

**COLIACCHIO**  
PO DELTA PARK DIVERA

 Regione Emilia-Romagna

La terra della dolce  
**Romagna**

[illegible]

# THE MONUMENTS OF COMACCHIO

**The city** Comacchio's historical center has rather distinctive urban features. Indeed, according to tradition, it sprang up on thirteen islets included among the Etruscan-era littoral belts, site of the forgotten city of Spina and those established in the Roman era and the early Middle Ages. Until the large land reclamation projects in the twentieth century, the city remained completely surrounded by *valli*, or fish weirs, in the unusual situation of being a lagoon city enclosed by terra firma. Although the bridges are still today one of its most characteristic aspects, they were among the first monuments to be modified or destroyed in the modern era in order to make the main roads usable by wagons and carriages. Some have survived.



## 1 - Ponte di San Pietro

This bridge is among the most noteworthy and best preserved. Completely in brick, it marks the beginning of perhaps the city's oldest and most characteristic quarter. Probably originally made of wood, it is set against a mainly 17<sup>th</sup>-century urban backdrop.



## 2 - Ponte dei Sisti

This single-arch bridge is located where the canal of Via Antonio Buonafede intersects with the San Pietro canal.



## 3 - Ponte dei Geromiti

This single-arch bridge is built entirely in brick and connects Via Antonio Buonafede to Vicolo dell'Ospedale.



## 4 - Palazzo Bellini

Located on Via Agatopisto next to the old prisons, it was once the seat of the Bargello. Originally a genteel residence with an adjoining fish processing and canning factory, it is currently owned by the city. It houses a prestigious art gallery for shows and exhibitions on the ground floor, the L.A. Muratori Public Library on the first floor, and the city's Historical Archives as well as the offices of the Department of Cultural Institutions on the top floor.



## 5 - Ponte della Ca' degli Sbirri

It rises at a junction inside the city, once the most important of the waterways; it connected the Loggia del Grano, the central square, the *pescheria* (fish market), the hospital, and Trepponti, from which Magnavacca Harbor and the open sea could be reached. The particular urban junction at an intersection of two of the more heavily trafficked and larger canals means that its shape is among the most complex and articulated of the various bridges.



## 6 - 18<sup>th</sup>-century Ospedale degli Infermi

This imposing neoclassical work of civil architecture was designed beginning in 1771 by the Ferrarese architect Antonio Foschini, with the exception of the rear which is attributed to Gaetano Genta. It is admirable evidence of the papal reform in the second half of the eighteenth century that was represented in Ferrara by the cardinal legate Francesco Carafa. Essentially completed in the years 1779-1784, it finally went into operation as a hospital in 1814, and continued until 1970.

The beautiful front elevation fits into the urban context

with almost the same virtues of a cathedral: the large colonnaded atrium supports a classical-style tympanum flanked by two elegant bell towers of delicate Baroque design. Inside, an elegant grand staircase leads to the vast hospital wards on the upper floor.

On the right side is the small church of San Pietro, while the Spezieria, or apothecary shop, which currently houses the Tourist Information Office, is on the left.



## 6/a - Ancient Delta Museum

The building houses the Museum of the Ancient Delta, which displays a rich heritage of archaeological treasures from the area, ranging from early prehistoric evidence up to the Middle Ages. The museum tells the ancient story of the mouth of the Po River. Because of the numerous waterways and land routes, it was for centuries an important node linking commerce and civilization between the Mediterranean world and continental Europe. The sections dedicated to the Etruscan city of Spina are particularly important, and include objects from the town, rich grave goods, the Roman world, up to the establishment in the Middle Ages of Comacchio as a commercial trade center and a bishopric. The museum has created an attractive, new display for the precious cargo of Comacchio's Roman ship, a veritable marine Pompeii, offering a cross-section of the Roman Empire's globalized world.



## 7 - Ponte di Borgo

Located near Trepponti, it is a single-arch brick bridge.



