



# Ravenna

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## World Heritage









## Ravenna, a city to discover

### **Ravenna is a showcase of art, history and culture of rare beauty.**

Its glorious past makes it a crucial stop for anyone who wants to discover some fundamental aspects of Italian history.

Between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> century, it was the capital of the Western Roman Empire, of the Gothic Kingdom of Theoderic and of the Byzantine Empire.

This magnificent period has left a visible mark. **Eight Early Christian and Byzantine buildings compose the site that UNESCO added to the World Heritage List in 1996.** They are authentic windows on the past that witness an important period of the history of European culture and that made Ravenna the Italian capital of mosaic. Each of these monuments - from the mosaic figures of Justinian and Theodora inside the Basilica of San Vitale to bishop Apollinare in the Basilica of Classe, preserves a treasure to be discovered.

But Ravenna is something more, it is the **city of inspiration**. Dante Alighieri wrote here the final part of the *Divine Comedy* and, as a matter of fact, his work is rich of recalls to this city. Not only Dante but also many other poets, artists and travellers took inspiration from their travels in Ravenna, such as George Byron, Gustav Klimt, Gabriele D'Annunzio and Dario Fo.

Nature lovers will choose Ravenna for its deep relationship with its territory: it is near to the coast and boasts the century-old pine forests of San Vitale and of Classe as well as the natural oasis of Punta Alberete and of Valle Mandriole, giving the landscape irresistible charm. Because of their uniqueness, all these places have become protected areas of the **Po Delta Park**.

The city welcomes its visitors in Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Kennedy and Piazza San Francesco in elegant lounges: **these places of sharing, culture, feast and music** make anyone feel at home.

### **But Ravenna has much more to offer.**

### **Ready to discover it?**

*On the left: Basilica of San Vitale*

*On the right: Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe / Pine forest of Classe / Dante's Tomb (credit: GoneWithTheWind / Shutterstock.com)*



## Ravenna: World Heritage

The UNESCO World Heritage site with its eight extraordinary monuments is one of the reasons why your travel in Ravenna will be unforgettable: the lights, the bright colours in the countless tesserae of the mosaics, the golden sparkle of their inside and the grand history they tell, make their discovery a unique experience.

✿ The **Mausoleum of Galla Placidia** was built by the empress during the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Conceived as a burial site, it never fulfilled its purpose. Inside the little Latin cross plan building hides a suggestive wonder where the warmth of sunlight seeps in through the alabaster windows: the mosaic decorations embrace the visitor who, looking at the ceiling, is struck by a sky full of golden stars.

✿ The **Neonian Baptistery** (also known as “Baptistery of the Orthodoxes”) amazes for its inner decorations, clearly of Hellenistic-Roman influence. The dome was commissioned by Bishop Neon towards the end of the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century but the building had been built before. The central medallion of the dome features the rite of baptism with Jesus child and Baptist surrounded by the figures of the twelve Apostles.

✿ The **Arian Baptistery** was built at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century during Theoderic's Kingdom. Inside this sober clay building, the cupola is richly decorated with a splendid mosaic decoration. This is the only building entirely preserved that witnesses the Arian worship of the Goths, based on the figure of Christ, represented both in his holiness and humanity.

✿ The **Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo**, built by Theoderic at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, was given its name during the 9<sup>th</sup> century to distinguish it from the one of Classe, when the remains of the Patron Saint of the city were moved from the former site to this new church. The inner mosaic decorations feature an astounding representation of the Ancient Port of Classe and of the procession of Saints celebrating their faith in Christ.







✿ The **Archepiscopal Chapel of Sant'Andrea** is the only perfectly preserved Early Christian chapel to the present day. It was initially dedicated to Christ but it was later named after Sant'Andrea during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when the remains of the saint were brought in Ravenna. The cross plan room is marked by a decorative scheme dedicated to the glorification of Christ's figure. At the entrance, a little vestibule is decorated with marbles and mosaics and the barrel dome depicts hundreds of colourful birds and white lilies.

✿ The **Mausoleum of Theoderic**, unique for its architecture, was built by the Gothic King (454-526) while he was still living, in an area close to the city walls that was overlooking the lagoon at that time. The building's square blocks of dry Istrian limestone joined with solid metal cramps show an outstanding artistry of construction. The Mausoleum consists of two polygonal overlapping rooms surmounted by the magnificent monolithic dome of over 230 tons. The building preserves the porphyry tub where the remains of Theoderic were presumably deposited.

✿ The majestic **Basilica of San Vitale**, built in 547, is maybe the best example of Late Roman artistry. The mosaics decorating the apsis are of remarkable beauty: the image of Christ on the globe surrounded by Archangels Michael and Gabriel confirms San Vitale as the undisputed wonder of mosaics. At the sides of the apsis, the representations of the courts of Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora are astounding: it's a still living part of Byzantium.

