



**RELAXING, TAKING CARE OF ONE'S HEALTH AND GETTING INTO TOP FORM**

## LE FONTI TERMALI DI ACQUI TERME

**Acqui Terme is set on the left side of the Bormida River, in the province of Alessandria, at 164m above sea level. Its untouched environment, rich in parks, gardens and naturalistic routes, favours the recovery of respiratory functions. Plinio himself used to mention Acqui Terme among the best thermal baths in the Empire.**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Its name comes from the Latin "Aque Statiellae", the town founded by the Romans around the thermal springs in the 2nd century BC. It is rich in monuments and at the same time it is livened up by a flourishing trading activity; besides the thermal complex, the town can boast a theatre, an amphitheatre, some general stores and the Roman aqueduct that allowed the mixing of the waters and make them available for both treatments and craftwork. Called Acquis (Acqui) since ancient times, only in 1956 it became Acqui Terme.

It was ruled first of all by the Lombards, then by the Franks and, in 978, it was put under the Bishop's government by

the Emperor Otto II. After the year 1000, at the Bishop's will, they started to build the Cathedral dedicated to the Madonna Assunta and the walls, to surround the high town, that left the hot springs and the Benedictine Abbey of S. Pietro outside them. During the 12th century, the Commune, whose first evidences date back to 1135, underwent a period of conflicts, for the control of the area, with the Bishop, the local Lords' families and the surrounding most important Communes such as Alba, Asti, Alessandria, Genova and Savona. The place, that was afflicted not only by the conflicts but also by the plague in the 14th century, benefited of the re-flourishing of the trading activity in the 15th century and, as a consequence, of a period of prosperity evidenced by the architecture of some civil and religious buildings realized at that time, including the thermal springs. One after the other, the Paleologi, the Gonzaga, the Duke of Mantova and the Savoia family ruled the town and it was thanks to Napoleon's government that, at the end of 1700, the route Savona-Acqui-Alessandria was realized. In 1800 the population increased so much as to require the demolition of the walls to favour the expansion of the town: the area was enriched with the Carlo Alberto bridge, reaching the Oltre Bormida district and its thermal springs, and the first railway line connecting Acqui to Alessandria (1858), that was later extended as far as Savona (1870), Asti and Genova (1893).

The end of the 19th century was probably the most flourishing period for the Acqui spa that lasted up to the Second World War: a new spa was built in the center of the town, together with a new theatre, a casino and the largest pool in Europe, aimed at brightening up the urban social life. Even if the post-war period was quite difficult for the local industry and for the spa themselves, it was followed by an economical recovery and a development of the town that, since 1996, has also housed a new University Center.

## THE SPA

An important spa in the Roman age, since 1700 Acqui has featured as a renowned thermal center for mud treatments. Various springs of sulphur waters have flown in different spots of its area.

The waters of three thermal springs called "Bollente", "Del Lago" and "Acqua Marcia", precious Nature's gifts, are the ideal cure for slight and serious respiratory diseases of both adults and children. In the center of the town, inside an elegant marble shrine built in neoclassical style, the "Bollente" spring gushes at a temperature of 75°C with a capacity of 560 litres a minute. Other springs, whose waters have a lower temperature but the same therapeutic qualities, flow in the outskirts of the town, on the right side of the River Bormida in the Bagni district. Mud and therapeutic baths, rehabilitative swimming pools, vascular cures in the pool, inhalations, physiotherapeutic treatments and vaginal cures: these are the main traditional treatments of the Acqui spa, available in the renewed centers: Regina (Bagni area) open from April to November and the Nuove Terme (town center) open all the year round.

The Acqui spa is also a modern Beauty Center that provides aesthetic muds for face and body, massages and derma-cosmetics, mechanical and manual lymph-drainage and hydro-massage, inside comfortable well-equipped areas; it avails itself with expert aestheticians and a selected medical staff that make even a short stay pleasant and unforgettable. A line of beauty cream made with thermal sulphur water, also containing sodium, chloride, bromide and iodide, can satisfy health and beauty needs at every age. The spa, together with first rate accommodation facilities, have made Acqui Terme become known as the ideal setting for people looking not only for natural treatments but also for rest and quietness.

## THE EVIDENCE OF PAST TIMES

The Municipal Administration of Acqui Terme is aimed at preserving and exploiting the historic and artistic heritage of the town, rich in evidences of the past: the remains of the Roman aqueduct, the ancient Basilica of San Pietro, the 15th-century Chiesa Conventuale di San Francesco with a cloister, as well as the elegant noble palazzi spread around. The big swimming pool, an important part of a vast thermal complex dating back to the imperial age, was found in 1913 during the construction of new arcades. Only through further excavations was it possible to bring to light the whole ancient thermal building that, together with the nearby amphitheatre found in the 50s, stood in a district set outside the ancient Roman town Aquae Statiellae, easy to be reached through Via Aemilia Scauri. It was probably also attended by the inhabitants of the surroundings and foreigners attracted by shows, games and sporting competitions that used to take place there.

The swimming pool, big and rectangular in shape, was excavated in the rock and encircled with a massive stone wall. Filled with the water flowing from the spring "Bollente" and covered by a vault, it was probably a "calidarium", a heated place for hot baths. The bottom of the swimming pool and the steps were covered with valuable white marble tiles and other important marble stones coming from Greece and Asia Minor.

