



NEGRAR

In Valpolicella, a stone's throw from Verona





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## Negrar

# IN VALPOLICELLA, A STONE'S THROW FROM VERONA

Nestled amongst the hilly vineyards and cherry trees and divided by a seasonal watercourse or “prognò”, the territory of Negrar extends towards the most easterly part of Valpolicella, the ancient *Val Veriacus*, which meets up with the Lessini mountains in the north. The name Negrar is believed to derive from the late Latin *Nigrariu*, meaning “place of the black soil”. The presence of man since prehistoric times is evidenced by the discovery of many man-made artefacts in flint dating from the Paleolithic period and by the “castellieri”, fortified villages strategically positioned on high ground and dating back to the Bronze and Iron Age.

In Roman times the territory belonged to the Pagus of the Arusnates, however the finding of an inscription dedicated to the cult of Jupiter and also of a villa confirm that the area was already inhabited during the Roman Empire.

View of Valpolicella



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All over the valley are scattered ancient "torri colombaie", or dovecotes, which are either isolated or situated within the courtyards or attached to the villas. The municipality includes the villages of Arbizzano, Prun, Fane, Mazzano, Montecchio, Santa Maria, San Peretto, San Vito, Torbe and a series of small localities dotted around the territory.

The international success of Amarone wine is one of the reasons for the growth of interest in this area in the province of Verona, situated between the town of Verona and Lake Garda. Its strategic position makes it an ideal base for a holiday in the hills, with visits to Venetian villas and vineyards producing Valpolicella, Ripasso, Recioto and Amarone wines boasting the title 'classico,' meaning that they are produced from grapes made into wine in the earliest area of origin.





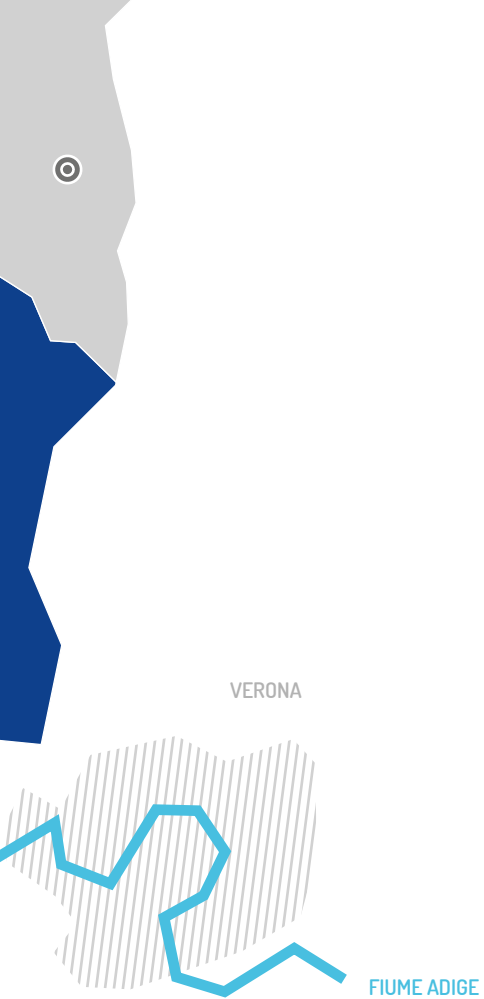
## Valpolicella

### THE ORIGINS

Valpolicella is the hilly area at the foot of the Veronese Pre-alps in the Veneto region. It covers the territories of seven Municipalities belonging to the Province of Verona. The valley is bordered to the south by the River Adige, to the east by the hills of Parona and Quinzano and by the Valpantena valley, while to the north it extends to the Lessini mountains. To the west, it is separated from the Adige valley by Monte Pastello.

Famed since Ancient Roman times for wine production, it is of importance for its stone quarries and for the extraction of red Verona marble. From the architectural point of view, the Valpolicella countryside is ornamented by Venetian villas of great splendour and has a multitude of shrines, chapels, rural churches, villages, hamlets and courtyards which make a significant cultural contribution to the territory.

The first human settlements go back to the Paleolithic period. In the early eighteenth century, the noted historian Scipione Maffei discovered two stone inscriptions, one at Sant'Ambrogio di



Valpolicella and one at Fumane, referring to the Arusnates people, an Etrusco-Rhaetian culture. In the Roman era Verona became a municipium and the Pagus Arusnatum, though depending on the town, preserved its administrative independence and control over all its lands. The Arusnates had their centre at San Giorgio di Valpolicella, most likely because of its geographical position, and they settled in the vici (villages) of Fumane, Mazzurega, Sant'Ambrogio, Gargagnago, Volargne e Pescantina.

