

Towns
to discover between
Langhe and Roero

Urban Itineraries

EN



LANGHE
MONFERRATO
ROERO

The Home of BuonVivere

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Across Bra, Cherasco and Dogliani, the perfect synthesis of Piedmont.

“The real New Year for the farmers comes in March, after the snow has melted, and Easter is on the doorstep. It is the time of weddings, of new straw hats, of the animals traded in the markets. And in the squares of the province of Cuneo, in Mondovì, Carmagnola, Saluzzo, Alba, talks begin about ropes, tractors, seeds, oxen, it is still cold in the mornings and the peasants are gathered under the porticoes and in the centre of the square with their cloaks on and their smooth, shaved faces ready for market day.”

Giovanni Arpino

“Storie dell’Italia minore - Il contratto di marzo”
(Mondadori Editore, 1990)

Two cities are just 6 km apart, both lying on the edge of the plateau but separated by a fertile plain and the Stura river, which flows just below the ridge on which Cherasco stands; the rock of Bra, on the other hand, closes the Turin plateau on the Tanaro Valley. The third lies less than 20 km away in the Rea valley: a small watercourse that descends from the Bossola Pass and flows into the Tanaro not far from Dogliani.

Cherasco boasts a huge area: a real link between the last hills of Barolo and the fertile plains of Cuneo, extending on both sides of the Stura and the Tanaro, the two rivers that surround its overhanging rock. Bra also combines the hills, with the extensive woods on the first Rocche roerine, with the plain behind, then stretches down the Tanaro Valley to Pollenzo, a very noble hamlet and once a rich Roman city. Dogliani has a distant past that is rooted in prehistoric finds and then goes through all the stages of the peninsula's history up to the more recent past with a President of the Republic like Luigi Einaudi.

Pollenzo, with the two sides of the Tanaro Valley (Verduno and Santa Vittoria d'Alba) became the "place of wines and delights" of Carlo Alberto and his Savoy ancestors also made Cherasco their "fortified citadel". Clemente Rovere from Dogliani was commissioned by the Savoy family to paint practically every historical Piedmontese artefact in the 19th century, while the presence

in Turin of the priests from Bra, Stefano Valfré and Giuseppe Cottolengo (among the first Social Saints), heavily influenced Savoy life and society for two centuries. In short, these three cities truly represent the synthesis of a great deal of Piedmont.

Cherasco is a *villanova* built from scratch by imperial will, Bra is the result of a medieval encastellation on the site of more ancient Roman settlements that were no longer suitable for defence, Dogliani is a fortified village along the river that only later had its castle.

Therefore they are all very different from each other. Cherasco is as orderly and geometric, with its chessboard-shaped grid plan, entrance arches and municipal tower at the intersection of the *cardo* and *decumanus*, as it is winding and anarchic in Bra, perched on the Zizzola fortress (a curious hexagonal building, now the town's symbol), made up of steep streets that barely extend into Piazza del Municipio. Dogliani is divided in two boroughs, connected only with paths and, in the past, a city wall.

The De Benedetti Jewish family is tied to Cherasco, as is the writer Gina Lagorio (with her novel "Tra le mura stellate" - Within the starred-shaped walls), while the writer and journalist Giovanni Arpino and Carlin Petrini are "from Bra". The greatest Italian publisher was

Giulio Einaudi, who was closely connected to Dogliani, to which he donated the Library designed by Bruno Zevi in memory of his father Luigi.

Dogliani hosts food markets of excellence, Cherasco has long been the capital of antiques, while Bra with the event “Cheese” has become the world reference point for artisanal cheese.

The three towns are also complementary in terms of food and wine pairings:

in Bra, the refinement of the homonymous DOP cheese and the superb veal sausage; in Dogliani, the noblest Dolcetto and some of the best truffle woods in the Langa; in Cherasco, snails (with an International Heliciculture Centre), the irresistible “baci” cookies of dark chocolate and hazelnuts, and even two hectares of Barolo.

There is so much in such a short distance that it just seems unbelievable.





The Baroque “taste” of Bra.

“So if you are not leather merchants or tannin merchants or even hunters, you will never have the chance to come all the way here, to drink black wine and eat salads of raw meat minced with a little oil, garlic and pepper. And those mixed boiled meats with parsley and mustard sauces, served steaming in the pot by the master himself, while everyone is loosening their belts at their conscription and wedding lunches.”

Giovanni Arpino

“Regina di cuoi” (Araba Fenice, 1989)

Bra is a beautiful lady all pleated with baroque drapes, whose historical glories are to be found in its elegant churches, in Santo Cottolengo and in Beato Valfré. The name derives from the medieval “brayde” (of Lombard origin, they were large properties given to a squire for pasture): the squires then became the “De Brayda” and gave their name to the town.

Today’s Bra is both industrial and agricultural, rich without ostentation in the discreet charm of its old alleyways and historic cafés, and forward looking thanks to the ongoing cultural and artistic ferment, especially among young people, which you will easily spot as you wander

through the city streets. Bra preserves the heritage of a proto-industrial town (tanneries, hemp and cheese production) with an insightful eye on the future: it is the headquarters of the Slow Food movement (born here as Arcigola) and of the *unicum* of the Università delle Scienze Gastronomiche di Pollenzo (Pollenzo University of Gastronomic Sciences).

