

Correggio. A Walk in Town among the charms of art, history and culture

Historical-Artistic Itinerary

Our tour starts from Corso Cavour, where the **Basilica di San Quirino** rises. The construction of the church dedicated to the patron saint of the town started at the beginning of the sixteenth century and ended in 1587. The front was built in 1782, but then some modifications in 1964 gave to the Basilica its current classical appearance. The church has a nave and two aisles. Under the presbytery is a crypt with the saint's relics. A collection of silverware, vestments and other Emilian and Lombard works are preserved inside this building.

Near the Basilica stands the ancient **tower**, erected at the end of the fourteenth century and turned into bell tower when the Basilica was built.

The big square in front of the church was created during the nineteenth century to host the monument dedicated to **Antonio Allegri**, also known as Il Correggio. The statue of the artist dates back to 1880 and is the work of Vincenzo Vela.

On the same street rises a symbol of the local Rinascimento, **Palazzo dei Principi**. Erected for Francesca di Brandeburgo and completed in 1508, the peculiar architecture of this palace shows the influence of Biagio Rossetti, the town planner that worked for the House of Este in Ferrara. The most important elements of the palace are the portal of Istria stone and its refined bas-relief, several frescos, and a frieze called Fregio del Nettuno. This building houses the Civic Library, the Civic Museum and the tourist information office. The Library preserves several works by the writer Vittorio Tondelli, others by the director Vittorio Cottafavi and some documentation of the local Resistance, while the Museum exhibits works by Andrea Mantegna, Antonio Allegri and a collection of Flemish tapestries. The historic archive of the upper floor can be visited on demand.

Reconstructed in 1889 after a fire, the **Civic Theatre** rises near Palazzo dei Principi. This building was Niccolò da Correggio's house during the fifteenth century and became a theatre during the seventeenth century. In the foyer, a frieze showing a tournament is still visible.

The neo-classical building has the typical Italian structure, with a horseshoe shaped auditorium, balconies and three levels of boxes. It is richly decorated with frescos. The theatre is dedicated to the composer Bonifazio Asioli from Correggio.

La **Rocchetta** – literally 'little fortress' – was constructed in 1373, but its current configuration dates back to 1887, when the original structure had to be demolished to build the railway. Today it houses the Youth Hostel. Not far from the Rocchetta, in a square called Piazzetta delle Suore (nuns), is the baroque church called **Chiesa di Santa Chiara** and the **cloistered convent**.

In the old town, in the Renaissance area called Borgonuovo, stands the imposing **Chiesa di San Francesco**. Constructed at the end of the fifteenth century, San Francesco is the most ancient church of the town and preserves two paintings by Antonio Allegri. The most famous is the altar piece portraying the Virgin and Saint Francis. Some exponents from the Da Correggio family are buried here.

In the square called Piazzale Andreoli rises the wide religious complex consisting of the **Chiesa di San Giuseppe Calasanzi** – founded by the Dominicans – and the big convent that housed them for two centuries. Nowadays there is a school in the convent and the church is undergoing renovations.

Piazza Garibaldi can be reached through Bernieri street. The name of the square derives from Giuseppe Garibaldi, the most important figure of the Italian Risorgimento. Garibaldi stayed in town at the Hotel Posta, demolished during the past century.

In this square you can admire the imposing façade of the **Chiesa di San Sebastiano**, built in 1951 and now place for several cultural events.

Back in Corso Mazzini, you can enjoy the perspective of the typical Italian arcades. The high arcades are the setting of the historical buildings of the town.

Noteworthy is the **Palazzo dell'Orologio**, where justice was administered until the eighteenth century. This building closes the street and makes it a square. The name of the building comes from the clock (*orologio*) on it, designed by Quirino Asioli. Under the arcade is a wide fresco that portrays the patron saints of the town, probably a work of Marco Bianchi. A war memorial to the dead, with the **Winged Goddess of Victory**, made by the symbolist sculptor Leonardo Bistolfi, dominates the front part of the palace. The **Palazzo Municipale** (1783), former monastery of the Piarists, has a peculiar curvilinear frontage. It preserves the emblems of the ancient principality, a staircase 'all'imperiale' and some fresco-decorated rooms.

In front of this building are **Palazzo Contarelli**, which dates back to the eighteenth century, and **Palazzo Bellelli**, which belongs to the next century. After a recent renovation, some decorated arches that adorned the workshops of that time have been found under the portico of the palace.

From Corso Mazzini, taking Via Santa Maria, you can enter the first popular neighbourhood established out of the old walls of the city, where the arcades are lower.

Noteworthy is the church **Santa Maria della Misericordia**, built around 1350 and then modified in the next centuries. Four works of Correggio have been exhibited here, among which the missing *Trittico dell'Umanità di Cristo*.

At the end of Via Borgovecchio you can visit the so called '**native home of the painter Antonio Allegri**'. Despite its name, the artist's original house was demolished during the sixteenth century and then rebuilt in 1754. It houses the new documentation centre dedicated to the painter, the **Correggio Art Home**.

In the vicinity of the old town, at the end of Corso Mazzini, stands the **Chiesa della Madonna della Rosa**, built for the prince Siro da Correggio in 1626. Its name comes from the terracotta bas-relief that portrays the Virgin with a rose in her hands. This Virgin has always been prayed for mercy from the people of Correggio. In the vicinity stands the **Jewish cemetery**, the last testimony of one of the most ancient and most important Jewish communities of the province of Reggio Emilia.

Reservation is required for guided tours of the town.
More information: Informaturismo, tel. 0522 631770

Translated by: Francesca Chiussi