



PESCANTINA
In the Valpolicella area, alongside the Adige



INDEX

Pescantina IN THE VALPOLICELLA AREA, ALONGSIDE THE ADIGE	●	p.2
Valpolicella THE ORIGINS	●	p.4

DISCOVERING PESCONTINA	I	p.6
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SPAS AND EVENTS	II	p.12
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Pescantina

IN THE VALPOLICELLA AREA, ALONGSIDE THE ADIGE

Pescantina is spread out over the southern part of the Valpolicella, on the left bank of the Adige, in a large, fertile plain planted with peach trees and vines. The name derives from the fishing term “pescante”, underlining the close link between the town and the river, which since ancient times could be easily crossed at this very point. During the Middle Ages, activities linked to trade developed along the Adige, and Pescantina became one of the key locations for river transport, which brought wealth and renown to the town.

The boats made in the local boatyards, including the burchio and the typical “barca Pescantina”, with a flat bottom suitable for shallow waters, transported goods of all kinds between the Trentino area and the Adriatic.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, water transport was replaced by rail transport, so the countryside around Pescantina turned to growing peach trees, now the most typical feature of the local economy.

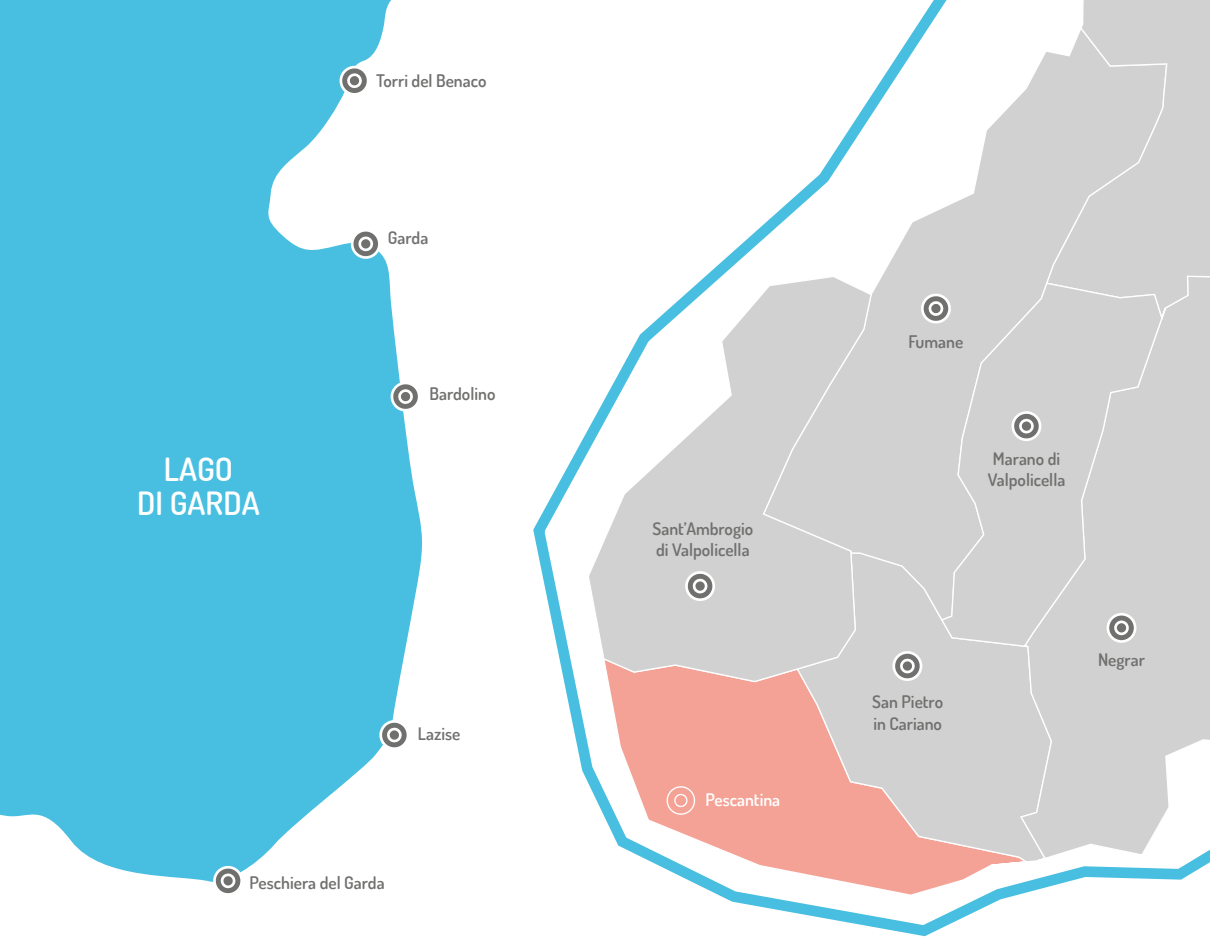
View of the Valpolicella



Once lined with mills, sawmills, textile mills and water wheels that supplied the irrigation channels, today the banks of the Adige offer the opportunity to take a pleasant stroll through the wild vegetation and the local history, exploring villages packed with atmosphere and picturesque little spots, as well as the numerous villas of different styles and from different periods scattered throughout the area.

In addition to Pescantina itself, the municipal area comprises the villages of Santa Lucia, Arcé, Settimo sull'Adige, Ospedaletto and Balconi. Nestling in the Valpolicella, between the city of Verona and Lake Garda, the town is well worth a visit and offers a number of pleasant cycling and walking trips.





Valpolicella

THE ORIGINS

The Valpolicella is a hilly area at the foot of the Verona Pre-Alps, in the Veneto region, and comprises seven municipal areas belonging to the province of Verona. The valley borders with the Adige river to the south, the hills of Parona and Quinzano and the Valpantena to the east, while to the north it stretches out to the Lessini mountains. To the west, it is separated from the Adige valley by Mount Pastello.

