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## TOURIST INFORMATION

**AGENZIA TURISMO FVG**  
Villa Chiocca - Via Carso, 3  
I - 33052 Cervignano del Friuli (UD)  
tel +39 0431 387111 / fax +39 0431 387199  
[info@turismo.fvg.it](mailto:info@turismo.fvg.it)

+39 0431 387130

**INFOPOINT TURISMO FVG DI AQUILEIA**  
Via Iulia Augusta Bus Parking/Terminal  
33051 Aquileia (UD)  
tel +39 0431 919491 / fax +39 0431 919491  
[info.aquileia@turismo.fvg.it](mailto:info.aquileia@turismo.fvg.it)

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## Aquileia

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Aquileia, situated in the fascinating lagoon area of the north-eastern Adriatic, a few kilometres from the well-known seaside resort of Grado, attracts every year a very large number of visitors coming from all over the world. Aquileia is one of the most important archaeological sites in northern Italy, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1998.

A place of historical memory and evidence of a long past.

Aquileia  
UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Colonized in 181 B.C. in "agro pallorum", the town of Aquileia was born as a bridgehead for the Roman conquest of the Danube areas and with the aim of defending the eastern borders to enhance the already flourishing trade between the eastern Mediterranean basin and the transalpine countries.

Born as a Latin colony, it will be declared a Municipium. Around 90 B.C. Julius Caesar, too, in the "De bello gallico" mentions Aquileia, which was, in fact, the location of the winter camps. With the administrative reform of Augustus (27 B.C.-14 A.D.) Aquileia became

the capital of the tenth region "Venetia et Histria". The town underwent a period of prosperity; it soon turned into a centre of important trade exchanges thanks to the navigable river that crossed it, the Natisone-Torre, and to the efficient network of roads that linked the town to the Po Valley and to Central Europe. Agriculture developed considerably, with valuable cultivations and cattle breeding; ships that transported building material (stones and marbles), food products (spices, wine, wheat and olive oil, precious stones, docked in the port. On the other hand, leather, wood and metals, especially iron from Austria, arrived from Northern countries. As far as trade is concerned, there were craft enterprises (blacksmiths, cartwrights, butchers) of terracotta and ceramics and above all glassworks, of blown glass as well, at least a thousand years before Murano. The population that lived within the walls was cosmopolitan, with a very heterogeneous ethnic composition. There were not only Romans and Greeks, but also Syrians, Egyptians, Jews, Celts. One assumes that, at the end of the imperial age, Aquileia had 70,000-100,000 inhabitants: it was the fourth Roman town in Italy and the ninth in the whole Empire.

Christianity arrived very soon in Aquileia, which became the spreading centre of the new faith. However, Aquileia also underwent various critical moments, but it was first with the deviation of the river, in 361 A.D., and then with the barbarian invasions in the 5th century, that a slow decline began, which precipitated definitively after Attila's devastation in 452.

## Aquileia, the river port

## The river port of Aquileia

In the eastern part of the town, where once the wide river Akilis (after which the town is named) Natisone-Torre flew, which is 48-metre wide and is navigable for 10 km, one can see the remains of the ancient port structure, which was built in the 2nd century B.C. Afterwards, it was enlarged and renovated several times according to the town's needs. During the Empire of Claudius (first half of the 1st century A.D.) it was given the monumental and rational arrangement documented by the visible remains. The pier was made up of an upper and a lower dock, thus to allow boats of different sizes to dock and to avoid the differences in height due to tides and floods. The upper level was provided with protruding and horizontal mooring rings, still visible, although new finds today may let think of bases for a port machine, called ciconia, whereas in the lower level they are

vertical and enclosed in blocks of Istrian stone, which is more resistant to the corrosion of brackish water than other stones. The other visible structures are the ramps for storehouses and the accesses to the town: the port, in fact, was linked to the heart of the town by three sloping paved roads. Goods from the whole Mediterranean (foodstuffs, spices, marbles, precious stones, fabrics) and intended for internal use or for the Danube markets arrived at the port of Aquileia. Among the cypress trees along the path will you see reclaimed remains, such as a solar clock, inscribed altars, fragments of graves and above all a large marble trabeation, supported by columns of modern small bricks, belonging to a second-century luxury building.

