



Gastronomic Piedmont

Some of the finest food and wine in Italy

14–20 October 2023 (MJ 943)

7 days • £3,780

Lecturer: Cynthia Chapman

One of the most celebrated gastronomic regions in Italy, centre of the 'Slow Food' revolution.

Wine and food production studied at source, including visits to Alba, white truffle capital of the world, and a number of Barolo wineries.

Superb restaurants, from simple trattorias to the Michelin starred.

Beautiful landscapes: upland pasture, rolling hills, sloping vineyards and hazelnut woods.

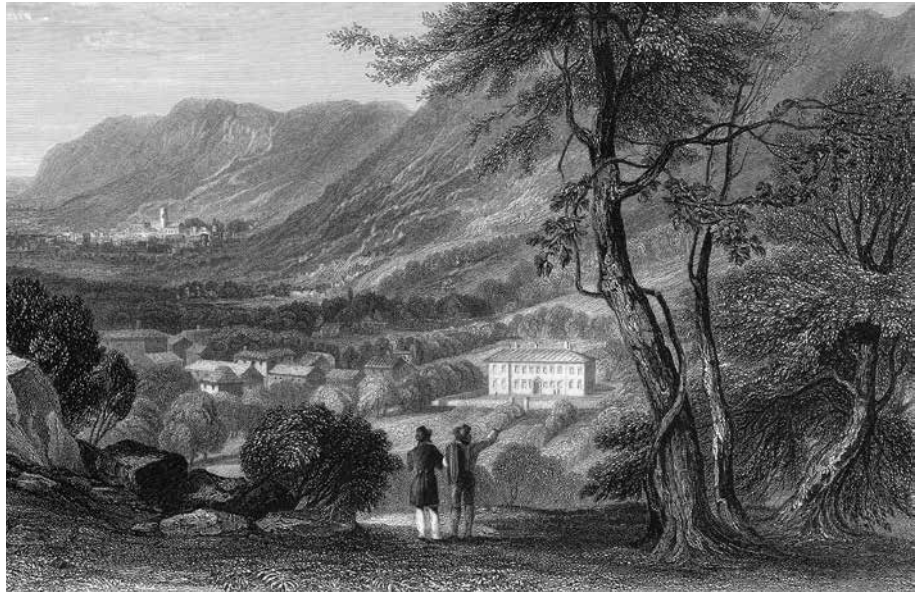
The lecturer is wine expert Cynthia Chapman.

Gastronomically, Piedmont is undoubtedly one of Italy's most interesting regions. Its wines are superb, the food produced there is varied and the delicious cooking ranges from traditional country fare to creatively modern cuisine. Moreover, the region is the centre of the Slow Food revolution, which is transforming gastronomy in Italy and beyond.

There is also another winning feature: many Piedmontese in the food and wine business have a desire to share their passion, and welcome interested visitors with generous amounts of their time and produce. In part this may be because visitors are relatively few, despite the high reputation which Piedmont enjoys.

For this tour we have bypassed Turin in favour of spending time in the countryside, seeing the origins of the food and wine and meeting the producers. This bucolic exile is not at the expense of culinary excellence; you will find superb restaurants, from simple rustic trattorias where Granny's recipes are still gospel, to Michelin-starred and innovative establishments, all serving some of Italy's finest food.

The study and enjoyment of wines is a large part of the tour. Barolo is the dominant wine – noble, austere and complex; the Nebbiolo grape is used for the elegant, tarry Barbaresco, and various other DOCs. We meet makers, chosen as much for their charm and communicativeness as for their wines, in some cases study their vines and the wine-making process, and taste the results. Among the foods we investigate, truffles are significant – Alba is something of a truffle capital – but the mountain cheeses such as Tomino and



The Val Lucerne, Piedmont, steel engraving after William Brockedon

Castelmagno make an equally powerful impression.

Landscape is another of the great pleasures of the tour. As its name suggests, Piedmont reaches from high pastures to alluvial plains, and much of it is used for agriculture (or small family-run farms). The Langhe hills are among the most beautiful in Italy, the flanks almost entirely carpeted with vineyards, the summits sporting castles, little mediaeval towns or ancient farmsteads.