Renowned since Roman times as a wine growing area, the valley is important for its stone quarries and for red Verona marble. From an architectural point of view, the hallmark of the Valpolicella landscape are the superb Venetian villas, and visitors can also admire roadside shrines, little churches, charming villages, neighbourhoods and courtyards, all of them a significant, characteristic testament to the local culture.

The first human settlements here date back to the Stone Age. At the start of the 18th century, the famous historian Scipione Maffei discovered two tombstones in Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella and



Fumane that indicate the presence here of the Arusnates, a people of Etruscan-Rhaetian culture. In Roman times, Verona became a municipium, and the Pagus Arusnatium territory, although dependent on the city, maintained its administrative autonomy and control over all its lands. The main centre of the Arusnates was in San Giorgio di Valpolicella, very likely because of its geographical position, and they also settled in the vici (villages) of Fumane, Mazzurega, Sant'Ambrogio, Gargagnago, Volargne and Pescantina.

The name Valpolicella appears for the first time in a document from 1117, signed by Frederick Barbarossa. The origin of the name is unclear, but the meaning may be "valley of Pol" (Valpolesela in the local dialect), since the Roman officials arrived in Pol from along the Adige, and from there moved to the nearby villages.

Under Federico della Scala, the Valpolicella obtained a special status with regard to the city of Verona, which it maintained even under the Serenissima Republic.

The Valpolicella can be divided into three areas: a mountain area in the north, a hilly area in the centre and a mostly flat area in the south. Each area is covered by a different type of vegetation: vines are the hallmark crop of the valley, especially in the hilly area.

There's more to the Valpolicella than wine, however, and the area is also worth exploring for its history, culture, natural landscapes and food.



Marks indicating the flood level of the Adige



DISCOVERING PESCANTINA



An interesting nature trail follows the **towpath** that winds its way alongside the Adige for about eight kilometres, from Santa Lucia to Settimo, and is particularly attractive due to the rich vegetation that grows on the banks. The trail can be followed on foot, mountain bike and horseback, paying particular attention on the stretches where the path runs close to the water. The original towpath was raised up to the high water mark, often supported by sturdy structures; the boats coming upstream were pulled by long ropes attached to pairs of horses. Along the route, or just off it, visitors will find several elements of historical and artistic interest, and can explore the villages of Santa Lucia, Arcé, Pescantina and Settimo.

