

Verona - City of Lerve

10 Jul 2009 by Nick Lander/ Business Life

As I wandered the atmospheric, cobbled streets of Verona in north east Italy I began to realise that this city could please almost everybody.

Ancient buildings abound, including the well- preserved arena that doubles as an opera set. Clothes shops are cheek by jowl with those selling the latest spectacles, shoes and jewelry and, as befits a city that takes its food seriously, there are plenty of shops selling wine and kitchen equipment. There is even one bookshop with a wine bar at the rear.

But there are perhaps two sets of people who would not enjoy what this remarkably well- preserved medieval city has to offer.

The first are those who like to drive their cars on holiday. Here the streets are just too narrow and the one- way system just too complex as the traffic has to circumnavigate so many ancient monuments and the meandering river Adige. Fortunately, Verona airport is only 12 km from the centre.

The second is those who may be called Juliet and for some reason dislike their romantic name because here there is no escaping the fact that Verona was the setting for this doomed love affair. This association is most obvious, and most welcome, in the Casa di Giulietta, supposed once to be her home now a well- preserved museum with its famous balcony, pictured here by ['Getting Married in Italy.com'](#).

But just outside the much- visited courtyard below the balcony are shops with machinists sewing the names Romeo and Juliet on to aprons and oven gloves, and market stalls in the nearby Piazza delle Erbe selling T- shirts emblazoned with 'Romeo & Juliet, University of Love, Verona'.

The sewing machines hummed in our ears as we crossed the Piazza delle Erbe with its sprawl of cafes down one side of the square and made our way to the **Osteria Giulietta e Romeo**, which came with the unqualified approval of a British wine merchant who frequently visits Verona.

While the menu also acknowledges the signature romance of the City of Love, via a drawing of a ladder leading up to a balcony, it was its approach to food and drink that delighted me. A broad, smiling barman stood behind the counter of his bar surrounded by bottles of grappa, the powerful Italian digestif; the shelves and walls are littered with wine magazines and empty wine bottles; and the osteria itself is made up of three very different, small rooms so that the overall noise level is never too high.

The menu revealed two other attractions. The first was the phrase Cucina tipica veronese, promising the local cooking that I most enjoy when I am traveling - although note that here this includes several dishes with horse meat (with pasta, as a tartare and as a steak with roast potatoes). The second was the price: 15 euros for two courses from an extensive a la carte menu, one reason that the osteria was packed with hungry Veronese.

These included tortelli stuffed with sweet pumpkin puree; penne with radicchio and gorgonzola cheese; vitello tonnato, the dish designed for a hot summer's day, that encompasses thin slices of cold veal topped with a creamy tuna sauce and capers; calves liver with polenta; and a chicken breast with roast potatoes that should keep any hungry child happy.

Another reason to take advantage of this generous two- course menu is that it is then possible to take in a few more local places.

There are, naturally, no shortage of ice cream stands and plenty of wine bars for a coffee and a glass of wine, of which my two favourites are the long established **Bottega del Vino**, just off the Via Manzini, and the **Osteria del Bugiardo** in the Corso Borsari.

And right next door to this Osteria is the **Caffé Tubino**, a narrow slip of a shop that serves perhaps the best espresso, hot chocolate and tea in Verona. Its shelves are full of coffee pots, English teas and jams, while four people work furiously behind the bar to keep the constant queue of customers happy. And to the best of my knowledge, none of them are called Romeo or Juliet.

Osteria Giulietta e Romeo, Corso S. Anastasia 27, 37121 Verona, 045.8009177. Closed Sunday and Monday lunch.