

PRESS RELEASE

WHY GENOA IS ITALY'S NEXT GREAT TOURISM , CULTURE AND FOOD DESTINATION?

The historic maritime capital of the Italian Riviera celebrates international accolades, a landmark UNESCO anniversary, world-class events, and a remarkable blend of art, nature, and gastronomy. Genoa, the capital of Liguria, Italy's historic maritime city is experiencing an extraordinary renaissance. With international accolades, landmark cultural anniversaries, major festivals, and a remarkable blend of history, nature and gastronomy, Genoa is emerging as one of Europe's most compelling destinations for 2026 and beyond.

The capital of Liguria has entered the year with unprecedented international recognition. In March 2026, the **Musei di Strada Nuova**—Palazzo Rosso, Palazzo Bianco and Palazzo Tursi—received the prestigious **Three Stars** in the Michelin Guide *Voyage & Cultures*, placing Genoa among an elite group of cultural destinations alongside the Louvre, the Vatican Museums and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The recognition follows two other significant milestones: Genoa's inclusion in **The New York Times' "52 Places to Go in 2026"**, where it stands as the only major Italian city selected, and its placement in **Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2025**, once again as the only Italian destination featured.

A City Where History Shapes the Future

Few cities in Europe combine such extraordinary historical significance with contemporary vitality. Home to Europe's largest preserved medieval historic center, Genoa flourished during the sixteenth-century "*Siglo de los Genoveses*," when its bankers financed kingdoms and empires across Europe, transforming the city into one of the world's great financial and artistic capitals.

This extraordinary prosperity gave birth to the magnificent **Palazzi dei Rolli**, the Renaissance and Baroque palaces that today form a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. In 2026, Genoa celebrates the **20th anniversary** of their UNESCO inscription with a year-long program under the theme "**Sharing is Protecting.**"

Unlike any other city in Europe, Genoa developed what historians consider the world's first organized system of public hospitality. Beginning in the sixteenth century, distinguished visitors—including popes, kings, emperors and ambassadors—were officially assigned to stay in the city's finest private palaces through a public lottery system known as the *Rolli*. This remarkable tradition lives on today through the celebrated **Rolli Days**, when normally private palaces open their doors to the public, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

A Vertical City Between Mountains and the Mediterranean

Genoa offers a landscape unlike any other European city. Built on a narrow strip between the Ligurian Sea and the Apennine Mountains, visitors can move from the historic harbor to panoramic mountain trails in less than fifteen minutes.

Historic funiculars and Liberty-style elevators connect the medieval streets with breathtaking viewpoints overlooking the city and the Gulf of Genoa. Above the skyline stretches the **Mura Nuove**, Europe's longest surviving city walls, linking a network of seventeenth-century forts through spectacular hiking and cycling routes.

At sea level, the city's vibrant waterfront tells another story. The **Porto Antico**, redesigned by architect Renzo Piano, is home to Italy's largest aquarium, the **Galata Maritime Museum**, the iconic **Bigo panoramic lift**, a lively marina, restaurants, museums and year-round cultural events.

The coastline can also be explored by traditional Ligurian fishing boats, sailing excursions, kayaking, paddleboarding and whale-watching experiences within the protected **Pelagos Sanctuary**, one of the Mediterranean's richest marine ecosystems. From Genoa, visitors can easily reach picturesque destinations including Boccadasse, Nervi, Camogli, Portofino and even the Cinque Terre.

Music, Festivals and International Events

Culture animates the city throughout the year.

One of the year's highlights is the inaugural Ottobre Paganini, a citywide festival running from October 2 through November 8, 2026, celebrating Genoa's most famous musical son, violin virtuoso Niccolò Paganini. For the first time, the city's leading musical institutions will collaborate on a month-long program of free concerts, masterclasses, performances, food experiences and public events. Ottobre Paganini is an offshoot of the internationally renowned Premio Paganini, one of the world's most prestigious violin competitions — extending the spirit and legacy of the biennial Premio into an annual citywide celebration, with the next competition final set for 2027.

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Genoa also hosts internationally acclaimed events including:

- **October 1–6, 2026, the Genoa International Boat Show**, one of the world's leading marine industry exhibitions;
- **October 2 – November 8, 2026, Ottobre Paganini**, the citywide free music festival described above.

- **October 16–18, 2026** — Autumn Rolli Days, the twice-yearly opening of the UNESCO-listed Palazzi dei Rolli.
- **October–November 2026**, the **Festival della Scienza**, among Europe's largest science festivals;
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A Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Destination

Looking ahead, Genoa continues to invest in accessibility, sustainability and innovation. For the **third consecutive year**, the city has been named a finalist for the **European Capital of Smart Tourism**, recognizing excellence in accessibility, sustainability, digital transformation and cultural heritage.

Tourism growth reflects this momentum. Genoa welcomed **3.5 million overnight stays in 2025**, a 15% increase over the previous year, while museum attendance grew by **30% during the first four months of 2026**, with international visitors accounting for half of all arrivals.

A Taste of Italy's UNESCO Heritage

Food remains one of Genoa's strongest ambassadors. As part of Italy's UNESCO-recognized culinary heritage—inscribed in December 2025 as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity—Genoa contributes its own distinctive chapter: Pesto Genovese IGP, celebrated every two years during the World Pesto Championship, alongside warm focaccia enjoyed with morning coffee, crisp farinata, savory torta pasqualina, and handmade

trofie. Each dish reflects the conviviality, seasonality, and intergenerational knowledge that define Italian cuisine as a living tradition.

The city's culinary identity extends beyond its restaurants through approximately seventy officially recognized **Botteghe Storiche**, historic bakeries, delicatessens, pastry shops and artisan businesses that continue centuries-old traditions and contribute to the authentic character of Genoa's historic center.

Looking Ahead

From UNESCO heritage and world-class museums to music festivals, sailing events, spectacular landscapes and one of Italy's richest culinary traditions, Genoa is redefining itself as a destination where culture, innovation and authenticity meet.

As international recognition continues to grow, the city invites travelers to discover an Italy beyond the familiar—one where centuries of history, vibrant contemporary culture and unforgettable Mediterranean experiences come together in a single extraordinary destination.

To discover more about Genoa, please visit the official website www.visitgenoa.it

For further information please do not hesitate to contact us:

Clara Svanera

Content and media relations

Direzione turismo Genova

csvanera@comune.genova.it