



*usitat*

# CULTURAL IDENTITY ITALY



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# CHAPTER 1

## ITALY



### THE STORY OF...



Italy has been a meeting place of **archaic** cultures such as the Etruscan, Latin and Sabine, of Celtic settlements and Greek and Phoenician-Carthaginian colonies.

Among the most ancient populations, **Venetians** were enterprising merchants, who traded mainly with the **Etruscan** and the **Greek** people. To escape barbarian invasions a group of Venetians sought refuge in some islands of the lagoon and founded Venice building it on million of wooden poles.

Italy has been the cradle of **Roman** civilization and of **Catholicism**.

Between X and XIII centuries in Italy 4 wealthy and powerful **Maritime Republics** developed: in Venice ("La Serenissima", i.e. the Most Serene Republic of Venice), Genoa (the "Superb"), Pisa and Amalfi. Those dominated trade on the Mediterranean Sea, including commerce between Europe, middle-east and North Africa, as well as Asia.

Venice was the birthplace of the greatest **explorer** of the Middle Ages, Marco Polo, who recorded his travels to the Eastern world in his famous book "The Million". Genoa was the birthplace of Cristoforo Colombo, who, in 1492 discovered America.

In the Middle Ages plenty of villages named **borgos** appeared in Italy. Originally they were medieval fortified small towns.

To mention some of those from the Veneto region, we can cite Asolo, Castelfranco Veneto, Marostica and many others. In Liguria, just to name a few: Sassello, Apricale, Dolceacqua.

The middle of the Fifteenth Century marks the beginning of the Italian Renaissance and the **Venetian Renaissance**, together with the Tuscan one, represents its fundamental declension.

