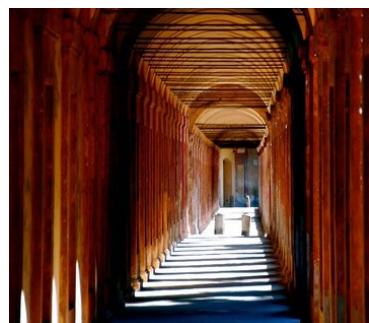




Europe

Alps to Aperitivo: Northern Italy with Ben Groundwater



trip highlights

Travel alongside Ben Groundwater on an active food and wine journey through Northern Italy, from Verona to Bologna

Taste your way through Emilia Romagna, with hands on cooking in Bologna, visits to producers of iconic Parmigiano Reggiano and balsamic vinegar, and long Italian lunches

Walk a wine trail through the vineyards of Alto Adige, tasting Gewürztraminer, and enjoy a hosted four-course wine pairing dinner at our winery stay in Valpolicella

Walk beneath the limestone peaks of the Dolomites, discovering rustic mountain food, local cheesemakers and the food traditions of South Tyrol, including a Slow Food dinner

Experience Lake Garda by private boat and on foot, walking the historic Strada del Ponale overlooking the lake



Trip Duration	11 days	Trip Code: BGAA
Grade	Introductory	
Summary	10 nights in quality hotels and characterful country stays	



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Northern Italy at the table with Ben Groundwater, from Dolomite rifugi to Bologna.



Single travellers are required to pay for their own room on this departure operated by our local partner

the trip

From high trails beneath the limestone peaks of the Dolomites to vineyard paths in Alto Adige, a private boat journey across Lake Garda and the celebrated kitchens of Emilia-Romagna, Alps to Aperitivo explores Northern Italy in the best possible way, on foot, around the table and with a glass of something local in hand.

Join travel and food writer Ben Groundwater on an active journey through one of Europe's most diverse food landscapes. Walking is at the heart of the experience, taking us through alpine meadows and mountain villages, past jewel-like lakes, among vineyards and high above the waters of Lake Garda. These walks connect us with the landscapes, people and produce that shape the food and wine of each region.

Lunch in traditional mountain huts, meet cheesemakers, taste Gewürztraminer among the vineyards of Alto Adige, cruise Lake Garda by private boat, and enjoy a four course wine pairing dinner in Valpolicella.

In Emilia-Romagna, discover the craftsmanship behind Parmigiano Reggiano and traditional balsamic vinegar and roll up your sleeves for a hands-on cooking experience in Bologna. And then there is aperitivo: that wonderfully Italian moment when the day's walking is done, the pace slows and everyone comes together over a drink.

Throughout the journey, Ben brings together his twin passions for active travel and great food, sharing the places, flavours and traditions that have made him fall in love with Italy.

about your leader/escort

Ben Groundwater is one of Australia's best-known travel and food writers, who has spent almost 30 years exploring the world's great food regions and the people, landscapes and traditions that shape them. A two-time Australian Society of Travel Writers' Travel Writer of the Year, Ben is a columnist and feature writer for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, and the author of six travel and food books. Ben has also been sharing his passion for travel by hosting small-group food and travel experiences, taking curious travellers beyond the obvious to discover the people, places and traditions that define a destination. He loves combining his twin passions - active travel and great food - and believes few places in the world do both better than Italy.

at a glance

DAY 1	ARRIVE IN VERONA - WELCOME TO NORTHERN ITALY
DAY 2	THE DOLOMITES - LIMESTONE PEAKS AND MOUNTAIN HUTS. WALK 6KM/3.7MI
DAY 3	LAGO DI CAREZZA TO MOENA & MEET A LOCAL CHEESEMAKER. WALK 11KM/6.8MI
DAY 4	LADIN VILLAGES AND SOUTH TYROL
DAY 5	BOLZANO, SOUTH TYROL'S VIBRANT CAPITAL
DAY 6	ALTO ADIGE WINES AND VINEYARD WALKS. WALK 4.5KM/2.8MI
DAY 7	VALPOLICELLA WINERY STAY IN THE LAND OF AMARONE
DAY 8	LAKE GARDA BY PRIVATE BOAT & THE STRADA DEL PONALE. WALK 5KM/3.1MI
DAY 9	EMILIA-ROMAGNA: PARMIGIANO AND BALSAMIC
DAY 10	BOLOGNA - ITALY'S FOOD CAPITAL
DAY 11	TOUR CONCLUDES IN BOLOGNA

additional deposits required

A higher tour deposit is collected at the time of booking, this is for the advance payments required to secure the accommodations. This is not an extra payment, it will simply be applied against the the balance payment, which is due 90 days prior to the tour date.

