

Bubbly, Gourmet Dining, and Island Hopping—A Vespa Tour Through Franciacorta

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Photo: Alamy



In Franciacorta, the idyllic sparkling wine region just an hour from Milan, bubbly flows nonstop. In 1995, Franciacorta acquired the Controlled and Guaranteed Designation of Origin. In other words, it became the first Italian wine to be crafted using a bottle fermentation process similar to Champagne, and still remains a lesser-known region for the libation due to its (relatively) young age. But don't be fooled—Franciacorta has it all: extraordinary wine, Lake Iseo (a scenic lake that rivals Lake Como), Instagram-worthy hamlets and vineyards, rolling hills, posh lodging options, and a bounty of remarkable restaurants. Plus, there are fewer tourists than, say, Tuscany, meaning easier-to-get restaurant reservations and winery visits without busloads of tourists.



Vespas courtesy of Percorsi

Photo: Jenn Rices



And thanks to Percorsi, a new rental service, visitors can now explore all Franciacorta has to offer by way of stylish Vespa. Biking around wine country is doable, but beware: The beautiful rolling hills might be tough to manage after a big meal (but are a solid way to work off calories).

Here, a perfect one-day eating agenda that will give you a small glimpse into the region's culinary scene—with a few coveted scenic stops and wineries along the way.



Vista Lago Bistrò in L'Albereta

Photo: Jenn Rices



Wake up well rested at L'Albereta, a stunning Relais & Chateau property housed in a 19th-century villa that will set the tone—especially during sunrise when a mystical fog sets over rolling hills and vineyards, blending in with Lake Iseo. Vista Lago Bistrò—located on the hotel's sprawling terrace overlooking the countryside—offers much more than a perfect cappuccino. In typical Italian fashion, there's a spread of deep red cherries, freshly baked breads and pastries, and fresh eggs with bright orange yolks.



Boat ride to Monte Isola

Photo: Jenn Rices



It's Italy, so there's really no wrong time to indulge in a glass of sparkling. Make an early tasting appointment at [Bellavista](#). Alma Gran Cuvée and Satèn embody the true craftsmanship and soul of the region. Next, a pit stop at [Riserva Naturale Torbiere del Sebino](#) (a nature reserve) for a quick photo session is in order. Then head to Sulzano to catch a ferry to Monte Isola, the largest inhabited lake island in Europe, for the most impressive backdrop—and a salty snack. Twiaite shad, referred to as “sardines” by locals, are a true culinary delight to look forward to, especially when paired with a glass of Franciacorta. Score an outdoor table at [Locanda al Lago](#) to enjoy Mr. Soardi's exceptional dried sardines, sourced directly from the lake in front of you.

With lunchtime nearing, hop on the next ferry to Cascina Dos just in the nick of time for a well-earned lunch. Beetroot tagliatelle with sheep ragout in a vibrant green bath of matcha tea is a truly memorable dish, best accompanied by a glass of Barone Pizzini Animante. If you're still hungry, order the burrata with date tomatoes, toasted pine nuts, and Taggia olives.



Bersi Serlini winery

Photo: Jenn Rices



A mere five kilometers away is Bersi Serlini, one of Franciacorta's oldest wineries. Visit for a cellar tour and tasting of famed Brut Anteprema, paired with grissini (long, thin breadsticks), Montisola salami (a Lake Iseo specialty), and local cheeses. Insider note: You can't get this stateside, so stock up now!

Continue down the wine road to organic winery CorteBianca, where owner—also an architect and interior designer—Marina Tonsi’s wine and grounds will leave you in awe. Rosé Vintage, produced from 100 percent Pinot Noir grapes, is the star. A private tasting entails an alluring spread of herbed farm cheeses, honey, and rose jams (the latter two produced at CorteBianca), while Tonsi herself expounds upon CorteBianca’s design inspiration and the remarkable English rose garden.



Rose jam at Corte Bianca
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No trip to Italy is complete without gelato. Make your way to Sarnico for a stop at Mej, a gelateria on Lake Iseo. Some tout this as the best gelato in the world. A trio of coconut, mango, and strawberry will not disappoint. If exhaustion starts to roll in, it’s time to indulge in a cappuccino at Bohem. The charming co-op features a whimsical café decked out in gem-toned velvet furnishings and drapes, a flower shop, an Italian candy shop, and a perfume boutique.



Mei Gelateria

Photo: Jenn Rices



A sunset stroll back to L'Albereta for a pre-dinner Negroni is an exceptional way to unwind. Plus, there's no better spot to witness sunset. Finish the day at Due Colombe, a one-Michelin-starred restaurant in a 1,000-year-old hamlet. Chef Cervini cooks from the heart, serving recipes handed down from his family for generations, slightly tweaked with a modern flair. Obviously, a meal of this nature starts and ends with Franciacorta, but in between expect rich, savory dishes like a crème brûlée-style foie gras, handmade farfalle pasta with black truffle, and a semifreddo dessert with honey and hazelnuts that have been perfectly doused in rich olive oil. The hotel is a 10-minute journey home, so consider that your time to digest. Just know that chocolates await at your turndown service.