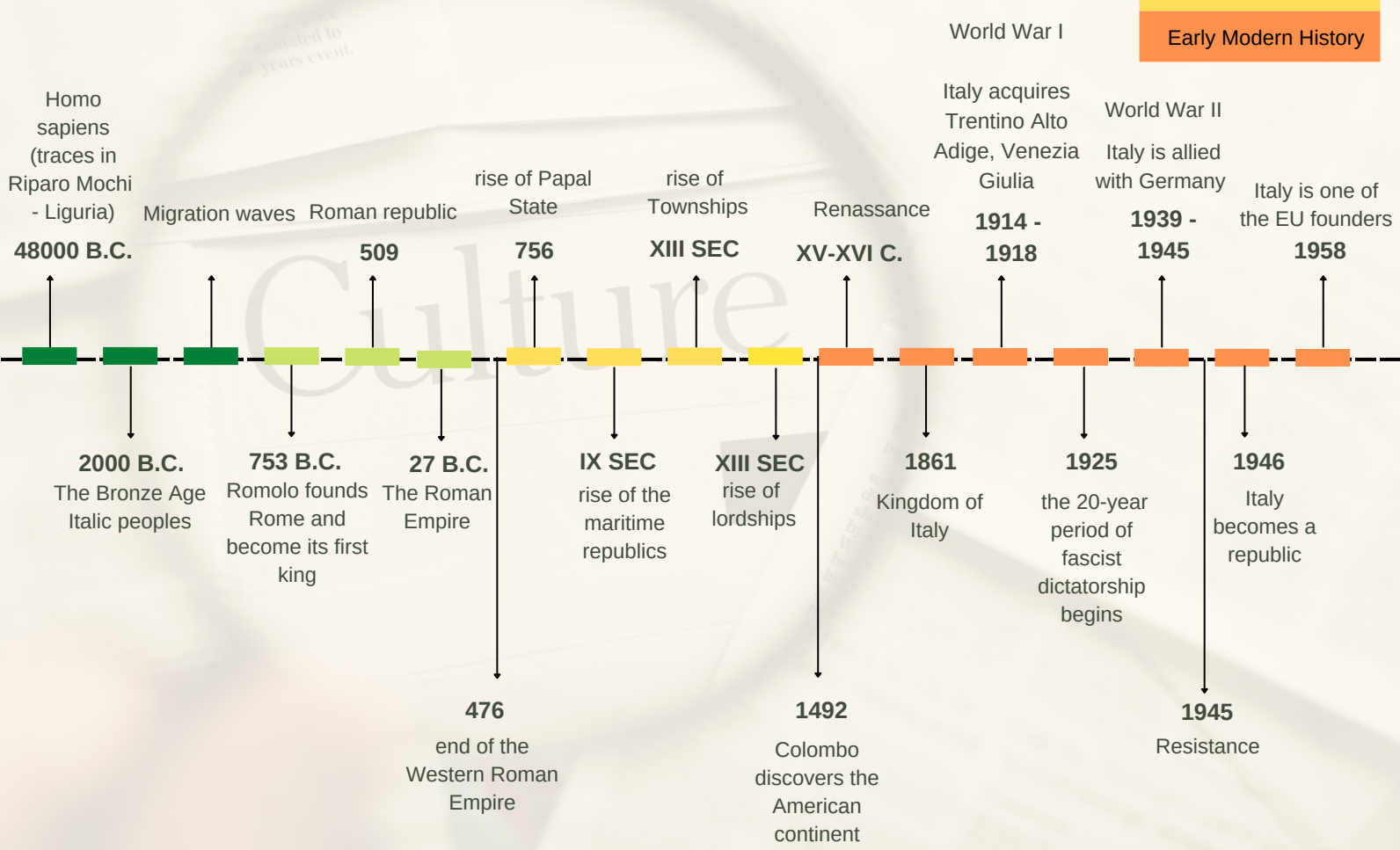
Italy entered **World War 1** in 1915. For 1,250 days, until 1918, the Veneto Region was right in the centre of the giant battlefield in a long fight of the Italian against the Austro-Hungarian Army. Traces of the conflict, like trenches and military fortresses, can be found anywhere in Veneto: from the Dolomites to the Cadore territory, from the mouth of **the river Piave** to the hills of Montello, from the Mount Grappa to the Asiago Plateau. Along the Piave some of the cruelest battles of WW1 were fought, so that the river is now considered in the entire peninsula as 'Sacred River to the Homeland'. A well-known song about it is still sung to celebrate it!



# ITALY HISTORY



Pre History
Early Inhabitants
Middle Ages
Early Modern History



# RELIGION, VALUES & BELIEFS



ITALY

Italians are religious people, most of them are **Roman Catholic**. There are many religious festivals and traditions throughout the year, such as Christmas, the Epiphany and Easter. On these days people usually go to church and eat or celebrate with their families.



On the **Epiphany** (Befana) it is tradition for an old, ugly woman dressed in rags to deliver gifts and candies to nice children, or sweet coal to naughty ones.

Every day in May devoted elderly people are used to **praying the rosary** to the Virgin Mary. They normally gather in small groups at roadside shrines or at other special picturesque, holy locations, such as sanctuaries (e.g. in Veneto "The Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Crown in Verona" or the Virgin's Sanctuary of Mount Berico in Vicenza; in Liguria Abbazia di San Fruttuoso, Madonna di Montallegro, Basilica dei Fieschi).

Pagan, agricultural traditions are often mixed together, for example in **The Feast of Candelora** celebrated on 2nd February. On this day all the candles in the church are consecrated as the symbol of Christ, light of the world. Many sayings or proverbs, especially about the weather, are linked with this day, for example: 'Candelora, Candelora del mal tempo semo fora, ma se piove o tira vento, del mal tempo semo dentro!' (Candelora, Candelora marks the end of bad weather but if it rains or it's windy we are still in the middle of winter).

Every town, city and village has its own **sagra**, i.e. local festivals, usually dedicated to the Patron Saint of the town..During celebrations, most towns offer a "processione": that is to say that the statue of Christ and the Holy Mary are carried through the village in their honor.