Tour deposits are non refundable. We highly recommend you have your travel insurance in place.

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trip dates

2027 13 Sep - 23 Sep

fast facts

Countries Visited:
Italy

what's included

- Hosted by Ben Groundwater
- 10 nights quality hotels and country stays - on twin share basis
- 6 dinners and 5 lunches showcasing ingredients and traditions of the regions
- 10 breakfasts
- Two hour private boat tour on Lake Garda
- Gewürztraminer wine tasting and a wine pairing dinner in Valpolicella
- Cooking class in Bologna
- Parmigiano and balsamic vinegar tour and tasting
- Experienced local guide
- Cable cars for walks in the Dolomites
- Private transport days 2 through 10

what's not included

- Travel to Verona and from Bologna
- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Single supplement - payable when staying in your own room
- Airport transfers
- Meals & drinks not noted on itinerary
- Tips

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 Arrive in Verona - welcome to Northern Italy

Arrive in Verona, where our Northern Italian adventure begins. Over the coming days, we'll explore the remarkably diverse food traditions of Northern Italy. Our adventure begins in Verona, a city of elegant piazzas, Roman history and lively wine bars. Best known as the setting for Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Verona's real story stretches back more than 2,000 years, with layers of Roman, medieval and Venetian history. We meet our host, Ben Groundwater, and fellow travellers over dinner in a traditional osteria. Before dinner, there's time to experience one of Italy's favourite daily rituals - aperitivo. More than simply a pre-dinner drink, aperitivo is a chance to ease into the evening over a glass of local wine or a classic Spritz, often accompanied by small snacks. It's a tradition that takes many different forms across Northern Italy, and one we'll happily embrace throughout our travels.

Accommodation: Hotel Scalzi, Verona (or similar)

meals: NIL

DAY 2 The Dolomites - limestone peaks and mountain huts. Walk 6km/3.7mi

Leaving Verona, we make our way north into the Dolomites, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed mountain range defined by its limestone peaks and picturesque mountain villages. As we travel through the Dolomites, we'll experience the unique Alpine culture shared across Trentino and neighbouring South Tyrol, where centuries of Austrian and Italian influence have shaped everything from the architecture and languages to the wines and cuisine. Arriving in the Val di Fassa, we take the cable car to Ciampedie, where a scenic walk unfolds beneath the Dolomites' peaks. Our

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trail leads us to a traditional mountain hut, where we enjoy a rustic lunch that may include local favourites such as Tyrolean dumplings and regional cheeses. Later, we transfer to our hotel, where there is time to relax before dinner.

Distance: 6km / 3.7mi

Accommodation: Hotel El Paster, Fassa Valley (or similar)

meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 Lago di Carezza to Moena & meet a local cheesemaker. Walk 11km/6.8mi

Our walk begins beside the emerald waters of Lago di Carezza, continuing through forest, mountain meadows and rocky landscapes towards the Carezza Pass, with views across the surrounding Dolomite peaks. From the pass, our trail descends through the mountain landscape towards Moena in the Val di Fassa. Walking gives us a wonderful sense of the terrain and farming traditions that have shaped the life and food in these valleys for generations. And there is good reason to work up an appetite. In Moena, our walk leads us to a local mountain farm and dairy producer for lunch and a tasting of locally made cheeses. Here, livestock farming, cheesemaking and Ladin culinary traditions remain closely connected to the surrounding landscape. The afternoon is yours to wander Moena's streets, browse food shops or simply relax with a coffee in one of the village cafés before returning to our hotel for dinner.

Distance: 11km / 6.8mi

Total ascent: 240m / 787ft

Total descent: 583m / 1,913ft

Walking time: 4 hrs

Accommodation: Hotel El Paster, Fassa Valley (or similar)

meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 Ladin villages and South Tyrol

After two days exploring the Dolomites on foot, the pace eases this morning with time to make the most of our family-run mountain hotel, perhaps taking a swim in the heated pool or unwinding in the Finnish sauna and Turkish bath, all included in your stay. We then set off for Ortisei, the main village of Val Gardena in South Tyrol, where there is time for your own lunch and exploration. Here the landscape is intertwined with the region's Ladin heritage, an Alpine culture that has flourished in the Dolomites for centuries, seen in colourful buildings, woodcarving traditions and artisan workshops. Later, we travel through Val di Funes for a Slow Food experience and dinner, celebrating a movement that originated in Italy and champions local food traditions and producers. We finish the day in Bressanone (Brixen), one of the oldest towns in the Tyrol, where medieval streets, baroque architecture and lively piazzas reflect South Tyrol's blend of Italian and Austrian influences.

