

This small town has retained the character of a medieval walled settlement. Within the ring of houses which once formed the town's defensive wall, narrow and irregular streets along the main thoroughfare link together the town's tightly packed neighbourhoods. It was mentioned for the first time in 1150 as Vicus Atinianus. In about 1300 a castle was built on the western side of the town but was demolished at the beginning of the 19th century.

The settlement spread to the north-west and the south-east, along the main street which crosses through the centre of the town. A cistern in the St. Laurentius (Sv. Lovro) quarter of the town dates from the Roman era. Graves containing urns and bones have been found on the road leading to Pula and Bale, also classical inscriptions near the Church of St. Lucia (Sv. Lucija). In the immediate vicinity of Vodnjan there are three prehistoric castles: Madona di Traversa, Montemolino and Castellier. On the main square stands the Baroque Parish Church of St. Blaise (Sv. Blaz). On the site of the present church there was a Pre-Romanesque church until 1760. Some remains were built into the walls of the present church: broken stones with examples of braiding ornamentation and three Romanesque reliefs. In the Baroque church there is a Renaissance custodia dating from 1451, an altarpiece from 1321, and The Last Supper by G. Contarini from 1598. More medieval works of art were brought from St. Lorenzo church in Venice in 1818, including the outstanding picture (tempera on wood) of St. Leone Bembo. There is also a beautiful painting of the Madonna (also tempera on wood) which is an example of late Byzantine art; the Madonna with two Saints is the work of the early Venetian Quattrocento artist Jacobello del Fiore. A reliquary of silver gilt and some of the church's ecclesiastical robes date from the 14th century. The church possesses a Collection of Sacred Art with a rich collection of works of art: paintings, icons, sculptures, church vessels and robes. The community of Vodnjan has set up its own Museum Collection in the Betika Palace, including a rich ethnographic collection gathered mainly from Vodnjan and its

surrounding area. In August the Bumbarske svecanosti (the Bumar festival) is held in Vodnjan. Bumar is a local word for an inhabitant of Vodnjan. To the east of the road leading to Bale, amongst the vineyards, stand the ruins of a single-naved Romanesque church with an enclosed apse, dedicated to St. Margaret (Sveta Margarita), which houses frescoes from the 15th century (Maiestas Domini, the Apostles and the Annunciation). On the road to Jursici stands St. Quirinus Church (Sveti Kvirin), which was originally a triple-naved basilica with three semi-circular apses, stone furniture and architectural decorative carvings from the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries.

Several Roman burial grounds have been unearthed in the area around Peroj (4 km to the south of Vodnjan). Following a series of plague epidemics which totally wiped out the original population, in 1648 the Venetian government moved 15 orthodox families there from Montenegro. Most of the present population of Peroj are descendants of those immigrants, and they have preserved their customs, religion and language. There are two churches in the village. The Church of St. Stephen (Sveti Stjepan) is an early Romanesque building with Romanesque frescoes from the 13th century. The church dedicated to St. Spiridon (Sveti Spiridon) houses icons from the 11th to the 18th centuries. About 3 km to the northwest, between Peroj and Mandriol

stands St. Foska's Church (Sveta Foska) which is an early medieval triple-naved basilica. Across the entire width of the wall of the central apse there is a composition showing the Ascension, which probably dates from the 12th century.