“*Brayde Oppidum, vernaculé Bra*”: this is the caption of a view of Bra, painted by Giovenale Boetto in 1666. The view, in which a fairly large urban area can be clearly distinguished, is extremely interesting from a historical point of view, capturing the town halfway between the present and the more distant past.



Yesterday's Bra has remote origins, dating back to shortly after the year 1000. Here, in the 13th century, the De Brayda family commissioned the construction of a solid turreted castle protected by moats. In 1515 the stronghold was attacked and destroyed by a large French army, which was led by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, and was finally dismantled in 1552.

However **Palazzo Traversa**, then owned by the Operti family, was saved. This 15th-century fortified mansion, probably built by the Malabaila family from Asti, is located between Via Parpera and Via Serra, the historic heart of Bra from which this itinerary starts. Palazzo Traversa is embellished with

fine mullioned ogival windows, graceful terracotta decorations and a crown battlement added in 1688. Palazzo Traversa is currently the seat of the **Museo Civico di Archeologia Storia e Arte (Civic Museum of Archaeology, History and Art)**, which houses archaeological finds from Pollenzo (3 km from Bra).

The ancient **Pollentia**, in Roman times, was the largest town between *Alba Pompeia* and *Augusta Bagiennorum* (today's Bene Vagienna) and preserves evidence of the Roman amphitheatre in its plan on which stands the old concentric group of houses in the heart of the town. Pollenzo is also worth visiting for its neo-Gothic Albertine revival



(Pelagio Palagi, Ernesto Melano and Xavier Kurten worked on the park), that involved the square, the Church of San Vittore, the Castle and the Agency (the operational centre of the sovereign's agricultural enterprises). All of this is surrounded by walls and embraced by an enchanting riverside park with hills, oaks, streams, small bridges and play of water among the rocks, and later it was used as a hunting reserve. Unfortunately, during the flood of 1994, the park suffered serious damage and is still being restored.

While the park and castle are private, the Agency is not, as it is the seat of the **Università di Scienze Gastronomiche (University of Gastronomic Sciences)**, a favourite destination for students from all over the world. Next door, or rather underneath, is the **Banca del Vino (Wine Bank)**, a specific representation of the wine heritage of the Langhe and Roero, and much more.

But let's return to **Bra**, and more precisely to the entrance to Piazza dei Caduti per la Libertà where, to our right, we find the beautiful **Palazzo Valfrè**, clearly of medieval origin, and, to our left, the 18th-century **Palazzo Garrone** (beautiful atrium and staircase) which borders the beautiful scene of the square. **Palazzo Mathis**, home to the city Tourist Office, and the undulating Baroque-style **Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall)** overlook the same square. The scenery is completed by the imposing Church of







Sant'Andrea, built between 1672 and 1682 on a design by Bernini, readapted by Guarini, featuring three naves and a façade with two orders in a refined Baroque style.

Beyond Piazza Caduti lies one of the most representative and socially vibrant places in Bra, which the local people call simply "la Rocca", the upper part of the town overlooked by the most diverse activities (Piazza XX Settembre), culminating in the pleasant hillock of the public gardens, where people still dance on summer evenings.

As you walk along the path carved out above the 19th-century market wing, you head back towards Piazza Caduti per la Libertà, where the monument dedicated to San Benedetto Cottolengo, the founder of the Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza, one of those Social Saints who, in the 19th century, turned Turin into a factory of pious deeds aimed at helping the weakest. To get there, you pass by the Saint's Birthplace, marked by a plaque standing out on the façade. Furthermore, along the way, a quick stop at the Church of the Santissima Trinità, commonly known as the Church of the Battuti Bianchi, is a must: unpretentious on the outside, it is splendid on the inside, with its soaring, light-filled single nave covered by a barrel vault and richly decorated with stucco.

Not far away is Santa Maria degli Angeli, a charming church with frescoes

by Pietro Paolo Operti and Luigi Morgari: in the 19th century, it was used as a barracks, arsenal and salt and tobacco warehouse, before being restored and returned to religious use in the 20th century.

Several narrow streets branch off from the "Rocca" and descend towards the centre, where it is pleasant to walk along at least the intriguing Via della Mendicità Istruita, where the famous Slow Food movement was born and is still based.

The street takes you into the city centre along Via Vittorio Emanuele and the parallel Via Principi di Piemonte which, together with Via Audisio and Via Cavour, form the "strolling" quadrangle. This is the beating heart of life and commerce of the Bra area, where you can find a series of fruit and vegetable shops, the most delicious gastronomy and charcuterie shops, the famous pastry shops and cafés which preserve the atmosphere of Piedmont in the 20th century.

Near the crossroads with the pedestrian Via Cavour you will find the Church of the Battuti Neri, which was begun in 1591 by the Confraternita della Misericordia (Brotherhood of Mercy), which took on the task of assisting prisoners condemned to death and providing for their burial. It houses a valuable painting by Giovanni Claret dating back to 1664

and paintings by Agostino Cottolengo dated 1834.