The name Valpolicella appears for the first time in a document of 1117 signed by Frederick Barbarossa. The origin of the name is disputed: it may mean the valley of Pol (in the local dialect), since the Roman officials arrived by travelling along the Adige as far as Pol and from there moved out into the nearby settlements. Under Federico della Scala, Valpolicella acquired a special status in relation to the city of Verona, which continued also under the rule of the Venetian Republic.

The land covered by the Valpolicella valley may be divided into three zones, a mountainous area to the north, a central area of hills and a flat plain to the south. Each zone features a different kind of vegetation: vines are the most prevalent, especially in the hills of the central area. But Valpolicella is not just wine. The quarrying of marble is also an activity with a history going back to the earliest times. The red marble known as "Rosso di Verona" in particular is perhaps the best known. It is used for flooring and for indoor and outdoor cladding, as well as for the creation of art objects, sculptures and funerary art. Valpolicella is also a place of history, culture, natural scenery, traditions and wine gastronomy.



Negrar sundial



VILLAS

I



In the locality of Villa stands **Villa Quintarelli**, built in 1510 and restored at the end of the 19th century. After 1746 the construction was expanded around the central block, preserving the existing building and giving it its current appearance. The villa is built on three levels, a structure with two lateral wings. On the “piano nobile” or main floor there is a hall with a fireplace; this hall leads to four separate rooms. In front of the villa there is an Italian garden with two 16th century columns, severely damaged, perhaps representing Bacchus and Ariadne.

Villa Quintarelli in Villa



The estate of Pojega was purchased in 1649 by the Rizzardi family, who were then living in Verona. The villa was restored in the 1850s in the 15th century Venetian style by the architect Filippo Messadaglia (1823–1901). The Garden of Pojega was built between 1783 and 1791 by the architect Luigi Trezza at the behest of the Count Antonio Rizzardi. **The Garden of Pojega** is one of the last remaining examples of an “Italian-style garden” and is renowned for its outdoor green amphitheatre and the spectacular surrounding views. Occupying an area of approximately 54,000 square metres, the garden features include a temple, the green amphitheatre, stone walls, sculptures, tree tunnels and a lookout. The garden is structured around three parallel paths that end in an avenue of cypresses, which intersects them and culminates in the belvedere. In addition to the belvedere, there is the grove with a circular temple, the Nymphaeum, the secret garden, an oval pond, and a green theatre. Within the garden is to be found a temple decorated with statues representing mythological figures. The gardens have recently been opened to the public.

Villa Rizzardi



Pojega Gardens





The park of Villa Bertani at Novare

**Villa Mosconi Bertani**, situated near Novare, was built of soft Valpolicella stone in the first half of the 18th century by the architect Adriano Cristofori, commissioned by Giacomo Fattori, and completed by the Counts Mosconi who acquired its estate. The Villa consists of a central block and two side wings enclosing the garden.

Inside the building may be seen the Salon of the Muses, its walls completely covered with frescoes, and the sixteenth-century cellar, in which 140 years' worth of wine-casks are preserved. Behind the main building stretches the great park featuring a lake supplied from natural springs. Outside, there is a lovely pathway between the vineyards to walk or cycle along.

**Villa Spinosa** sits at the foot of Colle Masua. The old villa dates back to the 19th century and is set in the middle of the property. In a panoramic position on the slopes of Jago Dall'Ora it is surrounded by an elegant Italian-style garden and bounded by old cottages and vineyards. Its courtyard is the typical rural courtyard found in Valpolicella dating back to the early 18th century.

Villa Spinosa



**Villa La Sorte** lies within the village of San Peretto. The villa, which dates back to the 18th century, is on simple architectural lines, ornamented by a grand central staircase consisting of two symmetrical flights with a decorative wrought-iron balustrade. The villa overlooks a garden embellished with 18th-century statues of dwarfs and laid out around a fountain set at its centre.