✿ The **Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe**, few km outside the city centre, was built over the burial place of the first Archbishop of the city Apollinare. It was consecrated by Bishop Massimiano in 549 a.D. and it is considered the highest example of Early Christian basilica. In the polychrome mosaic of the apsis, the saint is depicted at the centre of an idyllic wood animated by a sacred flock of sheep, birds and trees that grow until the golden sky where a gemmed cross with Christ's face at its centre stands out.

*Top: Mausoleum of Galla Placidia / Mausoleum of Theoderic*

*Centre: Arian Baptistery / Basilica of San Vitale*

*Below: Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo / Basilica of Sant' Apollinare in Classe*

## City of art and culture

The **MAR - Art Museum of the city of Ravenna**, hosts inside the Loggetta Lombardesca the collections of the municipal art gallery and an important collection of contemporary mosaics, in which the mosaic technique meets and dialogues with painting. Moreover, it hosts many interesting exhibitions of visual arts. Among the most famous artworks, special mention goes to the tombstone of knight Guidarello Guidarelli, whose beauty has enchanted visitors and still is one of the favourite topics of the Museum.

The **National Museum of Ravenna**, hosted in the complex of San Vitale, displays important archaeological findings from the Roman and Late Antique Lapidarium along with the minor and applied arts collections coming from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century monastic collections. Several valuable findings are spread throughout the complex, such as fabrics, ivory objects, old armours, weapons and Renaissance bronze statuettes. The most important Late Antique artifacts were recovered from some Early Christian and Byzantine monuments of the city.

The **Archepiscopal Museum** is located inside the Archepiscopal Palace and keeps the **Chapel of Sant'Andrea**, along with many artworks coming from the old Cathedral. The ivory pulpit of Archbishop Massimiano (6<sup>th</sup> century) is the crown jewel of the collection: its grandeur lies in the well-refined decorations of its engraved ivory panels depicting the story of Christ's life, of Joseph and of the *Genesis* along with other symbols of Christianity.

The historic **Classense Library** hosted inside a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Camaldolese abbey preserves an important collection of old manuscripts and modern texts: the printed book heritage counts about 800 thousands of books; among these, *Aristophanes* is certainly worth a mention being the only volume that contains all of the eleven plays by the Greek author. In addition, the Aula Magna is a real sight for any book lover.

There is another historic **library**, named after author **Alfredo Oriani**. The library is specialised in contemporary history and social studies. It stands where once was Casa Rizzetti, famous because it hosted Lord Byron during his journey in Ravenna in 1819.





## City of inspiration

Over the centuries, Ravenna has always been attracting brilliant scholars and travellers who praised the city electing it as the **city of inspiration**. First of all, **Dante Alighieri**, who found in Ravenna his “last refuge” after his exile and his peregrinations. He wrote the last part of the *Divine Comedy* right here and many of his verses are rich of recalls to our territory: beyond the mention to the Pine Forest of Classe, there are many hints to the mosaics of Ravenna, which deeply influenced his work.

The **Area of Silence** (“Zona del Silenzio”) is Dante’s heart in the city and includes the oratory **Quadraro di Braccioforte**, **Dante’s Tomb** and **Dante’s Museum**. The Tomb was built between 1780 and 1782 by Camillo Morigia, while the inner bass-relief was realised by Pietro Lombardo and dates back to 1483, whereas the Museum is hosted inside the splendid venue of the **Old Franciscan Cloisters**.

Just a few steps from Dante’s Tomb, the **Basilica of San Francesco** is one of the places the Supreme Poet used to visit during his stay (14<sup>th</sup> century). It definitely deserves a visit, especially because of its crypt. Built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century to preserve the spoils of Archbishop Neon, it can be seen through a little window inserted in the major altar. It is a wonder for the eyes: because of a phenomenon called “subsidence”, the amazing mosaic floor is covered by water, making its colours even brighter.

The cultural life of the city beats in its theatres: the **Dante Alighieri Theatre** and the **Luigi Rasi Theatre** offer a full calendar of events of first choice – from opera to drama, from music to ballet. Major events like **Ravenna Festival** with its rich summer calendar and **Autumn Trilogy** dedicated to opera make the city a cultural destination of European relevance.



