

# TWO TASTY TRIPS TO NORTHERN

# Bergamo is a beautiful hidden gem

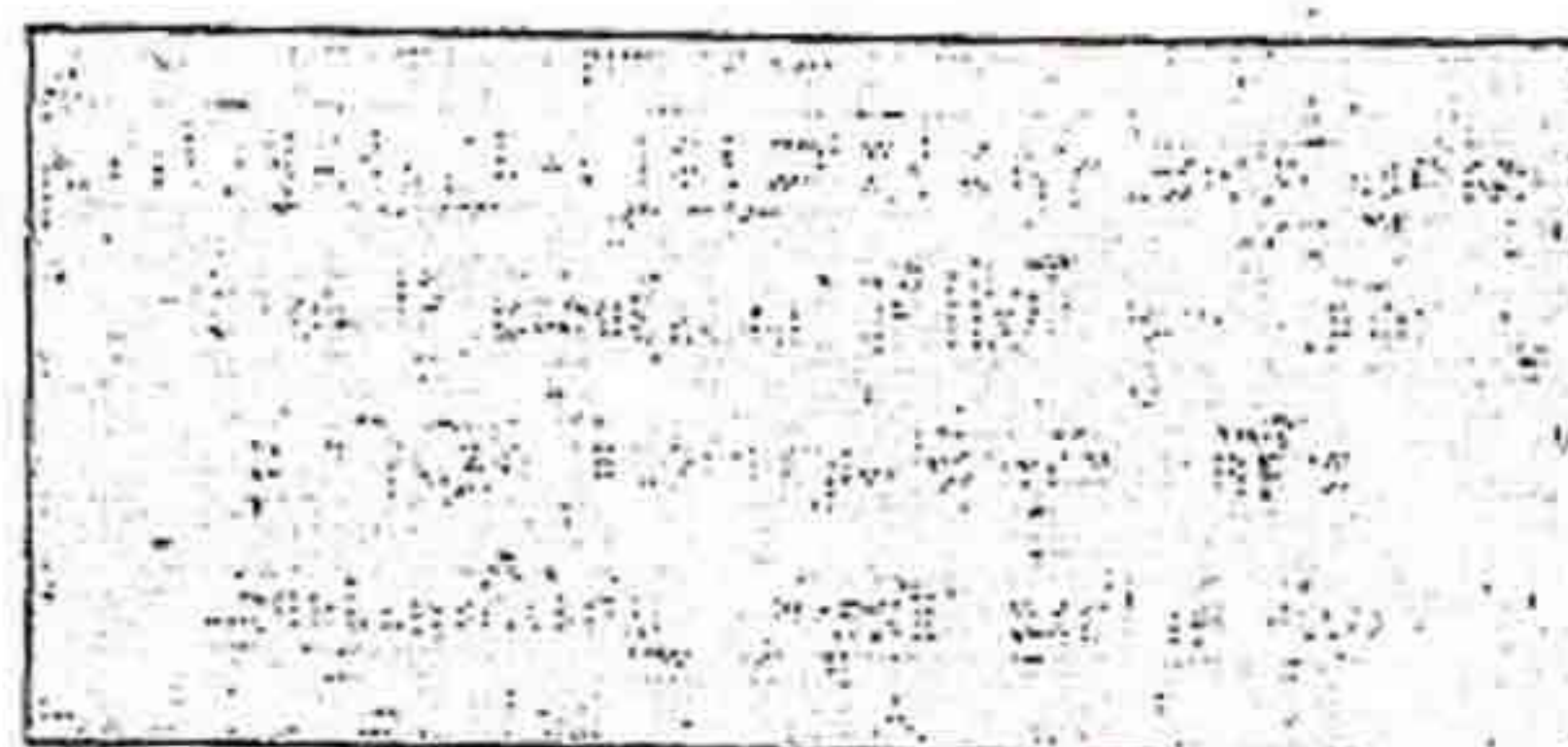
POPPING over to Milan for a weekend break is cheap, quick, easy and fuss-free with no-frills airline Jet2.

I flew to northern Italy from Manchester for a four-day break. But instead of heading towards the too modern, too big and too noisy streets of Milan, I opted instead for the short journey to near-by Bergamo, and its hidden delights.

Only a 10-minute taxi ride from Milan (Bergamo) airport, it is one of Italy's most beautiful fortified cities.

Nestling in the hills is the old town, with its cobbled streets winding around crooked medieval towers, which is filled with an abundance of cafés and quaint shops selling everything from regional cheeses and wines to exclusive fashions.

Getting lost amid the myriad of piazzas is a perfect way to while away the hours, but be sure not to miss its treasure chest of culture. And a tour of the fabulous Santa Maria Mag-



giore Basilica and Colleoni Chapel in the old square is a must.

In the valley, reached by funicular railway, is the cosmopolitan Bergamo of today, where endless shops overflowing with the latest fashions offer the perfect contrast to the old town.

Littered with towering snow-capped mountains, beautiful lakes, Romanesque churches, Renaissance mansions and baroque buildings, the Bergamo region offers endless sight-seeing and leisure opportunities.

It is perfect for both the snow enthusiast and the walker, with ski slopes and miles of relaxing woodland walks on offer at the sporting town of Clusone.

Spa resorts surrounded by clear

alpine air offer a haven of peace to those who need to recharge their batteries.

Attractions too numerous to mention include the astronomic clock of Pietro Fanzago, a 16th century mechanical masterpiece at the heart of Clusone; the Liberty-style former casino at San Pellegrino; and Ferdy's tourist farm, just outside San Pellegrino, where children and adults can enjoy everything from milking goats, riding horses, and mountain biking, to canoeing, fishing and canyoning.

You can also enjoy a tasty treat with a difference as Ferdy's home-reared donkeys feature in traditional dishes created in the farm kitchen.

A passion for balsamic vinegar which dates back more than 200 years is a compelling reason to visit a family vineyard at Santo Stefano degli Angeli, where samples of balsamic vinegar, fine cheeses, olive oil and wines can be tasted and bought.

The one guarantee that comes with a visit to Bergamo city and its region is that there is never a shortage of something to do.