Villa La Sorte in San Peretto



**Villa Bertoldi**, also known as 'The Palace', is located to the north of Negrar on the Torbe road. The villa was built in the 15th century by the Barsizza family, and was then acquired by the Maffei and finally the Bertoldi family. The villa was extended in the 17th century. The oldest part consists of a central arched portico, surmounted by a symmetrical loggia. Inside the main building there are 19th and 20th century decorations. On the east side, a small church decorated with statues contains high quality furnishings with painted pews.



Villa Bertoldi (The Palace) in Negrar

**Villa Salvaterra**, in the village of Prun, appears to have been built in two stages, between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century. It is the highest villa above sea level (520 m) of all the villas in the low and middle areas of Valpolicella. The upper loggia is made up of eight arches with mullioned windows. The lower level comprises of a four-span arcade and a paved courtyard, which gives the villa an elegant rustic appearance. The external façade is made of pietra di Prun (Prun stone) to the level of the first floor and to the rear of the villa there are two torri colombaie (dovecotes).

Villa Salvaterra in Prun





Villa Quintarelli in Noval

**Villa Quintarelli**, situated in the locality of Noval near Torbe, dates back to the 15th century and is considered one of the first examples of a villa with both a portico and a loggia. The villa is constructed with a portico on the ground floor that has three fornices and behind these there are two vaulted rooms. Ascending a spiral staircase constructed of Prun stone (Scaglia Rossa Veneta) you reach seven arches supported by elegant columns. At the rear is an extensive kitchen from which there is access to the internal staircase and to the granary. On the western side is a dovecote (torre colombaia) on three levels with niches for the birds along both sides.

Villa Turco-Zamboni in Arbizzano

**Villa Turco-Zamboni**, situated in Arbizzano, was built in the mid 16th century by the noble Turco family and then in the early 19th century became the property of the Zamboni family.

It may be considered as a transitional form of house between a country residence and a sumptuous villa. The manor house on its northern side has a triple-arched porch and above this an eight-pillared loggia.

In 1776 the scientist Giuseppe Zamboni was born in the villa and later it became his principle place of work.





PARISHES AND CHURCHES

# II





The Parish Church of San Martino

Built in the main square of Negrar, the **Parish Church of San Martino** was first mentioned in a document dated 1067. The Church was rebuilt in 1809 and of the ancient construction there remains only the Romanesque bell-tower in red tuff stone. The present building houses an antique organ and several paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries. The “**Carta Lapidaria**” or “stone document” of Negrar is a long inscription, a total of sixty-four lines, in Roman capital letters engraved in 1166 and still visible on the south wall of the bell tower. It records a series of contracts whereby the parish of Negrar was to collect an annual levy due to Ribaldino, a citizen of Verona, constituting a legal contract.

The Church of San Pietro Apostolo



**The Church of San Pietro Apostolo.** This ancient building is situated in the village of Arbizzano. According to an inscription painted within the façade, its origins may go back to 417 A.D., although its existence is only reliably documented since 1056. Of the Romanesque church (11th century) you can still admire the wonderful portal illustrated with a double crucifixion realized in a bas-relief technique on two sides of a slab of white marble. The portal is richly decorated with quadrants containing variously different motifs, both religious and natural, amongst which recurs that of vines and leaves with bunches of grapes. The present church dates from the 17th century and contains a reliquary triptych by the artist Giuseppe Antonio Schiavi, a baptismal font from 1400 and a canvas from the 17th century attributed to the painter Pietro Negri.



The Church of the Salette

**The Church of the Salette** is in the village of Fane. There is no available documentation regarding its date of construction, however, thanks to oral transmission, we know that in the 1860s there were two missionary monks living in the community who were very devoted to the Madonna della Salette. In 1868 the French built a sanctuary dedicated to her. With the passing of the years the small church has been abandoned and restored on several occasions. Within the fenced yard, there is a statue made of Carrara marble in the image of the Madonna della Salette donated in 2001 by the sculptor Rinaldo Dalle Pezze.

The Church of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin



**The Church of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin**, in the village of Montecchio, took its present form towards the middle of the 18th century and has been recognized as a public oratory from the year 1790. Its façade is neoclassical in style with a bell tower situated on the northern side of the presbytery. The entrance portal is rectangular in shape, framed by two pairs of pillars. Above this, there is a circular medallion with a bas-relief representation of “ the Virgin and Child with the young Saint John the Baptist”.



