

Historical Trail of Verona



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I WROTE THIS HISTORICAL TRAIL BECAUSE I LOVE THE ITALIAN CULTURE, ITS PEOPLE AND THE AREA I LIVE IN.
THIS TRAIL IS APPROXIMATELY 5 KM LONG, BUT CAN TAKE BETWEEN 3 AND 4 HOURS BECAUSE OF ALL THE THINGS YOU CAN SEE AND ALL THE LITTLE DETOURS YOU CAN TAKE.

Verona..... a city at the foot of the Dolomites; a city of wonders, churches and romance.
Verona..... imbedded in a valley surrounded by beautiful sights, such as the "Lago di Garda" (the Lake Garda).
Verona.... on the route between Milano and Venezia. It's a city with lots of flair.
Verona.... the city which set the sight for a play of one of England's most famous writers, William Shakespeare. Which play you ask, why "Romeo and Juliet" of course.

Verona will grab every ones attention, whether you are 6 or 100 years old. This city has something to offer to us all. It is very versatile in history, culture, architecture and nationalities.

Let me give you a few short historical facts about Verona. I will give you more detailed information on some of the dates/sights while we are on our tour. So just hang in there, grab a backpack with lots of water, do not forget your camera and good walking shoes. Oh ja, don't forget your wallet.

Okay, short history: Verona was built along the banks of the "Adige" river sometime in the 6th century BC. It was occupied by the Euganei and the Veneti who ultimately gave their name to the region, the Veneto. In the 3rd century BC the Romans conquered the Veneto region and it took all the way up to 89 BC for the people of the region to be given full Roman citizenship. The Arena was originally built in the first century BC (completed in 30AD). Verona had various rulers in its first 1200 years. Later the main ones were: 1263 Leonardino della Scala ("Mastino" or Mastiff) begins the area in which the Scala ("staircase") family rules. In 1308 Cangrande I ("Big Dog") comes to power and extends Scaliger rule over almost all of the Veneto mainland. In 1329, after the death of Cangrande I, Verona's power starts to decline and finally in 1387 the Scala family loses power completely.

*In 1314 Dante, a famous Italian writer and a public office holder arrives in Verona. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was an envoy and a prior at the magistrature in Florence. He lived in Verona until 1319.

From 1405-1797 Verona becomes part of the Venetian state. In 1801 Verona split between Austria and France. And in 1866 the Austrians get defeated by the Italians and Verona becomes part of Italy. Again in 1915-18 Austria and Italy fight about Verona and it gets heavily damaged during these attacks (World War I). Verona stays with Italy. During World War II, the allies bombed Verona and the Germans blew up all the bridges. Verona has not only rebuilt many of its old historical sites, but has also become a modern city with a large variety of industry.

Now that you know just a very little bit of Verona, let's get started. Remember; don't forget your good walking shoes, water, camera and wallet.

(* Dante info taken from: www.italnet.nd.edu/Dante)

Some general information: The tour is approximately 3 hours long, depending on walking speed and on how long you stay to “inspect” all the various attractions. Not included in this time frame are a few sights a bit further off the original route. I will mention those “extras”, when we come closer to them along the way.

Food: there are plenty of Ristorantes, Pizzerias and Bars/Caffes in Verona. They can vary from very fancy and expensive to kids friendly and affordable.

Restrooms: all the ristoranti and pizzerias have restrooms, some of them with toilets you are used to, others with the hole in the ground. But if you have been to Italy before, you are aware of this. There are plenty of public restrooms as well. They are usually very clean and cost Euro 0.50.

Entrance Fees: I will get to those when we get to the individual places. Most of them are the same, but some do vary, so just hang in there and start moving.

Arriving in Verona by train: You will arrive at the Stazione “Porta Nuova”. This train station is located approx. 15 - 20 minutes away from our official starting point. However, it is still easy to get to the “Portoni della Bra”. Once you come out from the train station you go across the Piazzale XXV Aprile”, to the “Tempio Votivo” church. You need to make your way across the “Adige” river. The “Viale Luciano Dal Cero” is a very wide road. You won’t be able to miss it. From here you go down the “Via Citta die Nimes”, which leads you through parts of the old city wall. Keep going straight till you get to the “Piazza R. Simoni”. Now hang towards the right (not completely to the right) and go down the “Via Giberti”, this brings you to the “Via della Valverde”. At the end of the “Via della Valverde” you come to the “Corsa Porta Nuova”, which is exactly where we will start our tour. Turning slightly towards the left you will see the “Portoni della Bra”, a large stone gate with a big clock.