Italians are generally superstitious. **Superstitions** are taken more or less seriously and make a significant part of the Italian and Venetian cultural identity. There are things Italians normally avoid doing (such as walking under ladders or driving along a street after that a black cat has crossed it) or practices to do to ensure oneself good fortune (throwing some salt over your shoulders after you dropped it)



Italians are generally proud and deeply attached to their place, properties and to their **family**. Although families nowadays are not as large as they used to be in the past, family ties are still strong and valued.



## RELIGION, VALUES & BELIEFS



VENETO



There are typical Venetian celebrations, such as **the Panevin** (literally 'bread and wine') **Bonfire** and the **Venice's Regata de Le Maranteghe** (Befana's Regatta, in Venetian a marantega is an old gossip lady). For the Panevin people usually burn a pile of wood and branches on the Epiphany's Eve evening, they gather around the fire drinking brulè (mulled wine) and eating pinsa, a dessert made of stale bread, dried figs, raisins, fennel seeds.

When a Venetian person loses something, it is tradition to recite for thirteen times a popular prayer called **sequeri** to Saint Anthony of Padua in order to find the missing object.

Venetian people have a real **bond with their land and agricultural traditions**. Traditionally 1st March marked the end of winter and the beginning of the new year and the growing season. On that day people used and still use to **batar marso** (make noise) to awake nature and the frozen land after the long winter.



*Even though Italians generally tend to take their time or postpone deadlines, punctuality is expected and highly appreciated by Venetians: it's not ok to be late. Being on time, or better being early, means you are hard-working and you don't take others' time for granted.*

LIGURIA

The representation of the Nativity is spread throughout the country, but the live **Presepe** (representation of the birth of Jesus) in the picturesque **Cinque Terre** is a must!



In Liguria, The **Torta dei Fieschi** is a historical event that takes place in Lavagna on August 14 each year. This festival commemorates the marriage, which would have taken place in 1230, between the members of two rich and noble families, and includes a sumptuous costume parade through the streets of the city and the cut of the "wedding cake".



# HABITS AND ATTITUDES



Italy is world famous for its **food and wine culture**. Meals define the daily life.

**Dinner** includes being all together enjoying the meal, as it is the time of the day when all the family members get together and have time to share what they have done.

**Sunday** is the day when the **family** enjoys a big meal all together, including grandparents and close relatives as well as friends. It is a tradition to meet at lunch time to stay all together and eat for quite a long time. In this case, the meal will be made of appetizer, first dish, second dish, side dish and dessert... everything home-made! Especially on festivities such as **Christmas** and **Easter**, lunch will seem to be never-ending!

Italy is not only about tasting delicious food, experiencing history, ancient culture, beauty and art but it is also characterized by its people's unique lifestyle and attitude. Habits and values widely evaluated and imitated throughout the world.

One of the most estimated ones is our peculiar way to socialize by having a drink or a small bite before dinner. The **aperitivo** or happy hour is a proper ritual.

The custom of meeting up at bars or taverns is also popular with elderly people who usually play **traditional card games** after drinking coffee or grappa together.

In Italy, it is quite common to **make fun of the inhabitants of the other regions** and for each of them there are peculiarities that are known across the country. There is also a lot of rivalry between regions but especially between nearby towns; this phenomenon is known as "**campanilismo**".

## VENETO\_ITALY



There are plenty of bars in Veneto specializing in Aperitifs. In Venice it is basically impossible not to bump into a **bacaro**, a typical bar or tavern serving an **ombra** - a small glass of wine - or an authentic **spritz** together with a **cicchetto** - a delicious tasting of typical Venetian dishes. On special occasions or events Venetians stop by several taverns having a proper **bacaro tour**. The very best part of this habit, the special ingredient of the perfect aperitivo in Veneto, is however **the joy of socialising and spending time together** after a long and tiring working day or at the weekend. It represents a moment for sharing and relaxing.

