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DESTINATION | december 2012

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EMILIA ROMAGNA – italy



ferrari museum

If you've heard of Bolognese sauce, Ducati motorcycles, Parmesan cheese and Ferrari cars, you've heard of Emilia-Romagna. Though this lovely region of northern Italy may not be as name-checked as neighboring areas like Veneto and Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna is the birthplace of many iconic Italian exports, from tortellini (made in Bologna) and balsamic vinegar (the best quality comes from Modena), to filmmakers like Fellini and Antonioni, to fast rides from Ducati, Lamborghini and Ferrari (all based in the Motorvalley). It's also home to one of the oldest universities in the world, scenic Renaissance towns and lively retreats along the Adriatic coast.

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Below is a taste of just some of the things travelers can experience in the region. Through Italy Vacations (www.ItalyVacations.com), you can create your own custom itinerary based on your dates and interests, or sign up for a small group journey (typically about 20 guests). Their six-night Emilia-Romagna package includes four-star hotel accommodations, transfers, guided city tours, prosciutto and Parmesan tastings, private tours of the car factories, dinners, a painting class and more, starting at \$2,799 per person, not including airfare.



A Bolognese Base

The best base for exploring the region is Bologna, the vibrant capital of Emilia-Romagna. Both classic and cosmopolitan, with a rich tradition of art, music, academics and cuisine, Bologna is home to a university dating back to 1088, as well as a beautifully preserved historic city center known for its porticoed passageways. Learn about the city's past at the recently opened Museum of the History of Bologna, set in a stunning palazzo, then wander the arch-topped sidewalks and cobblestoned alleys to check out the cafes, designer boutiques and artisan instrument workshops. A short walk from the grand Piazza del Nettuno, with its ornate Neptune fountain, the Quadrilatero neighborhood is brimming with specialty food shops and markets. Lunch at La Baita, a historic deli/restaurant famous for its incredible cheese selection, then pop into nearby stalls to pick up fresh-made tortelli and tagliolini, local wines and mortadella cold cuts; if you're lucky, you can even watch traditional Bolognese sauce being made. For dinner, book a table at Cantina Bentivoglio (www.cantinabentivoglio.it), a traditional osteria featuring live music.

-Check-in: Bologna Art Hotels offers six hotels in the city, in various locations and price ranges. We love the Hotel Corona D'Oro for its central location, classic charm and homemade buffet breakfast. www.bolognaarthotels.it

Home Cooking, Two Ways

With its famous cheeses, wines, specialty meats and dizzying array of fresh and stuffed pastas, Emilia-Romagna is one of Italy's top culinary destinations. Get a taste of authentic regional delicacies through the Home Food program (www.homefood.it) which allows you to dine in a private home; you'll be hosted by an approved Cesarina (home cook) and treated to a multi-course meal of classic seasonal dishes, accompanied by local vintages and good conversation with both your host family and other travelers. Once inspired, head to the Casa Artusi culinary center in Forlimpopoli (about a 45-minute drive from Bologna), where you can learn about the history of Italian regional cuisine, take a cooking class taught by local ladies and enjoy an incredible meal. www.casartusi.it.

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Day Trips

From Bologna it's an easy day trip to some of Italy's best-preserved historic towns. In mysterious Ravenna, check out the stunning Byzantine mosaics and tangled old town center, then grab a bite at Osteria del Tempo Perso (www.osteriadelttempo.it), with its movie- and music-inspired décor and gourmet menu full of seasonal ingredients like truffles. In June and July, Ravenna hosts a famous music festival featuring everything from opera and classical to electronica. Modena features a UNESCO World Heritage town center along with its signature traditional balsamic vinegar houses; at Acetaia di Giorgio (www.acetaiadigiorgio.it), you can learn about the ancient art of balsamic making, then taste a variety of styles of the "liquid gold." Finally, in Ferrara, make like a local and grab a bike (you can rent them in the town center) to peddle atop the ancient city walls, through the parks and in the historic old town, before settling in at Cucina e Butega for an amazing meal of specialties like pumpkin risotto, cappelletti pasta in broth, Adriatic fish and over 32 types of cold cuts and 24 types of regional cheeses (www.cusinaebutega.com).

Get Your Motor Running...

Within 30 minutes of Bologna sits Motorvalley, home to the HQs of Ducati, Lamborghini and Ferrari. Through tour companies like Italy Vacations, guests can tour these temples of luxury auto production, and even organize car test drives through the Emilia-Romagna countryside. At Ducati, wander the well-done museum, which details the history of the motorcycle brand and houses dozens of classic models, then visit the production line before grabbing an espresso (and Ducati souvenir) in the staff canteen. At Lamborghini you can see the cars in various stages of production, shop the exclusive brand store and visit a two-floor gallery filled with iconic models – including some rare one-offs. Just opened this year, the Museum Casa Natale Enzo Ferrari (www.museocasaenzoferrari.it) includes a museum in the house where Enzo Ferrari was born, plus a stunning, sun-lit galley lined with historic Ferraris, including the famous convertibles that have come to represent la dolce vita.

By Sandra Ramani | Photography by Giorgio Salvatori, Margriet Spangenberg

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