



**Ravenna
Cervia
Comacchio**





Ravenna: a city to discover



Ravenna is a showcase of art, history and culture of rare beauty. Its glorious past makes it a crucial stop for anyone who wants to discover some fundamental aspects of Italian history.

Between the 5th and the 8th century, it was the capital of the Western Roman Empire, of the Gothic Kingdom of Theoderic and of the Byzantine Empire.

This magnificent period has left a visible mark. **Eight Early Christian and Byzantine buildings compose the site that UNESCO added to the World Heritage List in 1996.** They are authentic windows on the past that witness an important period of the history of European culture and that made Ravenna the Italian capital of mosaic.

The eight monuments of the site keep treasures of high artistic value: they are the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, The Neonian Baptistery, the Arian Baptistery, the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, the Archiepiscopal Chapel, the Mausoleum of Theoderic, the Basilica of San Vitale and the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe.

The Ancient Port of Classe is an archaeological site of great historical value, moreover, it has been recently enhanced with Classis Ravenna - Museum of the City and of the Territory.

The many museums safeguard a historical and artistic heritage of inestimable value: the frescoes of Santa Chiara at the National Museum, the ivory pulpit of Massimiano at the Archiepiscopal Museum and the contemporary mosaics at MAR - Ravenna city Art Museum are only some of the treasures this city has to offer.

But Ravenna is something more, it is the **city of inspiration**. Dante Alighieri wrote here the final part of the Divine Comedy and, as a matter of fact, his work is rich of recalls to this city. Not only Dante but also many other poets, artists and travellers took inspiration from their travels in Ravenna, such as George Byron, Gustav Klimt, Gabriele D'Annunzio and Dario Fo.

On the left: the beaches of Ravenna

On the right, from above: Piazza del Popolo, Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Piallassa Piomboni





The city welcomes its visitors in Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Kennedy and Piazza San Francesco in elegant lounges: these **places of sharing, culture, feast and music** make anyone feel at home.

Nature lovers will choose Ravenna for its deep relationship with its territory, which also offers a number of opportunities for outdoor activities.

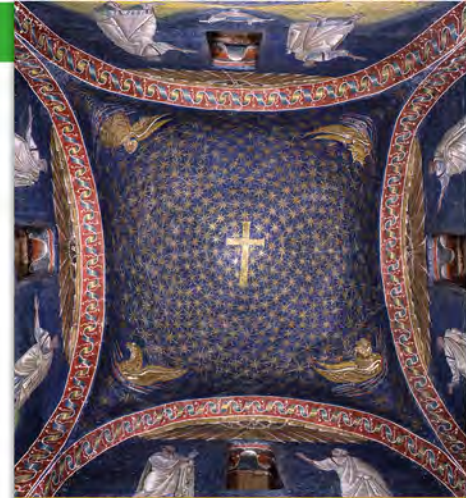
Few kilometres from the city centre, **nine seaside resorts speckle the 35 km long coastline** of the Adriatic Sea. From Casalborgorsetti to Lido di Savio, fine and clear sandy beaches are animated by visitors who are in search of relaxation, sports activities and amusement: there is a beach for everyone.

The uniqueness of the natural landscapes surrounding Ravenna made them become protected areas of the **Po Delta Park**. A visit to the **century-old Pine Forests of San Vitale** and **of Classe** makes you immerse into nature: walking in the shadows of the big pines, among the fragrant blossoming of hawthorns and the waters reflecting the big wings of the herons is a unique experience that has amazed visitors over the centuries. Neither the feathers of the great writers and poets could resist their beauty.

The charming natural oasis of **Punte Alberete** and **Valle Mandriole** are the only sweet water swamps left from the many ones that originally covered the territory of Ravenna centuries ago. These suggestive natural glimpses with their flooded forests and the rustle of reeds in the wind make them the perfect natural habitat for many rare birds species. **NatuRa - Museum of Natural Sciences Alfredo Brandolini**, which is part of the Po Delta Park, is rich with historical ornithological and mussels collections as well as reptiles and mammalian collections of the territory and of foreign countries.

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*On the right, from above: Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Arian Baptistery, Ancient Port of Classe
On the back page, on the bottom: area dedicated to poet Dante Alighieri "Zona del Silenzio"*



Cervia: where nature takes a dive into the sea



As soon as you arrive at the salt pans, a flock of flamingos flies off over you. On your left, you glimpse a heap of salt, while on your right some salt pan workers are busy harvesting salt. Inside the old quadrilateral town centre and in the area of the salt storehouses you can sense history. Just up ahead there is a fishermen quarter with its lined-up houses mirroring onto the canal harbour where the fishing boats still dock when they come back.