Typical card games are **La Vecia, il Madrasso, la Briscola in Veneto**. Veneto has got its own card pattern: **The Trevisane**, which firstly appeared in the early 19th century and originated in the city of Treviso. Its origin is also confirmed in the shield held by the King of Clubs. The card designs include curved, interlaced swords, cups, clubs and coins. Over the years the pattern has always maintained a rather classic northern style, so accurately decorated to resemble tarot cards.

***Find out more: [click here to enjoy a tour on our roads](#)***



***[click here to check out the map of Liguria](#)***



## LIGURIA \_ ITALY

Liguria is a land of **sailormen** and very rich families in an **international context** due to the **port** (Genova). This influenced the culture, the lifestyle, the history, economy, the language and the cuisine.

The territory of Liguria is located along the coast and it is a land that offers **mountains, sea and countryside**. It is extremely beautiful with astonishing colors and Nature, a common feature of all our towns is narrow streets and windy roads. It is difficult in the past and today to move and to work in the area: the way our personality is affected by the climate and **harshness of the region**.

People living in Liguria are famous for not being welcoming at all; this is a true fact and the attitude has ancient roots linked to the morphology of the territory: Liguria is a very narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains, and the legend says that since ever the inhabitants of the region had to adapt themselves to a hard territory, difficult to move within, and developed a harsh character.

In Liguria dishes are very savory but at the same time simple, with humble origins and often made with **“poor” ingredients**. Many of the typical dishes are made with **leftovers**.

# LANGUAGE



ITALY

Italians speak two languages: **standard** Italian, that derives from the Tuscan dialect of Florence spoken in the 15th-16th century, and the regional dialect. Italians usually speak dialect with their family or close friends while they speak standard Italian in formal situations or contexts.

There are many varieties of **dialects** and twelve **linguistic minorities** recognized by the Italian legislation (we can mention, as example, the language of the Cimbrian Community, an ancient Germanic tribe (XII century) who settled on the mountainous charming territory between Verona and Trentino - that is now called Cimbrian Alps - and the Asiago Plateau)

Italians, use **body language** and lots of hand gestures while talking to each other. That helps emphasize expressions or give the sentence nuances that the word or phrase itself lacks. Hand gestures are considered as a fundamental part of Italian communication: without them conversations are basically incomplete. Learning to understand the most widely used hand gestures before traveling to Italy will simplify the foreigner's life!



In the whole Veneto Region, people usually use a **family nickname** (called **menda**) to identify each family. The menda is different from the surname. There can be common surnames, shared also by people who are not relatives at all, but the family nickname is unique: each family has got one. It can be related to a patronymic, a family habit or flaw, to a job or to the family origin (for example *Botter*: someone who builds a botte -a barrel-, *Tecia*: someone who usually eats in a tecia - pot-...).

Some of the words used as family nicknames are also used as surnames, and it can be confusing sometimes. That is partly due to men known as *cappellani* who, once married, left their homes to move to their brides' house.

READ  
AND  
LEARN  
MORE





# LIGURIA



Vegnî into mæ caruggio \*

\* Literally: come to my road. Meaning: you now have my same opinion of a situation/problem

As in all other Italian regions, the traditional language in Liguria is the dialect. Today most people speak Italian, but dialect is still widely spoken at home and in many work places (such as the port or at the fruit and vegetable market). Since the Genoese people were sailors and travelled overseas, our dialect is spoken in very far away places, and today there are still communities of people who speak Genoese also in Latin America (Argentina, Chile and Peru) and even in the remote island of Tristan da Cunha.

Curiosity: in Liguria we say "Belin"

"Belin": whether it is connected to the male genital organ, whether it is a term linked to some divinity of Celtic or Phoenician fertility (populations that came into contact with the Ligurians), whether it is linked to an idea of "belino", that is to say a game and toy always with strong reference to the penis, the term Belin is impossible not to hear in Liguria, even two or three times within the same sentence but with a different meaning! It is not considered rude to say belin, and even children are allowed to say it.