Arriving in Verona by car: It makes no difference whether you come from; the north, south, east or west, you always take the exit “Verona Sud” off the A4. Once you have paid your toll you need to keep towards the left and follow the signs “Stazione/Fiera”. You will first pass the fair grounds and approx. 4 – 5 km down the road (always straight on), you will come over a big bridge (crossing over railroad tracks). Look past the road/direction signs and you will see the “Porta Nuova” in the middle of the road (like an island). Starting here, you want to follow the signs to the “Arena” park house. The signs will lead you past the “Porta Nuova” and down the “Corso Porta Nuova” for approx. 500 meters. Then you turn right and before reaching the intersection you need to turn left. The park house is right there. Parking at park houses is rather expensive; an hour costs you about 2 Euros. Take your parking ticket with you, and remember the color of the level you are on. Follow the “Uscita” signs and go on up the stairs or the elevator. Once you come out of the park house, you will be in a small side alley, just turn right towards the main road, which again will be the “Corsa Porta Nuova”. Turn right and walk through the “Portoni della Bra”, the gate with the big clock (picture shown on top of page 1).



Okay, now that we are all at the beginning point, let’s look to the left. This building on our left is the “Teatro Filarmonico”. **The Philharmonic Theatre was originally built by Francesco Bibiena, a famous architect and scenographer in 1716. In 1770 the theater burnt down completely but entirely re-built. Still, the way we can visit and admire the theater today is the third reconstruction, because in 1945 it was bombed and only the atrium and the foyer were left intact. These two parts were then restored and integrated together with the original eighteen century plan. Responsible for this latest reconstruction were the Accademia Filarmonica and the architect V. Filippini. The theater is one of the most loved theaters in Verona. Note: officially the theater is not part of the tour to visit inside, but if you want to you may do so, either now or on your way back.



If you turn and look behind you, you will be standing right in front of the **“Portoni della Bra”. The gates are crowned with merlons, which are very characteristic. Again to your left, which was your right before, you have the **”Palazzo della Gran Guardia” with its long elegant series of windows. Construction of this building started in 1610 on the south side of the square but did not get completed until 1820. The “Palazzo della Gran Guardia”, as you see it today, is the work of Domenico Curtoni (1556-1629), who was the grandson of Michele Sammicheli (1486/88-1559). The “Palazzo della Gran Guardia” was intended as a place where soldiers would stand in formation, during rainy weather, for the Generals to pass their troops. Now turn back around and you will be looking at the “Piazza Bra”. The word originates from the word “braida” meaning “open space”. This is the largest square in all of Verona and it is opening out in front of the impressive

** This information is taken from EB Bonechi “Art & History -Verona” guide.



“Arena”. **In Roman times this square was used for the “Forum Boarium”, the cattle market. Its sixteenth century layout resulted from the work of Sanmicheli, which included the “Portoni della Bra”, the “Palazzo della Gran Guardia” as well as the “Pentagonal Tower”. The “Piazza Bra” and the “Listone” (side walk around the “square”) are characterized by the elegance of the long series of fine buildings. Each of which have elegant facades, rich in original decorations, terraces and balconies looking out directly on to the street.



Now let’s go towards the “Arena”, but don’t just walk around the little park, make sure you walk through it. There are some important things you see there, for example the “Fountain of the Alps” which is situated beneath the statue of “Victor Emanuel II”, who was the First king (1861-1878) of the united Italy and last king of Piedmont-Sardinia (1849-1861). A little to your right is the “Palazzo Barbieri”, it was built under the supervision of G. Barbieri in 1838 and was considered the “Palazzo della Gran Guardia Nuova”, the new Palazzo. Nowadays it is used as the municipal offices.



Walk around the fountain and you will find a bronze book laying in the grass. Read it and remember or write down what it says, this will be part of our quiz at the end. (This is the only tip I will give you for the quiz, all the others are very obvious and if you do the tour you should not have any problems figuring them out.)