At the other end of Via Cavour, there is the Church of San Rocco, now deconsecrated and used as an exhibition centre, whose construction was completed in the 18th century but dates back to the 16th century.

Right behind the church are Piazza Carlo Alberto and Piazza Roma, with the prestigious **Politeama Theatre** and the inevitable bustle of the railway station.

We continue along Via Vittorio up to the small Via della Provvidenza, which leads back to Via Craveri, where the **Museo Civico “Craveri” di Storia Naturale (Civic Museum of Natural History)** awaits us.

Founded as a private collection in the first half of the 19th century by Angelo Craveri, it's a meteorological station since 1859. Its rooms house collections of geo-paleontology, ornithology and European birdlife that are among the most important in the region.

At the corner between Via Craveri and Via Barbacana we find the city's architectural gem, the **Church of Santa Chiara**, the greatest monument of Piedmontese Baroque style, built between 1742 and 1748 on a project by Bernardo Antonio Vittone, who designed it in the shape of a four-leaf clover, strikingly undulating both outside and inside, decorated with stucco and frescoes

and culminating in a complex vault with a double perforated dome that favours an admirable play of light. At the end of Via Barbacana we find Palazzo Traversa where we started.

We strongly advise you to take a stroll without haste (it's a *slow* city) through the maze of streets that lead up the hill to the top of Monteguglielmo, where you will find the **Zizzola**, a peculiar octagonal 19th-century building, once a “villa delle delizie” (villa of delights) and then a symbol of the city, which now houses the spectacular multimedia museum exhibition Casa dei Braidesi (House of the people of Bra).

Before leaving Bra, we advise you to visit another highly symbolic place in the city, which is more easily accessible by car. This is the Sanctuary of the Madonna dei Fiori (on the homonymous avenue), a vast religious complex built in 1626 on the site of a very old chapel, erected after the apparition of the Virgin Mary on 29 December 1336; one of the oldest sanctuaries of Marian worship in the province, it is famous for its “flowers in the snow”, a rare case of winter flowering. Inside, there is a painting of the Virgin Mary, made by Claret in 1638, and the statue of the Virgin, which is carried in procession through the streets of the city every year on 8th September. Outside, the majestic mosaic by Rupnik, depicting more than 200 scenes from the sacred texts, is to be enjoyed in full.

Top Art and Culture

- Birthplace of Saint Cottolengo
- Church of Sant'Andrea
- Church of Santa Chiara
- Church of Trinità (or of Battuti Bianchi)
- La Zizzola - House of the "Braidesi"
- Palazzo Mathis
- Sanctuary of the Madonna dei Fiori
- Pollenzo - Archaeological Site
- Pollenzo - Complex of Carl Albert of Savoy
- Pollenzo - Parish Church of San Vittore

Bra and its Museums

- Bicycle Museum
- Civic Archaeological Historical Artistic Museum "Palazzo Traversa"
- "Craveri" Civic Museum of Natural History
- Museum of Mechanical Writing
- "Rolfo" Museum
- Toy Museum

PLEASE NOTE

The opening times of the sites listed in this itinerary may be subject to change. Keep updated and please check www.visitlmr.it



The “secret” treasures of Cherasco.

*“Here comes the tower clock, and behind
In its granite bed the Stura
That already gurgles in its confused depth”.*

*“As in the night, everything is silent all around,
Yet only I felt life within these walls
And lives a century in a day.”*

Gina Lagorio

“Tra le mura stellate” (Mondadori, 1991)



Medieval palaces, convents, porticoes, ancient silk spinning mills, the Visconti Castle and the Synagogue give **Cherasco** a timeless atmosphere, while historical events give it an unprecedented role for a small town with less than 10,000 inhabitants.

It was actually here that the War for the Succession of Monferrato ended (the *casus belli* of the Thirty Years' War) and, back in 1631, marked the passage of a large part of Piedmont to the Savoy family. Furthermore, it was always here, about 150 years later, that Napoleon signed the Armistice with the defeated Kingdom of Sardinia, the first step in the Italian Campaign. City of peace, then, but also City of the Shroud (which was preserved here in 1706). From 1559 (Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis), the city became the jewel of the Savoy dukes, with its massive star-shaped walls and always considered an unconquerable refuge.

