



City of Valenza

SHORT GUIDE

VALENZA - VIA GARIBALDI

City of Valenza



Surface: 48.49 km²

Population: 18,358

At the centre of the
Genoa-Milan-Turin triangle



**Goldsmith
businesses:**
756

Goldsmiths:
> 4500



Gold processed:
30,000 kg
per year

90% of precious stones
imported to Italy are also
processed in Valenza.



**Surname
most common:**
Lenti

**Most common
names:**
Maria e Marco

But you can also encounter:
Emerenziana, Enola,
Crocefisso, Bellino, Arcadio.



**The world's
biggest
jewellery
brands make
jewellery
in Valenza**



Number of jazz concerts performed: 384

Since 1954, the Associazione Amici del Jazz Valenza has organised concerts by, among others: Chet Baker, Jerry Mulligan, Ornette Coleman, Stefano Bollani, Paolo Fresu, Fabrizio Bosso, Franco Cerri... etc.



Rivers: 1 The Po

It has always played a leading role in the life of the city and has even (improperly) influenced its name: from the 17th-century Valenza del Po to the still-used Valenza Po.



Emperors: 1 Angelo Bosio (THE EMPEROR OF THE PO)

Nel 2008 ha risalito in 22 giorni il fiume da Porto Tolle a Valenza (400 km) con un barca di sua costruzione con il solo uso del remo (*ramp*), vogando in piedi, alla veneziana.



Typical dish*:

Golden saffron risotto
(Recipe by Gualtiero Marchesi).

* [not true but it would be nice]



Films shot: 1 War and Peace (1956)

Directed by King Vidor with Audrey Hepburn, Herry Fonda, Vittorio Gassman.

The scenes of the Battle of Beresina were filmed along the snowy banks of the Po.



Valenza now as it was then

By this, we do not mean that Valenza has not changed over the centuries. But these vintage postcards, these historical maps, are too beautiful to be kept in a drawer. Of course, Valenza is no longer a fortified bastion high above the Po, a border garrison of the Duchy of Milan, and the walls were destroyed two centuries ago by Napoleon, but these sepia shots tell the story. The historic buildings and views you see can still be found. Just like the **Amaretti Margherita**, which you can enjoy in their classic recipe from 1906.

Valenza's goldsmiths are still there, in fact, they have increased, and continue to create unique jewellery.

• TOWN AND TERRITORY OF VALENZA (DETAIL), 1859, MUNICIPALITY OF VALENZA HISTORICAL ARCHIVES, CARLO DABENE FUND





84

85

97

124

125

130

132

135

135

8

5

2

3

1

4

7

6

9

C. del
Governo

Strada

Ponte

1 Cathedral | Piazza XXXI Martiri

Seventeenth-century building containing **Moncalvo's** painting *Madonna del Rosario* and to the right of the high altar, the cannonball that hit the building during the **siege of the city in 1635**. The adjoining premises house the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo where sacred vestments and furnishings, statues and paintings are kept.

2 Palazzo Valentino

| Piazza XXXI Martiri

A historical building from the 700s, its interior was renovated in the 1970s. It has been referred to as the **Guggenheim of Monferrato** because of its unique spiral interior architecture. Once the Town Hall, it now houses the **Municipal Culture Centre** and the **Public Library**.

3 Palazzo Lora Moretto

| Corso Garibaldi

Built between 1915 and 1917, it is commonly called the **Goldsmiths' Palace** because during the crisis of 1916 many unemployed goldsmiths went to work on the building site.

Mr. Bartolomeo Secondino Lora Moretto wanted to celebrate the success of his American adventure with the construction of a prestigious palace that was to be unrivalled in terms of novelty and extravagance of decoration.

4 Palazzo Pellizzari | Via Pellizzari

A building from the 1700s, now the seat of the **municipality**, it has frescoes and mythological stuccoes in the main hall. Along the main staircase is a bronze statue by sculptor **Giacomo Manzù** engraved with verses by poet Salvatore Quasimodo. In the inner courtyard, below the main balcony, the telamon called **Caganisoli** is visible.