Okay “Arena” here we come. Just a few administrative things before you dive into gladiator times. Admission fee for the “Arena” is: adults 4 Euro, children 7 – 14 are 1 Euro (accompanied by an adult), groups of 20 people are 3 Euros per person. Opening hours vary due to performances during the months of July and August. This is the reason why we start our tour in this area, because it is best to be here earlier in the day. So, let us get started. At the entrance of the “Arena” you have parts of the most outer ring that still displays 4 arches. Originally when the amphitheater was built in the first century AD it was designed with four concentric, elliptic rings (an oval). They were used for all kinds of things, one of the most fascinating thing I found out about the rings were that they had a perfect hydraulic drainage system. The internal veins or the “vomitoria” gathered and lead away any water filtering down from the outside of any of the rings. This might be one of the reasons why the “Arena” in Verona is in

the most excellent state of conservation. Another reason is that the “Arena” was always in use and was promptly renovated when needed. **Going back to ancient times, some literary and archaeological evidence proof gladiator fights took place in Verona, there was even a school for gladiator fighting here. However, there is no concrete evidence to suggest that the martyrdom of Christians had ever taken place. In the following twenty centuries there were to be many heretics burnt at the stake, “Judgments of God”, ordeals, tournaments, whirls, jousts and especially popular right up to the nineteenth century were the bull fights. During the 1900s the “Arena” also held circus events and witnessed the preparation of hot-air balloon. This is also when the production of theatrical pieces were started to be held here on a small stage, and also still during the nineteenth century, opea come to the “Arena”. This tradition has been going on until today. The “Arena”, in its typical Roman structure is the third in size, coming after the “Colosseum” in Rome and the Amphitheatre of Santa Maria Capua Vetere (approx. 16 miles north of Naples). However, as I mentioned before, it is in the most excellent condition of all.



Now depending on how early you started your tour, you might want to have a snack or lunch, there are plenty of choices here around the “Piazza Bra”, you can get a fast pizza in a small “fast food pizza place”, or you can wine and dine in a fancy ristorante, or just grab a “gelato”. It is all up to you. We can also just go on down the “Via Giuseppe Mazzini”, this little road, towards your right, is usually crowded with people, but that has it’s reason, there are some really neat shops for “window shopping”. If you are into churches; five minutes down the road (including window shopping), you can turn right into the “Via Scala” where you can get to the “Chiesa della Scala”, one of the many churches Verona has to offer. Now if you are not interested in a side trip to a church, just continue on the “Via Giuseppe Mazzini” until you get to a “T” in the road.



(** This information is taken from EB Bonechi “Art & History – Verona” guide.)



Now you have reached the “Piazza Erbe” and the “Via Cappello”. I would suggest you turn right into the “Via Cappello” to go see the “Casa di Giulietta”. Well, this is what we all came here for right? Entrance fees are the same here as they are most of all other places, adults pay 4 Euros, children 7 – 14 years of age pay 1 Euro, and groups of 20 people and more pay 3 Euros per person. The house is open Mondays from 1330 – 1900 hours (1:30 – 7 p.m.) and on Tuesdays through Sundays from 0830 – 1900 hours (8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.).



Okay, so you are standing at the entrance of this romantic thirteenth century house and are trying to figure out why all the walls are plastered with little pieces of paper. Lovers from all over the world leave their names and messages; this seems to have become a symbol of good fortune and everlasting love for one another. If it helps, I don't know. Nevertheless, go through the passage way into the court yard.

Right in front of you is a bronze statue of Juliet dedicated by N. Costantini. To your right is the famous balcony. Not only the romantic brick façade house with its elegant three-lobed windows is worth seeing, the inside is too. Before you go inside, however, let me give you some historical facts about the two lovers. Romeo



Montecchi (Montague) and Guilietta Capuleti met and died in 1302. Why did their young lives have to end this dramatically, well the Montecchi were Guelphs who supported the Pope; the Capuleti (Juliet's family) lines who supported the HRE. In short the two rivals and the lovers got caught in a terrible more thing, Shakespeare was not the original wrote the story in the 1520s. Shakespeare side. Once you go up the great staircase which step out onto the famous balcony. But do not you will end up in the room where Juliet and more. There are actually 5 floors, hard to be-thing, you may take pictures, but it has to be as well as cameras, to make sure you do not do various rooms, take a peek out the windows,



were Ghibel-families were feud. One writer of “Romeo & Juliet”, Luigi da Porto (of Vicenza) dramatizes the story in 1595. Okay, now you can go in-leads you to a spacious anti-chamber, you can actually stop there, just continue going through the various doors, Romeo died; you can see the clothes they wore, and much lieve if you only look at the house from the outside. One without the flash. There are people all through the house, anything you are not supposed to. While you are in the especially once you get to the higher levels.