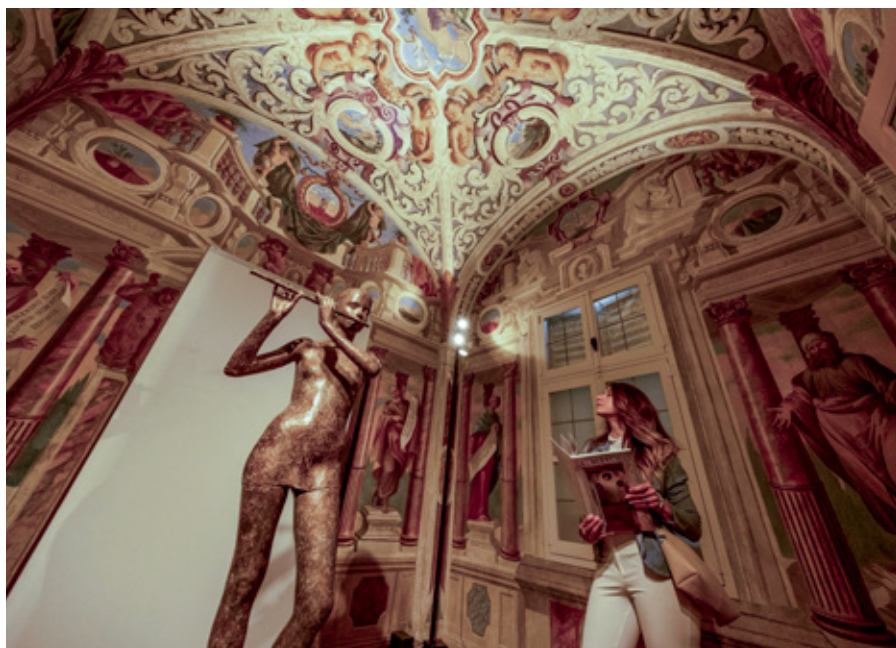
Cherasco has a very precise date of birth: 12 November 1243. It is curious how such a precise datum can be matched with the origin of a city that is so reserved, so discreet that in its history it has often been chosen as the ideal place for diplomatic meetings, public and secret negotiations, and agreements between small and great powers. Today, passing in front of the palaces of Cherasco, one still has the feeling that somewhere in there, court dignitaries in ponytails and tailcoats are preparing

to sign some secret agreement, with a goose feather and a bit of sealing wax.

But let's not digress and return to our story... On that day Manfredo Lancia, the vicar of Emperor Frederick II and Sarlo di Drua, the podestà of Alba decided that a *villanova* should be built on this stunning plateau, near the confluence of the Tanaro and Stura rivers, taking its name from a pre-existing settlement not far away, called *Clarascum*.

From the beginning, Cherasco took on the connotation of a fortified citadel: a quadrangle marked by orthogonal roads and defended by ramparts on the model of the Roman *castrum*. Many insignias stood out in the town, starting with the Angevins (in the first century of Cherasco's existence), and continuing through a series of disputes and claims until the arrival of the Visconti family of Milan, who, after 40 years of military garrison, together with the County of Asti, made it the dowry of Valentina Visconti, betrothed to Louis of Orleans, brother of the King of France.

When Cherasco became "French", it entered a long period of wars, sieges and famine, which only ended with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) and the handover to the Savoy family: during the vicissitudes of imperial and French armies, it even became a Portuguese possession in 1531. With the arrival of the Dukes of Savoy, a long period of reconstruction began which



enabled the city to grow in economic prosperity during the 17th century, thanks to the great families who began to excel on the city scene, thanks above all to the production and trade of silk.

The great palaces and religious buildings that still bear witness to the prosperity of those years were built or renovated, and new modern walls were erected (the so-called “stellate” walls by Ascanio Vitozzi, the former court architect who also designed the Royal Palace of Turin and the Sanctuary of Vicoforte) which helped the city isolate itself from the rest of the region, passing unscathed through the plague of 1630, becoming at that time a royal residence to host the Savoy family fleeing

Turin for fear of contagion, and thus the site of the ratification of the 1631 treaty for the Succession of Monferrato, with which half of Piedmont was definitively handed over to the Savoy family.

For these reasons, there is hardly a palace in Cherasco that cannot boast of having hosted illustrious figures, including Napoleon Bonaparte, who in 1796, having defeated the Piedmontese armies in Mondovì, took up residence in Palazzo Salmatoris to dictate his conditions. The king accepted the armistice and shortly afterwards Piedmont was annexed to France. The French presence, with its revolutionary spirit, profoundly marked the city’s identity and even today the old French names of the



streets of Cherasco still appear alongside the official toponymy.

Of course, today the little town has changed. It has lost a large part of its defensive walls, the great activity of silk factories has been replaced by other interests, including tourism, with the excellence achieved by Cherasco in the field of heliciculture (breeding of the kitchen snail) and the tradition of antique shops and the more accessible “marchés aux pouces” (over 600 stalls selling antiques, furniture, linen and generally period objects, which is always attracting several visitors every time).

Those who love fairs and markets will visit Cherasco on one of the many

busy dates of the year, and will find it bubbling, frenetic and pleasure-filled. Those who love a quiet stroll along a noble and discreet old town will choose any other day of the year, because Cherasco is beautiful in every season. So follow us along these Cartesian streets, along the façades of buildings which sometimes extend over entire blocks, in the shade of porticoes which smell of coffee and chocolate or old plane trees which recall the scent of France and ghosts.

At the crossroads of the two axes along which the town is built (Via Vittorio Emanuele, from north to south, and Via Cavour-Via Garibaldi, from east to west) lies the town hall square, with its impos-

ing **Torre Civica (Civic Tower)**: 36 metres high, the tower reveals its 14th-century origins in the structure of its base and offers us, together with its characteristic clock, a curious mechanical *lunarium* on the western façade and a Baroque sundial on the southern one. The **Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall)** is also the result of centuries of transformation, from 14th-century solutions to 16th-century decorations and Baroque renovations. The 18th-century fresco depicting the coat of arms of Cherasco surrounded by the allegory of the Tanaro and Stura rivers is also worthy of note. The Baroque remaking are mainly featured inside, in the beautiful Council Hall (Room Chamber) with a spectacular painted coffered ceiling, testifying to the most flourishing season of the city history.