POSTCARDS, VALENZA MUNICIPALITY HISTORICAL ARCHIVES, CARLO DABENE FUND



3

2

5 MOD | Via IX Febbraio

Museo dell'Oreficeria Diffuso, an exhibition where an **old goldsmith's workshop from the early 900s** has been reconstructed. Italian/English QR codes allow access to special content.

6 Teatro Sociale | Corso Garibaldi

This Italian-style theatre, **inaugurated in 1861**, has an auditorium, three tiers of boxes and a gallery with a total of 475 seats. A massive restoration project, completed in 2007, allowed for the recovery of the building's original decorative and architectural structure.

7 Corso Garibaldi

The **Cuntra Granda**, the sitting room of our ancestors, for centuries the backbone of the city, connects Piazza Gramsci (where Porta Alessandria was located) and Piazza del Duomo (Piazza XXXI Martiri). Along its route are numerous historical buildings, Casa Lora Moretto, the Teatro Sociale and the small, elegant Piazza Verdi.

8 La Colombina | Viale Padova

Viewpoint over the Po and the Lomellina rice fields. Legend holds that St Maximus (now patron saint of the city with St James) let a dove free and decided that the spot where it landed would be the birthplace of Valenza, the exact spot where it stopped is called *La Colombina*. The 17th-century walls of the ancient stronghold are still visible here.

9 San Bartolomeo

| Via della Banda Lenti

The Oratory presents itself as an octagonal building embellished by the imposing *trompe l'oeil* pictorial decoration that mimics neo-Gothic architecture resulting from 19th-century reconstruction. **The original monument dates back to 1500** when it was used for religious worship and was dedicated to St Catherine. The oldest building in the city has been re-purposed over the years for various uses. Today, the municipal administration has made it an exhibition space and concert venue.

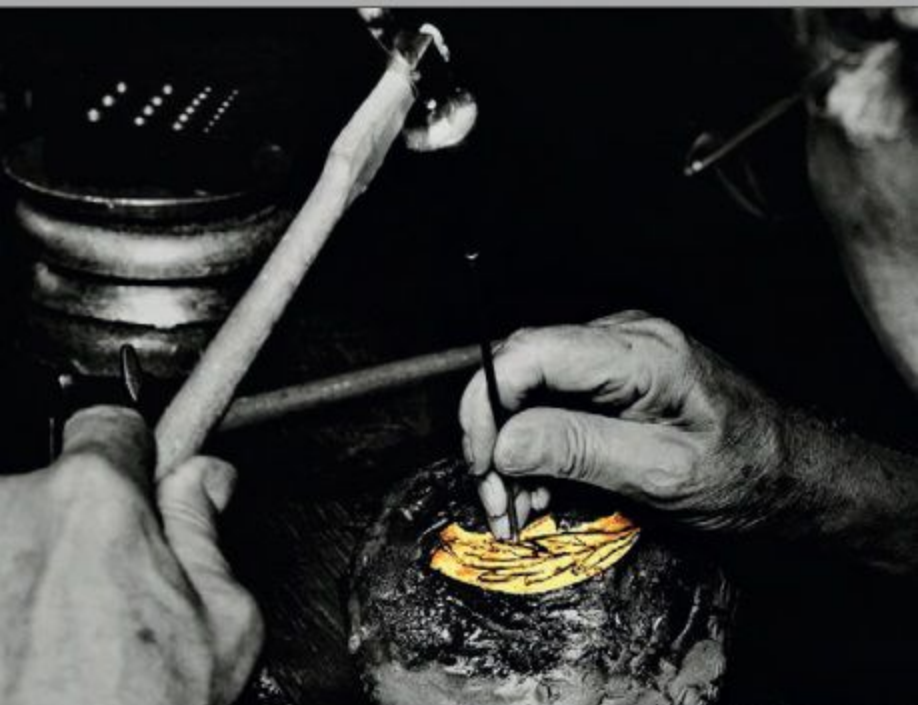


Valenza and goldsmithing

The Goldsmith District represents the hallmark of Alexandria's industry. Valenza is the world's leading player in premium jewellery, thanks to the presence of numerous highly specialised companies and a strong network of artisan businesses. Around thirty tonnes of gold and almost 90% of the precious stones imported into Italy are processed here every year (source: Piedmont Internationalisation Centre). Its history of goldsmithing began in 1817, when Francesco Caramora opened his workshop in Contrada Maestra. Two hundred years later there are 756 goldsmiths in the area.

