Italy

Birds, Wine & History (Relaxed)

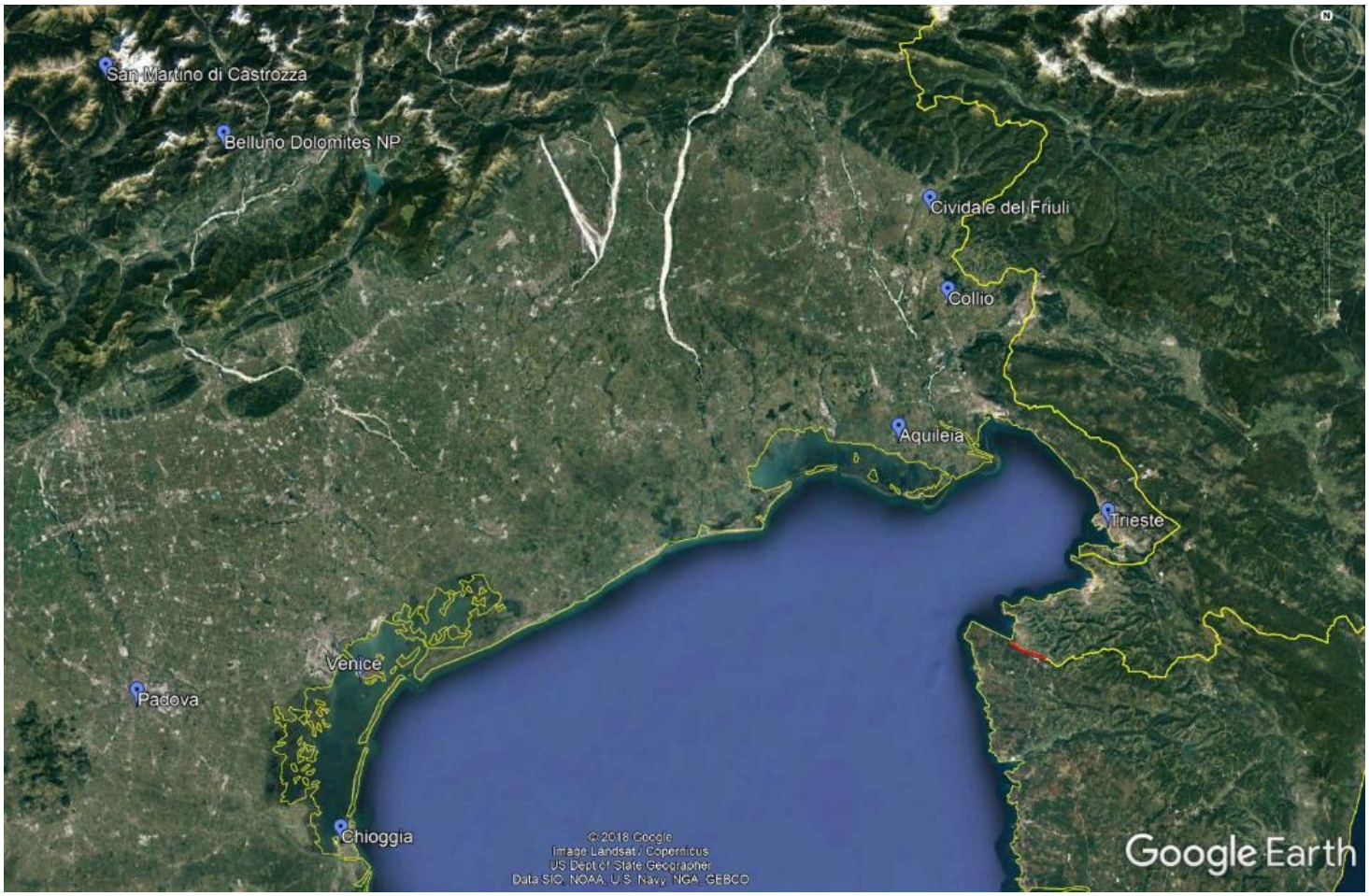


Greater Flamingo by Daniel Danckwerts

The 'Boot' is emerging as one of the world's foremost cross over destinations, home to more than 500 species of bird, several mammals, delicious cuisine, internationally renowned wines, historic cities and villages and scenic countryside. Our tour is focused on the northwest of Italy, encompassing the canals of Venice, the significant seaport of Trieste and the mighty Dolomites. Along the way, we shall spend our time birding, visiting several historical sites and enjoying fine wines and authentic local cuisine.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Venice, transfer to Chioggia**
Day 2	**Po Delta**
Day 3	**Chioggia to Padova and visit Colli Euganei Natural Park**
Day 4	**Padova to Trieste, via Aquileia**
Day 5	**Isonzo Estuary Natural Reserve**
Day 6	**Trieste to Collio and visit Cividale del Friuli**
Day 7	**Collio to Dolomites**
Day 8	**Belluno Dolomites National Park**
Day 9	**Dolomites to Venice**
Day 10	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Venice to Chioggia. After arriving at Venice International Airport, we head to Chioggia, a charming fishing town at the southern end of the Venice Lagoon. After checking in and unwinding, we'll begin our Italian journey with a gentle stroll through town.



Bearded Reedling by Rob Williams

Known as 'Little Venice', Chioggia features a network of canals—especially the Canale Vena—and narrow alleys called calli. The town also boasts several historic churches, many revamped during its 16th to 17th century heyday. A highlight is the Church of St. Andrew, home to the world's oldest watchtower, dating from the 11th to 12th centuries. We'll explore this and other key sites.

Tonight, we'll enjoy our first Italian meal at a local restaurant, with classic dishes like handmade ravioli, risotto, gnocchi, and wood-fired pizza.

Po Delta. Today we explore the nearby Po Delta, a vast wetland and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. It's widely regarded as Italy's premier birding destination, with around 350 species recorded, including over 150 breeding, and many overwintering species. Covering 54 000 hectares, the delta hosts a mosaic of habitats from rivers, lagoons and forests to dune systems.

