



# VODNJAN / DIGNANO



## I. VODNJAN

Vodnjan is a small town in the southwest of Istria, around 12 km from Pula, positioned at 135 meters above sea level. The town was formed on the remains of prehistoric hill forts. The local area is known for its numerous *kažuni* - characteristic rural constructions built in dry stone wall technique that marked a particular property. They are witnesses to a time when agriculture, especially olive oil and wine production, were the basis of the town economy.

According to the legend, Vodnjan was created out of seven properties, or *villae*, that were part of the colonial estate of Pula. In order to strengthen their forces against constant threat of conflict and pillaging, the seven villas of the area (Vodnjan, Mednjan, Guran, St. Kirin, Mandriol, St. Michael of Banjole and St. Lawrence) formed a new entity – the town of Vodnjan.

The first written record of Vodnjan - as *Vicus Atinianus* - dates back to the year 1150, although some indications suggest that the town was mentioned earlier in history, during the rule of the Venetian Doge Pietro Orseolo in 977AD. The name *Vicus Atinianus* eventually developed into *Adignani*, then *Dignano* and finally, the present day Vodnjan.

Vodnjan was mentioned during the the period of the Roman Empire, during the Barbarian invasions, the Byzantine Empire, the Venetian Republic and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The First and Second World War saw large demographic changes, when residents left the town to move elsewhere. Today, the Municipality of Vodnjan includes the surrounding areas of Galizana, Peroj, Barbariga and Gajana.

Within its historic core, the town has preserved its medieval look with atria and narrow streets that wind irregularly between houses, cobbled lanes and stone facades. Some of the old streets still display the impressive stylistic features from Gothic-Venetian, Renaissance and Baroque time periods. The old town boasts many churches rich with fine works of art.

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## 2. PARISH CHURCH OF ST. BLAISE IN VODNJAN (EST. 1800)

The parish church of St. Blaise is the largest parish church in Istria based on the dimensions of its ground plan (56.20 x 31.60 m) and its 25 meter high dome. Furthermore it boasts the tallest bell tower in the region measuring 62 m, resembling that of St. Mark's in Venice. The church is known for its collection of relics and the remains of saints. The contents of this unique church are considered to be extremely valuable, and some of this collection is on display in the museum that forms part of the church complex. The Vodnjan parish church altogether has 370 registered relics and the remains of 250 saints. The entire collection of religious artefacts has 730 items in total, dating from the 5th to the 19th centuries.

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## 3. BETTICA PALACE – MUSEUM (14TH CENTURY)

The palace was named after the Bettica family who bought it in the 16th century. Later it came into the possession of the city of Vodnjan, at which time it was renovated and became a museum with archaeological exhibits, and a collection of valuable paintings donated by Gaetano Gretzler in 1818.

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#### 4. CHURCH OF MADONNA OF TRAVERSE (EST. 1615)

According to legend, in the 12th century this was the site of a smaller church dedicated to Our Lady of the Fountain. It is said that at this place, St. Anthony of Padua stopped on his travels in 1229 and founded a small monastery. The cistern that once stood here was said to be large enough to provide water for the monastery and the surrounding area. Eight carved wooden altars from the 17th century can still be seen today and are currently in the process of being restored.

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#### 5. CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL (EST. 1630)

The church has a ground plan in the shape of a Latin cross, with an elegant facade made of finely cut stone, inset with a rosette window placed above the coat of arms of the chief magistrate Francesco Barbaro. A bell tower rises from the left hand side of the church. Due to its excellent acoustics, the church is nowadays a venue for many concerts of classical and religious music.

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#### 6. CHURCH OF ST. JACOB

Although precise information about the church's original form and development is unknown, it is considered to be the oldest church in Vodnjan. It dates from the 9th century and is located within the old town. The declaration of the Vodnjan Statute took place here in 1492.



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### 7. CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE (12TH CENTURY)

The church once stood beyond the main inhabited areas of Vodnjan and was a pilgrimage site until the 17th century, when the town spread out and the church became an integral part of it. The church interior reveals well preserved medieval frescoes, as well as inscribed drawings and graffiti.

