



COMUNE DI PAVIA  
Assessorato al Turismo



# **PAVIA**

## **ANCIENT LONGOBARD CAPITAL**

*The best things  
to see and discover*





*Dear friend,*

I would like to compliment you, first of all, for your decision to come and get to know Pavia.

The city you will soon be discovering is one of a kind: a place richly endowed with history, culture, sacred art, and institutes of learning. But Pavia is above all the city of the Pavesi, an industrious people who have carved out a well defined identity over the centuries, one that has allowed so many men and women born or residing here to become famous throughout the world.

Entrepreneurs like Vittorio Necchi, scientists such as Gerolamo Cardano, or paragons of culture like our beloved Mino Milani have been and probably always will be the best ambassadors for making Pavia known throughout Europe and beyond.

Journeys have always represented a means for personal enrichment; Pavia offers you a unique experience, an immersion in historical atmospheres and the special traditions of Pavia in a context very much oriented to the modernity of the contemporary world.

I am certain that this guidebook will be an invaluable aid to you during your stay.

Let Pavia amaze you. You will be glad you did.

My most sincere welcome.

***Roberta Marcone***  
**Commissioner of Tourism**

## PAVIA: A LIVELY AND INTENSE SECOND MILLENNIUM

*Settled by Ligurians on the banks of the Ticino River around 600 BCE, Pavia was founded by the Romans in 89 BCE. It was later chosen as the capital of the realm both by the Ostrogoth king Theodoric (who had the royal palace built) and by the Longobard sovereigns, who embellished it with many splendid churches. In the 10th century it underwent a period of decline, which culminated in 924 with the devastating sack by the Hungarians. But various political changes in the 11th century set the stage for the establishment of the city as a self-governing commune in the following century: thus, near*



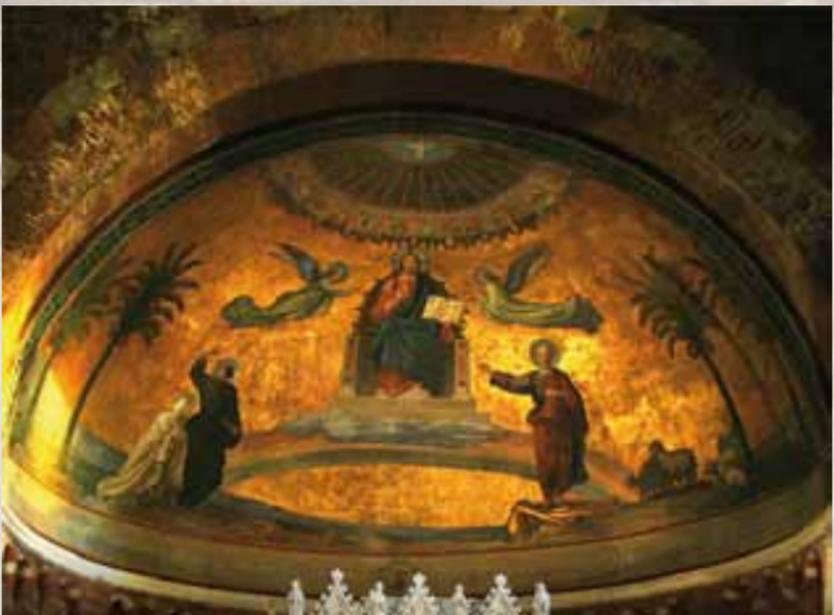
*the beginning of the new millennium, Pavia witnessed a period of intense and lively economic, political, and cultural ferment. One notable outcome of this climate of rebirth was a new architectural fervour: numerous projects were initiated to restore splendour to religious buildings of ancient and noble foundation, and many new churches were built. The notable density of churches and monasteries that characterized Pavia*



in the Middle Ages is due in part to the city's traditional religious vocation, and partly to its strategic position on the Via Francigena, which took atoning pilgrims from Canterbury to Rome and perhaps on to the Holy Land. The



faithful were also drawn by the venerated remains of Saint Augustine, Doctor of the Church, in the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro. The need to provide hospitality and accommodations to the wayfarers gave rise to an efficient system of ospedali, most of them instituted by religious organizations. The vitality and dynamism that characterized Pavia during the commune period also took economic form. An ancient crossroads on the main roads to northern Europe, Pavia received an enormous commercial boost from the fact that it stood on the banks of the Ticino, not far from where it flows into the Po, the most favourable communication route to Venice and the Orient. During the seasonal fairs of Saint Martin and Palm Sunday, one could find exotic products such as carpets, fabrics, perfumes, and spices that attracted merchants from Naples, Salerno, and Amalfi. Thanks to its wealth and the traditional bond with imperial power, since the end of the 9th century, Pavia was Milan's primary rival to the status of cultural and political capital of Lombardy.





## 1 - The Church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro

The church, rebuilt in the 12th century in Romanesque style, owes its fame principally to the presence of the remains of Saint Augustine, brought here in the 8th century from Sardinia by wishes of the Longobard king Luitprand, who is also buried in the church. The splendid, monumental marble ark in the presbytery is dedicated to the Father

of the Church. It is adorned with statues and relief work sculpted between 1362 and 1402 by master Lombard artisans. A stone plaque outside the church bears a passage from Canto X of Dante's Divine Comedy, mentioning the church as the burial place of the illustrious philosopher Severinus Boethius.

## 2 - The Church of San Teodoro

The church, with its red brick façade, stands at the centre of what was the fishermen's in Medieval times. Dedicated



to Saint Theodore of Pavia, a protector of the city, it contains numerous votive works: from the Roman frescoes on the columns to the Renaissance pictorial cycles of Saint Agnes and Saint Theodore (16th cent.) and

the famous early-16th-century Veduta di Pavia, an extraordinary topographical record of how Pavia looked in Renaissance times. The crypt is quite suggestive, with Romanesque sculptures and recovered Roman capitals, as is the lantern, its vault decorated with glazed ceramic basins of Oriental origin.



