

LIFE PEOPLE PLACES HERITAGE

RITA CIPALLA

Bologna offers an eye-catching cityscape with medieval towers, red-brick *palazzi* and nearly 25 miles of arcades. It's home to Europe's **oldest university**, founded in 1088, and the current student population, approaching 100,000, ensures a lively street scene, plenty of cafes, and a thriving arts community.

Bologna is also famous for its **culinary specialties**. One of its signature dishes is tortellini, tiny delectable mouthfuls of meat-stuffed pasta, handmade by local *sfogline* or pasta shops. The larger versions — tortelli and tortelloni — can be stuffed with squash or cheese.

Bologna allows you to experience life in a real Italian city, says **Roberto Grandi**, president of the Bologna museums organization. "The city is full of music, museums and cultural activities," said Grandi. "We may not have the 'must-see's' like Florence and Venice, but it's a place where people can feel history." Statistics validate the city's appeal: Visitorship has increased by 30 percent in the past four years.

To keep tourism fresh, city officials are developing a series of self-guided walking tours that start in Bologna and allow visitors to immerse themselves in the region's history. One of these tours is the **Path of Wool and Silk**. People can trek for six days on a set route from Bologna to Prato, following in the footsteps of ancient merchants. Restaurant and hotel suggestions are provided on a dedicated website.

If you have less time to explore, here are some other ways to get off the beaten path.

Above it all: Asinelli Tower (*Torre degli Asinelli*), built in the early 12th century, provides a panoramic view of Bologna's red rooftops, but there's another way to see the city from on high. In 2015, as the renovation of the **Basilica di San Petronio** got underway, a temporary viewing terrace was constructed about 175 feet off the ground. From that vantage point, it's easy to see why Bologna is called *La Rossa* ("The Red City"). But beware: because the area is a construction site, you'll need to sign a waiver before taking the construction elevator to the top (you can also take the stairs). The entry fees support the cathedral's renovation and the site is staffed by volunteers. Look for the entrance around the back of the cathedral in Piazza Galvani. The terrace is only open during the warmer weather months; cost is 3 euros.



Beautiful corners of Bologna, with its towers, portici and hidden alleys (Copyright: Dreamstime)



Secret Bologna: five hidden gems in the historic old town

Law and medicine: built in the 16th century, the **Archiginnasio of Bologna** served as the seat of the university from 1563 to 1805 and is one of the most important buildings in Bologna today. Inside its walls are two fascinating rooms often skipped by tour groups. The first is the Anatomical Theatre, built in 1636. Used for anatomy lectures and human dissections, its walls showcase wooden sculptures of some of the most famous physicians of both ancient and medieval times. At one end of the room is an ornately carved chair where the professor would sit, surveying the medical procedures demonstrated on the dissection table below. The chair is flanked by two wooden sculptures carved without skin to show off their musculature, known as "*gli spellati*" or the skinned ones.

In the same building is the richly embellished **Stabat Mater**, a large room where Renaissance law students would

convene to study. Decorated with emblems, crests and other carvings, it appears as though every square inch of its walls is covered with heraldic symbols. The room is home to a large collection of antique reference books arranged by subject matter, from geology to zoology. Today the Stabat Mater is used for events and conferences. Admission is 3 euros.

History comes alive: located in Palazzo Pepoli, a beautiful Gothic-style building, this museum recounts the rich history of Bologna. Using innovative technology and interactive techniques, visitors can stroll along a stretch of an ancient Roman road or see how water was once diverted through the city's extensive canal system. A new exhibit, "When Bologna Trembles," examines the topic of earthquakes, recounting the history and science of this natural phenomenon. The museum is at Via Castiglione 8; it's closed on

Mondays.

Hidden canals: in the 12th century, city engineers created a hydraulic system using locks, canals and underground pipes to distribute water to power the city's lucrative industries of silk weaving and leather tanning. Some 35 miles of canals eventually crisscrossed the medieval city. The canals are still there, but most have been paved over to create roads and bridges.

Luckily, there are a few spots where you can still catch a glimpse of what the extensive canal system must have looked like. One is at Via Piella 16 where a small window looks down upon the Canale delle Moline. The sparkling water and moss-covered walls below call to mind one of Bologna's famous neighbors to the north, Venice. Nearby, on Via Capo di Lucca, is a similar but less picturesque viewpoint, where the canal runs partially uncovered between buildings.

Giorgio Morandi House: Giorgio Morandi is considered Italy's most famous 20th century still-life artist known for his subtle palettes, small canvases and use of common everyday objects, such as jars, boxes and seashells, in his paintings. Born in Bologna in 1890, he moved to this house in 1933, sharing it with his three unmarried sisters until he died in 1964. In the museum, visitors can peer into the rooms where the artist lived and painted. His studio, bedroom, even his walk-in closet where he stored his props, provide a window into the life of this solitary yet devoted artist.

Morandi left behind an extensive body of work. In 2008, New York's Metropolitan Museum staged a retrospective that included nearly 100 still-life paintings and about a dozen landscapes. The Giorgio Morandi House, located at Via Fondazza 36, is only open a few hours a week. Check the schedule online. Admission is free.

SAN FRANCISCO ITALIAN COMMUNITY

CATHERINE ACCARDI

Foundation of the Etruscan City – The Example of Bologna

When we think of where all roads lead, we might think of Rome. There are, of course, any number of other outstanding città in Italy and one of those is Bologna, a city whose origins began, in part, as an Etruscan city.