Towpath along the Adige



The little **church of Santa Lucia**, in the village of the same name, is dedicated to the Virgin of Siracusa, and dates back to the 12th century. It is a simple, single-nave construction, with a gabled facade and walls built with large pebbles, mostly covered with plaster. Inside is a marble altar, probably from the 17th century, above which is a small wooden statue of Santa Lucia. The walls are decorated with late-mediaeval frescoes.

Detail of fresco



Church of Santa Lucia





Remains of irrigation system

Not far from here, on the towpath, you can see the high pillars of an irrigation system. Continuing on towards Pescantina along a path that is a delight despite the obstacles along the way, you'll enter a wood thick with bushes and herbs, as well as willow, cottonwood and elder trees, in contact with the river. Further along is the picturesque neighbourhood of Tegnente, surrounded by a large walled orchard planted with fruit trees tended using organic farming methods. A striking arch, all that remains of a water pumping system, marks the spot where a mill once stood on dry land.

What remains of another branch of irrigation channel is the main feature of the path at Rovejago, a stretch along which the waters of the Adige broaden out, flowing over a low floodgate. Further ahead, you can see the remains of an irrigation channel on high pillars, to which water was supplied, when it was in use, by four water wheels.

Path along the Adige



A little further on, a lane sets out on the left through ancient walls, leading to the **Romanesque church of San Michele Arcangelo**, to the west of the village of Arcé, in a field surrounded by a stone wall. Erected between the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century, with alterations carried out during the centuries that followed, this single-nave construction was built with stones from the bed of the Adige, which flows close by. The simple, pointed facade has a door with a tufa stone arch and two rectangular windows opened at the side in the 17th century, as well as a small round window.



Facade of the Romanesque church of San Michele Arcangelo

On the south side, two recessed tufa stone windows illuminate the interior, and engraved above the portal is the enigmatic phrase *SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS*, which many academics believe is a magic formula: what is unusual about it is that the words read the same from left to right and from right to left, and from the top down and the bottom up, and the anagram of the letters form the words *PATER NOSTER* twice, in the shape of a cross. There is a small square window in the apse. Inside are a number of frescoed areas, depicting saints and a Virgin with child painted in the 14th century. In the particularly interesting apse is a figure of San Michele Arcangelo guiding the honest and the damned.

Romanesque church of San Michele Arcangelo





Village of Arcè

In the characteristic village of Arcè, of ancient origins, small lanes lead to the old piazzola, or square, amid centuries-old houses, partially restored, on which you can still see paintings with religious subjects and coats of arms of the Salvi family, the lords of Arcè. One of these paintings is next to one of the entrances to **Villa Albertini-Da Sacco**, on the banks of the Adige, where the port used to be. This striking group of buildings, with the noble villa itself looking onto a large garden, flanked by simpler buildings and by the chapel of Sant'Anna. The group of buildings derives from a noble courtyard that belonged to the Sansebastiani back in the 17th century; its current appearance dates to the mid-19th century, and was the work of the Count Albertini, the then owner.

Along the wall that surrounds the large park looking onto the Adige are 4 towers in different styles, two of which are visible from the towpath, just after the bridge that links Arcè with the right bank, together with a plaque indicating the level reached by the waters of the Adige when the river flooded in 1882. At the bridge, built around 1950, is the hook to which was tied the rope of the ferry in use until that time.

Villa Albertini-Da Sacco



Towers





Vegetation along the Adige

Just before Pescantina, on the left, is the Mandela neighbourhood, where there used to be a kiln (and before that, probably, a foundry for bells), and a restara, a place alongside the river with lodgings and stable for the boatmen and their draught horses to rest. Remains of paintings can be seen on the walls.

