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Nove: Italian town perfect for pottery shopping

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Italy is famous for its ceramics, and the town of Nove produces some of the highest-quality ceramics in the country.

It's a popular shopping destination for Americans because the larger ceramic shops accept U.S. dollars, and they carry brand names such as Lenox and Tiffany, which can be purchased for a fraction of the cost one would pay in the States.

And it's only about a 30-minute drive from Vicenza and the U.S. base of Caserma Ederle, from which those with ID cards can mail boxes through the APO system. Larger ceramics shops, such as La Ceramica VBC, will even deliver purchases directly to the base.

With shopping made this easy, there is no reason not to go to Nove.

Two of the largest and most popular shops are La Ceramica VBC and its partner store, Ancora.

La Ceramica VBC has a huge selection, and it's the store that sells the Tiffany and Lenox pieces. A popular choice is from the Butler's Pantry collection by Lenox, so to save time, look up the collection online and choose what pieces you would like prior to shopping.

VBC also has some beautiful faux mosaic pieces that are slightly more expensive, but very colorful and full of Italian flair.

At VBC, you can get pottery for the kitchen and the dining room, as well as decorative pieces. Prices for all their pottery are extremely reasonable.

Ceramiche Artistiche Ancora sells a large assortment of hand-painted pieces. Here, as with VBC, you can get a selection of tableware in addition to decorative pieces. Ancora's products are a bit more unique than VBC's — no brand names are sold here.

If you buy ceramics at either place, you can arrange for VBC to pick up your purchases at Ancora and have them delivered to the military base. They will also pack and deliver any pottery you buy elsewhere in Nove, if you take them your purchases. Keep in mind that there may be additional fees for packing and delivery.

Another popular place is Ceramiche Larry SKG, where you can have your pottery customized ahead of time. You can order bowls, jars, pitchers, plates and more, personalized to your specifications.

Larry's also specializes in religious-themed ceramics. There is a nice collection of both tableware and decorative pieces, all at good prices.

Ceramiche Artistiche Marco Pizzato is another fine store, with wonderful hand-painted pieces. The owner even allowed us to go behind the store area and look at the pottery before it's painted and glazed.

Pizzato had some very nice antique-looking pieces, as well as seasonal tableware. The company caters mainly to large-scale purchases — restaurants, catering companies and the like — but you are able to buy individual pieces in their small but well-stocked shop. The advantage to this is that they have some unusual pieces that are not normally in typical tableware collections. Prices are very inexpensive.

For fine ceramics that are mainly decorative, go to Décor9. This store is just a bit off the beaten path, and it's quite a bit more expensive than the other ceramic shops listed, but they have absolutely beautiful pieces. From a distance, we watched one of its artists painting in the studio attached to the store.

If you plan to buy a large amount of pottery, it is advisable to call the U.S. Post Office at Caserma Ederle to make an appointment (+39-0444-71-7430 or DSN 634-7430). We were able to get an appointment at 9 a.m. on a day when the post office didn't even open until 11. The postal workers were very patient and efficient about handling the large numbers of boxes. Take your own address labels and fill out the customs forms in advance to save time.

Vicenza is a great destination for a long weekend or if you have a free week, particularly if you want to travel with friends to Nove. Both are fun destinations if you want a small taste of Italy, and you won't have to deal with as many crowds as you might find in Rome or Venice. Best of all, you're not overwhelmed, wondering what you should cram into a few days of sightseeing.

With ceramics, wonderful sightseeing and great eating all in such proximity, Vicenza is a wonderful choice for an Italian getaway. Take your wallet and your sense of adventure.

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Know and Go

Getting to Nove, Italy

Unless you're stationed in Italy, the quickest and easiest way to get to Vicenza is to fly into Venice or Verona. Low-cost airlines can take you into either city.

Germanwings flies from Stuttgart, Germany, into Verona; Ryanair has a flight from Frankfurt-Hahn into Venice Treviso.

My friends and I flew from Brussels' South Charleroi to Venice Treviso on Ryanair, a 90-minute flight. From there, we took a bus into Venice (about 45 minutes) walked to the rail station and caught a train to Vicenza.

Since there isn't much in Nove beyond ceramic shops, it is recommended that you make Vicenza your base. Ederle Inn has lodgings, if you wish to stay on base (+39-0-444-71-8034 or DSN 634-8034). It offers AFN, onsite laundry facilities and air conditioning.

We stayed at Hotel Continental, near Vicenza's town center. A quad standard room cost 99 euros per night, which includes a buffet breakfast. The rooms were clean and spacious, but the hotel is on a busy street, so there was traffic noise. Free parking is available.

The best way to get to Nove is by car. We rented one at the Europcar kiosk at Caserma Ederle in Vicenza. We could not pick up the car on base, but a shuttle that comes around about once an hour ferries customers to the lot to pick up their cars. It is recommended that you have either a very good map or a GPS system that will help you get to Nove; we found Vicenza very difficult to navigate at first — and others have had similar tales.

You should also stop by the SATO Travel office while on base to pick up a rough map of Nove. It tells where the pottery shops are and their business hours, since most are closed for an hour or two at lunchtime.

The stores

- **La Ceramica VBC:** www.laceramicavbc.com
- **Ceramiche Artistiche Ancora:** <http://www.madeinvicenza.it>
- **Ceramiche Larry SKG:** www.ceramicelarry.it
- **Ceramiche Artistiche Marco Pizzato:** www.ceramichepizzato.com
- **Décor9:** www.decor9.it

Dining in Vicenza

Italy is also known for its great food. One fantastic restaurant we found was in Hotel Giada. The food was excellent, the service was exceptional and the prices incredibly low.

We had two appetizers, four main courses, wine and soft drinks, a side dish and four desserts, all for less than 70 euros, including the service charge.

Seafood is prominent on most menus in the area, and Giada is no exception. Its pasta with crab is excellent. But if seafood is not your thing, it also has other delectable pasta dishes and pizza.

While in Italy, you must have *gelato*. An excellent place not far from Vicenza's Tempio di Santa Corona, is Gelateria Sonia. Its display window is adorned with the most mouthwatering, artful pastries you have ever seen.

In addition to *gelato* and pastries, you can get sandwiches and coffee. It's a nice treat to rest and refresh yourself during your sightseeing.

— Karyn Johnson

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