### **3 - The Church of San Michele**

A masterpiece of Lombard Romanesque architecture, the basilica features a majestic nave and two aisles surmounted by a lantern tower. Its façade is richly decorated with sculptures, relief work, zoomorphic bands, and botanical motifs in the archivolts framing the magnificent portals. The church was built on the site of an earlier Longobard church and is famous for its royal coronations: Frederick Barbarossa was crowned here in 1155. The interior of the church is decorated with sculpted capitals representing Biblical stories and allegorical figures. The presbytery is adorned with a floor mosaic representing the “Months” and the “Labyrinth”. The transept contains a notable crucifix said to be of Theodota, a masterpiece in silver laminae by a master silversmith working in northern Italy in the second half of the 10th century. And no tour is complete without a visit to the very suggestive crypt.

### **4 - The Church of Santa Maria in Betlem**

The Romanesque church (12th cent.) is located on the main street in Borgo Ticino, the old quarter outside the old city walls, a waypoint for pilgrims travelling to Rome and the Holy Land in the Middle Ages. The



church was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Bethlehem and adjacent to the old Hospital of Saint Anthony: a typical Medieval structure combining lodging for wayfarers with assistance to the poor and infirm. Inside the church visitors will find the wooden statue of Our Lady of the Star, an object of special devotion featured in a traditional procession of boats on the river.

### **5 - The Broletto (former Town Hall)**

The Broletto was once the seat of the municipal council (11th-16th cent.) and steadily expanded with the growing needs of the city government. It has the typical form of this type of building, with a portico on the ground level and a large assembly hall on the first floor for council meetings. The southern wing – looking onto Piazza Cavagneria (named after the baskets in which wares were displayed at the market) – was recently restored and now houses various cultural institutions and a contemporary art space. The northern side, looking out over Piazza Grande (now Piazza della Vittoria), is characterized by a 16th-century loggia leading directly into the salon of the frescoes.



### **6 - Piazza della Vittoria**

Piazza della Vittoria is Pavia's main piazza, known in former times as Platea Magna or Piazza Grande (big square) to distinguish it from the small square, Platea Parva, now Piazza Duomo. Close to the intersection of the ancient Roman cardo and decumanus (now Strada Nuova and Corso Cavour, respectively), it was the city's trading centre and market. Almost entirely surrounded by fourteenth-century



porticoes, it also features the Broletto and the small Gothic palazzo “dei Diversi”. The deconsecrated church of Santa Maria Gualtieri is another eminent presence on the piazza, established in the 10th century by the imperial representative Gualtiero, who had it built near his residence. It is now used as a civic space for temporary cultural exhibitions. There is now an underground market built in modern times below the level of the piazza and accessible from various points.

## 7 - The Medieval Towers

Of the hundred or more towers that once enlivened the skyline of Medieval Pavia, only five still stand: three in Piazza Leonardo da Vinci and two on Via Luigi Porta. The brick structures, tapering slightly upwards, date to the 11th-12th century. They were primarily symbols representing the stature and power of the families who built them. The ruins of smaller towers can still be found today, incorporated into many city buildings. The Torre Civica, located next to the Medieval Cathedral and crowned in the 16th century by a marble loggia functioning as the belfry, collapsed on 17 March 1989, leaving four people dead and a stump which is still visible today.



## 8 - The Church of San Francesco

Completed at the end of the 13th century, the church was part of a Franciscan monastery complex which has now become a university collegio (a college or hall), with the exception of the temple, a beautiful example of Lombard Gothic style. Observing the façade, one is struck by the chromatic interplay of the red brick and white plaster and marble, and the light, variegated tones of the sandstone. Also notable is the French-style twin portal, one of the few of



its kind in Italy, and a large three-light window that was “rediscovered” during restoration work in the 18th century. An element of particular interest in the interior is the wooden roof beams in the nave. The aisles on either side are lined with chapels embellished with works of art mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries.

## **9 - The Church of Santa Maria Incoronata di Canepanova**

The incomplete and unadorned façade of this Marian sanctuary built in the late 15th century to celebrate a fresco of the Virgin Mary believed to be miraculous (now located near the main altar) conceals an interior of rare splendour. Of clear Bramantesque inspiration, the church has a square floor plan with four niches in the corners transforming it into an octagon, above which rises an octagonal segmented dome. Artful perspectives and trompe l'œil frescoes create the illusion of more space than is actually present. Decorated in Baroque and Rococo style, the interior features interesting pictorial cycles prevalently dating to the 17th century. A second central-plan section with a cupola and presbytery was added in the 16th century.



## **PAVIA, PRESTIGIOUS EUROPEAN CAPITAL UNDER THE VISCONTI AND THE SFORZA**

*Riven by internal struggles among different families, Pavia was claimed by Galeazzo II Visconti, co-ruler of Milan, in 1359. Under the stewardship of Galeazzo and his son Gian Galeazzo, great architectural, urban, and cultural projects were undertaken in the city, elevating the new seat of the Visconti court to the level of a prestigious European capital. With the construction of the Castle, the creation of Piazza Grande (now Piazza della Vittoria) and the rectilinear Strada Nuova, the building of a new bridge over the Ticino with the characteristic covering we see today, and the ground-breaking for vari-*

ous religious and civil buildings, the city took on the late-Gothic style that still characterizes it in many of its buildings and their decorative terracotta embellishments.

In the same period, the institution of the *studium generale* – equal in status to the universities of Bologna, Paris, and Montpellier by diploma of Emperor Charles IV in 1361 – and the establishment of the Certosa, envisioned at the end of the century by Gian Galeazzo Visconti as a sumptuous family chapel and mausoleum along the lines of the Chartreuse of Champmol, put Pavia solidly on the European map.