Itinerary

Day 1: Fly at c. 10am from London Heathrow to Milan Linate (British Airways) and drive west to Bra, an attractive market town with some fine architecture, where the first four nights are spent. In the evening study the local wine-making process at the Ascheri winery adjacent to the hotel.

Day 2: Alba, Grinzane Cavour. Drive to Alba, chief town of the Langhe, for a truffle seminar and lunch. In the afternoon there is a wine tasting in the Castle of Grinzane Cavour, a spectacularly situated UNESCO heritage site, home of the first regional *enoteca* to open in Piedmont, now almost 50 years old. Dinner is at a Slow Food restaurant.

Day 3: Piozzo, Monforte d'Alba. The landscape between Dogliani and Murazzano is a patchwork of vineyards and rumbled hills,

woods and pasturage. There is a truffle hunt (real, not simulated) this morning in the woods around Piozzo, then a wine tasting and lunch at a small, family-run estate.

Day 4: Bra and surrounding countryside. Visit a traditional sausage maker, before a wine tasting in the Ascheri winery. Visit an outstanding restaurant for lunch and a cooking demonstration, before returning towards Bra for an optional guided walk through orchards, vineyards and hazelnut groves.

Day 5: Pollenzo, Serralunga d'Alba. In the morning there is a visit and wine tasting at the fascinating wine bank in nearby Pollenzo, which stores and ages wines from all over Italy in order to keep a historical record of the very best vintages. Lunch is at a Michelin-starred restaurant in Serralunga d'Alba. In the castle at Manta there are some marvellous medieval frescos. Continue to Cuneo where the last two nights are spent.

Day 6: Castelmagno, Sampeyre. The steep-sided valley of the river Grana is the sole source of one of Italy's finest cheeses, Castelmagno. Visit a farm to see aspects of its production. Continue to Sampeyre in the mountains for lunch and a cooking demonstration of alpine fare.

Day 7: Rivoli. Drive to Castello di Rivoli, one of the palaces of the royal house of Savoy established in hunting grounds around Turin.

Gastronomic Piedmont
continued

Rebuilt in the 18th century, though never finished, a museum of contemporary art has been installed here. Lunch at a Michelin-starred restaurant. Fly from Milan Linate, arriving London Heathrow at c. 8.30pm.

Lecturer

Cynthia Chapman. A professional sommelier and Vinality International Academy certified Italian Wine Ambassador. Born in the USA, Cynthia moved to Europe in 1990 where she has lived in Spain, Belgium, England and Italy, where she settled, centring her career in the Italian food and wine sector. She is a member of Le Donne del Vino and a Professor of Italian wine and culture, a regular judge for wine and sake competitions, and consults with restaurants and wine shops developing comprehensive wine lists and excellent food pairings.

Practicalities

Price, per person. Two sharing: £3,780 or £3,460 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £4,010 or £3,690 without flights.

Included: flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus A319); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 6 lunches and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; several wine tastings; all food tastings; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Accommodation. Albergo Cantine Ascheri, Bra (ascherihotel.it): 4-star hotel refurbished in a very modern but enjoyable design using locally made materials as much as possible. Service is enthusiastic and rooms are comfortable. **Hotel Palazzo Lovera, Cuneo** (palazzolovera.com): excellently situated 4-star hotel just off the ancient arcaded Via Roma. Décor is traditional and tasteful with dark wood and faux-Rococo wall paintings. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use throughout.*

How strenuous? There is a fair amount of walking involved. Participants need to be used to walking unaided on uneven terrain, and surefootedness is also essential for truffle hunting in the woods. Participants on the optional walk on Day 4 need to be used to hiking up and down hills. Average distance by coach per day: 65 miles.

Gastronomic tours. On a tour that focuses on food, wine and cooking traditions, we regret that participants with special diets may not have the same gastronomic experience as those with no restrictions. Please discuss your requirements with us before booking.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.