

PRESENTATION

*"...Bella quant'altra... con un prospetto così libero e vasto che più grande e più bella
io non credo aver ne possa alcun'altra città situata in pianura"*

(Lettera di Petrarca a Boccaccio - 14 dicembre 1365)

To plunge completely into the splendor of Pavia's glorious past and to discover the testimonies of today, the best thing is a walk. By walking, we can fully observe all the details of its history.

Alleys, streets, monuments, buildings, Pavia offers many paths to the visitor that arrives for the first time in the town. Through its squares, avenues and covered bridge, we can write Pavia's history: its grandeur is reflected in the town of today.

An old town, but at the same time also young and lively, that has maintained in time, despite the innumerable sustained changes, its Romanesque plant foundation. Its buildings, especially its Romanesque churches that represent the highest expression of this style, are considerably interesting and continue to inspire great curiosity. Its University, cradle of knowledge and its theatre tradition embody the modernist part of Pavia's past.

The routes, described here, develop a thematic tour comparing in a unique guidebook the most prestigious buildings of the town, the medieval towers, the green areas, the downtown, with its "Piazza Grande" and Strada Nuova, the ancient Roman *cardo*.

The richness of the historical, artistic and monumental heritage of our town does not measure only for the most mentioned monuments but moreover for the vastness of hidden treasures, which are often neglected, that constitute a real surprise for the visitor but also for the inhabitants of the town that often do not understand the masterpieces kept between the walls of home. The rooms of the Visconteo Castle are only one example of what one can experience here.

The medieval quarters, the Ticino river and its borough offer again nice ideas for day trips. The town can be visited on foot easily. Step by step we want to take you on a journey to the discovery of Pavia where each stage represents a step back in time and each one details a treasure to carry in your heart and to promote. Pavia, a town for people. The preferential lane for your trips.

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PAVIA. TOWN OF ART, CRADLE OF CULTURE

PAVIA: ITS REBIRTH AFTER THE YEAR 1000 A.D.

The city of Pavia, founded by the Ligurians on the bank of the river Ticino and founded again by the Romans in 89 B.C. was chosen as the capital of the kingdom both by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric (who got the Royal Place built in Pavia) and by the Lombard kings who embellished the town with several wonderful churches. In the 10th century Pavia faced a decaying period: in 924 the Hungarians sacked and devastated the city. Nevertheless during the 9th century many political changes gave birth to a free city-state. Thus, at the beginning of the new millennium, Pavia passed through a prosperous and intense period for its economy, politics and culture. This climate of rebirth was reflected in a new architectural fervour. In fact several builder's yards were opened, new places of worship were built, old and noble religious places recovered their former magnificence. The remarkable quantity of churches and monasteries, which highlighted the sight of the medieval town, was partly due to Pavia's traditional religious vocation, partly to its strategical position on the "Francigena Via", the atonement journey of the pilgrims towards the Holy Land. Furthermore, several religious believers came to Pavia, attracted by the sacred remains of St. Augustine, the Doctor of the Church, entombed in Saint Peter Basilica. This helped foster a growing need to provide accomodation to travellers and many hospital facilities were built in Pavia.

The thriving vitality of the period was also reflected in Pavia's economy, since the city was ideally situated at the cross-roads to northern Europe. Moreover, the longest river, the Po, into which the river Ticino flows, provided, a privileged route towards Venice and the East. During the two fairs of Saint Martin and Palm Sunday in Pavia, many exotic items were displayed on the stalls. These products, such as fabrics, spices, carpets, drew several merchants from Naples, Salerno, Amalfi. Thanks to its wealth and traditional ties with the imperial power, Pavia competed with Milan since the end of the 9th century, in order to conquer the leading role in becoming the cultural and political capital in Lombardy.

San Michele Church

Masterpiece of the Romanesque architecture in Lombardy, this church has a majestic nave and two aisles, surmounted by the lantern. The façade is richly decorated with sculptures, bas reliefs and figures of animals, plant volute cornices and green shoots. The present church was built on the site of a previous Lombard church and was the coronation place. In fact Frederich Barbarossa was crowned here in 1155. The inside boasts capitals present biblical stories and allegorical figures. The crypt is greatly attractive.