The Forum of Aquileia (115x57 metres) is of elongated shape. It appears to us in its reconstruction carried out in 1936, which reflects the late-antique building situation. Especially remarkable is the colonnade, which supported a portico, raised with three steps, overlooked by shops, taverns and religious and civil buildings, among which the forensic basilica. The Basilica was an environment of 2,250 square metres of rectangular shape with two opposing apses to the east and to the west of the structure, and was almost 90 metre long. The decumanus (east-west direction road) is to the south of the Forum and is made up of large basoti, perfectly connected paving stones that form the road paving. In the section between the Forum and the port it is dedicated to Aratralia Galia, a matron from Aquileia, who in the 2nd century financed the restoration of the road. The matron's name is known thanks to two commemorative inscriptions preserved at the Lapidarium of the Archaeological Museum.

civil and religious ceremonies. To the south of the square are the remains of the Forensic basilica (visible to the west of the Via Iulia Augusta), which was the Courthouse and the meeting place of traders and exchange agents. The Basilica was an environment of 2,250 square metres of rectangular shape with two opposing apses to the east and to the west of the structure, and was almost 90 metre long.

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**The Burial Ground**

Outside the town, along the road axes, there were burial grounds, like that of Via Anna, an important example of Roman cemetery: it consists of a series of fenced sepulchres, of different types and periods.

**Permanent exhibition**

"Aquileia, a crossroads of the Roman Empire"

Situated opposite the TurismoFVG tourist information office, it provides a wide photographic survey of the history of Aquileia.

**St. Anthony's Church**

In Via Roma, not far from Aquileia's Archaeological Museum, you will

find the Baroque St. Anthony's church. It was built between the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century. The facade features the portal, surrounded by the statues of St. Anthony and two angels and by two stucco statues. The interior is particularly elegant, decorated with fine frescoes (Annunciation, Flight into Egypt, Evangelists, St. Anthony and four Virgin Saints of Aquileia: Erasmo, Euphemia, Thecla and Dorothy, St. Catherine and St. Felicity). The frescoes are attributed to French painter Louis Dorigny, who worked in Friuli for a long period (first decade of the 18th century). Next to the Church there is a small exhibition room that houses thematic exhibitions.

**The Church of the Virgins**

In the town centre, on the third floor of an old house of Aquileia, probably a former convent, the museum offers good food for thought: the reading of painting works, among which the well-known master Giovanni Donizetti stand out.

**The Cemetery of Heroes**

Behind the bell tower, a place of memory and reflection: the Cemetery of Heroes. During the First World War the first Italian fallen but also Austro-Hungarian soldiers who, taken prisoners, died in the military hospital of Aquileia, were buried in the old cemetery that surrounded the Basilica. The old cemetery was progressively converted into a war cemetery: the walls were adorned by plaques and boxtombs were planted on the sides of the main avenue.

The crosses, of wrought iron with a laurel branch and an oak branch interwoven around the cross, con-

tain in the circular bronze plate the name of the fallen, the date of death and the unit of belonging. However, several graves contain more than one body. The central part of the cemetery features a monument in memory of all the fallen: it represents an arcosolium open on the Karst: an altar of sacrifice with a triumphal arch. The bodies of Ten Unknown Soldiers have been preserved under this monument since 4th November 1921. At the foot of the monument there is also the sepulchre of the woman who chose the body of the soldier to be transferred to the territory of the Fatherland in Rome: Maria Bergamas, who had lost her son at war.

**The "Donizetti" School Museum**

In the town centre, on the third floor of an old house of Aquileia, probably a former convent, the museum offers good food for thought: the reading of painting works, among which the well-known master Giovanni Donizetti stand out.

**The Markets**

In the Roman Age Aquileia was a big trading centre. In the middle of a field, to the south of the Patriarchal basilica, a sandstone paved area, recognized as a public market, has been brought to light. This area, surrounded by a double row of quadrangular bases, represents the remains of the roofs that covered the spaces of the market stands.

**Associazione Nazionale Aquileia:**

Permanent panel exhibition on the history of Aquileia

Via Iulia Augusta 11, Aquileia

[associazione-aquileia.libero.it](http://associazione-aquileia.libero.it)

Admission free.