Accommodation: Hotel Grüner Baum, Bressanone (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 5 Bolzano, south Tyrol's vibrant capital

Before leaving Bressanone, we explore its historic streets on foot, then head south through the heart of South Tyrol, travelling first to the village of Collalbo on the Renon Plateau. Here we board the historic narrow-gauge Renon Railway, a scenic journey through forests, alpine meadows and traditional villages before reaching Bolzano, the capital of South Tyrol, where Italian and Austrian cultures meet. This blend of cultures is reflected in everything from the architecture and wines to the local cuisine, while both Italian and German are widely spoken in the city. As evening

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approaches, Bolzano's piazzas come alive as locals gather for aperitivo. This evening we enjoy dinner in a traditional South Tyrolean stube (pronounced shtoo-buh), a warm timber-lined dining room serving hearty regional dishes and local wines.

Accommodation: Parkhotel Laurin, Bolzano (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 6 Alto Adige wines and vineyard walks. Walk 4.5km/2.8mi

The morning is yours to explore Bolzano's vibrant old town. In the afternoon we travel south into the vineyards of Alto Adige (South Tyrol). Sheltered by the Alps yet warmed by Mediterranean sunshine, this area produces elegant, cool-climate wines that reflect both its geography and the combined Austrian and Italian influence. Today's walk follows the Gewürztraminer Trail, winding through vineyards around the village of Termeno (Tramin), the birthplace of the Gewürztraminer grape where we'll have the opportunity to taste the wines produced in this area. The evening is free to enjoy more of Bolzano.

Distance: 4.5km / 2.8mi

Total ascent: 138m / 453ft

Total descent: 170m / 558ft

Accommodation: Parkhotel Laurin, Bolzano (or similar)

meals: B

DAY 7 Valpolicella winery stay in the land of Amarone

Leaving the mountains behind, we travel into the wine region of Valpolicella. Here, gentle hills lined with vineyards, olive groves and stone villages reveal yet another side of Northern Italy, where winemaking has been part of daily life since Roman times. Known around the world for its elegant Amarone, Valpolicella, with harvest just around the corner, the vines should be heavy with fruit. Our home for the next two nights is a beautifully restored mid-19th-century country farmhouse surrounded by vineyards and olive groves in the heart of Valpolicella Classica. This afternoon there's time to settle in, relax in the garden and enjoy the views across the vines before a special evening at the winery. We begin with a cellar tour, followed by a hosted four-course wine pairing dinner celebrating the flavours of Valpolicella. Accompanied by the winery's wine specialist, we'll discover the wines of the region, including Amarone, and how they complement each course of locally inspired cuisine.

Accommodation: Dimora Buglioni, Valpolicella (or similar)

meals: B,D

DAY 8 Lake Garda by private boat & the Strada del Ponale. Walk 5km/3.1mi

Today is spent at nearby Lake Garda, where steep mountains descend towards the water and colourful lakeside villages line the shore. At Riva del Garda, we take to the water aboard our private boat for a two-hour journey across Lake Garda before returning to Riva for a lakeside lunch. We then set out on a walk along the historic Strada del Ponale, a remarkable road carved into the rock in the 19th century to connect the Ledro Valley with Riva del Garda. Now a walking and cycling trail, it follows the mountainside high above the lake, with views opening across the water and surrounding mountains and remnants of historic military fortifications built into the rock. Upon reaching the panoramic viewpoint at Belvedere, we return to Riva

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before travelling back to our country farmhouse among the vineyards of Valpolicella, where the evening is free to relax and perhaps enjoy an aperitivo as the sun settles over the vines.

Distance: 5km / 3.1mi

Walking time: 2 hours

Accommodation: Dimora Buglioni, Valpolicella (or similar)

meals: B,L

DAY 9 Emilia-Romagna: Parmigiano and balsamic

We travel into Emilia-Romagna, widely regarded as the culinary heart of Italy and home to some of Italy's defining ingredients, including Parmigiano Reggiano, traditional balsamic vinegar, and handmade pasta.