## 10 - The Church of Santa Maria del Carmine

One of the city's finest examples of gothic architecture, the church of Santa Maria del Carmine dominates the splendid piazza of the same name. Once part of a Carmelite monastic complex, it was built thanks to a generous donation by the Visconti family. The authorship of the project is uncertain, but it may be attributable to Bernardo da Venezia. The façade is particularly notable, a magnificent example of Lombard Gothic style and



a triumph of terracotta decoration, starting with the grand rose window. And given that Pavia is notable for its towers, we should also mention that it has the highest bell tower in town. The interior is very spacious with a lofty ceiling. There are eight chapels in each of the two aisles with a wealth of polyptychs and other works of art from different periods; they were originally built to contain the remains of families or members of the various corporations of arts and crafts who had assumed patronage of a given chapel. Please note the tribune in neo-Moorish style above the wooden choir in the presbytery.



## 11 - The Visconti Castle

Galeazzo II Visconti ordered work to begin on the family castle in 1360, seeing the project completed in a mere five years. More than a military stronghold, it was a refined and splendid courtly residence, as exemplified by the elegant two- and three-light terracotta mullioned windows and the refined decorations in the courtyard.

The Castle still features a number of significant examples of the large frescoed scenes of battles, hunting scenes, and courtly life that once abundantly decorated rooms, porticoes, and loggias. An outstanding example is the magnificent Sala Azzurra with its splendid gold leaf and lapis lazuli decorations, perhaps the site of the fabled Visconti library inspired by Petrarch and containing a thousand codices.



Although not military in origin, the castle was used for a long time as a garrison and was outfitted in the Napoleonic Era with an upper parapet and roof hiding the crenellations. In the twentieth century it was acquired by the municipality, restored, and converted into a cultural centre: it now houses the various sections of the Civic Museums and rooms for temporary art exhibitions.



## 12 - The Cathedral

Starting in 1488, the people of Pavia began calling for the construction of a cathedral in Renaissance style to replace the old Romanesque cathedrals of Santo Stefano and Santa Maria del Popolo. The design was originally entrusted to the architect Bramante of Urbino with support from Leonardo da Vinci, later continuing under the supervision of Giovanni Antonio Amadeo of Pavia.

The ambitious construction project inched forward in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was not until the 19th century that the cupola (the third largest in Italy) and the main façade, still waiting to be faced in marble, were built. A testament to the initial grandeur and refinement of the project is an impressive wooden model in the Civic Museums, carved in the first quarter of the 16th century by master local artisans. The bronze statue of Regisole in front of the cathedral is a modern copy by F. Messina of the original from Ravenna, a war trophy destroyed in 1796 by the Jacobins.





### **13 - The Ponte Coperto**

Built in the mid-14th century to replace the former Roman bridge (whose piers are still visible in the river), the covered bridge connects the centre of Pavia to the picturesque Medieval burg on the other side of the Ticino, traditionally the home of washerwomen, gravel quarriers, and fishermen. The brainchild of Galeazzo II Visconti just after he took control of the city, it is characteristic for its roof, making it one of the most suggestive symbols of Pavia, and for the 18th-century chapel dedicated to Saint John Nepomucene at mid span. It was destroyed by bombardments in the Second World War and rebuilt in the early 1950s.

### **The Visconti Park**

After inheriting the castle from his father, Gian Galeazzo Visconti extended the park behind it to the Certosa monastery, some 7 kilometres to the north. The extraordinary work, completely surrounded by walls, was the Duke's hunting grounds, dotted with model farms, enclosures with exotic animals, a villa of delights (la Torretta), and the Castello di Mirabello, the quarters of the captain of the park. The park was the theatre of the famous battle in 1525 between Charles V and Francesco I, which marked the passage of Pavia from French to Spanish dominion. Today a system of greenways leads visitors through the beautiful natural surroundings.





Vedi cartina

## The Certosa

The Certosa stands seven kilometres north of the city of Pavia. Gian Galeazzo Visconti planned the grandiose complex to mark the northern edge of his park and to serve as a private chapel and family mausoleum.

The first stone was laid in 1396, at the height of the late Gothic period, but it was not until the second half of the 15th century that the monument was completed with its rich Renaissance decorations, making it one of the most prestigious monuments to Italian art.

Particularly admirable is the splendid sculptural decoration of the façade in white and polychrome marble, the triptych crafted from hippopotamus tusks in the old sacristy, the superb frescoed pictorial cycle by Bergognone in the transept, the incredible wood inlay work in the choir, and the rich terracotta ornamentation in the two cloisters.





### **14 - The Collegio Borromeo**

Founded by Saint Charles Borromeo in 1561, the Collegio Borromeo is housed in one of the most beautiful mannerist palazzi in Lombardy. Built between 1561 and 1588 based on designs by Pellegrino Tibaldi, it was later embellished by Francesco Maria Richini, who added beautiful Italian gardens.

Described by Vasari as a 'palace of knowledge', its impressive sculptural façade, an effect created by the windows alternating with niches and its monumental portal, looks out over one of the city's most suggestive piazzas. In the early 17th century, the salon on the upper floor was decorated with the pictorial cycle dedicated to Saint Charles Borromeo: the vault and northern wall are the work of Cesare Nebbia of Orvieto and helpers, while the southern wall bears the episode of Pope Pius IV placing the cardinal's cap on Borromeo's head, by Federico Zuccari.

In the years 1818-20, the side toward the river was expanded and completed, but this required the demolition of the adjacent Medieval church of San Giovanni in Borgo, whose complement of sculptures is now in the Civic Museums.

Established to allow intellectually gifted but economically disadvantaged youths to dedicate themselves to study, while also ensuring their proper moral development during the counter-reformation period, in the 17th and 18th centuries the Collegio produced mainly jurists bound for positions in the Church and the Milanese duchy.

### **15 - The Collegio Ghislieri**

Founded in 1567 by behest of Pope Pius V, the Collegio Ghislieri was designed by Pellgrino Tibaldi, who envisioned a three-storey building with



a square plan and very austere appearance. The windows are clean and austere, lacking mouldings, giving the façade a rigorous appearance. The sculptural effect is entrusted to the portal, the only projecting element.

