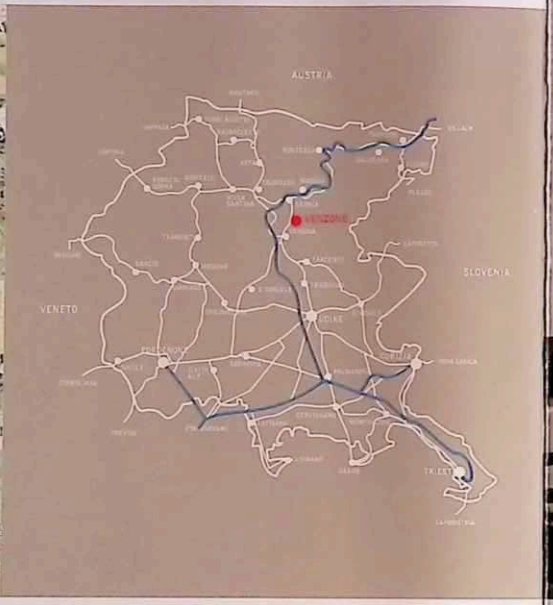
Venzone, Venzone is a small town with 2,200 inhabitants situated on the banks of the Tagliamento River, at an altitude of 230 metres above sea level. It is 35 km north of Udine and 100 km north of the seaside resorts of Grado and Lignano. Venice is only 130 km south, while the Austrian and Slovenian borders are 60 km away. It is possible to reach Venzone by train or coach from Udine and other cities, while the nearest motorway exit is on the A23 Alpe-Adria Autostrada at Gemona-Osoppo.



Map of "Friuli Venezia Giulia" (1:150000).
Ed. Tabacco - Udine.

TABACCO

ROSSO - Gemona del Friuli / UD

Provincia di Udine
Assessorato al Turismo

Comune di Venzone

Pro Loco "Pro Venzone"

A.P.T. Tarvisio

Parco Prealpi Giulie

Venzone

Udine - Italy

A view of the town, the history, the people

2 | A Stroll Through the Past and the Present

Anyone travelling towards Venzone from the south will find him or herself in front of the only example of a medieval walled city in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. The first buildings of interest can be found on entering through the **South Gate** (Porta di Sotto). This is a round archway dating from 1835, which replaced an earlier fourteenth century gateway. **Marcurele House** (Casa Marcurele), on the right, is the town's oldest building dating from the eleventh century. Further along, **Zinutti Palace** (Palazzo Zinutti), a seventeenth century nobleman's corner-house palace, has an elegant gallery with a wrought-iron parapet. Opposite this palace is the town's most important monument, **St. Andrew's Cathedral** (Duomo di S. Andrea) which today symbolises the rebirth of Venzone after its destruction in the 1976 earthquakes. The remaining structures were reinforced and restored using anti-sismic consolidation methods, while the ruins were rebuilt using the anastylosis technique. This meant putting the surviving stones in their original place, like a giant jigsaw puzzle, and replacing the destroyed ones with stones taken from the nearly Tagliamento River. The Duomo had been started in 1300 but it was not until 2nd August 1338 that it was consecrated by Patriach Bertrando of St. Geniès. It was constructed in the shape of a T-cross with a longitudinal nave and a large transept with three apsidal presbyteries and two towers.
Inside the Duomo, affrescos from the fourteenth century, which survived the earthquake, can be

