

## **TITLE: NOVA GORICA AND GORIZIA: A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY, CULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COEXISTENCE**

**By Nikol Grgurević**

On the border between Italy and Slovenia, we find a homogeneous territory from an environmental perspective, but highly different from a cultural standpoint. This is the reality of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, two complementary cities divided by a border that is sometimes clearly visible and at other times completely latent.

In 2025, Nova Gorica will be the European Capital of Culture in collaboration with Gorizia. This event has encouraged both cities to embark on a revolutionary journey aimed at improving various socio-cultural aspects of the cross-border territory.

What we aim to tell you is an itinerary to discover a territory that is entirely unexplored, a unique experience where cross-border reality becomes a shared path for two completely different nations.

### **THE CROSS-BORDER ITINERARY**

Starting from Piazza Transalpina/Trg Evrope is a must. Right in the center of the square is the border line, which is practically invisible today. In the slovenian part of Piazza Transalpina/Trg evrope, you can find the train station of Nova Gorica, inside which you can visit the „Border museum“ where are preserved multiple photographs dating back to the time when the border line was well defined and visible.

The time has come to explore Nova Gorica, crossing the border the architectural difference immediately catches your eye. Unlike Gorizia, an older city with medieval features, Nova Gorica presents an architecture with social-realistic features, also considering the fact that it was built after the Second World War. You find yourself exploring a young city, where although the environment harks back to Yugoslavian socialism, the atmosphere you breathe is predominantly that of an European city.

An experience not to be missed is a visit to the municipal library, absolutely well assorted and very welcoming. Among the various institutions that work in the cultural field and in the valorization of the cross-border relationship we must include the Cultural Center of Nuova Gorica as well as the multifunctional HUB where young people can realize their ideas.

Finally, to have an unforgettable experience, is recommended to visit the Kostanjevica monastery.

In addition to the breathtaking view that you will find once you arrive in front of the monastery, what will make your jaw drop is the library located inside, where books of immense historical value are kept. But the surprises don't end there, inside the Church, under the presbytery, you can visit the tombs of the last members of the royal lineage of the Bourbons, expelled from their homeland in 1830, during the July Revolution. It was Carlo 10th himself, despite never having visited the monastery in person, who chose to be buried in Kostanjevica, this because from the villa where he lived in Gorizia the view was right on the monastery.

At the end, for a complete visit, you absolutely must take a walk inside the rose garden, where there are more than 60 varieties of the Bourbon rose.

Then comes the time of the journey from Kostanjevica to Gorizia, walking, without even realizing it, you will find yourself back in Italy. I guarantee you that most of the time you spend in this area you will ask yourself: am I in Italy or Slovenia? It will only be the language spoken by the locals that will let you discover the answer.

In Gorizia what is absolutely recommend to visit is the Basaglia psychiatric hospital. Thanks to a local association it is possible to book a guided tour to discover the revolutionary history of the "Basaglia" method. You will find yourself embarking on a multi-sensory journey inside the beautiful park, you will hear the stories of patients who spent their stay in these places in a period in which psychiatric illness, in addition to not yet being studied entirely, was based on a series of stereotypes that made life impossible for those who suffered from them.

To explore most of the area it is possible to use a bicycle, the cycle paths are very well delineated and allow you to reach both cities without obstacles. Of course, if you want to visit the beautiful castle of Gorizia, we recommend you park your bike and continue on foot. Again, you won't regret it. Inside you will find the Middle Ages museum, absolutely not to be missed if you want to enrich your knowledge of the history of the Gorizia area.

At the end of our itinerary we will tell you that just as the Rhine river, in Strasbourg, divides France from Germany, here the Isonzo/Soča river acts as a natural border. For nature lovers this will certainly be the most evocative landscape, especially for the particular emerald color of the water.

### **A COMMON PATH TO ENHANCE THE TERRITORY**

The places I have told you about from a tourist point of view have an inestimable potential, certainly to achieve the full valorization of the territory, intense collaboration between the populations who live in these two cities is necessary.

GO2025, with the objectives it aims to achieve, is certainly an important project focused on European values. Both cities, as well as both nations involved, will have the opportunity to encourage sharing, the promotion of culture, social participation, the valorization of cultural and environmental heritage through a series of multicultural and multilingual events and projects aimed at improving cross-border coexistence.