The building encircles a porticoed courtyard with paired columns. The upper floor is enclosed. The central-plan Oratory is located on the west side, crowned with a cupola.

Next to the Collegio on the homonymous piazza is an elegant two-storey neoclassical building built during the Napoleonic Era to provide classrooms for the Scuola Militare and now housing the administrative offices of the Collegio.

The statue of Saint Pius V at the centre of the piazza is a beautiful example of baroque sculpture, work of Francesco Nuvolone of Ticino.

## **THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT AND A NEW BOOST TO THE UNIVERSITY**

*After the famous battle of Pavia of 1525, which conditioned the destiny of Europe, Pavia entered a long period of decline in all realms of social life. It was not until the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment, and the shift from Spanish to Austrian dominion that Pavia fully regained its vital and enterprising spirit. The Habsburgs proved to be particularly attentive to the social and economic situation and enacted various social and economic*



reforms. By initiative of Maria Theresa of Austria and her son Joseph II, the university was given a new impetus, re-establishing the fame of one of the world's oldest universities and making it one of the most scientifically advanced institutes of learning on the continent. New experimental programmes were inaugurated by eminent scientists such as Antonio Scarpa, father of anatomy, Lazzaro Spallanzani, famous for his experiments on fertilization and for having assembled one of the most outstanding collections of natural specimens of his time, and Alessandro Volta, celebrated physicist and inventor of the electric battery who conducted his studies of electricity in Pavia. One of the major hydraulic works of the time was built in Pavia: the Naviglio Pavese, a navigable canal between Pavia and Milan based on an idea by Leonardo da Vinci and designed by Paolo Frisi in 1772.

In the 1770s, by initiative of four Pavese noblemen, the first public theatre, the Teatro dei Quattro Cavalieri (now Teatro Fraschini) was established based on innovative plans by Antonio Galli Bibiena.

Private architecture also flourished again: splendid and refined noble residences were built, sumptuously decorated with fresco cycles and rich stuccowork: Palazzo Mezzabarba, Palazzo Olevano, Palazzo Gambarana, Palazzo Vistarino, and Palazzo Brambilla, to name just a few.

At the end of the century, in spite of political upheavals, the refashioning of the urban setting continued, including the redesign of the monumental city gates (e.g., Porta San Vito) and initiatives of public utility, such as social support and educational institutions.

The first city museum was also founded thanks to the efforts of Marchese Luigi Malaspina, a collector, architect, and man of culture with strong civic convictions.



## 16 - The University

The University of Pavia is one of the oldest in Europe: Galeazzo II Visconti promoted the opening in 1361 with courses on law, medicine, and liberal arts. The university witnessed a series of modifications as it slowly transformed into the layout and architecture we know today, thanks to the efforts of the Austrian government.

Under the Habsburgs, education was reformed and the buildings were redeccorated in neoclassical style and expanded by the architects Piermarini and Pollack with new halls and classrooms, including the Biblioteca "Teresiana", Antonio Scarpa's anatomy theatre, and the theatre of physics, where Alessandro Volta presented the newly invented electrical battery to Napoleon.

In the twentieth century, the university also occupied the facilities of the neighbouring San Matteo Hospital, with its Renaissance cruciform floor plan and adjacent courtyard with terracotta decorations.