admired along with some notable altarpieces and the Salzburg School "Pietà" from the fifteenth century. The organ, dating from 1792, is the work of the organ master, G. A. Callido and was restored in 1996. Next to the Duomo is St. Michael's Cemetery Chapel (Cappella Cimiteriale di S. Michele), dating from the first half of the thirteenth century. This was finally restored twenty-five years after the earthquakes and now houses the Mummies in its crypt. These mummies are the remains of ecclesiastical men and women who were placed in the Duomo's crypt in past centuries and were mummified by a rare parasitic mould. Walking towards the main square the fourteenth century **Calderari House** (Casa Calderari) can be seen on the right with its inviting internal courtyard. Closeby is the **Town Hall Palace** (Palazzo Comunale). This was built between 1390 and 1410 and it is a jewel of Venetian flamboyant-Gothic architecture. The exterior of the Palazzo is decorated with the coats-of-arms of some of the oldest noble Venzonese families and enhanced by five double windows in Venetian flamboyant-Gothic style. The eagle of the Aquileian Patriarchate can be seen as well as the embattled bridge symbol of Venzone. The corner tower, which houses a chiming eighteenth century twenty-four hour clock, also displays the Lion of St. Mark, which is a reminder of Venzone's Venetian dominance. In the Town Hall Square, (Piazza Municipio) as well as the eighteenth century fountain, the elegant facade of **Radiussi Palace** (Palazzo Radiussi) can be admired. This building, from the first half of the fifteenth century, has a triple window in Venetian flamboyant-Gothic style. The ruins of **St. John the Baptist's Church** (Chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista) can be seen from the square. This building dated from the first half of the fourteenth century but now only the main facade remains. This shows the Gothic doorway and its capitals decorated with figures and floral designs. Next to this, there is the fourteenth century building which houses the Pio Alms Institute (Pio Istituto Elemosiniere), one of the oldest charitable organisations in Friuli, founded in 1261 by the Venzonese nobleman, Alberton Del Colle. At the other extreme of the square, **St. Genesio's Gateway** (Porta di S. Genesio) can be found. This is the only gateway from the 1309 surrounding wall to have remained intact throughout the centuries. A drawbridge over the moat connected the town centre to the main road. Taking the main street northwards, (12) **Orgnani-Martina Palace** (Palazzo Orgnani-Martina) can be found on the right. This sixteenth century nobleman's palace is the best preserved in Venzone. Entering through the stone gateway, the internal courtyard can be admired, which was restructured in the 1700s with a stone gallery and an elegant wrought-iron parapet. In the centre of the courtyard there is a stone fountain. Today the Palazzo hosts many interesting exhibitions and the town library is located on the ground floor.

1 | Venzone's historical background

Venzone has been a mandatory transit point since the Celtic times (500 BC) because of its favourable geographical position. The Romans, who came after the Celts, made Venzone one of their stations along the "Via Julia Augusta" road. This led from the Adriatic sea at Aquileia to the north-eastern European markets. A number of different archaeological discoveries came to light due to the evacuations carried out during the restoration of the Duomo and these have proved the existence of a Roman building in the vicinity.
Throughout the following centuries the area was successively invaded by the Guards, the Marcomanns, the Visigoths, the Huns, the Ostrogoths, the Byzantines, the Longobards and the Carolingians. The first urban township dates back to the latter period (776 – 952 AD) when Venzone was first mentioned in the "Clause de Abintione" in 923.
In 1077, Venzone became part of the Aquileian Patriachate, with an important role controlling the passage of commercial traffic. The Patriach of Aquileia gave the fiefdom of Venzone to the Mels family in 1200, which increased its prestige and allowed it to be recognised as a legal municipality in 1247. This also gave rise to a wealthy market in 1252. Six years later, Glizoio Di Mels had the town fortified with a double wall and a deep moat, which was further strengthened in 1309.
A period of instability began with a rebellion in 1335 when Venzone passed under the authority of the Counts of Gorizia. However, the Aquileian Patriarch, Bertrando of St. Geniès, repossessed the town and its old privileges were returned in 1336. By 1420, Venzone was part of the Venetian Republic but this change signalled the beginning of its economic decline. The commercial traffic, which had been its main source of income for centuries, had begun to follow new routes, so depriving the town of vital resources.
Venzone was occupied by Napoleon's French troops in 1797and following the Campoformido Treaty came under Austrian rule. In 1866, Venzone became part of the Italian Kingdom and one hundred years later it was declared a national monument of great historical and artistic value.

3 | The Countryside

Venzone is not only history and architecture; in fact, a large part of the town's extended territory is also part of the Prealpi Giulie Regional Park.
This fact therefore gives the tourist a vast choice of possibilities. Simple, relaxing strolls can be enjoyed along roads and paths in the countryside or climbing excursions can be undertaken in the higher mountain altitudes which almost reach 2000 metres above sea level. It is possible to horse ride along the Tagliamento river bed to reach the springs of the Pradulin and Ledra Rivers or cycle up and down the mountain tracks. It is easy to combine culture and countryside by walking to the numerous medieval hillside chapels that lie outside the town walls.

More Information.
A visit to the permanent exhibition in Palazzo Orgnani-Martina, entitled "Forest, Man, Economy in Friuli-Venezia Giulia" gives an interesting and informative view of the local fauna and flora and their relationship with man. There is also an extensive section on Venzone in the town library, which can be visited during the week and at the weekend.