Known throughout the world, Valenzan jewellery has a strong foreign focus that strongly influences the province of Alessandria's exports: between 2008 and 2019, an increase in sales of Euro 2.6 billion (+68.5%) was recorded, with almost 60% of this leap being attributable to gold jewellery. The propensity towards foreign trade, which is particularly strong (over 56% compared to 37.6 in Piedmont and 29.9 in Italy), is supported by the presence of the Goldsmith District where one third of exports are concentrated. The production fabric has a much higher level of capitalisation (45.5%) than Arezzo (29.8%) and Vicenza (34.5%).

Enrico Sozzetti



Valenza and the river

A city very high above the water on the river side – this is how Valenza was described in a 17th century military report – and it surely goes without saying that the river in question is the **Po**, with which the city has always had a fundamental link. As a defensive embankment, a trade route, a food source, a holiday resort, it has always been part of the city's life, influencing (improperly) even its name. By many it is in fact called: **Valenza Po**.

To cross and navigate it, the people of Valenza have always used the *barcè* (a long, narrow, flat-bottomed boat).

The barcè is an existential boat because you stand upright, look forward and you can go against the tide. Standing on a boat means searching for a stable balance in an unstable element such as water. An exegesis of the life of us all, that is, the difficult search for peace in the chaos of the world.

(from *Ditemi un Po. Fragments of a Discourse on the Great River*, Guido Morandini)

The stretch of the river Po in the municipality of Valenza is part of the **Piemontese Po Natural Park**.

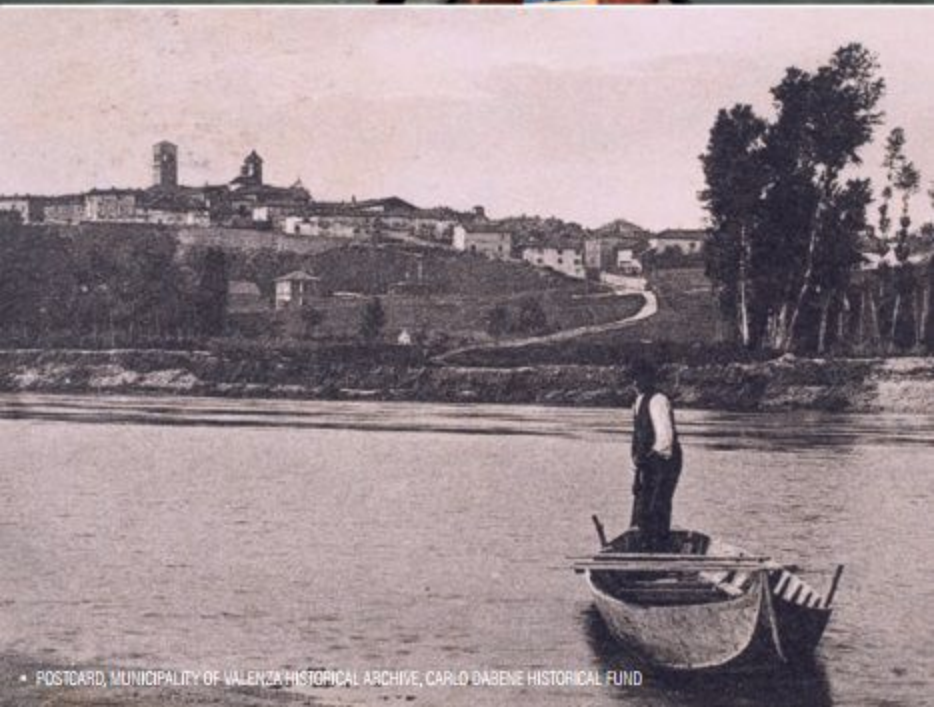
For information on routes, points of interest, etc.

