

WHERE THE RIVER ONCE FLOWED

Until the 12th century, Via Ripagrande was the main branch of the Po that today runs a few kilometres away to the north of the city. It originally flowed past the southern walls, where in the past a river port handled the shipping of goods. The south of the city was the oldest part and extended along the banks of the river, where various streets along which goods were taken to the marketplace met with it. This area is still largely intact and offers glimpses of buildings of significant cultural and religious importance. When the course of the main river was re-routed to the north of the city, the riverbed gradually narrowed and new buildings were erected; later, Duke Borso had the area encircled by the city walls to create a new quarter.

THE ITINERARY IN BRIEF




CASTELLO ESTENSE

Starting point of the route

- 1** Palazzo Paradiso
- 2** Chiesa di San Gregorio
- 3** Casa di Stella dell'Assassino
- 4** Monastero di Sant'Antonio in Polesine
- 5** Palazzo Costabili
Museo Archeologico Nazionale
- Byzantine Castrum**
- 6** Via XX Settembre
- 7** Casa di Biagio Rossetti
- 8** Chiesa di San Giorgio



 The tour starts from the **Castle Estense** (page 16), crosses Piazza Savonarola and heads towards the **Cathedral** (page 21). It then takes along the front of the 18th century **Palazzo Municipale** on your right with the Palazzo Arcivescovile on your left.

After the Cathedral, cross **Piazza Trento e Trieste** (page 23) and take Via Mazzini, one of the main arteries of the old Jewish quarter. In Via Scienze, you will find

1 Palazzo Paradiso

Via delle Scienze, 17 • tel. 0532 418200


Built in 1391 by order of Alberto of Este, the building later had various owners until 1567 when Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este rented it to the city authorities in order to transfer all the university faculties there. In 1753 the **Civic Library** was founded here, later dedicated to Ariosto. Of special interest are the **tomb of Ludovico Ariosto**, designed by **Aleotti** in 1612, the grandiose main staircase and the **Anatomy Theatre**, both from the 18th century.

 After Via Giuoco del Pallone, Vicolo Granchio, will take you to **Via Cammello**, in front of the

2 Chiesa di San Gregorio

Via Cammello, 19 • tel. 0532 209794

The existence of the church is documented from 1035 onwards. The Gothic façade in fired brick, restored in 1932, and the ancient bell tower (1092, made higher in the 14th century) make it a particularly evocative building.

 At a short distance stands

3 Casa di Stella dell'Assassino

Via Cammello, 15

This is a tall building, with massive walls and ogival windows and doors. Traditionally it is known as the house of Stella dei Tolomei, favourite mistress of Niccolò III, to whom she gave three famous sons: Leonello, Ugo and Borso. The nickname dell'Assassino was possibly attributed to her given that her father was from Assisi (with the adjective Assisino - from Assisi, later turned into Assassino- murderer).

[NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC]

 This route will take you along the streets where the bed of the River Po once lay and where in the fifteenth century, a new quarter sprang up with churches, streets and mansion houses that Borso d'Este had included to the city.

At the end of Via Quartieri you come to the city walls and passing through Porta San Pietro will take you into the park area outside the walls.

Secluded in Via del Gambone from the rest of the city that surrounds it, lies the

4 Monastero di Sant'Antonio in Polesine

Via del Gambone • tel. 0532 64068

Founded by Saint Beatrice II d'Este on an island in the centre of the old Po, this group of buildings is of great importance and still has a special atmosphere of peace and isolation.

The small public church, in the Baroque style, has a remarkable

frescoed ceiling from the 17th century. Inside the church **three chapels with precious frescoes** can be visited: the left-hand chapel contains the *Stories of the Childhood of Jesus* and the *Life of the Virgin*, of the Giotto school (1315-20). In the right-hand chapel *Stories of the Passion* can be seen, also of the Giotto school, painted between the end of the 13th and the middle of the 14th century.

The central chapel has frescoes of different schools and periods, including the delicate *Annunciation* by D. Panetti (1460-1530) and the 16th-century "grotesque" ceiling. The nuns' choir and a 16th-century *Flagellation*, with a precious gilded and sculpted wood altar-piece, are also interesting. The monastery has other interesting features, above all the elegant cloisters and the tomb of the foundress saint, to whom a number of traditions of religious devotion are linked.