The mosaic floor in the presbytery shows the "Months" and the "Labyrinth"; the transept contains Teodote's crucifix, a silver-laminated masterpiece by a skilled goldsmith, who worked in northern Italy in the second half of the 10th century.

San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro Church

The Romanesque church, refurbished in the 12th century, is well-known all over Europe for Saint Augustine's remains, transferred here from Sardinia in the 8th century, in obedience to the will of Liutprando, King of the Lombards. The King's tombstone is also visible. The magnificent and imposing marble Arch of the presbytery is dedicated to the Father of the Church. This arch was made between 1362 and 1402 by Lombard masters, who decorated it with many statues and carved figures.

Outside the church a memorial tablet shows the lines Dante (1265-1321, one of the most prestigious Italian poets) wrote about San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro on the famous philosopher Severino Boezio's burial.

San Teodoro Church

This church with its redbrick façade is situated in the central medieval fishing quarter. Dedicated to one of the patrons of the town, the church houses several votive tokens: from the Romanesque frescoes on the pillars to the Renaissance painting cycles of Saint Agnes and Saint Theodore (16th century) and the famous, early 16th century "View of Pavia", which is an amazing proof of Pavia's topographical value.

The basement crypt is remarkable captivating with its Romanesque carved figures, Roman capitals and the Lantern, once as decorated as the façade with polished ceramic basins of oriental origin.

Santa Maria in Betlemme Church

This 12th century Romanesque church is situated in a town area, which was once an ancient quarter outside the town walls. In the Middle Ages, the pilgrims on their journey to the East used to travel across this area, which fell within the Bishop of Bethlehem's competence and was next to the ancient hospital of St. Antonio: a typical medieval building which was used to give hospitality to travellers and poor and sick people. The church contains the wooden statue of the Madonna della Stella, which is worshipped and traditionally carried in procession on the boats along the river.

The "Broletto" (the Ancient Town Hall)

The "Broletto" was the historical seat of the city meetings from the 11th century to the 16th century. It was gradually restored to respond to the growing needs of the municipal community. According to the typical solution of the public building, the "Broletto" has a porch on the ground floor and a very large meeting room on the first floor. The southern wing has recently been restored and it is the seat of many cultural associations. The northern part looking on to the "Piazza Grande" (Main Square), features the sixteenth-century Loggia, giving access to the "Fresco" Hall.

Vittoria Square

It is the main town square, known as "Platea Magna", large square, in ancient times, in contrast with the "Platea Parva", small square, i.e. the Cathedral Square.

Near the intersection point between "Cardo" and "Decumano" (the Romans used these words to indicate the sense of town directions and divisions), this square was an important market place.

It was almost totally surrounded by the 14th century arches. The "Broletto" and the noble Gothic small mansion of the "Diversi" look on to the square. There is also the desecrated church of S.ta Maria Gualtieri, founded in the 10th century. The imperial delegate Gualtiero wanted it to be built near his house. Today it is used as a centre for cultural events.

From the square it is possible to get into the underground market, built in modern times.

The Medieval Towers

Today these are just five of a hundred or perhaps more towers featuring the outline of the medieval town: three near the university and two in L. Porta street. They date back to the 11th and 12th centuries, they are made of bricks and were the symbol of the powerful families they belonged to.

Remains of smaller towers are still incorporated in many buildings.

The town tower, which once stood next to the medieval cathedral with its 16th century marble loggia suddenly collapsed in 1989. Its remains are still visible.

THE FLOWERING OF ART UNDER THE VISCONTI AND THE SFORZA

In 1359 Pavia, divided by internal fights between several families, was conquered by Galeazzo Visconti the 2nd master of Milan. During this period, Pavia, thanks to Galeazzo and his son Gian Galeazzo, got a splendid townplanning, architectural and cultural restoration project. Thus, the new court made Pavia a prestigious European capital. After the building of the castle, the opening of the main square, the reconstruction of the typical bridge on the Ticino and the beginning of several religious and town building yards, Pavia got the late Gothic aspect, which still characterizes it in many of its terracotta decorated buildings.