+39 0142 457861, www.parcopiemontese.i





• ANGELO BOSIO



• POSTCARD, MUNICIPALITY OF VALENZA HISTORICAL ARCHIVE, CARLO DABENE HISTORICAL FUND

Valenza and the Monferrato

At the centre of the Genoa-Turin-Milan triangle, the Valenzan area opens onto three main landscapes: that of the *Great River*, the **rice fields** and the **hills**, the latter being the landscape that in the collective imagination characterises the Monferrato.

In this section, **the Po** has a sinuous and majestic course. A sequence of loops showing, beyond the banks, horizons lined with rows of poplars. From the paths in **Musolino Park**, also equipped for picnics in nature, you arrive at the riverside. The wide pebble beaches, once populated by bathers, are now resorts for the freshwater fishermen.

After crossing the historic *Ponte di Ferro*, you will enter a square world. The rice fields – divided into rectangular areas bordered by embankments that prevent water from flowing away – are the natural habitat of numerous birds. This area is a natural place for **birdwatching**: grey herons, ibis, ducks, storks and water gulls are just some of the species that can be seen simply by walking past the cultivated land.

Remaining on this side of the river, the landscape is characterised by **gentle hills**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. Vine cultivation makes this area one of the largest wine producers in the world. Crossing the Monferrato landscape means not only breathtaking views but also a journey in flavour.



Valenza, what to do

Within a 15 minute drive from Alessandria, 20 minutes from Casale Monferrato, 40 minutes from the Sacro Monte di Crea and the Serravalle Designer Outlet (just to combine the sacred with the secular), Valenza offers several possibilities for a **leisurely stay**. Here's what to do:

- visit the **historical centre** by stopping at the points indicated in this guide;
- **visit a business or a goldsmith's workshop.**
For info: Municipal Culture Centre (tel. +39 0131. 949286);
- taste excellent foodstuffs certified by the Piedmont Region: **Amaretti Margherita** biscuits from Pasticceria Torti (Via Po 5), natural **ice creams** from the Gelateria Soban (Piazza Gramsci 23), the **cannoncini** from the Pasticceria Principe pastry shop (viale Oliva 10), the **products** from the 19th-century café Barberis (viale Oliva 9/B) and stock up on **Agnolotti di stufato** from Padovan Fresh Pasta (vicolo del Pero 7);
- walking along the **Po River protected area** [www.parcopiemontese.it] or in the Valenzan hills following the **paths marked by the CAI** [www.caivalenza.altervista.org/sentieristica];
- cycling in the **Monferrato hills** on the routes suggested by Barbisa 1852 [www.monferrato-barbisa1852.com/bici-tour] or guided in **customised excursions** by the MBR (Monferrato Bike Ride) Association [www.monferratobikeride.it];
- go **horse riding**. For info: ASD Wild West (tel. +39 333.9906263), La Fonte Equestrian Centre (tel. +39 339.1009125);
- **play golf** on the greens of La Serra Golf Club [www.golflaserra.it].



ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

- Agriturismo Villa Gropella**, Strada per Solero 6, T. +39 0131.951166
Barbisa 1852, Strada per Pavia 1/A, T. +39 393.9135420
Cà degli ovi, Fraz. Monte, Strada delle Rocche 4, T. +39 339.5946479
Cascina Gaia, Strada Villabella 5, T. +39 339.6773875
Cascina Nuova, Strada per Pavia 2, T. +39 335.6230457
Cascina San Giorgio, Strada per Solero 39, T. +39 334.2577823
Hermoso Housing, Corso Garibaldi 61, T. +39 T. 0131.060118
Non salvat superbia, Corso G. Matteotti 92, T. +39 338.8974357
Il Quetzales, Fraz. Monte, Vic. Sant'Ambrogio 3, T. +39 333.4820888
Terme di Monte Valenza, Via Fontana 13, T. +39 0131.945253



CITTÀ DI VALENZA

ASSESSORATO AI BENI CULTURALI E AL TURISMO

Info: **Municipal Culture Centre / Civic library**

T. +39 0131 949286

biblioteca@comune.valenza.al.it



Centro Comunale di Cultura Valenza



Instagram [ccv_valenza](https://www.instagram.com/ccv_valenza)