The street, which ends triumphantly to the north with the **Arco di Belvedere (Belvedere Arch)**, built to mark the end of the plague, shows us the façades of several palaces, residences of the great families that are the common thread of the city's history and, accordingly, of the itinerary that will take us along the streets of the old town. Inside, they all preserve countless treasures, including furnishings, decorations and vestments, like so many caskets inside the great treasure chest that is Cherasco. The buildings are all privately owned and they are open only for special events, we will enjoy them from the outside as we stroll through the streets.

Opposite the Belvedere Arch we find, to the left, the remains of **Palazzo Lellio**, one of the oldest buildings in the city, **Palazzo Ratti**, with its garden enclosed by a fine example of *trompe-l'oeil*, and **Palazzo Mentone**, in the porticoed part. Opposite, the majestic **Palazzo Galli della Mantica** covers the whole block, with its beautiful frescoed hall painted in 1684 by Sebastiano Taricco.

On the same side are the 17th-century **Palazzo Burotti di Scagnello**, with its splendid hall frescoed by Operti, and **Palazzo Fracassi**, built in the 15th century and then renovated in the 18th century, which houses part of the original interior decoration of Palazzo Salmatoris. Opposite, but on the left-hand side of the street, are **Palazzo Rachis di Carpineto** and **Palazzo Brizio di Veglia**, with a massive Gothic structure, which says a lot about the economic prestige of the family that built it at the end of the 14th century.

The beautiful Belvedere Arch or Madonna del Rosario Arch was built in 1668 based on an initial project by Boetto, redesigned by Petitti di Roreto and with the active collaboration of the population who wanted it as an ex-voto. The arch was inaugurated only twenty years later, during a spectacular procession that involved the entire city, with a parade full of historical, religious and artistic reenactments. The original wooden statues were replaced by the current terracotta ones during the

19th century, while the central group was carved from marble. To its left, we find the Church of Sant'Agostino, still by Boetto and frescoed by Taricco and Aliberti, which was completed in 1677 by the Compagnia dei Battuti Bianchi. Again, this building tells us all about the prosperity of the city and its religious societies in that century.

If, after the arch, we turn right and cross a short driveway, past the Monument to the Fallen and Heroes of the Resistance, we reach the Sanctuary of the Madonna delle Grazie. The great devotion to the Sanctuary began with the discovery, in the mid-18th century, of a fresco of the "Madonna con Bambino e Angeli" (Madonna and Child with Angels), which seemed to be weeping due to water infiltration, and when an attempt was made to remove it, the liquid turned red. In a short time, thanks to the generosity of the local religious community it was possible to erect the building that we see today, which has incorporated the ancient votive pillar, and is based on Nicola Vercellone's designs.

By turning left after the arch, we reach the Sanctuary of the Madonna del Popolo, built in 1702 on a design by Taricco, whose beautiful terracotta façade provides a grandiose backdrop to Via dell'Ospedale. The interior is very delicate, dominated by shades of white and pink, and rich in artistic artefacts: the wooden statues of San Giovanni and San Giuseppe by Bonanate of





Cherasco, the frescoes by Aliberti, the canvases by the French artist Pietro Metey and Giovanni Claret and the carved benches, although deprived of the noble family coats of arms when, in 1799, the French wanted to abolish all noble privileges in Cherasco. Next to the Sanctuary, the **Antico Orto dei Padri Somaschi (Ancient Garden of the Somaschi Fathers)** carefully presents

the native species of the area is definitely worth a stroll. A treat not only for the eyes.

Next we turn onto Via dell'Ospedale, which is also rich, on both sides, in palaces and residences of great historical and architectural importance; the first part of the street is entirely occupied by the Ospedale degli Infermi, an an-



cient institution created by the Compagnia dei Battuti Bianchi and supported thanks to its wealthiest citizens. The 18th-century design of the building seems to be attributable to Vittone. At the end of the block stands **Palazzo Dall'Oglio-Badellino**, whose structure dates back to the late 17th century.

Further on, to the right, we find **Palazzo Gotti di Salerano**, with its rustic and simple façade, enhanced only by the splendid doorway surmounted by the coats of arms of the Gotti and Ratti families, as a sign of their marriage in 1672. Yet the palace preserves its treasures inside: a prestigious cycle of frescoes adorning all the rooms on the main floor, with a series of sacred themes that still reflect the liveliness of that century. Since 1908, the rooms of the palace have housed the **Museo Civico (Civic Museum) "G.B. Adriani"**, dedicated to the historian who donated his possessions to the town at the end of the century. The museum includes sectors dedicated to archaeology and to the collection of medals, seals, portraits of the House of Savoy and medallions of the popes and, in general, historical evidence closely related to the town of Cherasco.

