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## Bergamo, Italy: hotels, restaurants and getting there

Janette Griffiths offers essential information on transport and where to eat and stay in Bergamo, Italy.



Avoid stepping out into the street without looking

By Janette Griffiths

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## **GETTING THERE**

Ryanair (0871 246 0000, calls cost 10p per minute; [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) has several flights a day from either Gatwick or Stansted to Orio al Serio airport, as well as flights from East Midlands, Glasgow and Liverpool.

The airport is three miles from the town centre. Take the local bus No 1 into town. It leaves every half-hour from in front of the Arrivals door and costs €1.90/£1.68. Buy tickets from the office to the right of Arrivals or on the bus if it is closed. The bus stops at the station, and terminates at Porto Sant’Alessandro, just outside the walls of the upper town. From there it’s a few minutes’ walk to any of the hotels in the upper town.

## **THE INSIDE TRACK**

If you’re around on a Sunday, visit the basilica. This is the one day when the surreal marquetry screens on the wood carvings in the Basilica are removed to reveal even more surreal images of biblical tales beneath – like a 16th-century cinema.

The Accademia Carrara, Bergamo’s fine art gallery, is closed for renovation. Part of the collection, including paintings by Bellini, Tiepolo and Botticelli, is on display in the Palazzo della Ragione, affording an opportunity to see the inside of the beautiful Venetian palazzo that straddles the upper town’s Piazza Vecchia.

The friendly ladies in the grocery Tresoldi, at Via Colleoni 13, will help you pick out some of their excellent fresh pasta to take home. Try the strange and exotic local speciality, casoncelli – ravioli stuffed with cheese, meat, breadcrumbs, spinach and amaretti biscuits.

## **THE BEST HOTELS**

### **Casa Mario Lupo £**

A tiny b & b in a 16th-century palazzo 50 yards from the Piazza Vecchia; the larger “Venus and Saturn” suite has a log-burning fireplace (0039 035 233829; [www.casamariolupo.it](http://www.casamariolupo.it); from €40/£35 per person per night).

### **Hotel Agnello D’Oro ££**

Plain, albeit brightly coloured rooms above a rustic restaurant in a 16th-century building at the heart of the upper town (Via Gombito 22; 035 249883; from €93/£81).

### **Gombithotel £££**

Located in one of the city's medieval towers. Ignore the rather silly "designer" hotel gimmicks in the public areas (largely comprised of Michelin guides stuck to the ceiling) – the rooms are comfortable and classy, if a little masculine (035 247009: [www.gombithotel.it](http://www.gombithotel.it); from €180/£158).

## THE BEST RESTAURANTS

### **Il Circolino £**

Tucked behind the upper town's main street, this big, sprawling, comfortable café, bar and restaurant has a lovely garden, excellent pizzas and God gazing down at you from a ceiling fresco in the back room (Vicolo Sant'Agata 19; 035 218568).

### **Giopi e la Margi ££**

Down in the lower town, this restaurant is deservedly popular for its local cuisine, served in a cosy vaulted room – the cheese platter is superb (Via Borgo Palazzo 27; 035 242366).

### **Excelsior San Marco Roof Garden £££**

A favourite with local dignitaries and the business crowd. Offers a dreamlike panoramic view of the upper town through its glass wall (Piazzale della Repubblica 6; 035 366111).

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

French writer Stendhal called Bergamo's Piazza Vecchia "the most beautiful square on Earth".

### What to avoid

Mondays, when shops, galleries and theatres tend to be closed.

Stepping out into the street without looking. Most Città Alta hotels are on Via Colleoni. Cars occasionally rumble along this absurdly narrow street, passing inches from the walls. It is charmingly Italian – and lethal.

Taxis, which can be expensive. The town's funicular will take you between the upper and lower town. Bus No 1 provides a scenic ride from the upper town and across the centre of the lower town.

### How we moderate

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