The **Cathedral of San Lorenzo**, built in the 18th century, lies outside the centre of the town, along the road that leads to Arcé. It rises up majestically near the Adige, with the facade facing the river, on a large paved open area. This imposing edifice is in Neoclassical style, with Baroque elements, and is flanked on the left, at the apse, by a bell tower of around 80 metres. The solemn, well-proportioned single-nave interior has six side chapels: four steps lead up to the chancel, separated from the rest of the nave by a marble balustrade. The high altar is covered in polychrome marble, brought here along the Adige from Venice. At the back of the apse is the large, impressive altar piece depicting the martyrdom of San Lorenzo, by Francesco Lorenzi di Mazzurega. Above the altarpiece is a large semi-circular fresco depicting the glorification of San Lorenzo, and on the side walls are 23 oil paintings from the 18th century. Inside the side chapels are six marble altars, one of them with a wooden statue, from the old parish church, of San Nicola da Bari, once joint patron saint and protector of the corporation of the “burchieri” boatmen.



Cathedral of San Lorenzo



Detail of the interior of the Cathedral



Mediaeval parish church

On the right of the Cathedral is the old **mediaeval parish church**, dating to the 12th–13th century, when the population and economy of Pescantina began to grow, thanks to the trade and transport of goods along the nearby Adige river. The church was originally composed of three naves, separated by marble columns topped with fine Corinthian capitals decorated with flowers and figures of animals: four of these are still in place, while two can be seen on the edge of the square. Of the original structure, only a part remains, because when the new parish church was built, the earlier one underwent substantial changes, and the original Romanesque elements today blend with the more recent Baroque elements.

Column with Corinthian capital

For a few years now, the church has hosted an interesting **Ethnographical Museum** of work and traditions along the Adige river, with exhibits illustrating a world peopled with industrious individuals, deeply bound to their river; a world that has now disappeared due to the evolution of needs and working techniques. The museum contains original objects and documents, photographs and scale models, and is divided into four sections: water transport with boats and rafts; work in the mills; other typical trades, such as carpentry and saddlery, and work in the fields. This last section focuses in particular on the use of the water wheels and the growing of peach trees, which are very common in the Pescantina area.





Traditional riverboats

Following the towpath towards Pescantina, visible on the right is the base of a water wheel. Just before the bridge over the dual carriageway is a large building, once the headquarters of the Financial Police in charge of controlling traffic on the river, and now in a state of disrepair. After the bridge, you'll come to what was once the centre of the town. At the bottom of the wall that runs alongside the towpath, you can see one of the milestones that used to show the boatsmen how far they were from the border with the Trentino area. There once used to be a kiln here, and later a boatyard where the typical river boats were built.

A little further ahead is an old warehouse with a large raised door, with grooves at the sides for the sluice gates, so that goods could be loaded and unloaded easily straight from the boats even when the level of the water was high.

Old warehouse





Bust of Giovanni Giacopini



High relief depicting San Giuseppe

Also visible is a very old dwelling with a large sacred image that is very difficult to make out. A few metres up the wall is a high relief depicting San Giuseppe and the child Jesus, sculpted by Giovanni Giacopini, whom you can see in the small bust just below it; other works by the same artist are on display inside the house.

Building with portico and loggia



The original centre of Pescantina, one of the most picturesque little towns in the Verona area, has plenty of atmosphere, fine buildings and charming little corners to explore. Towards the square is an attractive building with a portico and loggia, from around the 17th century, preceded by a simple vault with the Giacopini coat of arms.



Church of San Rocco

Piazza San Rocco, looking onto the Adige, has always been the topographical centre of Pescantina. It is surrounded by a thick wall, a protection to keep the frequent floods at bay. All the buildings around the square are centuries old.

The church of San Rocco, probably dates back to the 13th-14th century, and was later altered. The door dates to the 15th century, and the pulvinated friezes of the two-light windows in the bell tower are very old.

In the past, the interior of the building has often been flooded by the waters of the Adige. Still visible on the portal are grooves for sluice gates to be attached to defend the building when the river burst its banks. Inside, you can see fragments of wall paintings, and in the apse, the mediaeval foundations of an early chapel.

