

as "the T", they're pedestrianised from 8am on Saturday to 10pm on Sunday. As a result, at weekends, the closest airport bus stop to the city centre is Via Marconi (4), a seven-minute walk to Piazza Maggiore (5). Taxis take around 15 minutes to the centre and cost about €20.

Get your bearings

Bologna is a compact city, and the vast majority of its landmarks are easily walkable in the tangled medieval centre. Sweeping Piazza Maggiore (5), with its crenellated palazzi and enormous basilica, is the heart of the city; but the Due Torri (6) – twin medieval towers east of the piazza that lean, tipsily, towards each other – are its hub. Five of the main streets spin out from here towards the ancient city gates.

The tourist office (7) is at Piazza Maggiore 1/E (00 39 051 239 660; bologna.welcome.com). It opens 9am-7pm daily (10am-5pm on Sundays).

Check in

Bologna's only five-star hotel is the opulent Grand Hotel Majestic (8) at Via Indipendenza 8 (00 39 051 225 445; grandhotelmajestic.duetorrihotels.com). It was formerly the Baglioni. Rather outré doubles start at €261, including breakfast. Al Cappello Rosso (9) at Via de' Fusari 9 (00 39 051 261891; alcappellorosso.it) is equally comfortable – and it's been going since 1375. Skip the dull classic rooms – most of the superior ones have fun themes. Superior doubles cost from €140, room only.

Located in an 18th-century palazzo, the low-budget Palace Hotel (10) at Via Montegrappa 9/2 (00 39 051 237 442; hotelpalacebologna.it) may not be the grande dame she once was, but the simple rooms are still comfortable, with high ceilings and an original fresco in the lobby. Doubles cost from €72, including breakfast.



Twin set: the Asinelli Tower

Day One

Take a view

Brave the 498 steps of the Asinelli tower (6) – the taller of the Due Torri, on Piazza di Porta Ravegnana. From the top, among the terracotta roofs you'll notice Bologna's 20-odd remaining medieval towers, which are often hidden at ground level. Entry costs €3 (9am-5pm).

Take a hike

Head east from the Asinelli along Strada Maggiore, turning right at number 19 to cut through the Corte Isolani (11), a Medieval shopping mall. You'll emerge at Santo Stefano (12) – a rambling complex of seven churches from the 10th-13th centuries.

From here, take Via Santo Stefano to Via Clavature, whose tiny church, Santa Maria della Vita (13), at number 10, houses a harrowing terracotta Deposition tableau.

The street opens on to Piazza Maggiore (5). To your left, at Piazza Galvani 1, is the Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio (14), the original seat of Bologna's university (00 39 051 276 811; www.archiginnasio.it; 9am-6.45pm Monday to Friday, 9am-1.45pm Saturday, shut Sunday). Here, wooden "skinned torso" figures prop up the lecturer's platform in the 17th-century Teatro Anatomico, or dissection room (€3 entry to Teatro Anatomico; the rest of the building is free).

To the right, Piazza Maggiore (5), whose castle-like buildings formed the seat of Medieval power, spills into Piazza del Nettuno (15), where there's a huge statue of Neptune and a moving photo memorial to the 5,238 partisans killed in the Second World War.

Lunch on the run

Tucked away behind Piazza Maggiore (5) is the Quadrilatero: an ancient grid of food shops. The most famous, Tamburini (16) at Via Caprarie 1 (00 39 051 232226; tamburini.com) has a cafeteria-style outfit, where main meals cost around €7.50. La Baita (17) at Via Pescherie Vecchie 3A (00 39 051 223940), is more refined, with mezzanine seating where you can sample hams and cheeses. Down-to-earth bar Osteria del Sole (18) at Vicolo Ranocchi 1D (00 39 348 225 6887; osteriadelsole.it, closed Sunday) has operated a bring-your-own food policy since 1465. Buy lunch at any of the nearby delis – Salumeria Simoni (19) at Via Drapperie 5/2A (00 39 051 231880; salumeriasimoni.it) is a popular choice – and they'll set you up at a communal table with a glass of wine.