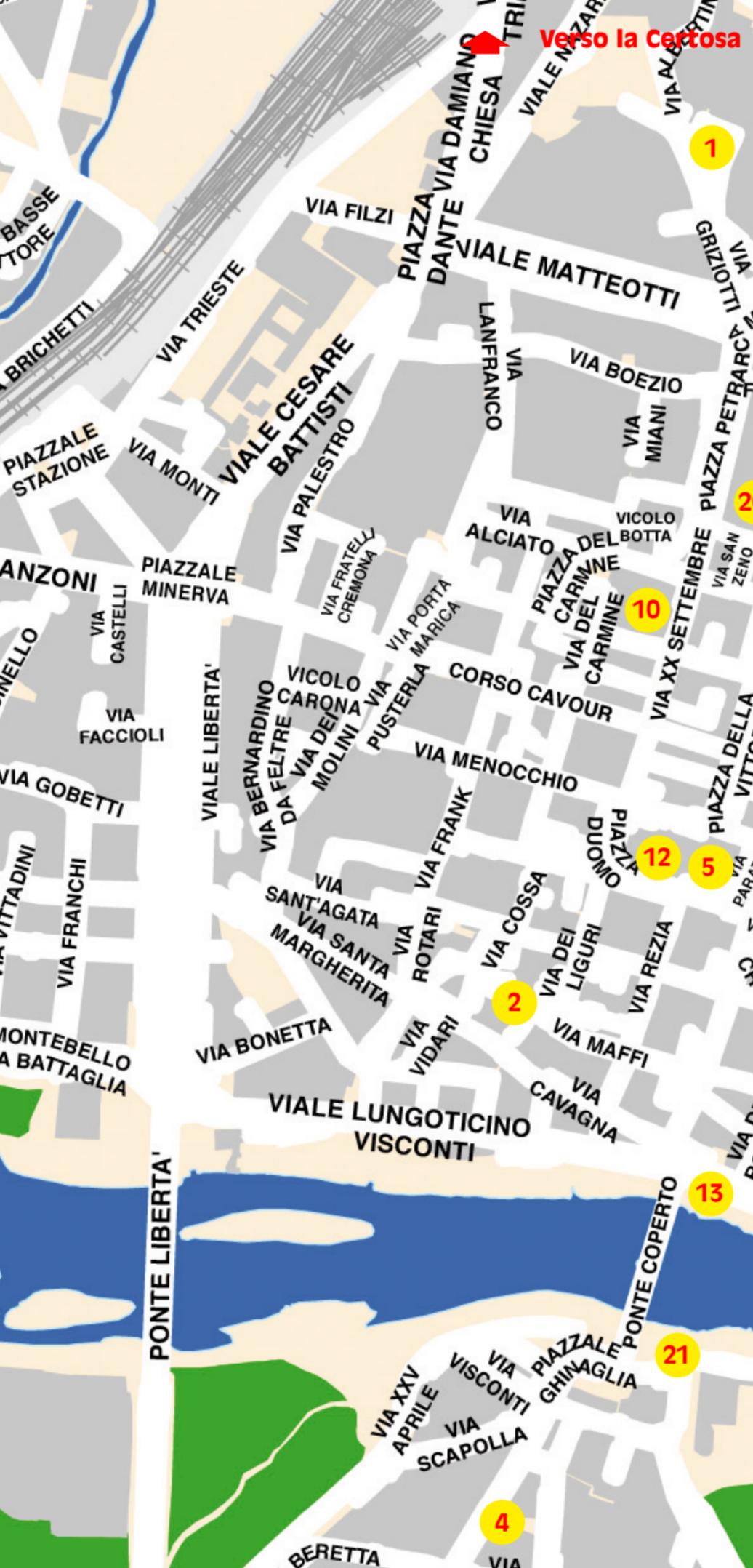


### The University museum system

The glorious past of the University of Pavia and its steadfast gaze on the future—especially in the sciences—



Verso la Certosa



1

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10

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21

4

BASSE  
TORE

BRICHETTI

PIAZZALE  
STAZIONE

ANZONI

INELLO

VIA GOBETTI

VIA VITTADINI

MONTEBELLO  
A BATTAGLIA

PONTE LIBERTÀ'

BERETTA

VIA TRIESTE

VIA MONTI

PIAZZALE  
MINERVA

VIA  
CASTELLI

VIA  
FACCIOLI

VIA  
FRANCHI

VIALE  
CESARE  
BATTISTI

VIA  
PALESTRO

VIA  
FRATELLI  
CREMONA

VIA  
BERNARDINO  
DA FELTRE

VIA  
DEI  
MOLINI

VIA  
SANT'AGATA  
VIA SANTA  
MARGHERITA

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BONETTA

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LUNGOTICO  
VISCONTI

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APRILE

VIA  
VISCONTI

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SCAPOLLA

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PIAZZA  
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LANFRANCO

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ALCIATO

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MARICA

CORSO  
CAVOUR

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MENOCCHIO

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COSSA

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MAFFI

VIA  
CAVAGNA

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BOEZIO

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MIANI

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BOTTA

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SETTEMBRE

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ALESSANDRINI

VIA  
GRIZOTTI

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PETRARCA

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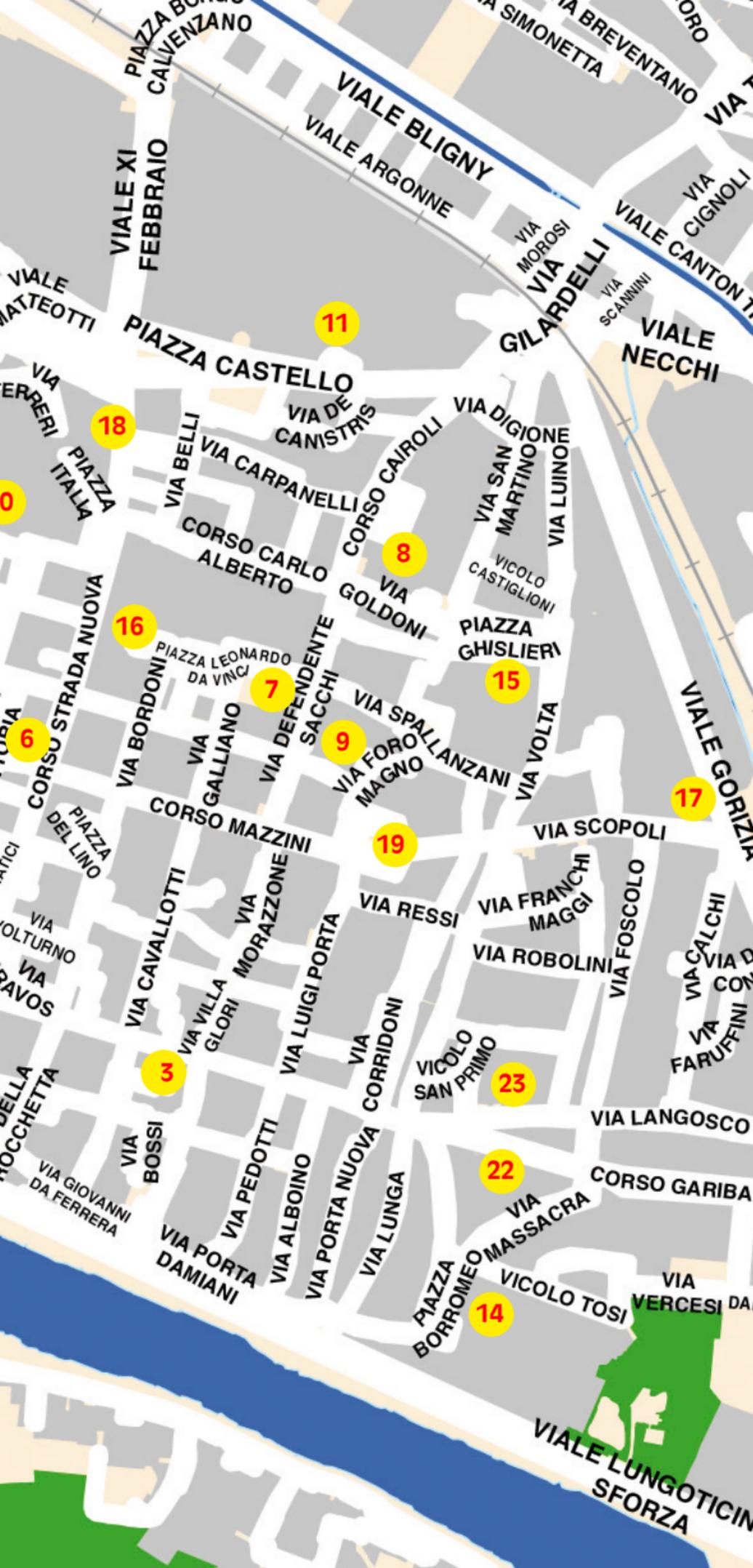
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PIAZZA BUCCHETTI  
VIALE XI FEBBRAIO  
PIAZZA CALVENZANO

VIALE BLIGNY  
VIALE ARGONNE

VIA BREVENTANO  
VIA SIMONETTA  
VIA CIGNOLI  
VIA CANTON T...