Right opposite the church is a building of mediaeval origin known as Ca' del Comun, which used to be the seat of the local council. Walled into the facade is the Monument to the Fallen in the two world wars, by Giovanni Giacomini; indicated on the left are the levels reached by the waters of the Adige during some exceptional flooding, the highest of which bears the date 1567. Via Madonna climbs quickly up to the seventeenth-century Casa Danese, with a small tower and interesting decorations, and Palazzo Betteloni, the present-day Town Hall, with a fine Neoclassical facade.

Casa Danese



Monument to the Fallen by Giovanni Giacomini



Marani-Arrighi Courtyard

Once you leave Pescantina and cross the Tremolè neighbourhood, a brief path followed by an asphalted road leads to **Corte Marani-Arrighi**, known as “La Presa”. Dating back to the 16th century, this is one of the most interesting old courtyards in the countryside around Pescantina, and it looks down from a rise onto the stretch of river between Pescantina and Settimo.

Important in military terms at the time of the war of the League of Cambrai (in the early decades of the 16th century), the original core of the courtyard lies to the east, and specifically to the tower-like construction that appears to derive from a mediaeval house-tower.

The courtyard’s present-day appearance is the result of repeated construction work; following a period of decline, general restoration work was carried out in the late 20th century, when a number of homes were built.

Continuing along the towpath towards Settimo, you’ll come to the mill known as “del Prognò”, thus named after the prognò, or stream of Fumane, which runs alongside it.

Built right on the Adige, some of the original masonry structures remain, and the mill was operative until 1991. Perfectly preserved inside is the machinery and the various instruments used to grind wheat and corn.

Stream of Fumane flowing into the Adige



Villa Bertoldi



Porto neighbourhood



As you arrive in Settimo, whose name derives from the seventh (settimo) Roman milestone, you'll be met with a striking irrigation channel that crosses the walled garden of Villa Bertoldi, immediately followed by the centuries-old houses of the characteristic Porto neighbourhood, where the ferry used to dock until 1950, when the bridge was built. Not far from here, you can see villas of various styles and from various periods: between the 16th and 18th centuries, the place was chosen as a holiday destination by a number of noble families from Verona, who had elaborately decorated homes and gardens built here.

The Villa Bertoldi complex dates to the 17th century, but it took on its current appearance in the 18th century. The characteristic layout of the Venetian villas is evident in the position of the outbuildings, the large garden, the park and especially in the interiors. Inside the villa are some interesting furnishings, a huge entrance hall with four large landscape paintings by Andrea Porta, and an extensive library, containing rare volumes from the 17th and 18th century. At the side of the villa is a beautiful chapel dedicated to Sant' Antonio da Padova, opposite which is an elegant votive shrine to our Lady of Sorrows. Remaining in the wall garden is the characteristic raised irrigation channel, which collected the waters taken from the Adige with a water wheel and distributed them throughout the fields. This is one of the few such systems still in good condition. Today Villa Bertoldi is home to a cultural association, and hosts concerts and events of artistic interest.

Villa Vascone-Bricci (Manni)



Opposite Villa Bertoldi is **Villa Sparavieri**, of fifteenth–sixteenth century origin, in a precarious condition. The oldest part is the main facade, facing the river, with a portico of low arches and an elegant loggia with round arches, resting on red marble columns topped with simple capitals.

Villa Vascone-Bricci, now Villa Manni, dating to the 16th century, is built in the architectural style typical of the Venetian villas, with a solid central part flanked by porticoed wings of a lower height. At the corners, two dovecot towers form two perpendicular volumes used as outbuildings. Inside, the central hall is decorated with frescoes.

Church of Sant'Antonio Abate

Not far from here is the fifteenth-century **Church of Sant'Antonio Abate**, which originally had a square ground plan and was subsequently expanded and restructured. Worth admiring are the two fragments of frescoes at the sides of the high altar: dating to the second half of the 15th century, they were recently attributed to a painter from Verona and depict the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Cenacle and the first Christian martyrs.