The Church of San Pietro

The original **Church of San Pietro**, known as "San Piereto", to distinguish it from the more important San Pietro in Cariano. It can be dated back to 1222. Internally, it has some original decorations and a Gothic fresco from the 15th century plus an altarpiece, "Madonna and Child giving the crown to Saint Eugenio". The bell tower dates back to the Romanesque era (12th century); it was constructed using tuff stone, without a cone and with mullions on each side of the bell chamber.

The Church of Mazzano



"Wind Harp"



The **Church of Mazzano** dates from the second half of the 18th century, a rebuilding of an earlier chapel dedicated to Saints Fermo and Rustico which was perhaps built on top of a pagan temple sacred to Jupiter Felvenne, as testified by the Roman tombstone found here and incorporated into the southern wall. The façade is gable-fronted, having two pilasters surmounted by a pediment and with a glazed half-moon window above the entrance. The interior has a single nave with a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and an altar to St Anne, which preserves its eighteenth-century altarpiece showing the Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple, by Nicola Marcola.

Near the parish church you will find the **Wind Harp** of Mazzano, a structure with the ability to produce beautiful sounds with the presence of wind. The sculpture was designed by the architect Giuseppe Ferlenga in memory of those departed, fallen in war and at work. It is approximately seven metres high with a sleek silhouette, representing a cypress pine, a symbol of eternal life. The shape of the base, which is of the local stone from Prun (Scaglie Rossa Veneta), calls to mind the mountain peaks.

The Church of San Pietro in Torbe



The **Church of Torbe** dating back to the second half of the 12th century was a secondary chapel to the principal church of San Martino in Negrar. Among all the Romanesque edifices of Valpolicella it is the one that preserves, almost intact, the mediaeval civil-religious complex incorporating church, sacristy, bell-tower, cemetery, rectory and town hall.

The church, dedicated to St Peter, has three naves divided by large pilasters with an overthwart beam roof, while the pavement is partially made up of tombstones. It is thought that in the beginning the church had only one nave and later the other two were added. The old church was abandoned when the new church was built and the former then became private property.

The Church of Santa Maria in Progno



The **Church of Santa Maria in Progno**, in Negrar, is a former Sanctuary of the Madonna del Carmine (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) of the 18th century, which was built over a chapel already documented in 1222 and dependent on the parish church of Negrar. From 1553, after being neglected during the 15th and 16th centuries, the chapel was rented to the monastery of San Tommaso of Verona, which made changes, attaching a monastery to it and introducing the worship of the Madonna del Carmine. It later passed to the Confraternity of the Madonna del Carmine, which in the early 18th century restored the church and retained ownership until 1806.



STONE AND FOOTPATHS

# III



Ever since the Iron Age the type of stone known as **Lessinia Stone**, or “Scaglia Rossa Veneta”, has left its mark on the economy, the landscape and the architecture of this territory. It was the fundamental building material in an environment where wood for building was in short supply: entire villages were built of stone, from walling to the traditional roof supported on solid wooden beams; also of stone were the piazzas, rustic dwellings, ice-houses and even the fences for fields and woods in the area

On the eastern flank of Mount Noroni there are many stone-quarries, some consisting of tunnels and some open to the sky. In these quarries can be seen the individual veins of “scaglia rossa veneta”, known locally as “lastame”. Quarrying Lessinia stone, or Prun stone, was at one time carried out by digging tunnels into the side of the mountain. As quarrying continued, further tunnels were created, so that it became necessary to support the roof by means of natural columns of rock which were left in place as the digging went deeper.

Worked marble: detail on the door of San Pietro Apostolo



Stone quarries



Dovecote in Prun



The territory of the Comune of Negrar is notable for its **torri colombaie** (dovecotes), a very widespread architectural feature which usually served as a lookout or as a defensive structure. The towers are usually on a square plan, rising to three or four floors, with one room to a floor. As time went on, the towers became an integral part of the architecture of many villas, shedding their defensive purpose to become status symbols for their owners.

The **washtubs / troughs** are very much part of the architectural heritage of the municipality of Negrar, and are the proof of the abundant supply of water as a result of the region's many springs. The water was used both for domestic purposes and to water animals and irrigate the fields. Almost all the washtubs take the form of a basin, of variable shape and size, but always equipped with an inclined flat surface to wash clothes on. Each village and hamlet is provided with a washtub or a fountain, proof that water was not only a necessity but also a resource to be shared.

There are also many shrines ("capitelli") and crosses, always of local stone, in the territory of Negrar.