We continue past the façade of the **Palazzo Amico di Meane** (its 19th-century refurbishment shows marked Art Nouveau influences), traditional seat of notaries for over two centuries, but the massive bell tower of San Grego-

rio already stands out and attracts our attention: its typically Romanesque structure has been partly disguised by later reconstructions, but it still tells us about the age of this church, which is a contemporary of the city itself.

San Gregorio has undergone numerous renovations and is now in late Baroque style. Via Garibaldi, overlooked by the church, is in its turn scenographically bordered to the right by the Church of Sant'Ilfredo, rebuilt between the 16th and 17th centuries, which preserves the polychrome marble altar and other frescoes by Operti.

Past Via Garibaldi, **Palazzo Aurelio di Torricella** and **Palazzo Ferraris di Torre d'Isola** (opposite, in the next block) stand out majestically: the two buildings share an imposing structure and both have unfortunately lost their vibrant exterior decorations. Palazzo Aurelio still preserves an extraordinary hall with frescoes by Giuseppe Dallamano, and it was in these rooms that the tragic story of a French officer took place. In 1747, he killed Countess Giacinta Aureli with his sword and then committed suicide near **Palazzo Mantica**, an episode that the writer Gina Lagorio made famous in one of her books.

Palazzo Furno, with its Gothic brick façade, stands out in the next block, and tell us again about the early days of Cherasco. Via Ospedale joins Viale Salmatoris, which marks the southern

boundary of the quadrangle of the old town: the southern entrance to the city is triumphantly emphasized by the **Arco di Porta Narzole (Arch of Porta Narzole)**, an unfinished brick construction; in fact, after the collapse of the gate in 1732, Victor Amadeus of Savoy was directly involved in its reconstruction, but the impending war prevented him from completing the work (a series of statues was also planned here).

Across the arch, we enter Via Vittorio Emanuele, the north-south axis of Cherasco and the city's main street, which is also marked by several prominent palaces. To our right we find **Palazzo Lunelli**, whose brick structure can still be seen on the side of Via Vozzerio: the residence of one of the city's most powerful historical families, its rooms hosted the 18th-century intellectual Benedetta Clotilde Lunelli and the imperial delegation negotiating the peace treaty in 1631.

Further on, to the left, stands **Palazzo Del Carretto di Monforte**, now the headquarters of the Associazione Italiana Elicicoltori (Italian Heliculturists' Association), adorned with frescoes still attributed to Taricco. Then we find **Palazzo Chanaz di Saint'Amour** (or Rero di Santo Stefano) and **Palazzo Genna di Cocconato**, which became the centre of the ancient Jewish community, which settled in Cherasco from the 16th century and was very active, especially in the silk trade. Some evidence of

this small Ghetto still survives, such as the Temple (on the second floor, on Via Marconi) with the traditional furnishings of the **Synagogue**, the cupboard of the scrolls of the law and a stone washbasin, as well as the intimate Jewish cemetery, almost on the rock.

On the other side of Via Vittorio Emanuele, we reach **Palazzo Salmatoris**, the heart of cultural and artistic events in Cherasco, whose rooms have hosted several important historical events: the signing of the peace treaty in 1631, the temporary transfer of the Shroud of Turin in 1706, the armistice of 1796 imposed by Napoleon and, in the artistic field, the work of illustrious artists such as Birago di Borgaro, G.B. Nicolis di Robilant, Taricco, and Dallamano. The interior features a grand staircase leading to the noble halls and the closed gallery, where we find one of Taricco's last works, the beautiful *Saletta del Silenzio* (Hall of Silence), frescoed once again on the classic sapiential themes, while at the end of the gallery is the so-called *Camera della Pace* (Peace Room), which perhaps looks a bit narrow if it actually hosted those large delegations. In the room there is a beautiful view of the city with a dove flying over it with an olive branch in its beak, and a gallery of portraits (by Barrelli) of the prominent figures who came to sign the peace treaty, including Giulio Mazzarino, Manfredo Scaglia di Verrua, Ottavio Piccolomini and Jean de Toiras.

Outside Palazzo Salmatoris the temptation is to go straight into the coolness offered by the porticoes, with their shops and small boutiques under the ancient vaults; after a short stop, however, we turn onto Via della Pace and reach the beautiful Church of San Pietro. We are in the presence of a building which, more than any other, gives us a glimpse of the entire history of Cherasco, as it was born together with the city itself: the overlapping of many different architectural and decorative works has curiously given a very pleasant final result

which combines the austerity of some styles and the frivolous nature of others, so that a 13th-century building with a massive structure is magically lightened by a loggia with small pillars closed by arches and embellished with coquettish coloured majolica tiles. A naïve (or diabolical) architect even gave the church a touch of heresy by placing marble heads of mysterious characters and pagan gods in some of the niches.

A Romanesque bell-tower rises on the side of the church, seemingly a prophe-



cy of the arrival of the Gothic style, and it stands out to emphasise the parish's urban primacy. The central door, carved in the 18th century, opens and inside the church we find in the third chapel to the left the splendid "Madonna con Bambino" (Madonna with Child) by sculptor Tommaso Carlone, carved from a single block of Carrara marble. Also worth seeing are the ancient fresco of the Crucifixion at the base of the bell tower and the *trompe-l'oeil* frescoes in the sacristy. The church square is bordered on the other side by **Palazzo Incisa di Camerana**, which used to be the home of Sebastiano Taricco.