It rarely has a vulgar meaning because within the phrases and idioms widespread in Liguria, it can be used to express admiration, indignation, sympathy, irritation and surprise.



***Find out more: [click here to read the "belin" glossary](#)***

Il mugugno (typical complaint)

Mugugno is what Ligurians do best! It is a sort of continuous complaint about..everything! Mugugnare is something that we all do all the time, anything can make us mugugnare: this behavior is usually associated with the grumpy personality of Ligurians, and it is accepted and even considered a tradition! If you don't mugugni, you aren't a real Ligurian.



## CHAPTER 2 - ITALY



### SPORTS, FESTIVALS & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

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MORE



**Football**, or soccer, is Italy's national sport. The Italian national team, the Azzurri, has won the World Cup in 1934, 1938, 1982 and 2006. When the national team plays, it is tradition for Italians to gather in groups of friends, eat together and watch the football match to support the Azzurri. Genoa CFC, the team of Genova, is the oldest company that currently plays soccer in Italy.

Other sport most frequently played are: basketball, tennis, rugby, volleyball, cycling.

**Since Italy is rounded by the sea and rich in lakes and rivers, water sports** are also very diffused. Sailing, Diving, Canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing, rafting, immersed in breathtaking scenery are widespread activities. Waterpolo is a traditional sport in Liguria. It is played year round in our swimming pools and in the sea during summer.

Some traditional games are also still being played, for example "bocce" (bowls). In **the game of bocce** a ball is rolled along a lane with the aim of reaching a smaller target ball named boccino. The nearest ball wins the game. People usually play it in recreational centers or at the beach.

Talking about the past, there are other events in Italy that recall ancient times and help people experience the past, such as local medieval palios. During the Palio the historical environment, the daily life and habits of the people living in a town in the Middle Ages are fully recreated. Everything is taken care of very carefully in accordance with the sources of the time, especially the costumes.

An excellent example is **the Palio of Castelfranco Veneto** during which a game ball tournament, that evokes an ancient game played in the area, takes place.

In Liguria, "**Il Palio del Golfo**" takes place every year in the Gulf of La Spezia: it is a race with traditional rowing boats.

In addition to religious "sagre" (festivals), many places in Italy have also Festivals dedicated to food (specialities or typical local products) or arts (see the Cinema Festival in Venice, in Rome, Biennale in Venice, Sanremo Song Festival...).



# SPORTS, FESTIVALS & LEISURE ACTIVITIES



## VENETO -ITALY



*Enjoy the video:  
playing soccer anywhere..with anything*

The Region of Veneto has issued an official list of Traditional Sports and Leisure Activities.

The beautiful city of Venice itself offers plenty of possibilities to do water sports, such as the traditional **Venetian rowing**, in which rowers stand, face forward and rest the row in a specific oarlock.

People like participating in local festivals or events. In Venice you can't absolutely miss the **Historical Regatta**, which takes place in September along the Grand Canal and starts with a parade of typical boats to re-enact Venice's glorious past.

'**La Regata delle Repubbliche Marinare**' is a rowing race that takes place every year, the participants are the 4 ancient maritime republics: Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi. It is held in turn in the waters of one the four maritime republics.

*The coreography during a soccer game*



*La regata*



Daily life in the region is still very much influenced by the seasons. We have a mild climate, but still we do perceive the change of seasons throughout the year. Important appointments throughout the year are:

Fishing, olive harvest and mushroom picking (in late summer/fall), visiting our own region (in winter, on sunny days), planting crops and enjoying longer days (in spring), going to the beach (in summer, participating in the typical local "sagre").

Mountain bike is becoming very common. The views are breathtaking. The beach is where Ligurians spend most of their time during the summer: we have a peculiar habit, that is to say we go to the beach as soon as we finish work and in the weekends we stay at the beach all day long.