**Eating with the ancient Romans**

Every year some restaurants of Aquileia, with the scientific support of historians and archaeologists, propose dishes cooked following the old Roman recipes as in the volume "De re coquinaria" by Apicius. During each dinner a speaker describes the various dishes

and tells of the history of Aquileia and of the uses and customs of the Romans who lived there: trades, games of that time, the emperors that arrived in the town.

## Belvedere and St. Mark THE SURROUNDINGS OF AQUILEIA

## Saint Mark's Pinewood

At about 5 km from Aquileia, in the direction of Grado, you will find St. Mark's Hill, a large sand dune rich in vegetation overlooking the Lagoon of Grado. According to Aquileia's tradition, it is here that Mark the apostle disembarked, coming from Alexandria, to carry out the evangelization of these lands and founded the Church of Aquileia.

A small eighteen-century church (1747), built by Marquis Francesco Savorgnan, stands on the top of the hill: the small St. Mark's church, situated next to the gravestone, is surrounded by a small but enchanting pinewood, which stretches towards the lagoon, consisting of stone pine and black pine evergreen trees, representing a very rare example of the pine woods with which these lands were covered in ancient times. It is an extremely charming place, immersed in a green and silent area, reachable by bicycle, motorcycle or car.

**Belvedere**

Already known in the Roman age, the territory of Belvedere was donated in 1387 by the Patriarch of Aquileia to the Savorgnan noble family, that, being tightly related to the City of the Doges, transformed the patriarchal estate into a small corner of Venice, the small church of Belvedere, dedicated to St. Anthony the Abbot, built in 1746 by Francesco Savorgnan, contains important works of art by well-known Venetian artists (the copy of Guardi's altarpiece, situated over the high altar, the right altarpiece, the angels of the high altar by Moriati). Next to the church of Belvedere is the Savorgnan-Fior-Pasi Villa, built in the perfect style of a Venetian villa. The Savorgnans were the owners of Belvedere until 1805; afterwards, the lands were sold to the Colloredo family and, in 1882, to the Fior family. Today, a wide area has been transformed for tourist purposes into a large campsite.

**The Basilica of Aquileia**

**Roman burial ground**

**Detail of a mosaic**

**The presbytery of the Basilica**

**Interior of the Basilica**

**The Roman Forum**

**The presbytery of the Basilica**

**Interior of the Basilica**

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**The Roman Forum**

**The presbytery of the Basilica**

## Palmanova

A RENAISSANCE STAR

The fortress of Palmanova is not only a gem of military art but also a casket full of curious aspects. It is a model of town unique of its kind, in the shape of a perfectly symmetrical nine-pointed star. A bulwark of the renaissance concept of ideal town wanted by the Venetian Government to defend the eastern border from the Ottoman raids and from the expansion goals of Austria. Since 1960 it has been considered a national monument.