On the high altar is a marble altarpiece with the Virgin Mary and Child, flanked by Sant'Antonio Abate and San Rocco. The bell tower rises up on the east side of the church, and probably dates to the same period.



Continuing along the towpath, with its delightfully rich vegetation, you'll come to **Villa Morando**, in Nassar-Settimo, on the bank of the Adige. The Villa is also known as **La Colombina**, because of the tower with the dovecot (colombaia) that was once the entrance to the courtyard. Built in the 16th century, it was once a prestigious noble dwelling, in an architectural style inspired by Sanmicheli.

Recently restored after years of abandonment, and now divided into a number of properties, the villa has a north facade with one floor plus an attic looking onto the courtyard, while the south facade - with three floors plus an attic because the level of the ground is lower on this side - has spacious terracing that faces the Adige, right above the towpath.



Villa Morando (La Colombina)

Chapel of Villa Mosconi



Not far from the river is Villa Mosconi, known as Villa Mirandola, built towards the end of the 17th century, partially altered compared to the original structure. Once a large, elegant construction, with a huge park that was destroyed during World War II, the villa appears today as an 18th/19th-century Neoclassical dwelling. Especially interesting is a pagan altar, sculpted with figures of cherubs and sacrificial instruments, found on the land belonging to the villa at the beginning of the 19th century. It is now divided into two parts, placed at the sides of the entrance, on the facade of the chapel dedicated to San Giuseppe, next to the village and looking onto Via Mirandola.



Monument to the victims of the concentration camps

Monument to the victims of the concentration camps

The monument dedicated to those who died or were imprisoned in the Nazi concentration camps, inaugurated in 1966, is located near the now-abandoned railway station of Balconi. This location is no coincidence, and aims to highlight the role played by Pescantina during and after the Second World War, when through the station passed the convoys that ran along the Brenner railway line, transporting hundreds of thousands of people to concentration camps in Germany, and when, in the spring of 1945, the station welcomed tens of thousands of survivors from those concentration camps, in desperate need of help of all kinds. Reception centres were set up, and the whole town strived to help with the initial care, thus becoming a symbol of the end of the fighting and the return home. This is why Pescantina was awarded the gold medal for civilian valour.

The monument is in the form of a wire fence, with hands stretching through it imploring freedom. It is a work that awakens strong emotions, a warning against war and barbarity. Next to the monument is a railway wagon with a brief historical explanation recalling the tragic events. Every year in September, a commemoration is held in memory of those who died and of those who survived deportation and the Nazi concentration camps.

Detail of the monument to the victims of the concentration camps



The little Sanctuary of the **Beata Vergine della Pietà**, known as “**la Madonnina**” can be seen in Via Madonna, in the northern part of Pescantina. Inside this octagon-shaped Baroque construction, dating to the 18th century, is a single marble altar, with an image of the Madonna painted above it on the wall, protected behind glass. According to tradition, the painting featured in a miracle, and the sanctuary was built to protect it, funded by donations from the faithful.



Beata Vergine della Pietà

Villa Quaranta, in Ospedaletto, built in the 17th century, today houses a renowned hotel and restaurant. The facade, with a simple architectural style, looks onto a large Italian-style garden. Inside, the walls and ceilings are richly decorated with frescoes. The oldest part of the construction, with outbuildings and porticoes, in the courtyard behind the villa, originated from a mediaeval settlement that included a small church and a hospice, or ospedaletto, from which the name of the village derives. The villa includes the little church, probably of Romanesque origin, dedicated to the **Purificazione di Maria**, with a square bell tower and two-light windows. Preserved inside are a number of cycles of frescoes attributed to Paolo Ligozzi.