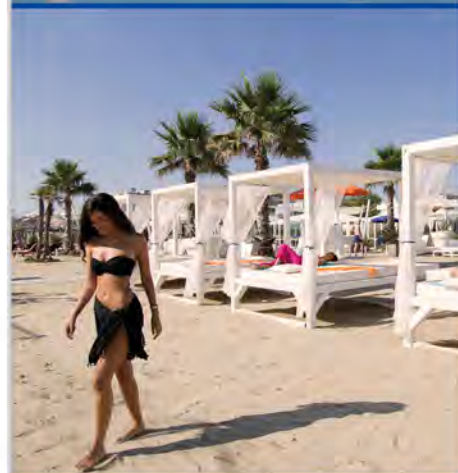
All these sceneries welcome you to Cervia - one of the greenest towns of the Adriatic coast with its pinewood, sea and salt pan.

Top-level reception facilities and a well-equipped and inviting fine-sand **beach** are ready to pamper you and to let you relax in the sun while caressed by the sea breeze.

Cervia, Milano Marittima, Pinarella and Tagliata have developed in total harmony with the environment, offering sport paths inside their pinewoods, kayak routes along tiny canals, bike tracks far from the traffic, playgrounds and picnic areas. In the century-old **pinewood**, there is also a **Natural Park**, of which small children are particularly fond of because they can get close to the farm animals and deer, the symbol of Cervia. Within walking distance, there is the Butterfly House where you can experience the emotion of a walk among hundreds of multi-coloured butterflies. Amidst the pine trees, you also find Cervia's spa. This thermal facility, open from May to November, offers treatments based on mud and salt pan waters.

Cervia's salt pan, the southern so-called "station" of the Po Delta Park, is situated a stone's throw from the town centre. Here, it is possible to watch - accompanied by an expert guide - hundreds of flamingos and other bird species. These astonishing places not only offer you peace and tranquillity but also great emotions, in particular when the salt pans reflect the warm sunset colours.

Along with its tourist aspect, Cervia is also proud of its historic origins as a salt production centre and it actually still harvests excellent salt, which is famous for being sweet - as it does not contain bitter chloride elements. Here, an ancient salt pan, where the salt is harvested through the same old method that was used until the 1950s, is still in use and is considered the outdoor part of the local MUSA Salt Museum. In this old salt pan, you can still attend the harvest, learn about the production process and actively participate in it together with the workers. The salt production and the fishery are at the base of Cervia's heritage and still inspire the town's major historical events, i.e. the **"Wedding of the Sea"** (Sposalizio del Mare), which since 1445 is held every year on Ascension Day to celebrate a legend dating back to the Venetian period, and the **"Taste of Salt Festival"** (Sapore di Sale) dedicated to salt, taking place in early September and offering a rich gastronomic offer, including markets, cooking shows





and the highlight of the event, the arrival of a “burchiella” - a century-old iron boat loaded with salt.

Last but not least, during the **“Salt Route”** (Rotta del Sale) boats sail along the ancient trade ways of the “white gold” and from Cervia they arrive in Venice, the so-called “Serenissima”. This itinerary can also be done overland by bike along a 278 km-ride during the **“Salt Route Bike Track”** amidst the natural scenery of the Po Delta Park.

The journey departing from Cervia and arriving in Venice goes through high natural-value sites of unique beauty, exploring areas and sites such as the lush Pine forests of Ravenna, the river Bevano mouth, the lagoons of Comacchio, the Sanctuary of Volano, the forest Bosco della Mesola and the Venetian Delta Valleys, touching the towns of Ravenna, Comacchio and Chioggia, and, after a bike-boat stretch between Pellestrina and Lido di Venezia, finally reaching Venice.

There are many other opportunities to live in contact with nature, among which a few world-class events stand out, such as **“Cervia Garden City - May in Bloom”** (Cervia Città Giardino - Maggio in Fiore), born in the early 1970s, which has become the largest outdoor flower exhibition in Europe, and the **International Kite Festival**, the one-week event taking place every spring that colours the sky with thousands of kites from all over the world on the wide beach in Pinarella.

Sport is everywhere here, both on the beach and in the natural surroundings. The opportunities are manifold and suit every skill: bike riding, sailing, tennis, golf, horse riding, Nordic Walking and all possible beach sports. The **Ironman** race is one of the most impressive and coveted sports competitions on the agenda.

Shopping plays an important role in the wide range of amenities offered by this seaside resort as well, in particular in the fine centre of Milano Marittima – founded in 1912 on the base of an urban plan for a “Garden City”.

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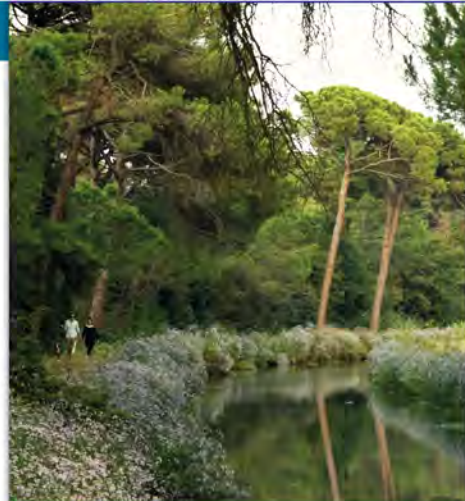
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On the left, from above: flamingos in the salt pan of Cervia (pic by Angela Raggi), the beach of Cervia, salt storehouses and bars along the canal harbour