Pavia became one of the leading towns in Europe in this period, when it was instituted with the "studium generale", which an official document in 1361 by Emperor Charles IV made equal to the University of Bologna, Paris and Montpellier. At the end of the century it was established by Gian Galeazzo Visconti the

magnificent Carthusian Monastery, as a sumptuous chapel and family mausoleum, replica of the Champol Chartreuse.

The Cathedral

Since 1488 the inhabitants of Pavia wanted a Renaissance cathedral to be rebuilt to replace the ancient Romanesque cathedral of St. Stefano and S.ta Maria del Popolo. At the beginning, the project was assigned to Bramante, an architect from Urbino, with da Vinci's consultancy. Bramante continued his work by following Amadeo's instructions.

The ambitious construction continued with difficulty in the 17th and 18th centuries; in the 19th century the imposing dome (the third in size in Italy) was carried out together with the façade still lacking its marble cover.

In order to prove the initial magnificence and refinement of the project, the town museums house the wonderful wooden model carved by local skilled craftsmen in the early 16th century.

In front of the cathedral there is the bronze statue of the "Regiole", made by F. Messina: this is the modern copy of the Ravenna's original, the war trophy, destroyed by the Jacobins.

The Covered Bridge

In the middle of the 14th century the bridge was reconstructed to replace the ancient Roman bridge, whose piers are still visible. It links the old city centre to the picturesque medieval village, a traditional place of washerwomen, gravel diggers and fishermen. This bridge is one of Pavia's famous landmark for its tile roof, wanted by Galeazzo II Visconti the day after the capture of the town and the small 18th century chapel dedicated to St. Giovanni Nepomuceno. The bridge was bombed during the Second World War and reconstructed in the early 1950s.

The Visconteo Castle

Built by Galeazzo II Visconti in 1360, the complete construction was achieved only five years later.

It was a stately and refined court residence rather than a fortress. The two and three mullioned terracotta windows and the refined decoration of the courtyard highlight this purpose. There are some significant proofs of the great frescoes showing battles, hunting and middle-class life scenes, which decorated rooms, porches and loggias. Another excellent proof is the complete decoration of the splendid Blue Room with its gold and lapislazuli. Perhaps it was the seat of the Visconti library with its 1.000 manuscripts and commissioned by Petrarch. The Castle was used as barracks and during Napoleon's age the crenellations were covered by a roof. In the 20th century the Castle was bought by the municipality, restored and used as a cultural centre. In fact, it houses the various sections of the town museums as well as art exhibition rooms.

The Visconti Park

When Gian Galeazzo inherited the Castle from his father, he extended the park towards Milan and ended it by founding the Carthusian Monastery. The park was totally walled and used as the Duke's hunting place. There were farmhouses, exotic animal menageries, the "Torretta" (a country house), the castle of Mirabello, the captain's home. In 1525 the French King Francis 1st and the Spanish Emperor Charles V met in battle in this park. The French army was defeated, thus Pavia started being ruled by Spain. Today this wonderful park can be crossed thanks to many peaceful trails.

The Carthusian Monastery

It is eight km to the north of Pavia. Gian Galeazzo Visconti wanted a magnificent complex to be constructed at the park boundary. It was to be a private chapel and a family mausoleum too.

The foundation stone was laid in 1396 during the late Gothic period, but only in the mid 15th century, the building was achieved in its rich Renaissance decoration, which makes it one of the most prestigious

monuments of the Italian art. Its façade is remarkably decorated with white and polychrome marble. It is worth visiting the ivory triptych in the old vestry, the superb frescoes by Bergognone in the transept, the amazing wooden carving in the choir and the rich terracotta decorations in the two cloisters.

Borromeo College

This College, founded by St. Charles in 1561, is one of the most beautiful mannerist mansions in Lombardy. It was constructed between 1561 and 1588 on the project of Pellegrino Pellegrini, alias Tibaldi. Afterwards, Richichi enriched the complex with beautiful Italian gardens.

This “palace of Learning”, as Vasari called it, overlooks one of the most admirable squares in Pavia. Its front has a strong plastic relief underlined by the decorated windows alternating with niches and a monumental main doorway.