Villa Quaranta





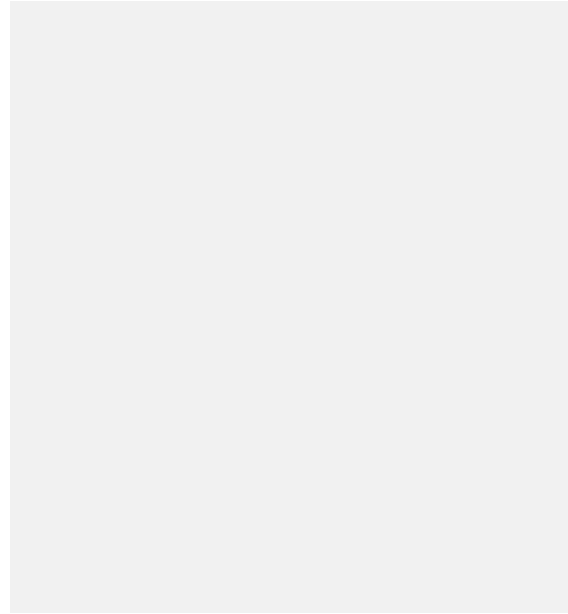
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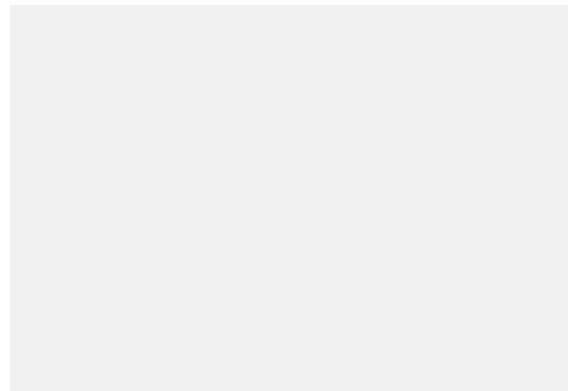
Adige Marathon

Adige Marathon - Adigemarathon was established thanks to the cooperation between the canoeing clubs of Pescantina, Verona and Borghetto. From the few hundred canoes that took part in the first edition, back in 2004, numbers have gradually risen, and some 1500 people now take part in this event on the Adige. Over the years, Adigemarathon has acquired an international dimension, and has even become a part of the Marathon World Series circuit.



Canoeists

The format is comprised of a competitive race (Borghetto d'Avio-Pescantina, 35km) plus an amateur descent (along the stretch from Dolcè to Pescantina, 20 km), so as well as being an important event for the Italian and European competitive canoeing season, it also offers an opportunity to attract a broader audience, thanks to the rafting element: the canoes will be accompanied by inflatable rafts in this colourful, lively event on the Adige river. Amateurs will find plenty of refreshment points along the route, and at the end of the event, amateurs and competitive canoeists alike will have the chance to enjoy typical dishes from Verona in the main square of Pescantina.



Finishing line and food tastings

San Lorenzo Festival

This is one of the main events in the Valpolicella. Over the years (the 80th edition was celebrated in 2016), the festival has become increasingly popular, and the high point is the firework display over the Adige. The hallmark of the festival is the splendid setting it takes place in: the characteristic town centre of Pescantina, looking onto the river. The festival comprises numerous activities: musical performances, a food area, cultural events, a photographic exhibition, a market for craft enthusiasts, an exhibition area, an area dedicated to the local associations, and a funfair for children.



Firework display over the Adige

Peach and Fruit-Growing Exhibition

The San Lorenzo Festival also focuses on peaches, the characteristic local product. Every year, on the Sunday evening, the Festival hosts the **“Peach and Fruit-Growing Exhibition”** organised by the Farmers’ Association of the Province of Verona. In recent years, a characteristic **“vintage tractor rally”**, has also taken place on the Sunday of the Festival.







In view of its natural resources, Pescantina local council has joined ANCOT (Italian National Spa Towns Association) and has thus become part of the circuit of Italian spa locations.

Pescantina has been a spa tourism destination for some time, with a number of wellness facilities perfectly equipped to respond to the demands of the segment.

So there's more to Pescantina than just its landscape, history and good food: over the years, it's become a popular destination for tourist who come here for our spa facilities, making it the spa resort with the largest number of visitors in Italy.

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