 Leaving the Monastero di Sant'Antonio in Polesine behind you, turn right and take Via Beatrice d'Este until you come to the

5 Palazzo Costabili Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Via XX Settembre, 124 • tel. 0532 66299

Begun in 1500 by order of A. Costabili, Este ambassador at the court of Ludovico il Moro, Duke of Milan, the *Palazzo* is an important work of **Biagio Rossetti**, who however left it unfinished. The marble decoration of the pilaster strips and of the steps of the main staircase, by Gabriele Frisoni, is worthy of note.

The original pictorial decoration can still be seen in some rooms of the 16th century



frescoed by **Garofalo**, particularly noteworthy is the frescoed ceiling of the **Sala del Tesoro** where the influence of Mantegna can be seen. The building, bought by the government in 1920, became the seat of the **National Archaeological Museum**. It exhibits the findings of the Etruscan city of **Spina**, which flourished from the 6th to the 3rd century B.C. and which was discovered at the beginning of the 20th century during the reclamation works. The museum conserves various types of objects of excellent artistic quality, most of which come from the necropolis. In the port of Spina, an important trading centre, goods from all over the known world used to arrive and a considerable wealth spread among its inhabitants.

The abundance of sets for symposium of Athenian origin bears witness to the city's close cultural links with Greece. Particularly fascinating are the large **Attic symposium vases** upon which are depicted mythological episodes and scenes of daily life.

Other objects, such as candelabras, tripods, stands, mostly in bronze, were made by the Etruscans. Some candelabra cymatia are true works of sculpture. Note the High Adriatic ceramics, produced locally when commerce with Greece came to a halt. The museum has been greatly enriched by the exhibition on display in the **Sala degli Ori** that houses almost a hundred items of gold, silver, amber and paste stone jewellery e pasta recovered from tomb decorations dating back to the sixth and seventh centuries A. D.



Panathenaic vase

6 Via XX Settembre


This Street was once known as *via della Ghiara* (Gravel Street) in that it ran along the old course of the Po which, as it dried up, left large quantities of round stones, known as *ghiaioni*, uncovered. Marquis Niccolò III d'Este had it levelled off in 1401 and donated land to those who wanted to build houses. It later became the main thoroughfare of the *Addizione di Borso*. The road is closed off by an 18th-century archway.

 Heading east along **Via XX Settembre** will take you to the

7 Casa di Biagio Rossetti

Via XX Settembre, 152

The house was built in 1490 by the great architect and town-planner **Biagio Rossetti** for himself and his family. It is a small building with a simple design, whose door and windows are crowned by arch vaults in brickwork and a highly projecting cornice, decorated with panels in the same material. [TEMPORARILY CLOSED]

 Detour here for the city walls of Alfonso I. Crossing the San Giorgio bridge will lead you to the first cathedral in Ferrara, the **Church of St. George**, dedicated to the city's Patron Saint.

8 Chiesa di San Giorgio

Piazzale San Giorgio • tel. 0532 62231



The church of St. George is mentioned from the 10th century onwards and was the **city cathedral** up to the 12th century. From the middle of the 15th century the monastery buildings and church were administered by the monks of the "Olivetian Congregation". The **bell tower** was built in 1485 by **Biagio Rossetti**.

The current layout of the church is the result of alterations made by Alberto Schiatti (1581) and later work in the 17th century. The façade in fired brick is decorated by a large stone bas-relief: *St. George slaying the Dragon*. The interior has a basilica plan with three naves and an apse. In the area of the presbytery stands the sepulchral monument of Lorenzo Roverella, bishop of Ferrara, rich in elegant decorations. At the entrance to the bell tower there is the tomb of the painter **Cosmè Tura**, leader of the Ferrara painting school. The sacristy and cloisters, the only remains of the large ancient convent, have a very elegant design.

On the way back, **Via Coperta** and **Via Ghisiglieri** are some of the ancient streets that, according to historians, lay at the very heart of development of the city. The horseshoe layout of these streets bears witness to the past existence of a "**castrum**" or military defensive building founded by Ravenna Byzantines in about the 8th century on the left bank where of River Po once flowed.