Spaghetti Bolognese'), 'Piselli alla pancetta'. Parmigiano Reggiano and balsamic vinegar also come from here.

9) CHIOGGIA (EMILIA ROMAGNA)

www.visitchioggia.com

When you are there:

- Enjoy walking around this pretty coastal town, which is also known as 'Little Venice'.
- Walk along the Diga Sottomarina, around the fishing port and down the main street called Corso del Popolo.
- Visit the fascinating Clock Tower Museum.
- Go to see Piazzetta Vigo and the superb fish market which is open on weekdays in the mornings.
- Stop by Chioggia's historical cathedral.
- It is possible to catch a boat to Venice from here. The journey takes about two hours. (We suggest checking prices beforehand).

Try the seafood in Chioggia as it has a wide selection which is caught locally, and you can eat here much more cheaply than in Venice.

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10) MODENA (EMILIA ROMAGNA)

www.visitmodena.it

When you are there:

- Visit Piazza Grande which has some lovely buildings surrounding it, including a 15th century clock tower.
- Go inside the cathedral which is the perfect example of a Romanesque church.
- Visit the Torre della Ghirlandia which is the cathedral's Gothic bell tower.
- Look out for special tours, which take place on certain weekends, to visit the Ducal Palace. It was once the seat of the Este court.
- The Museum Building houses some interesting exhibitions.
- Visit the Enzo Ferrari Museum to trace the history of the Ferrari and its creator. It is a very well-organized and exciting museum for all the family, not just car-lovers.

Products which are typical from Modena include balsamic vinegar, Parmesan cheese, ham and Lambrusco (a red, sparkling wine). 'Cotechino Modena' (a type of sausage) and boiled meats are also traditional from this area often served with lentils.