Enough romance for the time being? Good, because we are going to see some other interesting historical buildings and places in Verona, before we get to Romeo's house.



Off we go back to the “Piazza Erbe”. Here we have a very crowded area, you need to look upwards a bit so that you can see the magnificent houses. Some are richly decorated with stucco, others are painted. This square can be very overwhelming at times. Coming from the Via Cappello, just look straight into the distance, there is the “Palazzo Maffei”, it's a huge and imposing building. It actually closes in one side of the “Piazza delle Erbe”. **The rich and characteristic forms are baroque and date back to the seventeenth century. They cover a pre-existing thirteenth century structure. It culminates in an agile balcony decorated with statues of six divinities (Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, Minerva, Mercury and Hercules). Check out the story of these divinities, I might just ask you about them in my quiz. The eminently theatrical function of the façade is also reflected on the inside in the elegant courtyard. You can go inside this building, however, I did not do this because of all the other things I wanted to see and do. Honestly, you could probably be in Verona for a week and still find things to do and see. So I just had to pick and choose, however, I am giving you options along the way. Let's continue looking around the “Piazza della Erbe”. To your right is the “Casa Mazzanti” with its interesting sixteenth century figurative frescoes on the façade were added by Alberto Cavalli in 1530. To your left is the ***“La Domus Mercatorum” or the Merchants House. It is a fine Romanesque building which, in a questionable attempt at restoration in the nineteenth century, was crowned with improbable Gothic battlements. The “Domus” we see today was built by Alberto I under the Della Scala

family in 1301. The structure is in stone and brick and in the form of a loggia supported by arches and ennobled by mullioned windows with two lights. The earlier “Domus” was built in 1210; this earlier one had been built in wood as was the wide-spread custom in Verona and elsewhere at the time.

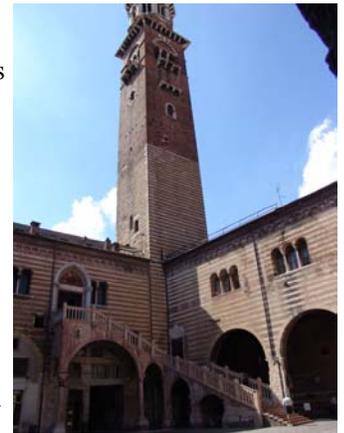
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Now start walking through the crowds, you will find the “Lion of St Mark” above its sixteenth century marble column. The wonderful “Fountain of Our Lady Verona” is in the center of the “Piazza delle Erbe”. This is the most singular Gothic monument ever created under the Della Scala Family, the rulers of Verona’s areas in the later part of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The shrine erected in the “Piazza delle Erbe”, better known as the ***“Berlina” was where the ceremonial inauguration of every new “podesta” (Mayor) officially took place. The “Berlina” we can see today, is not the original one. However, on the steps and on one of the sixteenth century pillars the units of measurement since the days of communal government until the introduction of the decimal system are still legible.



Between the fountain and the shrine is a pass way leading you to the “Piazza Dei Signori”. **This square with its aristocratic features and elegant harmony give it the unmistakable characteristics of the privileged meeting place for the governing officials to do well for the city. There are many fine buildings surrounding this square such as the Renaissance wing of the ***“Palazzo Comunale” or Municipal Chambers (located behind you when you walk in from the “Piazza delle Erbe”), the **Domus Nova which housed the Podesta.(building to the left of the Municipal chambers. The ***“Loggia del Cosglio” with its eight arches and the double windows separated by fresco work and pilaster stripes was built between 1475 and 1492. The cornice supports five statues by Alberto da Milano. These statues represent the five most illustrious men from Verona in the Roman times: Catullus, Pliny, Marcus, Vitruvius, Cornelius, and Nepos. Opposite the Municipal Chambers is the ***“Palazzo del Capitano”. An elegant portal created by Sanmicheli opens up in the sixteenth century façade. This building gets its name from