In the early 17th century the large hall on the first floor was decorated with paintings dedicated to Saint Carlo Borromeo. The vault and the north wall are the work of Cesare Nebbia from Orvieto. The south wall shows the laying of the cardinal’s hat, Federico Zuccari’s work.

In 1818-1820 the college was achieved and enlarged towards the river. The nearby medieval church of San Giovanni in Borgo was demolished and its rich sculptures are now in the town museums. The College was founded to enable talented students, who could not afford to attend university, to devote themselves to studies.

Meanwhile, during the Counter-Reformation the College was to warrant adequate moral values.

In the 18th and 19th centuries jurists destined for highly responsible positions in the Church and Milan’s State attended this prestigious college.

Ghislieri College

It was founded by Pope Pius V in 1507 on Tibaldi’s project: an extremely austere three-floor building on a square plan.

In fact the front is severe with its windows without cornice. The plastic effect is highlighted by the large main door, the only jutting element. The college courtyard features porches with coupled pillars, while the upper floor is closed. The domed Oratory is to the west.

Next to the College there is an elegant, neoclassical two-floor building, which was constructed during Napoleon’s time in order to supply the military school with classrooms. Today this building is the seat of the college administration.

The statue of St. Pius V stands in the middle of the square. It is a refined example of the baroque sculpture by Francesco Nuvolone.

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

After the well-known battle of Pavia in 1525, the town fell into a long decline affecting every field of social life. Pavia recovered its vitality and industriousness, during the Age of Enlightenment and with the passage from the Spanish to the Austrian’s rule. The Habsburg rulers proved to be chiefly interested in the economic and social situation of the town and they implemented several reforms for its economy and social life. Queen Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II gave major boost to Pavia’s university and made it one of the most prestigious European universities, mainly for its avant-garde scientific courses. New experimental teachings were carried out by eminent men of science: Antonio Scarpa, the father of anatomy, Lazzaro Spallanzani, famous for his experiments on fertilization and for creating one of the most appreciated naturalistic collections of his time, and Alessandro Volta, a famous physicist, the inventor of the pile, who did his researches on electricity. One of the most important hydraulic works was then carried out: the building of the Naviglio, a navigable canal conceived by da Vinci and executed in 1772 on Paolo Frisi’s plan.

In the seventies, on the initiative of four Pavia aristocrats, the foundation of the Theatre of the Four Knights (today, Teatro Frascini) took place. It was the first public theatre planned by Antonio Galli Bibiena.

The private architecture was also thriving: refined and splendid noble buildings were constructed, Palazzo Mezzabarba, Palazzo Olevano, Palazzo Gambarana, Palazzo Vistarino, Palazzo Brambilla, richly decorated

with paintings and stuccoes. At the end of the century, despite the political changes, the works of reform concerning the town refurbishment did not stop. The main town entrances were designed again, such as the Gate of San Vito, together with welfare and education institutions.

Marchese Luigi Malspina, an architect and collector, a skilled person of culture and strong civic consciousness wanted the first town museum to be built.

The University

The University, one of the oldest in Europe, was founded in 1361 by Galeazzo II Visconti, who set up courses in law, medicine and liberal arts. The University underwent subsequent changes, but thanks to the Austrian rule, it keeps its present architectural structure.

In fact, under the Austrian rule, the University teachings were reformed, the buildings were restored in the neoclassical style and enlarged by the architects Piermarini and Pollack. New lecture halls were added: the Library called "Teresiana", Antonio Scarpa's anatomy theatre and the physics theatre, where Alessandro Volta showed the invention of the pile to Napoleon.

In the 20th century the University also occupied the complex of the nearby San Matteo Hospital, a Renaissance crosshaped building with terracotta decorated courtyards.

The Botanical Gardens

They are situated in an ancient area where the convent of Sant'Epifanio once stood and whose cloister is still visible. In 1773 under the Austrian rule they were refurbished by the botanists Brusati and Borsieri. The architect Piermarini planned wooden greenhouses which were then replaced by iron and glass greenhouses. Research was deeply boosted by Giovanni Antonio Scopoli (1777), who increased the botanical specimens, making Pavia's Botanical Gardens an avant-garde study and experimentation centre in Europe.