## 8 - Trepponti

Known as Trepponti, the Pallotta Bridge is probably the city's best-known monument and is named for the cardinal legate Giovan Battista Pallotta, who ordered its construction in the early decades of the seventeenth century. At that time, it was still the fortified gate to the city for those coming from the sea along the navigable canal. The pent-arch bridge was designed by the Ravennan architect Luca Danese (1598-1672), who was also responsible for the San Pietro and Sbirri bridges. Over the centuries, the initial design has been adapted to meet practical and aesthetic needs, making it the structure we now admire today.



## 9 - Palazzo Vescovile, or Bishop's Palace

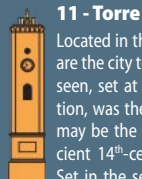
Located on Via Edgardo Fogli, the palace was once the city governor's residence. Beginning in 1748, it was the bishop's seat until 1986, when the Holy See decreed that the two dioceses of Ferrara and Comacchio be united. The building, with a square plan, currently has an obvious 19<sup>th</sup>-century structure. Of particular interest is the bishops' salon lo-

cated on the first floor, characterized by medallions on the walls depicting all the city's bishops, beginning with Pacatianus.



## 10 - Seat of the Comacchio Salt Works (Saline)

Built in 1920, the seat of the salt works (*Regie Saline*) is located on three floors, and has a roof terrace and small internal garden. Although it has not been used since 1985, the supporting walls, floors, and roof appear in fairly good condition. Its main features are the large Venetian-style faux lancet windows and a broad entrance.



## 11 - Torre Civica, or City Tower

Located in the center of the city, on Via Ugo Bassi, are the city tower and the Loggia del Grano can be seen, set at the sides of what, before its demolition, was the splendid Ponte di Piazza. The tower may be the 19<sup>th</sup>-century reconstruction of an ancient 14<sup>th</sup>-century tower that collapsed in 1816. Set in the semicircular niche is a beautiful stone statue of the Madonna and Child, perhaps from the seventeenth century. The tower has been equipped with a mechanical clock since 1872.



## 12 - Loggia del Grano, or Granary

One of the first papal works of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century *renovatio urbis*, it was built during Cardinal Giacomo 'a legation. Istrian-stone columns and brick pillars supported the rectangular hall of the granary the on upper floor. The simple brick-faced exterior has neatly framed square-cut openings that lighten its appearance. It has recently been attributed to the Ferrarese architect Giovan Battista Aleotti, known as Argenta.



## 13 - Palazzo Patrignani

As we can see, it almost certainly dates back to the nineteenth century. The low, two-story brick-faced building, with a large main entrance, owes its name to the Patrignani family. Located on the street of the same name, the house was the residence of the Comacchio nationalist Antonio Buonafede (1759-1814), instrumental in the community's purchase of the *valli* (fish weirs) from Napoleon Bonaparte.



## 14 - Palazzo Tura

Situated near the cathedral, this two-story structure has a square base, with a small, central tower. Built in the eighteenth century by Abbot Pietro Maria Zanoli, it is currently owned by the Tura family.



## 15 - Cathedral of San Cassiano

It rises majestically on Piazza XX Settembre. The ancient origins of the diocese are uncertain; a plaque located in the sacristy attributes to Bishop Vincenzo the founding in 708 of the first Romanesque cathedral dedicated to this saint. Designed by the Roman architect Angelo Cerruti, the current building was

consecrated in 1740. The internal structure has a single aisle with side chapels. Creating a dramatic backdrop is the imposing marble altar with angels to its sides, complementary to the faux monochrome altarpiece by the Bolognese Giuseppe Gotti, with Saints Mauro and Nicholas of Tolentino that encircle the 16<sup>th</sup>-century wooden image of Saint Cassian, patron saint of the city and the diocese.

## 15/a - Bell Tower

The work of the Venetian Giorgio Fossati, it was erected coeval with the cathedral and is set to its side. A painted panel at the church entrance illustrates the ambitious original design. The project lost its momentum following a collapse that took place in 1757 when construction was nearly completed, resulting in the tower's height being reduced.