## Palmanova

THE FORTRESS TOWN

### An outline of the town's history

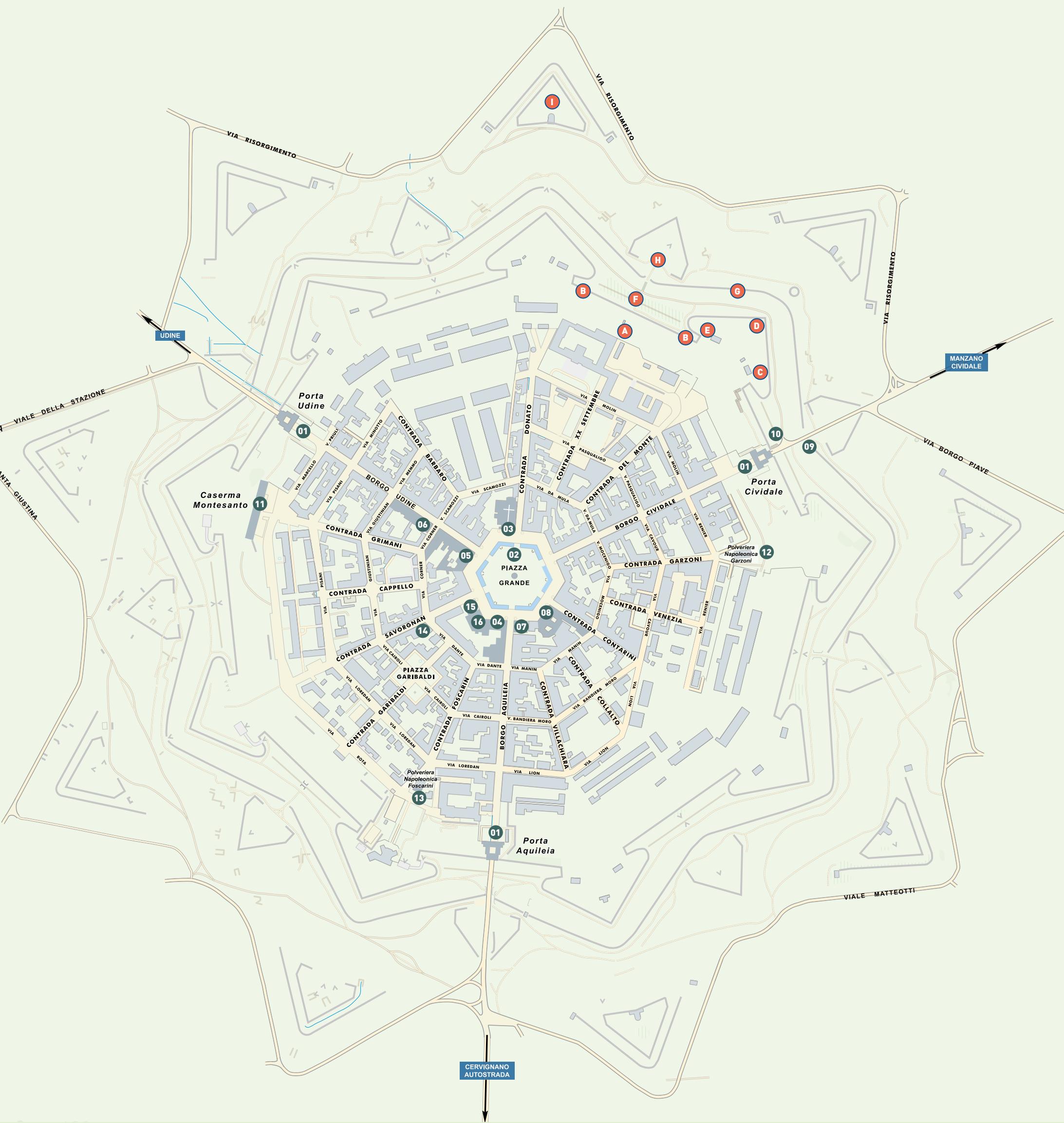
The building of this fortress started in 1593 by order of the Serenissima Republic of Venice that aimed at defending the eastern border, as well as from the raids of the Turks and of the Uslaks (serfs of Slavic race), from the expansion goals of Austria as well. Declared a national monument in 1960, the fortress-town is not only one of the best preserved examples of military architecture of the Renaissance, but also features the concept of ideal town. Looking at it from above, it is possible to admire the perfection of the characteristic polygonal urban layout in the shape of a nine-pointed star with nine solid ramparts. The design by architect Giulio Savorgnan is a masterpiece of military engineering: he availed himself of the help of architects working at Venice's Fortification Office, essentially taking into account the range of the weapons of that time. The military reasons at the basis of its foundation determined its external arrangement in the shape of a nine-pointed star surrounded by three circles of fortified walls (the first two Venetian, the third Napoleonic), each built in axis with respect to the previous one in order to create three perfectly symmetrical nine-pointed stars inside one another.



At the fall of the Serenissima and after the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797) the town soon returned under the Austrian rule, but in 1805 it was occupied by Napoleon Bonaparte's French troops. Napoleon established his headquarters in the town and built an additional circle of walls - the range of the guns, in fact, had increased and therefore the thickness of the existing defences was insufficient - equipping it with the so-called "lunettes", bastions of half-moon shape; moreover, he built functional structures, such as powder magazines and casemates.

After the Napoleonic period, the town passed under the Habsburg rule (1814-1848). In 1848, at the end of the 3rd War of Independence, it was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy. During the First World War the town was the location of hospitals, storehouses and a clearing and supply centre for the troops stationed on the Isonzo river. After the defeat of Caporetto Palmanova was set on fire by the retreating Italian troops.

