

## A Visit to Bologna

2014/03/04 - Written by Francesca Spizzirri



Bologna - Palazzo del Podestà

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**When people think of Italy, there is one thing that comes to mind: FOOD. Italian food is undoubtedly the most popular in the world and Bologna is undoubtedly one of Italy's gastronomic capitals. Though often overlooked by busy tourists, Bologna has much more to offer than a plate of tagliatelle. Here are some reasons to visit Bologna on your next Italian vacation.**



Bologna is an easy city to love. There's the beautiful display of medieval and Renaissance marvels; an attractive selection of museums and art galleries; an ensemble of terracotta red, burnt orange and yellow palazzi; 40kms of arched porticos throughout the city; an illustrious university (Europe's first, founded in 1088); and a cuisine to be envied by all.

Lovingly referred to as "La Grassa" (The Fat Lady) for its remarkable culinary tradition, Bologna is the capital of Emilia-Romagna; a region famed for many of the Italian specialities introduced to tables around the world. Foods like Tagliatelle al Ragù (Bolognese sauce), Mortadella, Parmigiano Reggiano, Prosciutto Crudo di

Parma, Tortellini, Lasagna and Balsamic Vinegar are a few on its impressive résumé. Local *trattorie* and *osterie* are a great place to sample regional dishes and local red and white DOC wines. Try the spumante Romagna Albana DOCG.



Bologna's ancient streets criss-cross one another like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. At its centre sits the 13th century Piazza Maggiore flanked by the Gothic Basilica of San Petronio, the world's sixth largest basilica. This gathering space is the perfect place to people watch or begin sightseeing. Adjacent to the piazza is Renaissance artist Giambologna's famous 16th century Fountain of Neptune, also referred to as "Il Gigante" (The Giant) due to its immense size.

To the east of Piazza Maggiore are the landmark Two Towers: Asinelli and Garisenda, two of only 20 standing towers that remain from the hundred that dominated this landscape in the Middle Ages. The towers were symbols of power; the higher the towers, the richer and more prestigious the family. For a breathtaking view of Bologna and the surrounding countryside, we recommend you climb the 498 steps to the top of the Asinelli.

Attracting over 80,000 students each year, Bologna's university is definitely worth noting. It's not only the oldest university in the world but it boasts Dante and Copernicus among its alumni. Other buildings to put on your sightseeing list include Palazzo Accursio, Palazzo del Podestà, the Sala Borsa, Palazzo Re Enzo, the Archiginnasio, the Complex of Santo Stefano, San Giacomo, the Oratory of Santa Cecilia, Basilica of San Domenico, and the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca.

Bologna is a great place to visit any time of year and thanks to the city's arched walkways you can find respite from heat, rain, and snow. Don't just see the city, devour it!



### **Where to stay**

GRAND HOTEL MAJESTIC GIÀ BAGLIONI is located in a 300-year-old palazzo with ceilings frescoed by the Carracci brothers. It is the oldest and most prestigious hotel in Bologna and sits within walking distance of Piazza Maggiore. Ever wonder what it would be like to stay in a 14th-century convent? Then book a room at IL CONVENTO DEI FIORI DI SETA, a beautifully decorated boutique hotel with a modern twist.

A simple and charming boutique hotel, ART HOTEL OROLOGIO was named after the clock tower it faces on a small square steps away from Piazza Maggiore. It's affordable, charming and in a great location.

### **Where to eat in Bologna**

You can't visit Bologna without trying tagliatelle al ragù and ALL' OSTERIA BOTTEGA is the place to go. This small and intimate restaurant only seats 20, so if you're lucky enough to get in, sit back and enjoy.

Located in the heart of Bologna is I PORTICI, a restaurant awarded the prestigious Michelin star for serving up classic Bolognese dishes with a modern twist. Try their 5-course tasting-menu.

Enjoy authentic local dishes under the shade of the two leaning towers at IL PAPPAGALLO. This Bolognese institution has been serving up great food for over a century to a list of famous patrons. Be sure to try their famous tortellini in brodo. From the food, bread, wines, down to the artwork, CAMINETTO D'ORO is a celebration of the beautiful bounty from Emilia Romagna. It's a must for both locals and enlightened tourists.

For over thirty years TRATTORIA BATTIBECCO has been serving delicious Italian dishes. This sleek Michelin-starred restaurant may be renowned for its meatbased creations but the fish is impeccable.

### **Surroundings**

Outside the city are a series of rolling, olive-and vine-covered hills known as the Colli Bolognesi that produce many great red and white DOC wines. Take time to sample the best balsamic vinegars in the world and discover how this condiment is made and the delicious ways it can be used. If you have time, enjoy day trips to Parma, Modena and Brisighella.

### **Getting to Bologna**



There are daily flights into Bologna's Guglielmo Marconi airport from most Italian and European cities. Bologna is also easily accessible by train, bus or car.



*Santa Maria dei Servi - Bologna*

### **Fun Facts**

- Bologna's many nicknames include La Grassa (The Fat), for the culinary tradition; La Dotta (The Learned), for its ancient university; and La Rossa (The Red), for the colourful hues of its buildings and left-wing politics.
- Solid chocolate was invented here.
- Like Venice, Bologna has an intricate network of buried canals. A great view point is Via delle Moline. • Bologna is consistently named one of Italy's most liveable cities.
- Though gelato was not invented here, Bologna-based company Carpigiani invented the ice cream machine used in half the world to create gelato. Try some drizzled with balsamic vinegar.
- A 14-year-old Mozart earned a diploma in composition at the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna in 1770.
- UNESCO designated Bologna a City of Music.
- Beneath the 13th century Palazzo dei Podestà is a double open arcade - Voltone del Podestà – a whispering gallery where two perpendicular passages intersect and create an extraordinary acoustical effect.
- Superstitious students refuse to climb the Torre degli Asinelli because they believe they won't graduate if they do. • The city has a street named "Via senza nome" (nameless street).
- Bolognese singer Lucio Dalla wrote a song about Piazza Maggiore referring to it as "Piazza Grande" like the main piazza in Modena. As a result, people often confuse the two.
- This highly political city is host to the Festa dell'Unità each year, a socio-cultural and musical event organized by the Democratic Party's young students.
- Via Emilia is one of the oldest, longest Roman roads in Italy. It connects Rimini with Piacenza passing through Bologna, Modena, Parma and Reggio Emilia and divides the cities (including Bologna) in Levante and Ponente (east and west).