Our day begins with a visit to a Parmigiano Reggiano producer, where we'll learn how one of the world's most recognisable cheeses is still made using time-honoured methods. We continue to nearby Modena, home of traditional balsamic vinegar. Here we'll discover how this extraordinary condiment is patiently matured in a series of wooden barrels, often for decades, before enjoying a tasting that reveals its rich depth and complexity. Afterwards, we sit down to a long farm-to-table lunch showcasing the outstanding produce of the region. Later, we check in to our hotel in Bologna, where the evening is free to enjoy the city.

Accommodation: Starhotels Excelsior, Bologna (or similar)

meals: B,L

DAY 10 Bologna - Italy's food capital

Bologna, affectionately known as La Grassa ("The Fat One") for its rich culinary traditions. Beneath its kilometres of UNESCO-listed porticoes, the city's red and terracotta-coloured buildings, medieval towers and lively piazzas are home to markets, delicatessens and family-run trattorias. Explore the city on your own this morning before we come together over lunch for a hands-on cooking class, preparing traditional regional dishes before sitting down to enjoy what we've made, accompanied by local wines. We'll gather for one final aperitivo, the perfect way to celebrate the stories and flavours we've shared from our own Alps to Aperitivo adventure with more time to enjoy Bologna as you wish tonight.

Overnight: Starhotels Excelsior, Bologna (or similar)

meals: B,L

DAY 11 Tour concludes in Bologna

Our Northern Italian adventure comes to an end after breakfast. Bid farewell to Ben and your fellow travellers before making your onward journey.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

climate

September is one of the most enjoyable times to visit Northern Italy. Days are generally mild and comfortable, making it an excellent season for walking, while evenings become cooler, particularly in the mountains. In the Dolomites, daytime temperatures typically range from 12 - 20C (54- 68F), although higher elevations can feel noticeably cooler and weather conditions can change quickly. In the lower-lying regions of Verona, Bolzano, Valpolicella and Bologna, expect pleasant daytime temperatures of around 20 - 26C (68- 79F).

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As this tour combines mountain walks, vineyard visits and city exploration, we recommend packing clothing that can be layered, including a warm fleece or jacket for cooler mornings and evenings. Comfortable walking shoes are essential, along with a waterproof jacket, as showers are possible at any time of year. A hat, sunglasses and sunscreen are also recommended for sunny days.

dietary requirements

This is a food focussed itinerary and we want you to get the absolute best out of it so it's essential you let us know any dietary needs. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Group members must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

accommodation on the trip



A carefully selected range of hotels, each chosen for their superb location and distinctive character. We have detailed our intended accommodations however these are subject to change, in which case a hotel of equal standard will be provided.

pre and post tour accommodation

Please ask our team if you will be arriving into Verona earlier, or staying on in Bologna and wish to book additional nights at the group hotels. We recommend booking this well in advance.

visas

There are plans to introduce an ETIAS to visit the Schengen area. Please refer to these potential new visa requirements at https://travel-europe.europa.eu/etias_en

Until the ETIAS is introduced the following is applicable – • Visas not required for citizens of Australia, Canada, USA and New Zealand for up to 90 days in a period of 180 days for all Schengen countries (see https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/visa-policy_en . Please ensure your passport is stamped on arrival in the Schengen area. For all other nationalities and for longer stays in countries covered by the Schengen Agreement (Australian New Zealand, Canadian and US passport holders), please contact the relevant embassy. Stays of longer than 90 days in the Schengen area require a long stay visa for the country you are spending most time in. However long stay visas are unlikely to be issued unless there is a valid reason (eg. studying in country). Unfortunately we cannot assist in obtaining visas for long stays due to individual country visa requirements.

carbon neutral

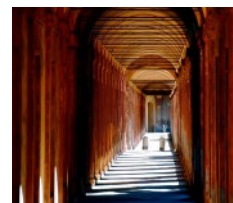
We focus on measuring and reducing emissions rather than relying on carbon offsets. Our Carbon Labels estimate a trip's emissions from accommodation, meals, ground transport, activities and guiding. The calculations are done independently by the carbon consultancy ecollective.

The labels don't include international flights, which are often the biggest part of your footprint. You can reduce yours by flying direct, flying economy, and travelling less often but for longer.

For more detail, go to Climate Action under Responsible Travel on our website.

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how to book

Bookings can be made online at www.worldexpeditions.com

A higher non refundable deposit amount is required at the time of booking. This is due to advance payments required to secure the accommodation.

The tour balance payment is due 90 days prior to commencement.

We are happy to quote on airfares and can book extra hotels nights at the group start and end hotels if you wish.