Among many, we would mention especially the Shrine of San Rocco at Villa, with a doorway opening into a courtyard showing, on the left, a mural painting of the Annunciation and on the right, in a niche, a statuette of San Rocco; and the Cross of Masua, a single cross set up on a boundary wall with arms ending in three rounded tips, dated 1886.



Entrance portal of a courtyard at Saline

#### Washtubs / Troughs



The territory of Negrar is indissolubly linked to its vineyards and the wine that is produced from them. There is evidence of this dating back as far as the Iron Age and of a great expansion during the Roman period. The wines that are produced today are Valpolicella, Ripasso, Recioto and Amarone, and the major varieties of grapes utilized are Corvina, Corvinone and Rondinella; all being varieties indigenous to Valpolicella.

Other agricultural crops cultivated in the valley of Negrar are cherries, olives and chestnuts.



Vineyards

Detail of a dry-stone wall (marogna)



In spring the cherry trees bloom for approximately twenty days, decorating the slopes of the hilly landscape. They are situated mainly in the northern zones and with the arrival of the summer season there is a local cherry market in Negrar where the cherries can be purchased. There are various varieties of these cherries that are also exported throughout the world, amongst which are the Mora di Verona or Mora di Cazzano, the Adriana and the Giorgia. It is worth remembering that in the past the cherry trees were planted as part of the structure to support the vines.

Cherry trees in blossom





Olive groves

As well as the the cultivation of vines, olive trees have also been cultivated since Roman times in the area. In the valley of Negrar olive trees are mainly grown on the southern slopes. The main varieties are Grignano, Favarol and Trep; and the oil produced by these olive types has a golden green colour and a delicate aroma.

Walled internal road

Also distinctive features of the territory of Negrar are the **“marogne”** - low dry-stone walls, built to shore up agricultural terraces, illustrating the harmonious relationship between nature and human effort.

Of interest in this connection is the **“Strada dei Muri”**, which connects the village of San Peretto with Negrar: an internal road which can only be followed on foot or by bicycle.





EXCELLENCE OF THE TERRITORY

IV





Vetrina dell'Amarone 2016, Villa Mosconi Bertani

The **Palio del Recioto festival** was first organized in 1953 thanks to the intuition of the Mayor of the time, Guido Ghedini, with the aim of promoting Valpolicella Classica wine and its territory. The Palio is now the most important annual event for the people of Negrar. Wine producers take part in a competition to choose the best Recioto del Palio, a Recioto wine made with grapes from the most recent vintage. By tradition the winner is proclaimed on Easter Monday. During the festival the main streets of Negrar are filled with stands where visitors can enjoy the Recioto del Palio and other Valpolicella wines.

Since 2015 the Palio del Recioto has been updated, becoming Palio del Recioto e dell'Amarone with the introduction of the Vetrina dell' Amarone, an event held in a prestigious location within the area, dedicated to show-casing Valpolicella's most famous wine, Amarone.

On Easter Tuesday professional cyclists from Italy and abroad take part in an international cycle race, the **Gran Premio Palio del Recioto**.

The Palio del Recioto e dell'Amarone in Negrar



The bust of Emilio Salgari  
in front of the Negrar Council building



The ancestral home of Salgari



**Emilio Salgari**, (1862–1911), an author well-known for his adventure stories and the creator of the character Sandokan, was born on 21st August 1862 in Verona. His family owned a large estate with a summer house, farmer's cottages, barns, a cellar and a dovecote tower in Tomenighe di Sotto. In this small locality within the parish of San Peretto Emilio Salgari spent several years of his life. The completely restored house still preserves the characteristic dovecote tower, a typical feature of Valpolicella country houses. In 2006 the Negrar Town Council, in collaboration with the Salgari Committee and other institutions, created the Emilio Salgari Literary Award for adventure literature. The award is presented as part of a national competition held every second year which aims to promote and enhance appreciation of the importance of adventure literature, Emilio Salgari and Valpolicella.

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Grape Drying



Within all of the territory of Negrar there are many wineries that produce wines with the denomination of Valpolicella Classico. The grape “appassimento” (drying) is the traditional method used in the region to concentrate the aromas and tastes in the wine. The grapes are laid out on racks or in boxes in drying lofts for the winter period before vinification. This is an ancient technique which has been in use for centuries in the area and has been improved through the years, and today the method is used in particular for production of Valpolicella Classico Amarone and Recioto.

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