## 16 - Church of the Suffragio

From 1644, the church lost its original appearance when it underwent restorations in the second half of the last century. Fortunately, the triptych of the main altarpiece, occupying the entire back wall of the church interior, was saved. The central canvas, in which popular devotion required depicting the Madonna and Child, Saint Anthony and souls in purgatory, is a work by the Bolognese Antonio Randa (1577-1650), a pupil of Guido Reni.



## 17 - Church of the Rosary

Adjacent to Piazza del Popolo, the present-day Via Vincenzino Folegatti, the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary had it built, with construction lasting from 1622 to 1640. The elegant brick façade is embellished by a beautiful Istrian-stone portal. The unique structure of the interior is striking, with its single aisle, a flattened barrel vault, and a spacious apse where the confreres prayed. The restoration following the Second World War robbed the temple of all the decorative elements that had adorned it, and its walls were covered with cold, austere marble slabs. Of particular interest is the large painting by Cesare Mezzogori, a painter from Comacchio who died in 1689. It depicts the Virgin of the Rosary in a blaze of angels, with Saints Justina and Dominic; in middle distance, in the background to the left, is the Battle of Lepanto. The church's real treasure, however, is the beautiful 17<sup>th</sup>-century statue of Our Lady of the Rosary.



## 18 - Ponte Pasquale

Made entirely of brick, this single-arch bridge connects Via Cavour at Via Don Minzoni.



## 19 - Ponte del Teatro

It connects the left side, or bank, of Via Cavour, formerly Via Gattamarca, with Carmine Island. With a single arch, it is set at an angle to the banks.



## 20, 21 - Ponti del Carmine e Pizzetti

Set respectively along and to the side of the Church of the Carmine, they are among the largest, though not

the most sophisticated, of the city's bridges. Except for the side embrasures, these single-arch bridges are made entirely of brick.



## 22 - Church of the Carmine

In the district of the same name, this church dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel is the oldest extant church. Of humble design, it dates back, in fact, to the early seventeenth century. The facade is enlivened by four pilasters that separate it from the tympanum crowning it and from the round-arched main entrance. The interior, also a victim of subsequent refurbishments, houses a valuable 17<sup>th</sup>-century wooden altarpiece that contains the elaborately dressed figure of the Madonna and Child. The bell tower is from 1756. Unlike the church, it has the more complex and elaborate style consistent with 18<sup>th</sup>-century architectural canons.



## 23 - Church of Santi Mauro e Agostino

Seat of the early medieval monastery of San Mauro, this 17<sup>th</sup>-century Augustinian convent was a barracks during the 18<sup>th</sup>-century imperial occupation and later, a school until after World War II. Its overly long neglect has led to the progressive collapse of almost all its structures.



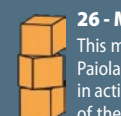
## 24 - Church of Santa Maria in Aula Regia

Built in the mid-seventeenth century, a colonnade with 142 arches leads to this church dedicated to Our Lady of the People, in the western part of city. Besides devotional requests to rescue Comacchio from the waters of the Po in 1645, it was the intention of the cardinal legate Stefano Donghi that the arcade, connecting the church to the city, would offer visitors from the mainland, a doubly greater prospect of the city. In the single-aisle sanctuary, the wooden altarpiece displays a beautiful 15<sup>th</sup>-century terracotta of the Virgin and Child, venerated as the city's patron saint.



## 25 - Manifattura dei Marinati, or Fish Factory

In the last part of the colonnade is the entrance to the old fish factory. A magnificent example of industrial archaeology, it is worth a visit to see where fish from the *valli* (fish weirs), especially eels, were salted and marinated. It currently houses the headquarters of the Po Delta Park.



## 26 - Monument to Anders Lassen

This monument, a work by the artist Maurizio Paola, is dedicated to the Danish soldier killed in action on 9 April 1945 during the last weeks of the Italian Campaign. He was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest British military decoration.