## Map of the centre of Palmanova with main points of interest



## Palmanova



## Palmanova, walking in the town centre

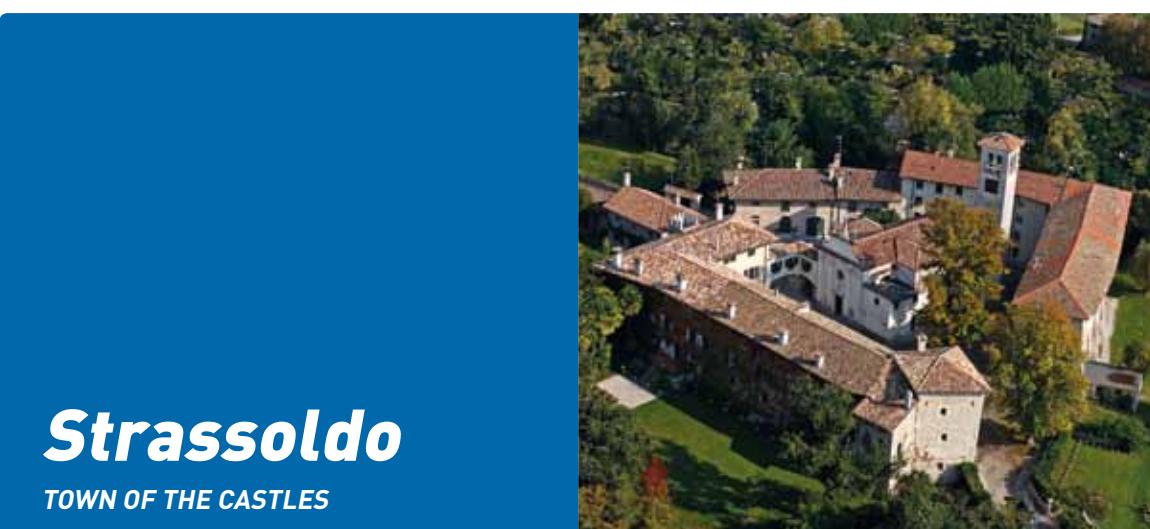
**Palazzo del Provveditore Generale [Palace of the General Superintendent]**  
Town Hall of Palmanova, piazza Grande, 1  
33057 - Palmanova (Ud)  
tel +39 0432 922111  
[www.comune.palmanova.ud.it](http://www.comune.palmanova.ud.it)

Opposite the Cathedral, on the opposite side of the square, you can see the symbol of the civil power of the ancient fortress: the Palazzo del Provveditore Generale [Palace of the General Superintendent], today's Town Hall. Started in 1598, it was enlarged in 1611. Next to the palace, the Loggia della Gran Guardia (Loggia of the Guard), the seat of the troops that watched over the General Superintendent, and the Loggia dei Mercanti (Merchants' Loggia), which contains a monument to the fallen by Marcellus Maserini.

The heart of the star-shaped town is Piazza Grande, the ancient hexagonal parade ground, from which the six main streets (three borghi and three quarters) start. The square, at the centre of which the fortress stands, is adorned by the statues that represent the General Superintendents of the fortresses, considered one of the most prestigious offices in the government of the Serenissima Republic of Venice. Piazza Grande is overlooked by the town's most important monuments, above all the seventeenth-century Cathedral built by the Fortification Office of Venice.

The single-nave cathedral preserves valuable works of art among which a wooden Madonna attributed to Domenico from Tolmezzo (dating back to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), frescoes by Domenico Fabris and the Altarpiece of the Troops (dating back to 1641) by Alessandro Varotari called il Padovano.

The double ceiling truss of painted larchwood is very precious as well. The bell tower, adjacent to the cathedral, dates back to 1776.



## Claviano

ONE OF ITALY'S MOST BEAUTIFUL TOWNS

In the municipality of Cervignano Udinese, a few kilometres (4 km) from Palmanova, you will find the small medieval town of Claviano, one of the best preserved in Friuli's plain.

The origin of the town date back to the Middle Ages: the oldest buildings can be attributed to the 15<sup>th</sup> century and are located around St. George's Church and in via Borgo S. Martino.