### 8. MEMORIAL COLLECTION OF ERMINIO VOJVODA

The collection is dedicated to the life and work of the world famous shoemaker (haute couture designer) Erminio Vojvoda (23rd of May 1902 - 6th of April 1991). The collection displays the production process, his tools, furniture and gives a sense of the ambiance of the former Vodnjan shoemaker's shop. His collections were shown in Milan, London and Paris.



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### 9. TRGOVAČKA (MAIN STREET)

The street developed with the growth of Vodnjan during the 17th and 18th centuries, mainly due to a need for new shops, crafts, warehouse space etc. Trgovačka Street leads to the main square of Vodnjan. It is more than a kilometer long, has around 200 house numbers and is the longest street in Istria.



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### 10. TOWN SQUARE

The Town Square (the present-day Narodni trg) was formed in 1808 after the demolition of the castle that stood on the site. The square is surrounded by magnificent buildings, such as the renovated Town Palace, Bembo House, the Bradamante Palace, the Davanzo and Benussi Houses.

**I2**

### **I2. APOTEKA GALLERY**

The Apoteka Gallery is a new space for contemporary art opened in the old town of Vodnjan in the rooms of an abandoned pharmacy, which gives the gallery a retro feel. Local and international artists exhibit in this gallery throughout the year.

**I3**

### **I3. THE BRADAMANTE PALACE**

Over the centuries the palace had a multitude of different functions: a Venetian loggia, a storage place for grain, the seat of the chief magistrate, the town archive, a prison and a theater. Today, it is the Center of the Italian Community of Vodnjan. The building displays a clock from 1877 on its facade. There is a library on the first floor, while the lobby exhibits a permanent collection of coats of arms of rectors and notable families of Vodnjan.

**I4****I1**

### **I1. THE NARROWEST AND SHORTEST STREET**

In the old part of Vodnjan, within a multitude of narrow streets, lies the narrowest and shortest street in Istria. Today, the narrowest street is called Stari grad – or the Old Town and it has inspired many stories and legends.

**I3**

### **I4. KAŽUN THEME PARK**

In the Vodnjan area there are roughly 3,000 kažuns (small dry stone huts). In order to present this unique part of Vodnjan's rural heritage to visitors, a theme park was opened in 2012. The kažuns are presented through their four building stages. A dry stone wall surrounds the park, as well as other kažuns of varying shapes typical to the area.

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## 15. ECOMUSEUM "ISTRIAN DE DIGNAN"

The ecomuseum is located in the heart of the old town, on the main square. It displays many tools and objects that were once part of everyday life of the native population. Here you can sample local food and drinks, learn about the usage of stone, steel and wood through a guided tour of the museum, or by taking a tour of the town on a traditional "voz" (carriage) pulled by the last two donkeys from this area.

## 16. MURALS

You can find interesting murals located in different parts of the town of Vodnjan, which are often hidden in alleyways and squares. These were created during the Boombastick and Street Art Festivals. Both festivals are attended by local and international musicians and "street art" artists, who have painted the facades of many Vodnjan buildings.

**16****17**

## 17. GASTRONOMY

Vodnjan boasts unique and specific local products, especially extra virgin olive oil from native olive varieties, such as the Vodnjan buža, and karbonaca. Furthermore, Vodnjan produces a unique sweet dessert wine made of dried grapes, called Vin de Rosa. You can also enjoy the traditional „Bumbar“ cuisine (named after the Bumbari - the natives of Vodnjan).

## 18. EL MAGAZEIN GALLERY

The gallery was opened in 2009 in the space of a former stable. The gallery hosts events such as art exhibitions, concerts, poetry readings, book presentations, lectures, theater performances and fashion shows.

**18****19**

## 19. CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS

The city leaders, together with the citizens of Vodnjan, used to host bishops from Pula in this rather small but important church. The bishops would arrive by horse to the front of this church, where they would join a colorful parade through the city in all their splendor. The church was also the seat of the Confraternity of Flagellants.



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*Za izdavača:* Morena Smoljan Makragić  
*Tekstovi:* Anita Forlani / Morena Smoljan Makragić  
*Prijevod:* Atinianum d.o.o.  
*Realizacija:* MPS Pula