## LIGURIA \_ ITALY

**learn more about sports and outdoor activities in Liguria**  
clicking on the icon with the sea



**Best hiking trails in Liguria**



We have amazing reefs and sea life to observe in Liguria. Il Cristo degli Abissi is a bronze statue placed in 1954 on the bottom of the bay of San Fruttuoso, within the Portofino protected marine natural area, at a depth of 17 meters.

**Dive in and discover the Christ**




# MUSEUMS AND THEATRES





# ITALY


Italy is a land rich of history, therefore there are also plenty of famous museums to visit. There are historical, cultural, musical, foreign arts museums all over the country. But what is extremely peculiar is the fact that many small villages today are becoming open-air museums themselves. In facts, due to the beautiful architecture and the lovely sceneries, visiting a town in Italy is always an unforgettable experience (Burano..etc. for Veneto, The Cinque Terre, Triora, Velva in Liguria)


Some famous museums in Italy are:


Musei Capitolini in Rome 


Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples 


Musei Reali in Turin 

Musei Vaticani in Rome 


Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence 


Reggia di Caserta 


Galleria degli Estensi in Modena 


Castello Sforzesco in Milan 


Some historical sites that are to be visited as museums are:

Pompei 


La Valle dei Templi in Sicily 


Colosseum and Fori Imperiali in Rome 


The Antique Theatre in Taormina 


Villa del Casale di Piazza Armerina 

Some famous theatres in Italy are:

Teatro Alla Scala in Milano 

Teatro di San Carlo in Naples 

Teatro La Fenice in Venice 

Teatro dell'Opera in Rome 

Teatro Verdi in Trieste 







# MUSEUMS AND THEATRES












## Veneto:

- Palladian villas 
- Palazzo Ducale in Venice 
- Cà Pesaro in Venice 
- Cà Rezzonico in Venice 
- Cappella degli Scrovegni in Padova 
- Teatro La Fenice in Venice 
- Teatro Verdi in Padova 
- Teatro Goldoni in Venice 
- The Home to Giulietta in Verona 
- Arena di Verona 

# VENETO AND LIGURIA

## Liguria:

- Museo di Palazzo Reale in Genova 
- Musei di Strada Nuova in Genova 
- Museo della carta in Acquasanta 
- Galata museo del mare in Genova 
- Castello D'Albertis in Genova 
- Museo Archeologico in Chiavari 
- The historical center of Genova 
- Teatro Carlo Felice in Genova 
- Teatro della Tosse in Genova 





## ARTS & CRAFTS

## ITALY



Traditionally, arts and craftsmanship are fundamental economic and social activities for Italy. The history of our country is rich in world-famous artists who were - and still are - considered revolutionary and innovative geniuses.

Sculptures, paintings and architecture have always been representative of Italy's magnificence throughout the centuries, and it is widely known that many of our cities are open-air museums that travellers from all over the world want to visit: Florence, Rome, Venice are among the most famous ones.

However, other forms of art are widespread on the territory;

**Goldsmithing and jewellery-making:** Vicenza is the leading capital in this sector, and it is due to mention also Valenza in Piedmont and Florence, in Tuscany.

**Mosaic** working is a centuries-old practice used to decorate religious (but not strictly) buildings. Very often, the mosaics represent historical and religious events. Mosaics can be found throughout the country: Ravenna in Emilia Romagna is considered the most emblematic example of mosaic art in Italy, the Dome or Orvieto in Umbria, the Basilica of Saint Cecilia in Rome, ruins in Pompei, the Cathedral of Otranto (Apulia), St. Mark's Basilica in Venice and of course Sicily..just to name a few.


**Ceramics** are worked with great skill all across the Peninsula: in Sicily, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, Campania, Apulia are very well-known. Este, in the Euganean Hills of the Veneto Region, is one of the oldest ceramic production centres in Europe.