Window shopping

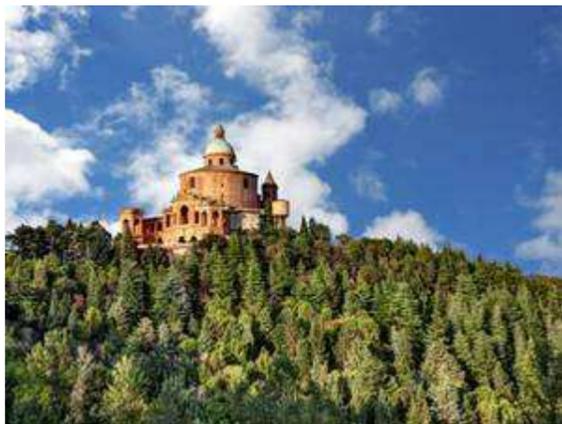
Bologna's 16th-century Ghetto Ebraico (Jewish Ghetto) was run down until recently, but is enjoying a cultural renaissance. Tiny Via dell'Inferno (20) is now crammed with artisan workshops such as the upmarket cobblers La Calzoleria di Max e Gio at 22A (00 39 051 263856; laczoleriadimaxegio.com) and Cosetta Corticelli (00 39 051 228661; corticellicosetta.it) on the corner at Via Canonica 3. Casagrande Tigrino at Via dell'Inferno 24A/B (00 39 051 234948; casagrande-tigrino.it) produces delicate jewellery, while Arteggiando (21) at Via del Carro 11 (00 39 051 7176556; arteggiando.com) sells locally made textiles and objets d'art.

An aperitif

Nearby, the hipster-vintage surroundings make Camera a Sud (22) at Via Valdonica 5 (00 39 051 095 1448; cameraasud.net) a popular place to enjoy an Aperol spritz for €4. Book ahead to ensure a seat.

Dining with the locals

Via Cartoleria has two unique restaurants. Sette Tavoli (23) at number 15/2 (00 39 051 272900; settetavoli.it; shut Sunday) is a tiny gem of seven tables, whose inventive menu shifts to a different area of Italy each month. Drogheria della Rosa (24) at number 10 (00 39 051 222529; drogheriadellarosa.it) serves Emilia-Romagnan specialities in a delightfully ramshackle environment.



The Santuario della Madonna di San Luca

Day Two

Sunday morning: go to church

Begun in 1221 in honour of the founder of the Dominican order, the Basilica di San Domenico (25) in peaceful Piazza San Domenico (00 39 051 640 0411) contains

Baroque and Renaissance work by Guido Reni, Filippino Lippi and Ludovico Carracci. But the main draw is the saint's spectacularly florid marble tomb, sculpted by Pisano, Niccolo dell'Arca and Michelangelo.

Walk in the park

Just beyond the southern city walls, Giardini di Margherita (26) at Piazza di Porta Santo Stefano, is Bologna's only proper park. It is surrounded by grand palazzi and modelled on London's St James's Park. A central lake divides formal lawns – lined by cedar and chestnut trees – from the commons, where two Etruscan sarcophagi, found during landscaping, sit

beside the path.

Out to brunch

The glass-fronted Chalet dei Giardini Margherita (27) (00 39 051 9913789; chaletdeigiardini.margherita.it) is on the bridge overlooking the park lake. Warm up with croissants, sandwiches and piadine, a local flatbread (open 8am-7pm). The seriously sweet-toothed should try Regina di Quadri (28) at Via Castiglione 73A (00 39 051 6446201; reginadiquadri.eu), a chi-chi pasticceria where shelves groan with pastries and there's a hot-chocolate fountain (8am-8pm).

Take a ride

Santuario della Madonna di San Luca at Via di San Luca 36; sanlucabo.org), is on a bluff south-west of the centre. Bus tickets, valid for 75 minutes, cost €1.30. Number 32 runs from Porta Castiglione (29) to Porta Saragozza (30); change there to the number 20, and get off at stately home Villa Spada (31), where a minibus leaves for San Luca every half-hour. There's a Baroque church and spectacular views across the city to the Apennines (open 7am-5pm daily).

Cultural afternoon

Back at Villa Spada, take the 20 bus towards the centre. The Museo Civico Medievale (32) at Via Manzoni 4 (00 39 051 219 3930; [bit.ly/ MuseoBol](http://bit.ly/MuseoBol)), is a 10-minute walk from the Malpighi stop, along Via Ugo Bassi. The museum has Medieval and Renaissance treasures, from a Venetian courtesan's shoes, to jaunty sarcophagi of university lecturers. It is open 10am-6.30pm at weekends (closed Monday; €5).

Icing on the cake

Next door, at number 2, is Palazzo Fava (1) (00 39 422 429999; lineadombra.it; €12), where the Dutch Golden Age exhibition is being held. It's open 9am-8pm daily (to 9pm Friday and Sunday; to 10pm Saturday).