

Tips for Exploring Bologna in 24 Hours

Whether you want elevated cuisine or world-class art, here's where to find Bologna's can't-miss spots.



Here are a few strategies for planning the perfect day in Bologna, Italy.

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Vibrant, rich and captivating, Bologna has long been regaled as one of Italy's best-kept secrets. Unlike popular Italian cities like [Rome](#), [Florence](#) and [Venice](#), Bologna's squares, politically-edgy locals, alluring arches, medieval architecture and mouthwatering restaurants aren't flooded with tourists. The market stalls blossoming with fresh figs, squash blossoms and thick, hearty ragu sauce – or

"Bolognese," as the locals say – paired with the beautiful red-arcaded archways and collegiate vibes makes Bologna both an intriguing and memorable destination.

Spending 24 hours in Bologna is certainly not enough time to spend wandering the Piazza Maggiore, strolling through the miles of Portici, taking in the contemporary art scene in Saragozza or tasting the many tantalizing varieties of tortellini or ragu. Still, it's long enough to discover the city's lesser-known charms. Whether you've visited Bologna before or are discovering the city's splendors for the first time, here's your quintessential guide to [get the most out of your trip](#).

Morning

Take advantage of the morning light with a tour of the Portico of San Luca, which is Bologna's longest portico. A walk through the 12th-century arcades eventually leads to the Sanctuary of San Luca, the city's masterpiece basilica. With more than 600 intricate arches, the arcade not only connects the piazza with the sanctuary; it also affords sweeping views of the rolling countryside and the city's business center. It's a strenuous walk and requires a bit of hiking, so comfortable shoes (and a snack) is advised.

Afternoon

After your morning walk, [refuel with a memorable meal](#). Consider the area around the bustling and fragrant Mercato di Mezza, located in the Quadrilatero area behind the Piazza Maggiore, your gastronomic hub. This former fruit and vegetable market has transformed into a foodie mecca of Bologna, with nearly every store, market stall and osteria dishing up scrumptious dishes. Begin with Eataly, a new location for the famous Italian market. Inside, you'll find gourmet Italian products, a wine bar and a restaurant. Then stop at La Baita, the ultimate *fromaggeria*, for a taste of their homemade parmesan (called Sua Maestra il Nero) as well as a sampling of other cheeses. After sampling traditional cheeses, stop by Paolo Atti e Figli for a certosino, a classic Bolognese fig cake, or Melega for a wide selection of organic produce. End your culinary adventure with a glass of wine at the charming Osteria del Sole, a favorite local haunt (complete with a wooden bar and patrons noshing on fresh figs or fava beans).

In the mid-afternoon, treat yourself to an art tour around the Piazza Maggiore, the city's most famous square. Explore the Palazzo d'Accursio, which serves as the Bologna's town hall since 1336. An incredible myriad of architecture styles, the structure is mostly made up of makeovers complete in the 15th and 16th centuries. The second floor is one of the most interesting since it houses the incredible collection of Giorgio Morani, one of the city's most notable painters. End your art-and culture-focused tour with a cone of pistachio gelato from one of the city's best spots, Cremeria Funivia, which is located just a few steps away from the piazza.

Evening

For the best view of the city at sunset, climb the Asinelli Tower, the largest of Bologna's medieval twin towers. At a staggering 97 meters high, and a staircase that ascends 498 steps, this climb isn't for the faint of heart. Complete with narrow and antiquated steps, it can take at least an hour to climb. The tower was built in the 10th century and, much like many of Italy's other prized towers, it leans slightly to the left. The views are a showstopper here and offer a glimpse into Bologna's unique mix of old and new; the ancient structures that give the city charm next to a high-rise building, for example.

Enjoy the fancier side of Bologna with a visit to Ristorante I Carracci, a world-famous restaurant serving up innovative gourmet dishes. The prices are hefty, easily setting you back close to around \$170 USD for a meal. However, the ambiance, complete with Bologna aristocrats donning expensive suits and white-linen tables, evokes a bygone era. For a more budget-friendly bite, visit Trattoria di via Serra on Luigi Serra for authentic Bolognese cuisine or Ristorante Garganelli on via del Pilastro for delectable octopus salad or soft tagliatelle with duck ragu.

Late-Night

End your Bologna jaunt with a stop at Gessetto Wine Bar, a favorite among locals for late-night drinks. As you sip a glass of crisp *pignoletto* (a wine made in the hills around the city) and nosh on plates of prosciutto and crisps, you'll overhear conversations (all in Italian) and hip music. But heavenly *vino* and people-watching isn't the only reason to visit: Bologna's romantic allure and diverse culinary and art scenes are sure the charm you, and inspire you to plan your next trip.

TAGS: travel tips, travel, adventure travel



Claire Volkman is a social media journalist with a passion for food and travel. She's spent time in more than 30 countries and hundreds of cities writing, photographing and immersing herself in all things food, wine and culture. You can find her favorite recipes on her blog, [The Realistic Nutritionist](#). Follow her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Google+](#) to keep up with her adventures.