Open on Saturdays

from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm and

on Sundays

from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

Groups must book at

Civico Museo Archeologico,

Tel. 0144 57555.

## **CASTELLO DEI PALEOLOGI**

Even if it can boast more ancient origins, the castle of the city was first mentioned as "Castelletto" of the Episcopo in 1056. It was the Bishop's residence until 1258, then it became one of Giovanni Marchese di Monferrato's properties and was rebuilt in 1480 featured as a military fortress. Over time it underwent various sieges and destructions by Carlo I d'Angiò, the Sforzas, the Spanish and the French but, each time, it was rebuilt. Today it houses the Archaeological Museum and preserves the heritage of the finds brought to light during various private and public building works in the area.

Since 2001 a new organization has enabled the visitors to follow a historic route from Prehistory up to the Middle Ages. In 1996, inside its park was created an attractive Birdgarden, a botanic garden rich in local shrubbery and grassy essences suitable for hosting specific kinds of birds.

Castello dei Paleologi

via Morelli, 2

Tel 0144 57555

Civico Museo Archeologico

(Prehistory, Roman Age, Middle Ages).

Open on Wednesday and Saturday:

from 9.30- 12.30 am and

from 3.30 to 6.30 pm

on Sunday:

from 3.30 to 6.30 pm.

## **THE DUOMO**

Firstly identified as the Church of S. Maria Maggiore, at the beginning of the year 1000 the Duomo was rebuilt in the large sizes preserved up to now.

In 1067 it was consecrated by S. Guido. Its Romanesque building, especially styled in the Cluniac architecture for what concerns its vertical lines, the Latin-crossed layout and the characteristic transept, underwent various restorations till the end of the 19th century. Inside you can admire the charming crypt and, in the Sala dei Canonici, the "Trittico della Madonna di Moserrat", the gem of the cathedral by Bartolomeo Bermejo (Rubeus), a distinguished artist of the 15th-century Flemish-Spanish painting.

## **WROUGHT IRON BY THE FERRARI MASTERS**

The Ferrari Museum, that preserves the magnificent wrought iron works by the masters Ernesto and Mario Ferrari, has been housed at the Castello dei Paleologi at the will of the Municipal Administration and the artists' family. It is aimed at reminding young people and art lovers of the artists' creativity and imagination, their excellent ability to forge the iron into works of art.

The production by Ernesto and Mario Ferrari, as "specialists in wrought iron art", is varied according to the way of moulding iron; it includes works of majestic proportions whose execution lasted for years as well as significant artistic works of reduced dimensions and even minute examples embellished with precious metals.

You can visit the Ferrari Museum inside the municipal Archaeological Museum at the Castello dei Paleologi.

## **ART AND CULTURE**

Acqui Terme is also the right destination for those who love visiting enchanting places rich in art, culture and nature. The landscape is overlooked by gentle hills, whose slopes are dotted with grapevines while the urban complex is set in the plain below. Acqui offers amusements, peace and relaxation and provides tourists with the best hospitality, hotels equipped with every kind of comfort, typical restaurants, guesthouses, swimming pools and vast green areas. The Cinema Teatro Ariston stages interesting plays and dramas, recitals, musicals, alternating classical and modern shows to suit all the tastes. Various tours both to the hinterland and to the verdant surroundings make the stay pleasant also for those who are fond of ancient history and archaeological excavations.

## **THE WINE GROWERS IN THE DISTRICT OF ACQUI**

### **"CATTEDRALE DEL VINO"**

The "Viticoltori dell'Acquese" is an Association of wine producers founded in 1953 in an important area of southern Piemonte.

It has especially developed in the Alto Monferrato district, a hilly area rich in ancient wine-making traditions (over 12000 hectare wide) and includes about 25 communes spread around Acqui Terme.

They produce various kinds of wine such as Barbera d'Asti DOC, Barbera del Monferrato DOC, Cortese dell'Alto Monferrato DOC, Piemonte DOC Chardonnay, Dolcetto d'Acqui DOC, Moscato d'Asti DOCG e Brachetto d'Acqui DOCG.

The observation of the ancient traditions of Piemonte for what concerns both the cultivation of the species of wine and the natural process of wine-making, is the peculiar characteristic of the Association that, at the same time, perfectly integrates with most advanced technological equipment to grant a first rate production.

## CUISINE

We recommend you to taste the delicious delights granted by the genuine local products (meat, cheese, mushrooms, truffles, chestnuts, honey, fruit, wine) cooked according to ancient traditional recipes.

Among the hors d'oeuvre there is the very savoury "filetto baciato", a typical dish of Ponzone: it looks like a normal salami but it is made with a pickled fillet of pork. At the end of the meal you must not miss the "Acquese al Rhum": a chocolate sweet made with chestnut cream, hazelnut paste and plain chocolate with rum.

## GETTING TO ACQUI TERME

**By car:** From Genova: Ovada exit (A26) km 20 - From Torino: Alessandria Sud exit (A26) km 30 - From Milano: Alessandria Est exit (A21) km 40.

**By train:** Genova-Ovada / Torino- Asti / Milano-Alessandria to Acqui Terme Station ( Piazza Vittorio Veneto).

**By plane:** Nearest Airports: Genova km 75 - Torino km 115 - Milano km 135.

**By bus:** Bus Station at Piazza Vittorio Veneto - Connection to: Alessandria, Torino and Milano.