

Brescia. A Mediterranean Spot in Mittel Europe

Marina Melchionda (March 01, 2010)



Lakes, mountains, lemon and olive gardens, historical sights, spas, cultural events, the most famous car race in Italy: Brescia can offer this and much more. The Province was presented on February 25 at the headquarters of the Italian Government Tourism Board

A Mediterranean Spot in Continental Europe: that's how we could define Brescia and its surrounding areas. Lakes, mountains, excellent food and wine, cultural and sport events, historical sites: all kinds of attractions that can fulfill the needs and desires of tourists of all ages, social classes, and inclinations.

Together with the Director of the [Italian Government Tourism Board in North America](#) [2] Riccardo Strano, the President of [Bresciatourism](#) [3], Paolo Rossi, presented this eclectic and quite unknown area to our fellow Americans at the headquarters of the Italian Government Tourism Board on February 25. "Situated in an ideal position, between Milan, Verona and Venice, it can become the



perfect jumping-off point for visiting these cities, go to the [Arena di Verona](#) [4] for some Opera, and do some shopping in Milan. We offer the tourist an up-scale vacation where amusement, relax, and fun are the rallying cry", he started.

Listing the activities you could organize and experience in the area is almost impossible, but let's try to look at the region through a closer lens...

Most of the territory is hilly, since Brescia is surrounded by the Alps, making it a traditional destination for ski and winter sport lovers. In this period of the year, tourists crowd the typical village mountains of [Ponte di Legno](#) [5], [Montecampione](#) [6], Corteo Golgi, Borno, and Gaver, where they can find well-equipped facilities, and slopes for both experts and novices. Trekking, rafting, and other extreme sports are also practiced during the spring and the summer, while in the natural parks of Stelvio and Andamello curious can find, watch and photograph the typical fauna of the area.

At the base of the mountains lies the largest lake of Italy, [Lake Garda](#) [7]. Called "the sea" of Brescia, it is surrounded by Mediterranean vegetation, including lemon trees, olive trees, vineyards and cypresses.

"The lake is the flagship of the region", Mr. Rossi said to our microphones. As he farther explained to us, the area is characterized by a very particular and contrasting landscape, where Roman palaces, Liberty-style villas and modern international resorts contrast with the green and flourishing nature. On the lake is the villa of the famous Italian Poet Gabriele d'Annunzio, "[Il Vittoriale](#) [8]", that has now become a museum hosting the unusual and eccentric furnishings and antiques he owned.

Besides the villas, the medieval castles on the lake's shores and the numerous Spring Spas, can farther enrich the visitor's staying with cultural sight-seeings and relaxing moments to share with a partner, friend, or in intimate solitude.

[Lake Idro](#) [9] and [Lake Iseo](#) [10] are the two other major lakes of the region, the last one of which being of particular interest for those people coming from large metropolitan areas like Milan or New York. In fact, right in the middle of the lake, one can find the isle of Montisola, a place where no automobiles are allowed, and the rhythms are those of ancient times, when the life of the inhabitants was based on fishing, net making, and wooden boat building. It is a Paradise on earth for those who look for tranquillity and rest.

As the presentation went on, Mr. Rossi focused on the numerous attractions the city of Brescia itself can offer to tourists. Every year the municipality hosts a number of events, exhibits, and programs that can really meet the tastes of a wide range of fellows. "The most beautiful race of the world, as they call it, the '[Mille Miglia car race](#) [11]', takes off every year in May from Piazza Vittoria, located right in the heart of the city. Antique cars built between 1927 and 1957, with their both Italian and foreign owners, participate in the contest. They cover 1000 miles of Italian territory, from Rome to Brescia and back, passing through the cities of Ferrara, Ravenna, Bologna, Urbino, and Florence. It's an incomparable experience for them, and for us it is an honor to continue hosting what up until a half of a century ago was the world automobile championship race par excellence".

Mr. Rossi listed the other major events characterizing life in the city of Brescia. The **International Contemporary Circus Festival** takes place every June and July. Involving artists from around the world, it is set in some of the most evocative and enchanting spots of the cities, among which piazzas and theatres, but also courtyards and spaces open to the public just for the occasion.

While from April to June the **International Piano Festival** brings acclaimed musicians to the city to compete and perform in 30 concerts, in June the **Dieci Giornate** (Ten Days) swamps the streets and the houses of the center of Brescia with concerts, meetings with artists, shows, art, and music from morning to late at night.

In September, the **Centomiglia regatta race** brings you back to the river of Lago di Garda, and also becomes a great occasion to enjoy the countryside at the beginning of the fall, particularly the area of [Franciacorta](#) [12].



As Mr. Rossi told us, Franciacorta is "the" place for a high-standard, inclusive, and introspective trip in the savors and flavors of the area's food and wine. "Its wine was the first product in Italy to be granted the Denominazione di Origine Controllata - D.O.C. (Denomination of Controlled Origins). In America, this wine is gradually substituting Champagne. We re-baptized it 'Bollicine' (Sparkles), and is today largely recognized for beating its French competitor in both price and aroma", he continued with pride.

In Franciacorta the high-quality standard of the local products and the cuisine of some of the most famous chefs of Italy espouse the natural elegance of the area. With the greatest number of first-class restaurants of the country, it is without a doubt the ideal destination for the gourmet traveler.

We had the opportunity to taste some of the exquisite products and the traditional and genuine recipes offered by the culinary culture of the province of Brescia during a buffet dinner set in the hall following the presentation. Before that, however, there was time left for an interesting Q&A section, a moment taken by the numerous Italian and American journalists and travel agents to learn more about Brescia and its area.

Did we learn everything we needed to? We tested our knowledge about the province through "the Brescia Questionnaire", a fun moment for all in which eleven of us, chosen at random, were awarded prizes if we gave the correct answer. Books, plaques, and stamps preceded the last, rich prize: a six-night trip for two to Brescia was won by Nancy Kay Streiter (Travel Consultant, Protravel International). She was asked two questions, a double test for a prize ten times as rich. Suggestions from the public and from "the jury" accompanied laughs and good spirits in this convivial moment.

Fully satisfied with the final outcome of the event, the Director of the Italian Government Tourism Board, Riccardo Strano, left us with a final comment on the initiative: "Our aim is to introduce and acknowledge Americans working in the field and potential tourists on the beauties and attractions that areas of Italy which are less known to the great public can offer. Brescia is a perfect target, being also very close to sites of relevant interest to the American traveler such as Verona, Milan, and Venice. It's a multifaceted location, where culture, fun, sport, music and art live in perfect balance with the area's magnificent nature".

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