



A Few Hours in Bologna – the Chair’s View

Are you going to spend only a few hours in the city centre of Bologna, between a keynote speech and a technical session? Here are few suggestions for a walk. Do not expect to find here necessarily what can be found in an official guide!



Let’s start the walk in **Piazza Maggiore** (the main square). On each side, a wonderful piece of history. First, **San Petronio’s church**, unfinished (it was originally meant to be larger than San Pietro in Rome, but then it was not completed for various reasons: lack of financial resources, and, someone says, because Rome was not pleased by the idea...). On the West side, **Palazzo d’Accursio** – the old town hall – with the beautiful statue of Pope Gregorio XIII, looking at the square since the 16th century. On the East side, **Palazzo de’ Banchi**; built during the 15th century, it was used – and still it is! – as location of shops (at that time, mostly for money exchange; today, for money waste!) with a number of fine and expensive fashion shops aligned under the portico, named the

“Pavaglione”. Finally, on the North side is **Palazzo del Podestà**, even older: built during the 13th century. For a visit, you just need to wait for the conference banquet that will be held there. The best place to look at the facades on the four sides is from the centre of the square, with your feet on the “crescentone”: the big rectangular curb that was built on 1934 to protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic, nicknamed after the popular “crescenta”, a fried food specialty for the locals.

After this 360° view, let’s take a walk in the pedestrian Via D’azeglio. After 100-200 meters, there is a small square on the right. At the corner, the home of **Lucio Dalla**. Lucio lived here. One of the most famous Italian singers (never heard about his “Caruso”? Check here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqtSul3H2xs>), he died few years ago. You see his shadow on the house façade. Sometimes in the late afternoon you can hear his voice signing, in the narrow street...

Let’s continue walking: when you reach via Farini you turn left and then left again in **Piazza Galvani**. If you notice a frog on Galvani’s statue, well, I assume you know why. Luigi Galvani was born and died in Bologna. You can now continue along San Petronio’s side. Before reaching Piazza Maggiore again, under the portico, you will find the entrance to the historical site of the University of Bologna. The building, and the historical **anatomy lecture room** (though re-built after World War 2 when it was destroyed by bombs) deserve a stop. Now, let’s reach Piazza Maggiore again and dive into the most folkloristic part of the city: take **Via Pescherie Vecchie** under the porticos of Palazzo dei Banchi, where the most ancient food market takes place (and where you can buy typical food specialties like Mortadella and other salami), then turn right in Via Drapperie and then left on Via Clavature. Then, walk few hundred meters till when you reach Via Santo Stefano; now, look on your right, and you will see the most beautiful square (actually, it is a triangle) in Bologna and, possibly, in the world: **Piazza Santo Stefano**. You will notice a church at the end of the Piazza. It is not only a church. It is the entrance to a sequence of four churches (for some historical reasons, we say “the seven churches” but actually they are four), one inside/besides the other. Enter, and enjoy this piece of medieval adventure. The oldest one dates back to the 11th century (for your curiosity: Romano Prodi, former President of the European Commission, lives 50 meters from here).

After you exit from the same door you entered, walk on the right hand side of the Piazza and enter into the gallery you will find on the right (Galleria Isolani). At its exit is Strada Maggiore; look above your head: you are under a medieval wooden portico (**il portico delle tre frecce**), and you might see some iron arrows plunged into the ceiling. They are there since centuries.

Now, you should turn left and walk till the end of the street, when you will be at the bottom of the tallest medieval tower of Bologna: **Torre degli Asinelli**, about 100 m high. You can reach the top easily... by stairs (498 steps)! The sight from there deserves the effort: you will understand why Bologna is known as “the Red” (the other reason being of political nature).

Finally, it is time for buying something which is a true flavour of the city: once you leave the tower, at the corner with Via Zamboni, there is a bar (**Bottega Portici**), which is more than a bar: on the shop window you will find ladies making pasta with their own hands. They sell it, and I recommend you buy some memory of Bologna there... Now take Via Rizzoli and in few minutes you end up close to Piazza Maggiore again, on the side small square Piazza re Enzo where the **Neptune Statue** made by Giambologna (despite the name, he was Belgian). Have you noticed anything similar in Florence? Well, in Piazza della Signoria there, there is a copy, in white. This is the original, that’s the copy... Enjoy the walk.