More numerous are the buildings of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Over time the town has kept unchanged both its fortifying structure (the original medieval plan) and the typical rural architecture of Friuli: the old houses made of stones, with the main side overlooking the road and the inner courtyard.

Embellishing elements are the elegant doors, surrounded by white stones, which introduce to large arcades.

In the main street of the town you will find St. George the Martyr Church (18<sup>th</sup> cent.), in which you can admire a remarkable sixteenth-century font. Just out-

side the town, among the fields and close to a grove, you will find the small St. Mark's Church.

The first documents date back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century but it is supposed to be older, as it was probably situated along the old medieval road that from Aquileia led to Cividale, with subsequent rearrangements in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The charm of this place is enhanced by the frescoes (mid-14<sup>th</sup> cent.) that adorn the apse, and the seats along the perimeter of the walls, like in Oriental churches.

**Imaging time: Autumnal Equinox Festival**  
Art, Culture, Music, Food and Wine products in an amazing setting. The old houses open their courtyards to visitors, to music, to creativity.

**For information:** Tourist Office of Palmanova  
Borgo Udine 4 - 33057 Palmanova (Ud)  
tel +39 0432 924815  
[palmanova.turismolibero.it](http://palmanova.turismolibero.it)



## Strassoldo

TOWN OF THE CASTLES

At a short distance from Aquileia, a few kilometres before the Renaissance town of Palmanova, you will find a small medieval town of remarkable beauty: Strassoldo, which features two of the oldest castles of Friuli, the Castello di Sopra (Upper Castle) and the Castello di Sotto (Lower Castle).

Various are the origins of its name: in German "Strasse-Holt" means "to keep, to control the road". It is certain that the homonymous family, the Strassoldo counts, have been living here for a thousand years or even more.

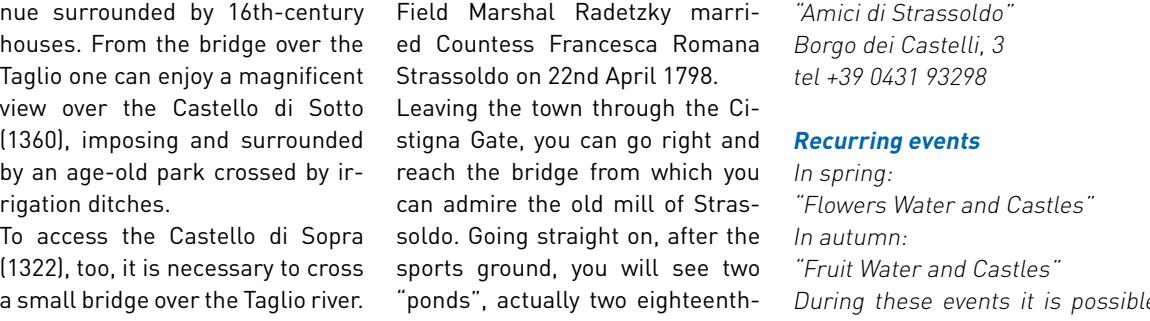
The town, which dates back to the thirteenth century, can be accessed through the tower-gate called "Cisla", which overlooks an avenue surrounded by 16th-century houses. From the bridge over the Taglio one can enjoy a magnificent view over the Castello di Sotto (1360), imposing and surrounded by a small bridge over the Taglio river. The two castles are characterized

as "water castles", being situated in the Bassa Friulana resurgence area. On the left you can see the former huskery of the castle, dating back to 1812, which supplied rice to the Viennese Court.

Not far from the castle is the thirteenth-century Church of Santa Maria in Vinis, which preserves a cycle of fourteenth-century frescoes among the most beautiful and best preserved in Friuli.

Moreover, St. Nicholas Church (1725-1750), which preserves two paintings by Pierre Bonnivard and the Renaissance altar of the risen Christ, attributed to Bernardino da Bissone, a sculptor from Ticino active in Friuli since 1491, is worth a visit. However, few people know that in this small church Field Marshal Radetzky married Countess Francesca Romana Strassoldo on 22nd April 1798.

**Recurring events**  
In spring:  
"Flowers Water and Castles"  
In autumn:  
"Fruit Water and Castles"  
During these events it is possible to visit the castles and their ponds.