This would be why, on May 25, the San Francisco Istituto Italiano di Cultura hosted, in conjunction with the Municipality of Bologna and Cultura Italiana, a conference entitled “The Founding and Development of Etruscan, Roman and Medieval Cities-The Example of Bologna.”

Massimo Maracci, Director of Cultura Italiana, Italian Language School of Bologna, Italy, led a conversation with Mary Tolaro-Noyes, author of the book *Bologna Reflections: An Uncommon Guide*, and Lisa Pieraccini, Professor of Classics at UC Berkeley, about the developmental elements of the Etruscan city.

Director Maracci shared details of the event with *L'Italo-Americano*. “Director Barlera from IIC of San Francisco agreed to host the conference and the Mayor of Bologna supported the event. The aim of the conference is to promote in San Francisco the school Cultura Italiana Bologna, which works to spread the Italian culture by teaching our beautiful language.”

Tell us more about Cultura Italiana.

“Cultura Italiana is a school specializing in the diffusion of the Italian language and culture. It has organized language courses in Bologna since 1981. We collaborate with the University of Bologna and Siena, University of Stockholm, Uppsala, Bard College and Keisen University of Tokyo and



Conference participants (left to right) Professor Lisa Pieraccini, Professor Massimo Maracci & Mary Tolaro-Noyes. Photo: Catherine Accardi

different American Universities: Johns Hopkins, Spring Hill College and College of the Holy Cross. Cultura Italiana welcomes 1,400 foreign adult students every year who stay in Bologna an average of four weeks getting to know the Italian way of life and learn the language.” Learn more about Cultura Italiana by visiting their website at <http://www.culturaitaliana.eu>.

What are the special attributes of Bologna and its rich

history?

“Those who come to Bologna are selected tourists because they have chosen a beautiful city, not yet discovered by mass tourism that invades Renaissance cities like Florence, Rome and Venice. Bologna has a medieval type of beauty, mystic and deep. The building of the school is Palazzo Pepoli, ancient castle which names the street ‘Via Castiglione’ (big castle).

“In Bologna the first University of the Western world was born in 1088 (after Beijing, in China), and it still has a fundamental place for knowledge. In history it’s the most famous city in Italy for the quality of its food and way of life, besides its excellent museums.”

Could you elaborate on the Etruscan connection with Bologna?

“Bologna is an Etruscan city. The Etruscan name was Felsina. Destroyed by the Celts, was rebuilt by the Romans with the name ‘Bononia.’ In the suburbs of Bologna, in Villanova di Castenaso, the first remains of the Etruscan natives were found who lived in the VIII century in the region of Bologna (Emilia Romagna), Tuscany, part of Lazio (the region of Rome, also an Etruscan city), and part of

Campania. Close to Bologna there is the only Etruscan city in open air, Kainua (today Marzabotto). It’s the only one because all the other Etruscan cities are covered by modern cities which were built on top of them.”

The conference included a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the importance of

Marzabotto. The PowerPoint is actually available online by going to http://www.culturaitaliana.eu/about/publications_and_lectures. Professor Pieraccini described the evolution of the ancient Etruscan city and the origin of modern day Bologna. The presentation illustrates that it is possible to see the organization of space, the organization of infrastructure (streets, water channels), the squares, the temple and the “ara” (altar for sacrifices). Those who walk in Bologna and in many Italian cities walk on places that used to be sacred. Beneath today’s streets, there are Roman streets, under the Roman streets there are the Etruscan streets with their definite directions from the cosmos.

L'Italo-Americano asked speaker and author, Mary Tolaro-Noyes, for her thoughts on Bologna’s origins. “While

preparing for this event I realized the importance of ‘sacredness,’ or spiritual energy as it applies to the foundation of the city we know as Bologna—the Etruscan, Roman, and Christian elements. I had discovered during my research for the chapter “Pilgrimage” in my book *Bologna Reflections* that in the fourth century both the spiritual and civil structures that rescued the city were owed to the Catholic Church, and centered at the basilica of Santo Stefano. The following excerpt describes the spiritual energy that fascinated me then and still does whenever I enter the holy place:

I am always a pilgrim at Sancta Jerusalem Bononiensis, as the Sanctuary of Santo Stefano is sometimes identified, a reverent traveler to this holy place where tranquility reigns. I ask myself why I, too, often wander here, drawn to the spot that has been a sacred site for millennia. I come to feel close to Bologna’s spiritual center. Even now the Bolognesi consider it the holiest place in their city. I come here to contemplate the past and to feel connected to it. I come to refresh my spirit, to enjoy the silence that allows me to touch my own soul.”

(*Pilgrimage*, pgs.119-20)

ITALIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES provides Bay Area Italian-American seniors and families with trusted resources to help them live healthy, independent and productive lives. We are committed to honoring and preserving the Italian language and culture, with an emphasis on the strength and support that comes from family, community, education and goodwill.

- Translation for seniors/new immigrants
- Community service coordination
- Information and referrals



ITALIAN
COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Preserving Our Culture. Serving Our Community.

CASA COLONIALE JOHN F. FUGAZI
678 GREEN STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133
415•362•6423
WWW.ITALIANCS.COM