The Naviglio (the Canal)

This very important hydraulic work was planned to link Milan's Darsena (wetdock) to the river Ticino, and to Venice and the East, passing through the Po river. Da Vinci planned it in the 16th century, it was partly carried out in the 17th century and only completed in the town section in Napoleon's time. The locks, used to fill the ground differences in level, respond, in their scenographical disposition, to the standards of neoclassical town decorations. Along the canal, in a town area, the quarter of Borgo Calvenzano was carried out, intended for storing goods. Nowadays it is a still existing infrastructure, mainly occupied by a residential area.

Fraschini Theatre

Four representatives of the town nobility wanted the first public theatre to be built. The project, carried out between 1771 and 1773, was assigned to one of the greatest stage designing architect of the time, Antonio Galli Bibiena, who carried out a complete masonry building and adopted innovative and clever solutions: a bellshaped parterre to get excellent acoustics. In the middle of the 19th century the theatre was owned by the municipality and named after the famous tenor from Pavia Gaetano Fraschini. Acknowledged as a "theatre of tradition", every year from October to January, it has a varied programme: operas, plays, music and ballet.

Mezzabarba Mansion and Oratory

Masterpiece of the late Lombard Baroque, the Palace was planned by the architect Giovanni Antonio Veneroni as a stately residence of the noble Mezzabarba family. The picturesque façade is severe despite its decorated architectural aspect. Its large halls are beautifully decorated, chiefly its dance-hall with the frescoes of "Diana's Stories" on the walls and "The Virtue overcoming the Dagon" on the vault. They were

painted by Giovanni Angelo Borroni. Next to the building there is the Oratory dedicated to Saint Quirico and Giuditta with beautiful rococo stuccoes and frescoes by Pietro Antonio Magatti. This mansion has been town hall since the end of the 19th century.

Malaspina Mansion

This neoclassical residence was planned by Luigi Malaspina, a cultivated marquis and enlightened collector, to whom Pavia owes art collections. Today the building is the prefect's residence whose monumental gate shows the statues of Petrarch and Severino Boezio. It reflects nobles magnificence and honour principles. The frescoed front faces a "romantic" English garden. The halls are richly and variedly decorated with neoclassical paintings and stuccoes.

THE VISCONTEO CASTLE MUSEUMS

The Visconteo Castle, Pavia's monumental place "par excellence", is the seat of the town Museums. It is three-floor long and over 8.000 square metre wide.

On the ground floor there are the ticket office, the bookshop, the exhibition room, the audiovisual room, the museum sections: archaeology, Lombard jewellery, medieval sculptures, the Romanesque cathedral room, the Gothic and Renaissance room and the Sant'Agata al Monte fresco.

The artgallery is based on the first floor where there are several ancient paintings, 17th and 18th century paintings, the wooden model of the cathedral, the 19th century picture-gallery and the magnificent collection donated by the Morone family. There are also the print room, the coin cabinet, the manager's office, the art reference, the photograph library and the speciality library.

The second floor houses the Italian "Risorgimento" museum, the Robecchi Bricchetti ethnographical museum, the collection of plaster casts and the modern sculpture section.

Important building works are being carried out in order to warrant both a greater functionality to the exhibition rooms and a wider room for the collections, not yet on display, and temporary art exhibitions. The garrets and the basements will be recovered, so new rooms will be dedicated to modern art, to the very rich Renaissance print collection and minor guilds.

The campaigns for the restoration of the castle frescoes, after the refurbishment of the Sala Azzurra, will aim at the porch and open Gallery vaults and the decorations of the tower room, which, in ancient times, used to be the Visconti family's rich library.

The Castle Museums'aim is to become the centre of the town museum system thanks to the quality, variety and richness of their collections. The existing University Natural Science Museum, with Lazzaro Spallanzani's collection, together with the Electrical Technique Museum, the Cathedral Crypt Museum, the Diocesan Museum and the Carthusian Monastery Museum will join this important process.

The Castle Museums house temporary art exhibitions and promote meetings, courses of lectures and publications.