It is time to take a stroll along the outer perimeter of the city centre, along the route of the fortified ramparts that have represented the strategic essence of the city over the centuries. Along Via San Pietro (heading south) we reach the romantic Viale dei Platani, flanked by the giant trees that tradition says were planted by Napoleon.

The avenue runs alongside the majestic **Castle of Visconti**, completed in the second half of the 14th century by the Milanese lords to house a large military garrison. Tradition has it that the castle was the scene of several episodes of arms and love affairs, from the brave resistance of Gerolamo Sacco and his soldiers to the libertine fickleness of Queen Giovanna d'Angiò, who is said to have thrown a young knight, more lovestruck than hand-

some, from the top of a tower. The building is surrounded by a beautiful garden, which provides the place with a charming atmosphere.

Heading north of the castle, we enter Via dei Giardinieri, which takes us to the narrow square on which stands the Church of San Martino, another Gothic-Romanesque gem rebuilt between 1705 and 1711. The façade, however, is still the original, in exposed brickwork and Gothic style, and features the most typical depiction of San Martino, in the act of sharing his cloak with a poor man. The interior is also worth a visit, with furniture, ornaments and wrought iron of significant artistic value.

On the way to the Bastioni (ramparts) we recommend that you visit the **Museo della Magia (Museum of Magic)**, which was conceived thanks to the creativity of Mago Sales, a native of Cherasco, who wanted to create a unicum here. The tour guides both adults and children through the discovery of magic, and offers unexpected emotions.

If you continue along Via Cavour, it is easy to reach the last quarter of the chessboard-shaped grid, which is full of charm, the beautiful ramparts walk, which, as you return to the Belvedere Arch, offers a beautiful view of the Tanaro and Stura valleys, a glimpse of the Langhe and Roero hills and all the local villages, including Roreto, Bra, Santa Vittoria d'Alba, Pollenzo and La Morra.

Top Art and Culture

- Ancient Botanical Garden of the Somaschi Fathers
- Arch of Belvedere
- Arch of Porta Narzole
- Church of San Pietro
- Palazzo Gotti di Salerano - Civic Museum “G. B. Adriani”
- Palazzo Salmatoris
- Sanctuary of the Madonna del Popolo
- Synagogue
- Town Hall and Civic Tower

Cherasco for Children

- Museum of Magic
- Kiss Trail - The route of the Tsarine of Cherasco
- Roreto di Cherasco - Murales “Nara la Rana”

PLEASE NOTE

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Dogliani, in-between leisure and shops.

“Have you ever been to a country village on a fair day? Surrounded by the bustle of children, the elbow hits of farmers and peasant women who want to get close to the stall where the fabrics, clothes, shoes, etc. are to be seen, compared and touched, and the cries of the vendors who want to persuade you that their stuff is the best of all? The only one that looks really good when you wear it, the only one that will make you more annoyed at wearing it than at being whipped, the one that is a real gift compared to the little money you have to spend to buy it? That fair is a market, i.e. a place where, on a fixed day and known to a large number of neighbouring villages, hundreds of lorries, carts and salesmen’s carts gather, laden with the most diverse goods, from clothes to shoes, from cooking pots to ploughshares, from sheets to pillowcases, from knick-knacks for children to wedding gifts for the fiancée.”

Luigi Einaudi

“Lezioni di politica sociale” (Einaudi Editore, 1949)

The Langa of Dogliani is the land of Dolcetto (see itinerary Langa of Dolcetto), where on the terraces overlooking the Tanaro the grapes preserve a unique freshness, such as to make this wine the favourite of King Victor Emmanuel II, while along the thousand ridges leading towards Monforte d'Alba its characteristics become definitely more volitional.

Dogliani, although bone of contention in the Middle Ages, came fairly early into the Savoy family's orbit and then underwent considerable economic and artistic development in the following centuries: it is the home of the eclectic architect Giovanni Battista Schellino, the aforementioned Clemente Rovere

and Luigi Einaudi. Michele Ferrero, the father of Nutella, was also born here.

Dogliani has always been divided into two villages: the older one on the Rea stream and Borgo Castello, which overlooks the hill and offers protection and refuge; and it is historically a dynamic market place, for centuries much richer than all the small villages of the Alta Langa as well as the castle-like fiefdoms of the Falletti family.

The two villages are very old, as the **Museo Civico-Storico Archeologico (Civic-Historic Archaeological Museum) "Giuseppe Gabetti"** well explains, providing a fascinating journey from prehistoric times to the present day. The museum is located in the area of the



Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall), near the so called “Cessi” Tower, together with the beautiful and tasty **Bottega del Vino (Wine Shop)**, localised in the cellars.

Inside the Church of Santi Quirico e Paolo, then, there is also an interesting **Museo degli Ex-Voto (Ex-Voto Museum)**, evidence of popular devotion that goes back as far as 1600.

In Dogliani and the surrounding area, starting with the town hall, many buildings and monuments bear the unmistakable mark of **Giovanni Battista Schellino**, an eclectic architect with a daring style, nicknamed the “Gaudi of the Langhe”, whose most fascinating work is perhaps the imaginative entrance to the local cemetery.