## Aiello del Friuli

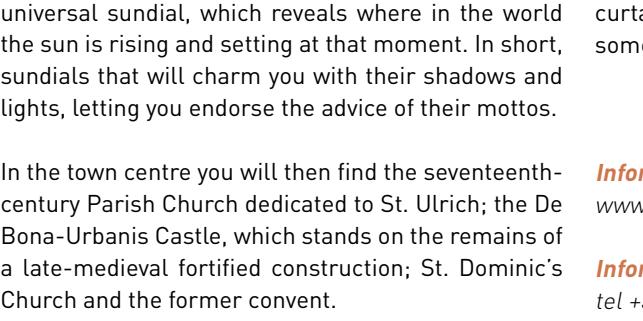
THE TOWN OF SUNDIALS

At 7 km from Cervignano you will find Aiello, a small town in the resurgence area, once rich in mills and where several Roman finds have been found, among which the statue of the leader Navarca, preserved at the museum of Aquileia and found in the 1950s in the countryside between Aiello and Cavenzano.

In the latest years the town has been characterised by the realisation of numerous sundials on the walls of public buildings and private houses. The sundials, that is to say, the solar clocks that have marked time since ancient times, provide modern man with the silent and discreet possibility to read time, reminding him - with the shadow of the gnomon - to live fully each moment of his existence.

Along the town's streets one can admire over sixty sundials of different types. One can read the Babylonian time, that of the ancient Romans, the Islamic time and the Islamic time.

The fulcrum of the itinerary is the Courtyard of Sundials, without forgetting the universal sundial, which reveals where in the world the sun is rising and setting at that moment. In short, sundials that will charm you with their shadows and lights, letting you endorse the advice of their mottoes.



## San Canzian d'Isonzo

THE SAINTS CANTIUS

The history of this town is linked to that of Aquileia; in fact, one of the largest sepulchral areas of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. developed along Via Gemina.

Inside the Parish Church you can see the high altar carved by P. Zuliani (1750-1767) and the triptych of Saints Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianilla, of 1581, attributed to G. Secante from Udine.

Of considerable interest, in the lower hall, two paintings by Furio, a Venetian painter who worked between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one depicting the Martyrdom of the three brothers from Aquileia, Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianilla, the children of a local Roman noble family that had rural properties. The two brothers,

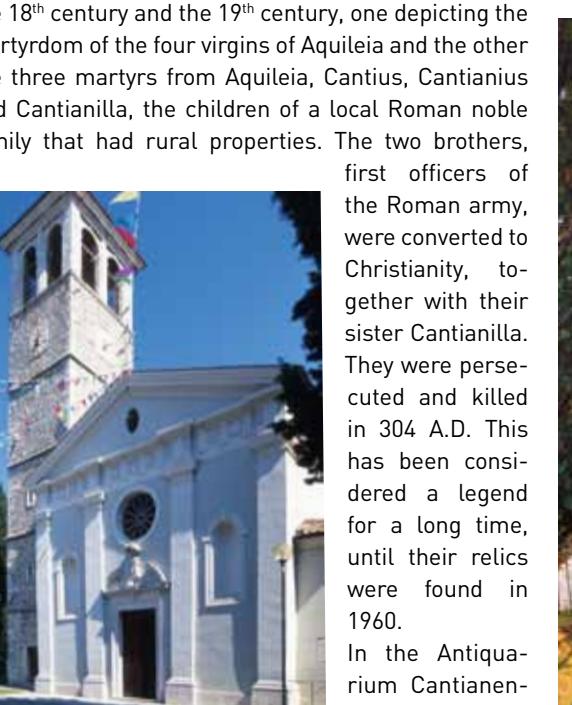
first officers of the Roman army, were converted to Christianity, together with their sister Cantianilla. They were persecuted and killed in 304 A.D. This has been considered a legend for a long time, until their relics were found in 1960.

In the Antiquarium Cantianense, an exhibition

room next to the parish church preserves valuable finds, such as funerary inscriptions, sculptures, mosaics.

**For information:**  
Largo Garibaldi, 37 - Hamlet of Pieris  
tel +39 0481 472311 / fax +39 0481 472334

Foto: del Tagliamento



## Surroundings of Palmanova