PIAZZA CASTELLO  
VIA DE CANISTRIS

VIA MOROSI  
VIA GILARDELLI  
VIA SCANNINI

VIALE NECCHI

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VIALE MATTEOTTI  
VIA ERRETTI  
PIAZZA ITALIA

VIA BELLI  
VIA CARPANELLI  
CORSO CARLO ALBERTO  
CORSO CAIROLI  
VIA DIGIONE  
VIA SAN MARTINO  
VIA LUINO

16

PIAZZA GHISLIERI  
VICOLO CASTIGLIONI

VIA BORDONI  
CORSO STRADA NUOVA  
PIAZZA DEL LINO

PIAZZA LEONARDO DA VINCI

7

9

15

VIA GALLIANO  
VIA DEFENDENTE SACCHI  
VIA SPALLANZANI  
VIA FORO MAGNO  
VIA VOLTA

17

CORSO MAZZINI

19

VIA SCOPOLI

VIA VOLTURNO  
VIA PAVOS

VIA CAVALLOTTI

VIA VILLA GLORI  
VIA MORAZZONE

VIA RESSI

VIA FRANCHI MAGGI

VIA ROBOLINI

VIA FOSCOLO

VIA CALCHI

3

23

VIA BOSSI  
VIA GIOVANNI DA FERRERA

VIA PORTA DAMIANI

VIA PEDOTTI

VIA ALBOINO

VIA LUIGI PORTA

VIA CORRIDONI

VICOLO SAN PRIMO

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VIA MASSACRA

CORSO GARIBOLDI

VIA VERCESI DA

14

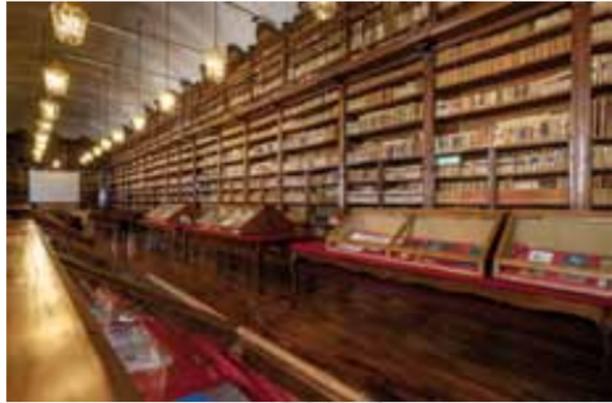
VICOLO TOSI

VIALE LUNGOTICO SFORZA



are expressed and made accessible to the public through a complex network of museums distributed throughout the urban

fabric. The university's golden period during the Enlightenment is well illustrated at the Museo per la Storia dell'Università, which contains the collections of illustrious names in medicine and biology (e.g., Antonio Scarpa) and physics (Alessandro Volta first and foremost) among its exhibits, and in the Botanical Garden. The birthplace of the battery also features the Museo della Tecnica Elettrica [Museum of Electrical Engineering], which retraces the main events in the discovery and use of electricity. The old 18th-century natural history museum recently underwent a profound transformation (2019) to become Kosmos, a modern exhibition temple of zoology and anatomy offering a broad range of educational services. There are also numerous smaller collections, such as the Museo di Archeologia and the Museo Golgi.



## 17 - The Botanical Garden



The Pavia botanical garden is located in an area formerly belonging to the Convent of Sant'Epifanio and still contains the cloister of the religious institution. It was established in 1773 under the Austrian government by the botanists Brusati and Borsieri. The architect Piermarini

designed wood-framed greenhouses, later replaced by more modern iron-framed models. Giovanni



Antonio Scopoli (1723-1788) did much to promote research at the institution after his arrival in 1777, expanding the number of species in the garden, making it one of the most advanced botanical study and experimentation centres in Europe.



### **The Naviglio Pavese**

The major hydraulic work to connect the Milan city dock to the Ticino River and from there, via the Po, to Venice and the Orient, had already been designed in 15th century by Leonardo da Vinci, partially built in the 17th century, and only finished under Habsburg rule.

The locks, which were necessary to overcome the differences in level, were placed in such a way as to conform to neoclassical criteria of urban decoration.

The quarter of Borgo Calvenzano was built along the canal in the city. It was a system of warehouses for goods; the infrastructure still exists, although now prevalently converted to a residential function.



## 18 - Teatro Fraschini

The first public theatre in Pavia was the initiative of four members of the local aristocracy, whence its original name of Teatro dei Quattro Cavalieri [Theatre of the Four Cavaliers].

The design was entrusted to one of the most eminent theatre architects and stage designers of the time, Antonio Galli Bibiena, who built it entirely in masonry and adopted ingenious and innovative solutions—such as the bell shaped main floor—to optimize acoustics. It was built between 1771 and 1773 and became property of the municipality in the second half of the following century, when it was named after the famous Verdian tenor Gaetano Fraschini. Recognized as a “teatro di tradizione”, every year it organizes an opera season (October-January) and a season of plays, music, and dance.