*On the left: Classense Library / MAR - Art Museum of the city of Ravenna / National Museum of Ravenna*

*On the right: Old Franciscan Cloisters / Basilica of San Francesco / Dante Alighieri Theatre*

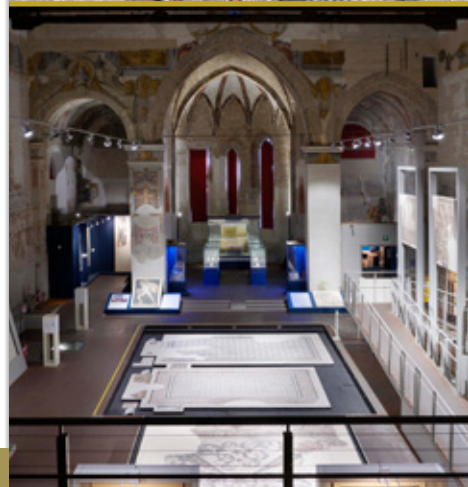
## Archaeology and history of the city

**Classis Ravenna - Museum of the City and of the Territory** was developed from the Ex-Sugar Factory of Classe thanks to an important restoration work of industrial archaeology. It suggests a journey in the history of Ravenna: the Etruscan-Umbrian origins, the Roman Age, the Gothic kingdom, the Byzantine Age up to the Middle Ages. Following the timeline "Linea del Tempo", the more than 600 original findings on display, along with the graphical and 3D reconstructions and the films, tell the evolution of the city and its territory. Together with the **Ancient Port of Classe** and the **Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe**, the museum builds the **Archaeological Park of Classe**. From the site of the Ancient Port, resurfaces one of the most important harbours of the Roman and Byzantine reality.

Archaeology and mosaic lovers should absolutely pay a visit to the **Domus of the Stone Carpets**, the **Tamo Museum - All the Adventure of Mosaic** and the **Rasponi Crypt & Roof Gardens**. The **Domus** is made of fourteen rooms, all paved with polychrome mosaics belonging to an old Byzantine building of the 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> century a.D. The figurative elements of the mosaics *Dance of the Seasons Spirits* and *Good Shepherd* are of outstanding uniqueness. Inside the suggestive venue of the Church of San Nicolò, the **Tamo Museum** offers a fascinating itinerary throughout the mosaic heritage from the Antique period to the more recent artworks; the sections, such as "Mosaics between Hell and Heaven" and the "Spirit of Waters", are dedicated to the *Divine Comedy* and to the mosaic floors of an old Roman imperial Domus. The colourful mosaics of the noble chapel called **Rasponi Crypt** derive from the Church of San Severo in Classe and date back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Crypt features a magnificent Neogothic Tower and it is immersed in the **Roof Gardens of Palazzo della Provincia**, from which the view of the city is superb.

The so-called **Palace of Theoderic** has been the focus of some studies carried out starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its real function is still unknown: some scholars think it could be part of a guardhouse dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century, whereas others think that it could be the remains of a church.

In the great public park of the **Brancaleone Fortress**, you can walk along the walls of what remains of a Venetian fortress. Built in 1457. Today it keeps a park, one of the larger green areas of the city, and a cinema-arena in summer.





## Sea, nature and amusement

Ravenna not only is art and culture, but it also has many other activities for nature, sea and outdoor lovers. A few kilometres away from the city centre, **nine seaside towns speckle the 35 km long coastline** of the Adriatic Sea. From Casalborsetti to Lido di Savio, fine sandy beaches welcome those who are in search of relax, sports or just want to have fun: there is a resort for any taste!

Nature lovers can trace their path through the century-old **pine forests of San Vitale and of Classe**: let be enraptured by its charm, as many other travellers did before when they came in Ravenna. The uniqueness of the landscapes earned them a place among the nature reserves of the **Po Delta Park** area.

The fascinating **natural oasis of Punta Alberete and Valle Mandriole** are the only sweet water swamps left from the many ones that originally covered the territory of Ravenna centuries ago. These suggestive natural glimpses with their flooded forests and the rustle of reeds in the wind make them the perfect natural habitat for many rare birds species. **NatuRa - Museum of Natural Sciences Alfredo Brandolini**, which also is part of the Po Delta Park, is rich with historical ornithological, mussels, reptiles and mammalian collections of the territory and of foreign countries.

**Mirabilandia** is one of the most beloved amusement parks in Italy. It is the best destination if you are looking for emotions - fairy tales as well as thrilling experiences.

*On the left: Classis Ravenna - Museum of the City and Territory / Domus of the Stone Carpets / TAMO Museum*

*On the right: Pialassa Piomboni / Beaches Brew Festival / Beaches of Ravenna*

*Backside, on the top: Dante's Tomb / Piazza del Popolo / Mausoleum of Galla Placidia / Basilica of San Vitale*  
*Backside, on the bottom: Wetlands of Ravenna / Neonian Baptistery / Via IV Novembre (credit: GoneWithTheWind)*  
*Rasponi Crypt*





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