Rarely enough, the lower part of the village is not modern at all, descending, so to speak, into the valley, as has happened so many times before, but rather the first ancient medieval settlement that still has the two city gates (the upper gate is virtually intact with its coats of arms and pointed stone arch) and a pleasant centre to explore on foot in the maze of narrow streets that branch off from Via Vittorio Emanuele and the cozy Piazza Carlo Alberto. Cafés, boutiques, antique dealers and a nice range of taverns and restaurants make exploring even more exciting.

What Dogliani has also preserved from the Middle Ages is the liveliness of a beautiful and authentic local market



(held twice a week), which was the daily test of Luigi Einaudi's entrepreneurial theories. In fact, the first President of the Republic retired here to "his village" to write memoirs and produce Dolcetto from his house in San Giacomo, switching between "leisure and business" like an ancient Roman, like the true intellectual and economist he was.

The humanistic talents of his son Giulio, one of Italy's greatest publishers, can also be found in the **Library**, a modern building by Bruno Zevi, donated to the city by Giulio in memory of his father and conceived as a popular public space for meetings and debates in which books are the scenic backdrop: it currently houses 20,000 volumes and, with the "Festival dei Nuovi Media" (quite recent, but it soon became hugely successful), is the city's true cultural animator.

Another must-see attraction *extra muros* is the grandiose neoclassical parish Church designed by Schellino, and the 17th-century Confraternity of the Battuti by architect Gallo, located at each entrance to the village. Under the covered market, in front of the confraternity, the *cisrà*, the soup of the poor, has been distributed on Saints' Day since ancient times, reminiscent of the local tradition of hospitality and solidarity.

Both the Porta Sottana and Porta Soprana gateways climb up along the old walls to Castello; but it is also possible to climb up from the Borgo itself along





the beautiful route known as the Belvedere, which is undoubtedly easier on the way down. If you want to go by car, from the Piazza della Confraternita you have to turn onto Via Salita al Castello, which climbs green and shady to the left of the Porta Soprana gate.

Right on top, beyond the Gabetti Arch to the left of the homonymous street, surrounded by greenery, there are still the foundations of the Castle, which was lost in the usual 16th-century disputes. The Gabetti Gate introduces us to the summit village: the nearby Piazza Grasso is a sort of junction of the various streets that run through Castello, and it is also the right place to park and continue on foot.

The neoclassical Church of the Immacolata presents us with a less eclectic and more rigorous Schellino, as in the restoration of the parish Church of San Lorenzo which, while preserving Romanesque features on the façade, has been internally remodelled in octagonal forms.

The charm of Castello can be found by wandering through the narrow streets, spotting the remains of walls here and there, as well as unexpected passages and arches, old houses, palaces and simple dwellings. You can stroll as far as the centuries-old horse chestnut tree overlooking the Belvedere balcony, with the **Torre Civica (Civic Tower)**, also called Clock Tower, symbol of the town, to the left and the castle to the right.

Nowadays, what is known as the “castle” is actually a 14th-century tower, later remodelled at the end of the 18th century, which is also the site of the 16th-century **Casa Perno di Caldera**, which, however, still preserves an earlier 15th-century double lancet window, revealing the complex stratigraphy of the site itself.

It is then possible to descend along the western bastions of Via Cesare Battisti towards the Porta Sottana, passing under the **Ritiro Sacra Famiglia (Holy Family Retreat)**, another complex work by Schellino, and then turn onto Via Marengo to complete your itinerary in Piazza Don Delpodio, where a plaque commemorates the bombing of 31 July 1944, which remains shrouded in mystery as eyewitnesses saw a plane with Nazi insignia flying over the village. However, 28 innocent people (elderly people, women and children) were affected. Nearby, we recommend a visit to the 16th-century frescoes of San Colombano (in the hamlet of Casale), the Pillars of the Rosario and the Sanctuary of Madonna delle Grazie (on the road to Belvedere) and the “Madonna del Latte” (Madonna of the Milk), a superb 15th-century fresco “rediscovered” in the Sanctuary of San Quirico (along the Rea, on the road to Bossolasco).

This is a final unexpected surprise in this town that is definitely much “bigger” than its 5000 inhabitants.

Top Art and Culture

- Church of Santi Quirico e Paolo - Museum of the Ex Voto
- Town Hall - Historical Archaeological Museum “Giuseppe Gabetti”
- Town Hall - “Luigi Einaudi” Museum

Top Food and Wine

- Local Wine Shop of Dogliani DOCG

Dogliani, the Works of G. B. Schellino

- Bell Tower and Chapel of the Church of San Lorenzo (1854-1855 and 1881-1884)
- “Cessi” Tower (1873-1885 and 1872)
- Church of the Immaculate Conception and San Giuseppe (1870-1880)
- Civic Hospital (1878-1888)
- Civic or Clock Tower (1862)
- Holy Family Retreat (1883)
- Monumental Cemetery Entrance (1855-1867)
- Parish Church of Santi Quirico e Paolo (1859-1886)
- Sanctuary of Madonna delle Grazie and Pillars of the Rosario

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