

Friuli Venezia Giulia: 2026 between new highlights and major events

Located in north-eastern Italy, on the border with Austria and Slovenia, Friuli Venezia Giulia encompasses a thousand-year history and a unique variety of landscapes. It takes less than two hours to cross the region from north to south and from east to west, discovering places of art and culture, exceptional food and wine and a rich calendar of events for 2026, reinforcing the region's role as an international destination.

Four cities of art (Trieste, Udine, Gorizia and Pordenone), two Capitals of Culture (Gorizia-Nova Gorica 2025 and Pordenone 2027) and five UNESCO sites – including the ancient Roman metropolis of Aquileia, Cividale del Friuli, the capital of the first Lombard duchy, and the star-shaped fortress city of Palmanova – combine to offer visitors a diverse historical and artistic panorama.

As the regional capital with a cosmopolitan, Central European character, Trieste boasts Europe's largest sea-facing square, Piazza Unità d'Italia, and numerous initiatives linked to culture, art and nature. Through an interactive route, the Museo LETS – Letteratura Trieste tells the story of the city's literary and multicultural identity, where great authors such as James Joyce, Italo Svevo and Umberto Saba found inspiration for many of their works. ITS Academy, Italy's first museum of contemporary fashion, enriches the scene with projects dedicated to fashion and cinema, including a new exhibition on the visibility, identity and language of fashion, entitled "Exposure – When the world is watching you – from Harry Styles to Lady Gaga" (opening 26 March). Among other new developments, the "open-air museum" concept is expanded with the Magazzino dei Venti (Warehouse of Winds) and the Borarium in Opicina – spaces that tell the story of the Bora as an immersive, evolving experience. Meanwhile, work continues on the new Campo Marzio Railway Museum, scheduled for completion by the end of 2026.

In Udine, a cultured and elegant town with a Venetian architectural touch, art takes centre stage with two international exhibitions. "Impressionism and Modernity" at Casa Cavazzini in the historic centre presents 91 masterpieces from the Kunst Museum Winterthur, including works by Van Gogh, Monet, Picasso, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Magritte, Ernst, Klee and De Chirico, running until 30 August. At Villa Manin in Codroipo (Udine province), the exhibition "Borders: from Gauguin to Hopper" runs until 12 April, featuring over one hundred masterpieces from the 19th and 20th centuries, including works by Caspar David Friedrich, William Turner, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, and Paul Gauguin.

2026 will also cement the legacy of GO! 2025 (Gorizia–Nova Gorica European Capital of Culture). Highlights include the recent opening of the DAG – Digital Art Gallery, the largest digital gallery in Europe, featuring over 1,000 square metres of state-of-the-art curved LED installation in the restored Galleria Bombi. The inaugural work, DATA TUNNEL by artist Refik Anadol, is open year-round. Meanwhile, preparations gather pace for Pordenone as Italian Capital of Culture 2027, with a range of initiatives already under way, including the exhibition "Sul Leggere. A season of photography exhibitions", with photographs by Robert Doisneau, Olivia Arthur, Seiichi Furuya and Stefanie Moshhammer on display at the Galleria Harry Bertoia and the Civic Museum of Art in Ricchieri (until 6 April).

In Aquileia, the UNESCO archaeological heritage will be the focus of excavations, itineraries and tastings that blend history with gastronomy. On the coast, Lignano Sabbiadoro will inaugurate the new Terrazza a Mare, a seaside icon revitalised with a panoramic pool and seafront events. Grado enriches its cultural portfolio with two new museums – the National Museum of Underwater Archaeology and the Civic Museum of the Treasury – and renewed thermal spa facilities featuring a new spa and wellness centre, inaugurated last December.

Finally, wine and gastronomy remain among the region's most authentic ambassadors. With a production of almost 90 million bottles a year across nine DOC zones (including Collio and Colli Orientali), Friuli Venezia Giulia produces some of the world's best white wines. These range from native varieties like Friulano, Ribolla Gialla, and Malvasia to international grapes like Pinot Grigio and Sauvignon, whose nuances are enhanced when paired with unique PDO products like Prosciutto di San Daniele and Montasio cheese, or Prosciutto di Sauris. Essential tastings include traditional recipes such as *cjarsons* (ravioli filled with herbs, sultanas, and ricotta) and *frico* (a crispy cheese and potato dish with onions), the region's signature specialty. The Strada del Vino e dei Sapori (Wine and Flavours Route) offers six themed itineraries to explore the region through gourmet experiences and winery visits. New routes include a trail dedicated to the *fogolâr* (the traditional hearth found in historic homes and restaurants) and a "ham and charcuterie" trail. Every route becomes a journey through the flavours of a region that unites culture, art, and taste in a tapestry of experiences.