We'll visit several sites, walking along trails and taking a boat trip through the main channels to access remote birding spots. Lunch will be at a traditional casone, a restored fishing lodge typical of the region.

Birding highlights include Ferruginous Duck, White Stork, Pygmy Cormorant (at its westernmost European breeding site), Glossy Ibis, Red-breasted Merganser, and large numbers of Greater Flamingos. We'll also look for waders and wetland specialists such as Marsh Sandpiper, Eurasian Spoonbill, Collared Pratincole, and various gulls and terns, including Little and Gull-billed Terns.



Collared Pratincole by Rob Williams

Later, we'll visit the Sacca di Goro, also known as the Island of Silters, where we'll scan for large flocks of shorebirds like Eurasian Curlew, Grey Plover, Dunlin, Kentish Plover, and Pied Avocet. The surrounding woodlands may reveal songbirds such as Eurasian Golden Oriole, Eurasian Blackcap, and Short-toed Treecreeper.

Chioggia to Padova. This morning, we travel to Padova (Padua), one of northern Italy's oldest cities, founded around 1183 BC. A walking tour takes us through its elegant arcades, piazzas, and bridges. Highlights include the clock tower in Piazza dei Signori and Giotto's frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel.

The 12th century tower, later expanded to 82 metres, features an astronomical clock that chimes and plays a short melody composed by Maestro Valtinoni before noon and 18:00.

In the afternoon, we visit Colli Euganei National Park for a relaxed nature walk and further birding, before returning to Padova for dinner.



Hawfinch by Adam Riley

Padova to Trieste, via Aquileia. Today we head east to Trieste, stopping in Aquileia, a former Roman colony. We'll explore the impressive Basilica Complex with its stunning mosaics, the Crypt of the Frescoes, and the Südhalle mosaic in the Aula Cromaziana. The surrounding archaeological area has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1998.