4 | The Suburbs

Carnia. Situated at the confluence of the Tagliamento and Fella Rivers, this village has always represented the crossroads between the two mountain regions of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The western region is known as Carnia because it covers the Carnian Alps, while the eastern region, called the Iron Canal (Canal del Ferro), lies along the Valcanale mountain pass through the Giulian Alps.
The village of Carnia underwent great development in 1879 with the opening of the railway line between Udine and Pontebba. Subsequently another track was laid that went to Comeglians in the Carnian Alps. The village also became known as Carnia Station (Stazione per la Carnia) because of its importance to these two railway lines. Today a number of small industries represent the main economic activity. The parish church of St. Peter Apostle (Chiesa parrocchiale di S. Pietro Apostolo) is a particular place of interest in the village. It was rebuilt after the 1976 earthquake using a modern design and consecrated in 1998. It contains a noteworthy wooden Crucifixion scene by the Friulan artist Franco Maschio (1999).
Pioverno. This village lies along the west bank of the Tagliamento River and is dominated by St. Simon's Mount (Monte S. Simeone). Pioverno was established along the route of the ancient Celtic road that led from Venzone towards the Carnian Alps. Discoveries at Invillino, Paularo and other Carnian towns have confirmed the presence of this. During the Medieval Age, Pioverno functioned as a watch and signal post for Venzone. The Church of the Blessed Immaculate Virgin (Chiesa della Beata Vergine Immacolata), originally from the nineteenth century, was destroyed in 1976 but rebuilt in 1988. A simple modern style was used for the new church and it contains two modern works that are worthy of attention; a wooden Crucifixion by Bruno De Cecco (1990) and the gold-plated bronze door of the built-in tabernacle by Antonio and Livio Pascolo (1988).
Portis. Situated along the site of the Roman Julia-Augusta road, Portis probable dates back to the twelfth century. The village, which was almost completely destroyed in the 1976 earthquake was moved northwards along the Pontebbana main road for safety reasons. The entirely new village was inaugurated in 1981. The new church of St. Bartholomew (Nuova Chiesa di S. Bartolomeo) is the most obvious landmark. It was built to a modern plan in 1991 and contains a large wooden Crucifix from the end of the thirteenth century made in the Friulan tradition. The old church, dating from the nineteenth century was destroyed by the 1976 seism and the ruins can still be seen 1km south of the new village today.

5 | 1976: The Earthquakes

Friuli sadly became famous in 1976 due to the earthquakes that killed 989 people and caused, not only terror to the population, but also, extensive damage to the artistic and architectural heritage of the region. In Venzone, the seisms caused the death of 52 people and almost totally destroyed the medieval town centre, the Venzonese suburbs and those of Carnia, Pioverno and Portis. Venzone was one of the forty-five municipalities declared damage by the Regional Authority.
The shockwave of 6 May 1976 at 8:59p.m., which lasted a seemingly endless sixty seconds, made the whole of North Friuli tremble. It was equal to the tenth grade on the Mercalli Scale and its epicentre was under Monte S. Simeone between Venzone, Bordano and Gemona del Friuli. On 15 September, the second earthquake completed the destructive work begun in May with the collapse of most of the surviving structures.
The most striking feature of the reconstruction was its aim. This was to return the city to its citizens "Where it was" and "How it was" before the earthquakes. In order to achieve this the anastylosis technique was adopted which enabled the almost integral reconstruction of this important architectural and artistic heritage. Such an operation, without precedent, has allowed Venzone to continue being appreciated as one of Italy's most important and evocative historical sites.
On comparing the photographs of Venzone before and after the seisms and today, it is easy to understand the importance and magnitude of the objective reached by the population, the local administration and various public offices which united their efforts in this important project.