**Tailoring** is considered as the cradle of high fashion design and it represents the Italian Excellence in the world that despite globalization, enhances the prominence of the Made in Italy and contributes to making Italy increasingly competitive in the world. Tailoring includes weaving, leather factories, silk factories.


We cannot forget to mention the **art of food** and wine in Italy: a real example of mastery of pleasure!

# VENETO AND LIGURIA

## ARTS & CRAFTS




In the Regions of Veneto and Liguria there are plenty of **arts and crafts workshops and schools** where tradition and expertise are still preserved. Thanks to apprenticeship programmes they are handed down from one generation to another to be constantly combined with innovation and technology.




In Veneto *Antica Sartoria Veneta* - **the Ancient Venetian Tailoring Company** - has been sewing special cloaks named Tabarros since 1974. A *Tabarro* is an ancient cloak made of wide, rounded, and heavy cloth used to protect the body from cold and it's still a synonym for elegance and style.

The Weaving factory is one of the oldest crafts in Venice: historical weaving workshops producing silk, velvet, damask and brocade fabrics are still present. **The Bevilacqua Weaving Company** has been carrying on the Venetian tradition since the 18th century!



One of the most significant productive sectors in Veneto is **shoe industry**, represented by the luxury footwear of **the Brenta Riviera** (with its shoemakers called *calegheri*), and by the cities of Verona and Montebelluna. Veneto also boasts a long-lasting experience in the designing and production of **eyewear**. The district of Belluno is one of the most renowned areas of manufacturing. **Luxottica**, in Agordo, near Belluno, is one of the most prestigious companies in the world.



Ligurians are also people of crafts, the most typical and famous are the following:

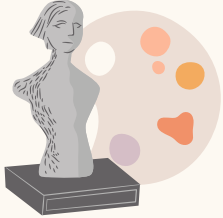
- the **chairs** (Chiavarine) in Chiavari. These chairs are of exceptional quality and they are characterized by the fact of being incredibly light. They are a symbol of the town and they are extremely expensive.
- The working of **clay** in Albissola is thousands of years old, dating back to the Roman times when the amphorae were used for the transport of wine, oil and cereals. From the 1920s ceramics from Albissola were used to set the tables and for the decoration of the transatlantic liners of the Italian General Navigation and of the Italian Maritime Transport Society
- **Gozzi**. They are handmade wooden boats of excellent quality. The Ligurian coast has plenty of small lovely bays, and it is necessary to have small boats to reach the land from the sea. The Gozzi are typical wooden boats that can reach the most hidden corners due to their small size and agility. Today, there are only few craftsmen who build the gozzi by hand and the value is unique. The artists that create the gozzi are called “mastri d’ascia”, that is to say “masters of the ax” as it is with this tool that all the ship is built.
- Le **polene** are women carved in the bow of the ships, and today there is one artist who still works in his shop in the historical center of Chiavari: a visit to Franco Casoni is a lifetime experience.



ITALY



SCULPTOR  
/PAINTER  
MICHELANGELO



PAINTER  
SANDRO  
BOTTICELLI



ARTIST  
LEONARDO DA  
VINCI



MUSICIAN  
GIUSEPPE VERDI



PAINTER  
RAFFAELLO



WRITER  
DANTE  
ALIGHIERI



PAINTER  
GIOTTO



SCULPTOR  
ANTONIO  
CANOVA





# LIGURIA



**ARCHITECT**  
**RENZO PIANO**



**WRITER**  
**EUGENIO**  
**MONTALE**



**MUSICIAN**  
**FABRIZIO DE**  
**ANDRÈ**



**MUSICIAN**  
**NICOLO**  
**PAGANINI**



# VENETO

**ARCHITECT**  
**ANDREA**  
**PALLADIO**



**MUSICIAN**  
**ANTONIO**  
**VIVALDI**



**PAINTER**  
**TIZIANO**



**MUSICIAN**  
**KATIA**  
**RICCARELLI**



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