

CODIGORO, loc. Pomposa

ABBAZIA DI POMPOSA

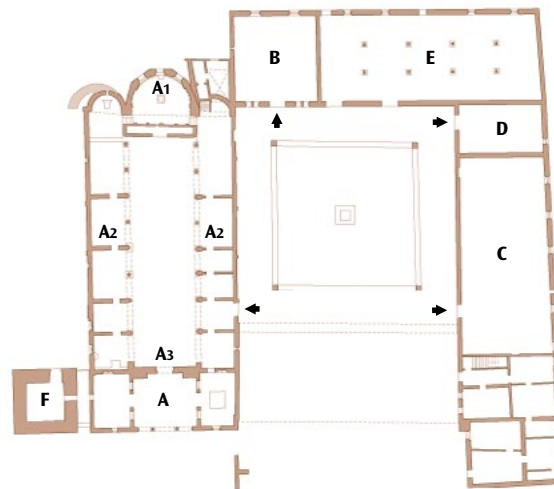
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A masterpiece of Romanesque art, **Pomposa Abbey** can be seen from a distance with its towering campanile. The **church** was founded in the 6th century A.D. and from the middle of the 9th century the first community of Benedictine monks began to form, reaching its peak after the year 1000, when the Abbot's spiritual and political jurisdiction extended over all the surrounding villages. Civil administration of the abbey's feuds was centred in Codigoro, nearby. A true lighthouse of culture, Pomposa had one of the most extensive libraries of the time. Among the personalities that made it so famous were the saint and abbot Guido degli Strambiati who imposed a very austere lifestyle within the monastery. Here the monk **Guido da Pomposa** invented the **modern musical notation**. In the 15th century most of the monks moved to Ferrara, where Duke Ercole I had built a new monastery for them.

EXTERIOR

The first building the visitor sees is the **Church of Santa Maria**, with a portico in front of it, richly decorated in terracotta, marble and colourful majolica tiles. The two circular windows, closed by beautiful stone transennas sculpted with animals and vegetative forms are particularly graceful. To the left, near the arches of the narthex, there's a large white plaque with an image above it, in memory of the extensive renovation work carried out under the abbot Giovanni Vidor (1148-1161). To the side of the church stands the 48-metre high **campanile** **F**, built in 1063 by the architect **Deusdedit** who chose to be remembered on the western wall. It is divided into nine levels, each one having windows that are wider and with more lights than the level below it, giving the building a particularly light and soaring appearance that is emphasized by the spire of considerable height. The red and yellow brick face conserves very rare inserts of ceramic bowls (18 of ancient origin, the others of the modern era) with designs of trees, fish, birds and flowers: these can be dated to the 11th century and come from various parts of the Mediterranean such as Egypt, Tunisia and Sicily. On the opposite side with respect to the campanile is a courtyard of which only three sides have survived. Opposite the cloister is the **Palazzo della Ragione** **G**, from which the abbot administered justice in his feuds. As the building did not have religious functions, it was detached from the others.



- A Church of Santa Maria
- B Chapterhouse
- C Refectory
- D Pomposa Museum
- E Sala delle Stilate
- F Campanile
- G Belfry
- Entrances

INTERIOR

Despite the loss of many of the structures of the ancient abbey over the centuries, today it is still possible to visit many richly decorated parts of it.

A Church of Santa Maria: the interior is divided into three aiole with two rows of Byzantine-Ravenna style columns, with elaborate capitals and pulvins above them. The floor is of great value, with sections laid in different periods (from the 6th to the 12th century).

A1 The apse area was decorated in the 13th century by **Vitale da Bologna**. At the centre is a monumental *Christ Enthroned* in the mandorla of heavenly light, surrounded by groups of angels (on his left, lower down is the Archangel Michael with the scales for weighing sins and good deeds). To the sides of the representation are two groups of saints. Below the vault is a band with portraits of saints and lower down still a second band with stories from the *Life of St. Eustace*.

A2 Along the side walls of the central nave runs a rich 13th-century frescoed decoration, arranged in three bands. The upper band shows scenes from the *Old Testament*, the middle one scenes from the *New Testament* and the lower one, at the level of the arches, scenes from Saint John's *Apocalypse*.

A3 The wall on the inside of the façade is decorated with a large *Last Judgement*.

B Chapterhouse: 14th-century frescoes. In the centre The *Crucifixion*, flanked by the portraits of Saint Benedict and Saint Guy, the abbot of Pomposa.

C Refectory: on the rear wall are three well-conserved frescoes.

D Pomposa Museum: located in a room on the first floor, it contains decorative exhibits from many of the parts of the abbey that have now disappeared. Finely sculpted capitals in various styles, marble plutei and panels with mythical animals, fragments of frescoes and majolica tiles.