## 19 - Palazzo Mezzabarba and Oratory

A masterpiece of Lombard Rococo, Palazzo Mezzabarba was designed by the Pavese architect Giovanni Antonio Veneroni as a patrician residence



of the noble Mezzabarba family. The picturesque façade, severe in spite of its variegated architectural composition, is echoed in the sumptuous interior decorations, especially in the ballroom, which is frescoed with “Stories of Diana” on the walls





and “Virtue Triumphant over Vice” on the vaulted ceiling by the painter Giovanni Angelo Borroni. Alongside the building stands the coeval Oratory of Saints Quirico and Giulitta, with delightful Rococo stuccowork and frescoes by Pietro Antonio Magatti.



## **20 - Palazzo Malaspina**

The marchese Luigi Malaspina designed the palazzo as his residence in typical neoclassical style. He was a cultured and enlightened collector to whom the city is greatly indebted for his excellent collections of art.

Now the residence of the Prefect, the palazzo features a stunning, monumental entry portal in line with the principles of sumptuousness and decorum typical of the nobility of the time, with statues of Petrarch and Severinus Boethius. At the rear of the palazzo, a frescoed façade looks out over a “romantic” English-style garden. The interiors are richly and variously decorated with paintings and stuccowork in neoclassical style.



## THE VISCONTI CASTLE MUSEUMS

The city's monument par excellence, the Visconti Castle houses the Civic Museums on three floors in a total space measuring more than eight thousand square metres, including exhibition galleries and associated services.

Ground floor: ticket office, bookshop, restrooms, temporary exhibition gallery, conference room; Archaeology Section with Roman archaeology, Longobard goldwork, and early Medieval sculpture; the Romanesque and Renaissance Section, with Romanesque cathedrals, Gothic sculpture, the fresco from the apsidal semi-dome of the lost church of Sant'Agata al Monte, and Renaissance sculpture.

First floor: Pinacoteca Malaspina (with paintings from the 14th to the 18th century), the wooden model of the Cathedral, the Collector's Room, and the Court Library; Art Resources Room, Photography Archive, Specialized Library.

Second floor: Historical museum of the Risorgimento, WWI Room, Plaster Casts Study Room, Modern Sculpture Section, Eighteenth-Century Paintings Gallery, Civic Painting School Room, Morone Donation Room, 1900-2000 Contemporary Art Space.





For the quality, variety, and richness of the collections, the Castle Civic Museums are the fulcrum of the city's museum system, which includes the University Museums – the Museo Kosmos, the Natural Sciences Museum with the curious collection of Lazzaro Spallanzani, and the Museum of Electrical Engineering – , the Crypt Museum in the Cathedral, the Diocesan Museum (in progress), and the Museo della Certosa.

The Castle Civic Museums organize temporary exhibitions, conferences, courses, and learning experiences, as well as issuing publications.

## **I THE MEDIEVAL QUARTER ALONG THE RIVER**

*Turning left after exiting the church of San Teodoro, you can take the narrow Vicolo Terenzio down to Porta Calcinara. Now an isolated remnant, the gate was part of the defensive walls of the Medieval city in the late 12th century. Its name refers to the river landing for barges carrying construction materials, especially sand and gravel. The city walls were later expanded outward by Charles V in the second half of the 16th century.*



*We are in a picturesque neighbourhood sloping down toward the river, with its tangle of cobbled lanes: Via Porta Pertusi, with the Casa degli Eustachi near*

the river, residence of the guardian of the waters, a notable example of a 15th-century private dwelling, Via Pesani, Via Maffi, and Via Rovelecca. The latter lane once marked the centre of the Jewish ghetto, which was closed off every evening.

Walking back up away from the river on Via dei Liguri, the heart of old working-class Pavia, you reach Via Cardano, along which stands the former Benedictine monastery of San Maiolo. Established in the 10th century, it was an important centre for the spread of the Cluniac Reforms in Lombardy and now houses the State Archive, with a beautiful 16th-century cloister with porticoes on the lower level and loggias above.



Following Via Cardano westward, you will reach the small piazza where the church and monastery of Sant'Agata al Monte was once located (so-called because it stood on a rise), built in the 7th century by the Longobards.

## 21 - BORGO TICINO

Descending Strada Nuova and crossing the Ponte Coperto you find yourself in the characteris-





tic Borgo Ticino. The Pavese refer to it simply as “il Borgo”, a more humble extension of the city south of the Ticino. Through the centuries it has maintained the appearance of a village of fishermen and sand-quarriers.

Unfortunately, the bombardments that destroyed the covered bridge in WWII also destroyed the buildings immediately adjacent to it.

The picturesque houses in the Borgo, especially those along the riverbank, are occasionally invaded by flood waters, as commemorated by the plaques on the houses and the one on the façade of the church of Santa Maria in Betlem in Via dei Mille, listing the heights of the most devastating floods. The exotic name of the parish (Our Lady of Bethlehem) evokes the passage of pilgrims in the Middle Ages on their way to the Holy Land as they navigated down the Ticino and the Po to Venice. Built in the second half of the 12th century on the site of an existing oratory, even after a series of modifications and restorations, it still maintains the original characteristics of the Pavese Romanesque style, especially on the façade: a tripartite gabled façade topped by interlacing arcs under the cornice, a round arch over the portal, and decorative sandstone inserts.

Abutting the church to the right is the 16th-century building complex with portico that used to house the hospital (xenodochium). Built at the end of the first Millennium and dedicated to Saint Anthony, it was suppressed in 1808 under Napoleonic rule.

### **The Ticino River**

When it was founded by the Romans, Pavia was called Ticinum, after the river that flowed through it, testifying to the role that the river has played in the life of the city. The river was a sort of ersatz de-



fensive wall and offered a river port that remained active into the 1960s, a landing strip for floatplanes, and also a source of water used by generations of washerwomen to wash the clothes for the local hospitals. Today these traditional activities are found in old paintings or black-and-white photos, but the Ticino is still well loved by the Pavesi, a bona fide green (and blue) lung and the main artery in Europe's oldest natural river park. The Ticino offers fishing and sports such as kayaking, rowing, and Venetian rowing on traditional boats known as barcè ["bar-SAY"]. There are paths along the banks for strolling, running, or cycling, and lawns for picnics, reading, or yoga. There is also a beach and numerous cafés, houseboats, and traditional restaurants for a pleasant aperitif or typical local dishes, contemplating the Ponte Coperto from a privileged angle. And of course you can explore the river environment with its lanche [LAHN-kay] (abandoned meanders), heron nesting colonies, springs, woods, and much more.