On the right, from above: pinewood of Milano Marittima, salt pan of Cervia, Ironman (pic by Getty Images)

On the back page, in the centre: beach of Milano Marittima (pic by Gianni Castellani)



Comacchio: a city born from the waves



The great Po Delta has designed the landscape. Over the centuries, among islands and boats, Comacchio was a safe place for landings and departures along the great sea routes and the internal rivers. The Greeks and the Etruscans settled here, giving life to a flourishing commercial trade centre. Salt became ready cash for the Lombard traffic. The water took land towards the sea, the fishing weirs were enclosed, and the sand dunes bordered the coast. In the 17th century, the Papal States built a new city, with bridges and canals to bring living water to the people. The 18th century saw the construction of the city's new cathedral and of the Ospedale degli Infermi, which now hosts the **Ancient Delta Museum**. Today, as then, Comacchio preserves evidence of its 17th century-rebirth. The monumental **Trepponti bridge** (originally known as "Pentarco"), with its five stairways, opens towards the historical centre. The welcoming coast with its seven seaside resorts speaks the contemporary language of tourism, with wide, white sandy beaches and all the possibilities of hospitality for an experience in contact with the untouched nature preserved in the **Po Delta Regional Park**, which has been acknowledged **UNESCO biosphere reserve**. The city stretches out to its weirs where, for centuries, other creatures have found shelter: the eels, which stay there for years and then, called by love, return by sea to the ocean from which they came. Comacchio is a city of history, eels, and tourism, it is a point of arrival, departure, and return.

Fresh river water and seawater, the nearby pine groves and woods, winds and tides, and centuries to shape the natural landscape: these are the **Valli di Comacchio**. The eels have chosen these exceptional oases where to grow, so that, after a daring journey of thousands of kilometres across the Atlantic Ocean, they could stay in a safe, protected natural reserve. This is how it has been for centuries. Today, the lagoons of Comacchio extend over 13,000 hectares, between the last arm of the Po river and the Reno river. Inside them, the fishing or guard's huts tell the story of the lagoons and of the fishermen who lived here for a long time, just as the eels did. The eels grew and the fishermen waited for them. On the coldest, darkest winter evenings (today as in the past centuries), the eels return to the Sargasso Sea, to the nests where they were hatched, and they reproduce. Therefore, in order to catch them, the fishermen cleverly invented the eel trap: a structure with mobile grid barriers at the mouth of the channels connecting the lagoons to the sea, from which the eels pass in search of freedom. To become acquainted with the history of the lagoons, take a boat to cruise slowly along the internal channels, admire nature's architectures, and spot birds of all species, including the elegant flamingos.





The salt production in Comacchio started long ago: even the Etruscans from Spina used salt ponds to make evaporate and extract salt from the sea water. **The salt evaporation ponds of Comacchio** were built at the ancient mouth of the Po (once known as river Eridanus), which flowed north of the current lagoons and is a biotope with a noteworthy natural value that extends over more than 500 hectares. Kingdom of seagulls and terns, this area also welcomes many other very rare species. The salt collection had such great economic importance, that the *naves* (ships) of Comacchio were found in the major ports of the Po river system (Capitulary of Liutprand, 715 AD), even in subsequent centuries. In 1796, Napoleon ordered a modern French-style plant with multiple evaporation ponds. Further improvements were carried out by the Papal States in the 19th century.

Later, it became an industrial plant, but it ceased production in 1985. The salt evaporation ponds have returned to nature, to the extent that flamingos arrived here in 2000 and have now formed a breeding colony with more than 2,500 birds. Salt production continues today in a smaller salt evaporation pond. Moreover, the CADF, the Municipality of Comacchio, and the Po Delta Park, in collaboration with the association of Salinari di Comacchio, ensure the processing and collection of this white gold. In the educational hall of the plant, educational workshops for students, individuals and visitor groups are held to discover the ecosystem's biodiversity and the chemical and physical characteristics of salt. The site can be visited only when accompanied by authorized guides.

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*On the left, from above: Trepponti monumental bridge, salt collection in Comacchio, boat trip in the Valli di Comacchio
On the right, from above: eel fishing in Comacchio, sea and cycling routes in the beaches of Comacchio, Ancient Delta Museum, amphorae from the Roman section*



Cervia

Ravenna

Comacchio

THE BEACHES OF CERVIA

Milano Marittima
Cervia
Pinarella
Tagliata

THE BEACHES OF RAVENNA

Casalborsetti
Marina Romea
Porto Corsini
Marina di Ravenna
Punta Marina Terme
Lido Adriano
Lido di Dante
Lido di Classe
Lido di Savio

THE BEACHES OF COMACCHIO

Lido di Volano
Lido delle Nazioni
Lido di Pomposa
Lido degli Scacchi
Porto Garibaldi
Lido degli Estensi
Lido di Spina