6 | The Local Events

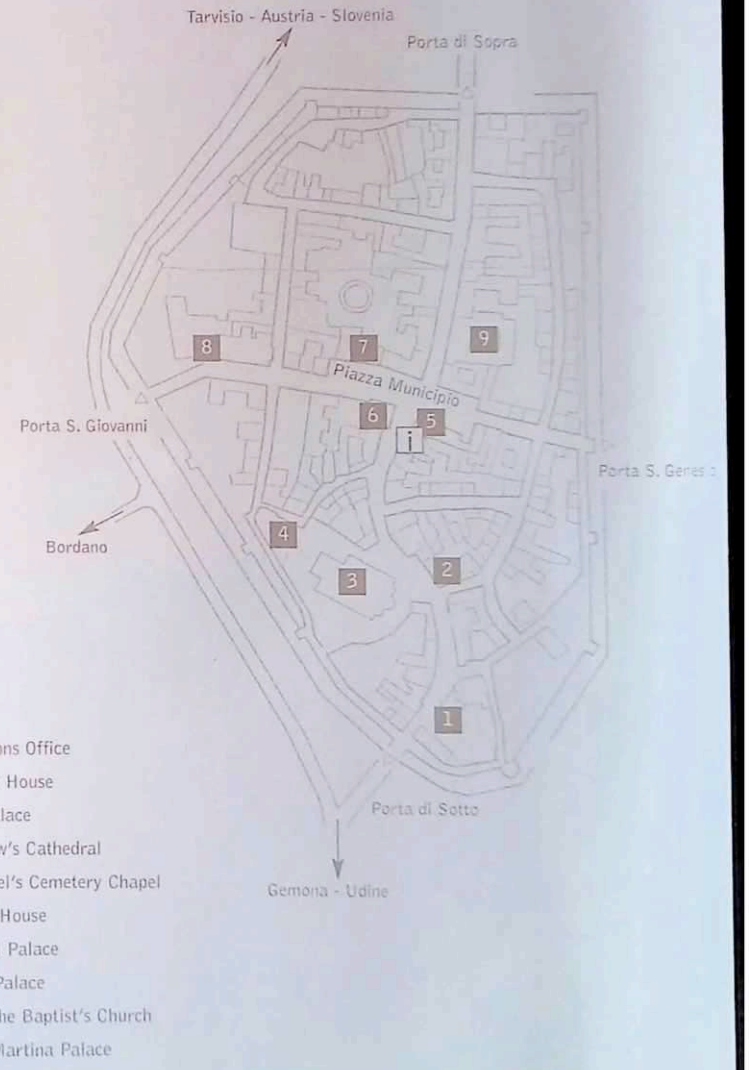
There are a number of events that are organised during the course of the whole year, both by the Pro Venzone society and by other local organisations, often with the collaboration of the town authority. Perhaps the most popular event is the Pumpkin Festival (Festa della Zucca) in October which is a medieval fair when the whole town centre takes part in a historical re-enactment. There are also annual exhibitions of modern art in the summer and theatre representations in Friulan organised by the Pro Venzone society. Another summer event, under the direction of a theatrical group, Teatro Acceso, promotes dramatic, artistic and musical presentations from June to September in and around Venzone. In July, the St. James and St. Ann festival (Sagra dei S.S. Giacomo e Anna) is held near that particular chapel. The local suburb committee organises the traditional four-day "sagra", while the Portis Pro Loco holds a similar festival in August for St. Bartholomew (Sagra di S. Bartolomeo). The Venzone Band and the Majorettes present their summer Ferragosto concert on 15th August and are often engaged in other concerts at home and abroad during the year. The "Gjgj Moret" international organ recital is held in September in the Duomo, where various concerts are held throughout the year under the direction of the Parish of S. Andrea. In December, the festival of St. Lucia is celebrated with a special mass, a traditional winter market and a choral concert organised by the Venzonese choir "Li Muris". For sporting fans, there is a mountain bike race in May, which follows a route through the nearby mountains. The "Nino Madrassi Trophy" foot race is run in the same area in October and both are organised by the local Polisportive society. A dualathlon, in August, is organised by the Pioverno Pro Loco to coincide with the village festival.

7 | Food and Drink

The numerous local restaurants offer both typically Friulan dishes as well as better known Italian specialities, along with fine regional wines. All the following are in the local area:
Hotel Ristorante Carnia – 0432 978013; Albergo Ristorante Al Girarrosto – 0432 978132; Albergo Ristorante Da Michele – 0432 985045; Locanda Al Municipio – 0432 985801; Ristorante Caffè Vecchio – 0432 985011; Trattoria Da Bruno – 0432 985078; Rosticceria Da Flavio – 0432 985628; Agriturismo Casali Scjs – 0432 985282.
For those wishing to just to spend the night at Venzone there is also Locanda Al Fogolar – 0432 985164 and Bed&Breakfast Carla&Vittorio – 0432 985240.

Besides the normal range of shops and services, there are also a number of handicraft workshops in the town. They offer engraved glassware, articles and clothes in leather, handmade jewellery, stoneware and cosmetics made from local plants.
Other services include a confectioner's who offers freshly-made cakes, a dairy that sells locally made cheeses and salamis, as well as other shops that specialise in copper, wooden and ceramic items.

8 | Information

For further information about Venzone and the surrounding area the following agencies can be contacted:
- **Ufficio I.A.T. Informazione ed Accoglienza Turistica** c/o Pro Loco "Pro Venzone"
Via Glizoio di Mels, 5/4 - 33010 Venzone (UD), tel and fax 0432 985034,
e-mail: info@venzone.org / web: www.venzone.org
- **Venzone Town Hall** tel 0432 985266, fax 0432 985404
- **Ente Parco Prealpi Giulie**, Resia (UD), tel 0433 53534 / 53129
e-mail: info@parcoprealpigiulie.org
- **A.P.T. del Tarvisiano e Sella Nevea**, Via Roma 10, Tarvisio (UD),
tel 0428 2135, fax 0428 2972

Production: Aldo Di Bernardo.
Translated by Yvette A. Corincigh.
Photographs: Franco Bet, Fernardo Cervelleri, Walter Della Schiava, Renzo Fornera, Anna Pascolo.