## ITINERARIES OF FAITH AND SLOW TOURISM: PAVIA CROSSROADS OF EUROPE

### VIA FRANCIGENA AND OTHER PILGRIMAGE ROUTES

When the English archbishop Sigeric set out on the return trip of his pilgrimage from Canterbury to Rome in the year 990, he certainly had no idea that the notes taken along the way would become an essential guide for every future pilgrim or traveller wanting to reach Rome and then, most importantly, make it back home again. Arriving in Italy from France, the road was named the Via Francigena (the road that comes from France) but it is also known





as the Via Romea for those heading in the opposite direction. Sigeric's itinerary records seventy-nine places to stay on the long journey, three of which are in Pavese territory. The old section XL, indicated as Sce Cristine, now the municipality of Santa Cristina e Bissone; section XLI near Pamphica (Pavia); and section XLII in Tremel, now Tromello. Today's Via

Francigena, travelled every year by thousands of new aficionados of pilgrimage routes and slow tourism, numbers the sections in reverse order. The part through the province of Pavia has not changed but is segmented into sections 11 Robbio-Mortara, 12 Mortara-Garlasco, 13 Garlasco-Pavia, and 14 Pavia-Santa Cristina.



Pavia is obviously the most in-



teresting stopover for contemporary pilgrims as well, who pass by the ancient church of Santa Maria in Betlem, which once offered care and lodging for tired or ailing pilgrims in its xenodochium. Now, after a well-deserved stop to see the city's various attractions, the road continues south-east passing alongside San Pietro in Verzolo, founded by the Longobards. This complex also once included a hospital, built in the 10th century, and a Benedictine monastery, built in the 11th.

Speaking of Benedictine monasticism, there is another major pilgrimage route that counted Pavia as an important waypoint: the Cammino di San Colombano. In 591, almost fifty years old, Saint Columbanus, the great Irish abbot and one of the fathers of European Christianity, set out from Bangor (in what is now Northern Ireland) to begin a twenty-five-year



journey that would take him through Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy, evangelizing and founding abbeys along the way. The road ends in Bobbio, where Columbanus died in 615 and his remains are now kept. In 612, coming from the territory of Milan, where he had founded a monastery in what is now San Colombano al Lambro, Columbanus stopped in



Pavia, staying at the court of Agilulf and Theodelinda. His presence was fundamental in achieving peace between the Longobards, the Papacy, and the Byzantine Empire. In recognition of this,



he was given the land of Bobbio as a place to establish his last grand abbey. The Pavese stretch of the Cammino di San Colombano allows us to rediscover the Longobard history of the city and leads us toward the Apennines, following the Via Francigena to the Po River.

Closely related to the Cammino di San Colombano is the Via degli Abati,



also known as the Via Francigena of the Mountains, a path established in the 6th century starting from Pavia and winding for some 190 kilometres to Pontremoli. It was the main road taken by the abbots of Bobbio and Pavia travelling between monasteries or crossing the Apennines to continue on to Rome.

And the Cammino di Sant'Agostino is also dedicated to the memory of a great saint. This road ends in Pavia at Saint Augustine's tomb in the splendid basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro. The Cammino di Sant'Agostino differs from most other ancient or modern pilgrimage routes because it is not a linear route but a network joining fifty Marian sanctuaries in Lombardy and three places associated with the memory of the great bishop and theologian from Hippo. The road is also known as the Cammino della Rosa, because it traces out a sort of stylized flower with Pavia at the base of the stem. The last two stretches of the Cammino di Sant'Agostino lead from the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio in Milan to the Certosa of Pavia (25th section, 31 kilometres) and from the Certosa to the Basilica of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro (26th section, the final 12 kilometres).





## **THE CHURCHES OF SAN LUCA - 22, SANTA TERESA, SAN LAZZARO, SAN LANFRANCO E DEI SANTI PRIMO E FELICIANO - 23**

Pavia boasts many churches that are unjustifiably excluded from the traditional city tours, often because they are not found within what used to be the old Medieval burg within the walls, now the historical centre. However, not all of them escape the eye of pilgrims passing through Pavia: actually, thanks to the location of these churches, they either greet or bid them farewell. San Luca, built starting in 1586, is an excellent example of a counter-reformist church, built according to principles disseminated in Lombardy by Charles Borromeo following the Council of Trent. It has an unusual orientation, its façade faces north, giving onto the road to Cremona. And on the way to Cremona, we find the Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, also known as Santa





Teresa, which is striking for the “solemn incompleteness” of its façade, and the delightful small Romanesque church of San Lazzaro, once part of a hospital/hostel complex on the Via Francigena, which in various periods has provided lodging not only to pilgrims, but also to poor and even lepers. Much more imposing, on the other hand (and on the other side of town), is San Lanfranco, an excellent example of Romanesque archi-

itecture, complete with a beautiful belltower in the same style, a relatively rare feature among churches of this period in Pavia. The interior features a particularly noteworthy Renaissance marble ark, the work of Giovanni Antonio Amadeo, containing the remains of San Lanfranco Beccari. Outside the church, the small and large cloisters are all that remains of the monastery of which the church was once an integral part. Another Romanesque church, dedicated to the Saints Primo and Feliciano, stands in an area that was known as Monte Cucagna [Mountain of Plenty], a neighbourhood once known for its gambling houses and bordellos. While its façade is one of the oldest examples of Romanesque style in Pavia, its Gothic and Baroque interior is the fruit of later remodeling work. Not to be missed is the precious triptych by Agostino da Vaprio, a jewel of 15th-century Pavia painting, in the second chapel on the right.



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