the historical role carried out by the elected major or “Captain” of Verona in these official premises in the time of Venetian dominion. The “Palazzo del Capitano” boasts a magnificent inner courtyard onto which the elegant “Loggia Barbaro” and the famous “Porta Bombardiera” (built in 1687) look out. The** “Palazzo degli Scaligeri” is the House of the Della Scala family. It is unique with its Ghibelline battlements. The “Palazzo della Prefettura” (Seat of the Prefecture) corresponds to the old Della Scala Palace which was begun in twelfth century but was not completed until the fourteenth century. It underwent several changes in design and style, but was accurately restored and reconstructed to its original structure in the first few decades of the twentieth century. From here you can gain access to the elegant internal courtyard of the ***“Palazzo Comunale”, otherwise known as the “Cortile des Mercato Vecchio” (the Courtyard of the Old Market). The courtyard lays in the shadow of the lofty “Lamberty Tower” Its elegance is increased by the double flight of stairs in an agile Gothic style. These flights of stairs are more commonly known as the “Scala della Ragione” (Stairs of Reasons). These stairs lead you up into the tower and you can actually climb all 368 steps to the top. The tower is open Mondays from 1330 – 1900 hours (1:30 – 7 p.m.) and on Tuesdays through Sundays from 0830 – 1900 hours (8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.). Entrance fees are: adults pay 4 Euros, children 7 – 14 years of age pay 1 Euro, and groups of 20 people and more pay 3 Euros per person. There is an elevator for handicapped. Well, how about a cappuccino or coffee or water after this climb? Caffes are all over the place.



Okay, after you had your cappuccino and a gelato at the caffe in the “Piazza Dei Signori” let us go on to the ***“Arche Scaligere”. The Della Scala tombs are closed off by an elegant wrought iron fence in which the heraldic motif of the Della Scala family is repeated. The area is set out like a military encampment and constitutes the official cemetery of the embers of this family. A holy warrior stands on every corner pilaster protected by a spire-shaped canopy which seems to be watching over the eternal rest of these Lords. The two most important tombs, complete with canopy and a veritable profusion of decorative sculptures belong to Cansignorio and Mastino II.

Once you pass these impressive tombs, turn right into the “Via delle Arche Scaligere”. The Gothic house with it’s façade in brick was built in the fourteenth century. The house Romeo lived in belonged to Cagnolo Nogarola and therefore it is also called “Casa Di Cagnolo Nogarola” (detto Romeo). It is set up similar to Juliet’s home; however, you cannot visit the inside of Romeo’s house because it is privately owned. Nowadays there is a ristorante on the bottom floor.

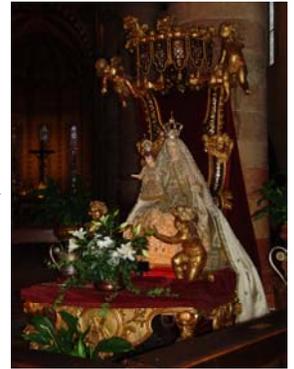


From here you have two possibilities. The first one is: if you are interested in old Roman and medieval discoveries of Verona you to go around the corner down the “Via Ponte Nuovo”, away from the river (in short you turn right after Romeo’s house). There is a small park with a Garibaldi statue, on the right of the park is the main post office, opposite (on your side of the road) is an arch entrance that leads you into the “Cortile del Tribunale”. In the center of the courtyard is a glass floor. Take a peek. And if you are interested in more, go visit the Scavi Scaligeri (Scaligeri Excavations).

(** This information is taken from EB Bonechi “Art & History – Verona” guide.)