We'll enjoy lunch and a wine tasting at a nearby family-run vineyard, then continue to Trieste. We'll explore the city's unique blend of Latin, Slavic, and Germanic influences, reflected in its Roman ruins, Baroque palaces, and Habsburg architecture.

Isonzo Estuary Natural Reserve. Today is dedicated to birding at the Isonzo Estuary Reserve. This beautifully managed area includes wetlands, reedbeds, grasslands, woodlands, and the Isonzo River mouth. It mirrors the diversity of the Po Delta and offers a second chance to find species we may have missed - particularly Pygmy Cormorant and, if lucky, Little Crake.



Alpine Chough by Clayton Burne

We'll enjoy a picnic lunch at the visitor centre before returning to Trieste for the evening.

Trieste to Collio, visit Cividale del Friuli. We travel to the scenic Collio region, known for wine production and castle-dotted hills. At a family-run vineyard, we'll learn about the Nebbiolo grape, whose name derives from the fog (nebbia) common during harvest. A vineyard picnic will round off our visit.

In the afternoon, we head to UNESCO-listed Cividale del Friuli, a town rich in Lombard art and history. Founded by Julius Caesar, it rose to prominence in the 6th century as a Lombard capital. We'll explore landmarks

such as Piazza Paolo Diacono and the Ponte del Diavolo, while enjoying the town's architecture and regional treats.

Collio to the Dolomites. This morning we drive into the Dolomites, arriving in the alpine village of San Martino di Castrozza. Located between the Primiero and Fiemme Valleys, the town developed as a stopover near the Rolle Pass. After a walk through the village, we'll visit a local cheese farm to learn about traditional cheese-making before dinner at a local restaurant.

Belluno Dolomites National Park. Our final birding day is in Belluno Dolomites National Park, home to over 100 bird species. Notably, this is the only European site where the full suite of alpine game birds can be found: Rock Partridge, Black Grouse, Hazel Grouse, Western Capercaillie, and Rock Ptarmigan, albeit none are easy to see. Other highlights include Alpine Accentor, Alpine Chough, Northern Nutcracker, Rock Bunting, and Golden Eagle.



Northern Nutcracker by Adam Riley

We'll also explore the lower slopes with their coniferous forests, where species like Black Woodpecker, Eurasian Nuthatch, and European Serin may be seen. Mammals include Red Deer, Alpine Ibex, and, if we're lucky, a Chamois or Marmot.



Alpine Accentor by Clayton Burne

Dolomites to Venice. This morning we bid farewell to the Dolomites and return to Venice, arriving in time for lunch at a traditional wine bar serving cicchetti, Venetian-style tapas. The afternoon is spent exploring key highlights.

We focus on Piazza San Marco and the Basilica di San Marco, famed for its golden mosaics and ornate Pala d'Oro altarpiece set with nearly 2 000 gems. The square is bordered by elegant arcades and overlooked by the iconic bell tower.

We'll also visit the Rialto Bridge and San Polo district, home to one of the city's oldest markets. An optional gondola ride offers a classic Venetian experience. We end the day with a farewell dinner at our hotel.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground, with some areas of uneven/rocky ground. Slightly longer hikes also possible.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality sealed roads.
Photography		Worthwhile to good.
Annoyances		Some bright sunny days.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 18kg (40 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: This tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are comfortable.
- Some hiking, particularly in the mountainous areas is involved. These are easy hikes on clean trails, but they can take a few hours on occasions. These will be done at an easy and comfortable pace, as we will be birding along the route.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Venice on the morning of day 1 with a group transfer to Chioggia. Do ensure that you arrive the previous day. The tour will conclude after breakfast at Venice International Airport (IATA: VCE) on day 10.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Venice International Airport (IATA: VCE) is the main port of entry and departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.