The second option is: go back towards the “Arche Scaligere”, but this time follow “Via Cavelletto” straight on to the “Corso Santa Anastasia”. Once you get there turn right and go straight to the church that is right in front of you, it is the “Chiesa di Santa Anastasia”. This basilica is worth your time. Entrance fee is 2 Euros for any and everyone. This is a handicapped friendly church and picture taking is authorized. Remember that no short pants and short skirts are authorized to be worn in Italian churches, plus your shoulders need to be covered. The ***“Chiesa die Santa Anastasia” is the largest basilica of its kind in Verona. This Gothic construction was built by the Dominican Order and dedicated to Saint Peter Martyr, a Dominican monk from Verona. He is also a co-patron saint of Verona together with Saint Zeno. It is, however, more likely that the order had built



their church on the site of an older church that was dedicated to Saint Anastasia. In 1290 the basilica was started to be built, it was not completely concluded until 1481. The first part of the construction time frame when from 1290 to 1323 and then it was started back up 100 years later in 1423.



The church boasts a majestic apse in red brick and an extremely high bell tower. The elegant façade of the basilica was never completed in the upper part. However, it is hallmarked by the timeless fascination of the double portal surrounded by multi-colored marble and bas-reliefs and the two slender agile windows. Once you enter the basilica pay attention to the holy-water fountains, the one on the left is the so-called “fat hunchback”, the one to your right is the “thin hunchback” They were placed in the church to represent the workers of the nearby water mills on the Adige River. Look around and you will find the impressive altar/chapel of “our Lady of the Rosary”. All together there are 17 such chapels that open onto the side aisles. All of them have their very unique beauty. Don’t miss the sealing and the floor, read the little brochure you received at the entrance, it is very interesting and much too long for me to mention here and now. Once you leave the basilica look to your right, you will find a tomb similar to the ones at the “Arche Scaligere”.

Alright, from here we go to our last station, the oldest bridge I think I have ever seen, the “Ponte della Pietra”. Coming out of the church yard, turn right onto the “Via A. Massalongo”, then turn right again and you are on the “Via Ponte di Pietra”, just follow the road down to the river. From there you have a great view of the “Ponte della Pietra”. This bridge was built in ancient Roman times. It was destroyed many times by floods, such as major ones in 1154 and 1239. After these floods the bridge had nearly disappeared, and it underwent a big change which has given it the name “Ponte Pietra”, meaning stone



bridge. The little remains of the ancient Roman bridge can be seen at the left bank of the river in form of the two large archways (very light colored stone). **After several restoration attempts the bridge’s appearance was altered drastically. Its dramatic arching from with the five asymmetrical archways underneath respect the current of the river. Because of the sharp bend in the river, the current flows more quickly towards the left bank Here the bridge rests on 4 stone “bows” built to slice through the current where it’s at its strongest. In the thirteenth century Alberto I della Scala had the “Torri di Guardia” (Watch Tower) built, which had the purpose to defend the bridge. The most recent damage done to the bridge happened in World War II when the Germans left the city they destroyed all the bridges behind them. But also after this, the bridge was rebuilt as it had been documented with photos shortly before the bombing of the bridge. With its asymmetrical structure and the profile of a donkey’s back crossing the Adige River, the “Stone Bridge” has always been a true symbol of the city.

Well, are you tired yet? Honestly, I was by that time, but that did not hinder me, nor my family to grab a “gelato” at the little gelateria on the bend/corner of the “Via Ponte di Pietra” and the “Piazza Broilo”, the road that led up to the bridge. They make their own ice cream right there and they speak multiple languages. I know they speak English and German there.



If you still have energy to go on, here are some other options you can do. You can go over the bridge and visit the “Teatro Romano”. Or you can continue past the guard tower of the bridge onto the “Via Sabbion” to the “Chiesa del Duomo”, the cathedral. Verona has a large amount of churches, we could actually just write up a historical trail on Verona’s churches. So feel free and decide on your own. My official “Historical Trail of Verona” ends here at the “Ponte della Pietra”. I hope you had a great time and, just maybe, we will just run into each other somewhere here in the wonderful city of Verona.

Just remember whatever you decide, you and your kids have to make it back to the car or the train station.

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Quiz Time:

1. What does the book in the little park (near the “Arena”) at the “Piazza Bra” say?
2. What is the “Arena” used for, especially in the months of July and August?
3. Who is Guilietta?
4. What landmarks/statues/objects are in the center of the “Piazza Erbe”?
5. How many steps lead up to the “Lamberty” tower?
6. What are the “Arche Scaligere”?
7. What style is the church of Santa Anastasia?
8. What is the name of the oldest bridge in Verona? And what river does it cross?