

Parma Guide

What to See on Your Own

The Way To Italy



Parma on Your Own

Parma Cathedral

Officially known as Santa Maria Assunta Cathedral, it's one of the most beautiful churches in Italy. First built in 1074, the ancient church lies in the Duomo Square and opens at 7:30 am. Two 13th century lions guard the main entrance. The cathedral is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and is considered one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Italy.

Dome Of Parma Cathedral

The stunning Correggio fresco in the Cathedral's cupola dates from 1526. It's one of the most famous paintings in history and transformed the art of dome interiors. The artist spent eight years creating this mesmerizing High Renaissance masterpiece. It's an absolute must visit with one day in Parma. The fresco's theatricality foreshadows the coming of the Baroque period. You'll need to pay a few euros to light it up. The fresco depicts The Assumption of the Virgin, i.e., the moment she is passively assumed into heaven and joyfully reunited with her son. Craning her head upward, Mary rises through an ocean filled with frolicking angels and dense clouds. Adam and Eve are on Mary's right and left. The angels seem inspired by Michelangelo's nudes from the Sistine Chapel frescos. For a closer look at the frescos, you can walk up the stairs on the right side of the nave.

Baptistery of Parma

The Baptistery is right next to the Cathedral. It was the brain child of the great Romanesque architect Antelami and is perhaps the most singular and spectacular baptistery in Italy. Begun in 1196, it's a mix of Romanesque and Gothic styles. The Baptistery has a unique octagonal shape. On each side are four open loggias with 16 slender columns.

Baptistery of Parma continued

Inside, you'll find colorful 13th century ceiling frescos depicting the seasons and the zodiac signs. They were painted by craftsman from the Po River region. The ceiling is an umbrella vault divided into 16 sections, extending from the central keystone. The frescos are Byzantine in style. In the center of the Baptistery is an octagonal baptismal font intended for full immersions. A smaller second font is in a niche. Of the many statues in the baptistery, the two most famous are sculptures of two seasons (winter and spring) by Antelami.

Church of San Giovanni Evangelista

Located directly behind Parma Cathedral. This church was built for the Benedictine order between 1498 and 1519 after a fire destroyed the previous church. The doors will be closed, but they're not locked. So don't be deterred. Just push your way in. There's also an illumination box that you put euros in to light up the paintings. You can select up to four areas. In 1604, an elaborate pink marble Baroque facade was added, which contrasts with the Renaissance architecture of the adjoining cloisters and convent. By far, the most spectacular piece is the dome fresco depicting Jesus and the apostles. This is the first of Correggio's illusionistic dome frescos. It's created in a dramatic di sotto in su perspective, which makes it seem like the figures are standing on a transparent piece of glass. The subject of the fresco is somewhat unclear. It may be the death of St. John the Evangelist. Others say it's the vision of St. John on the Greek island of Patmos that comes from his book Revelations.

Camera di San Paolo

Just 5 minutes from the Baptistery is the Camera di San Paolo. It was Correggio's first major commission. It proved to be a warm up for his more fantastical dome frescos. The Camera (or room) was the private space of Giovanna Piacenza, a worldly abbess of a Benedictine nunnery. The room wasn't open to the public. The Camera stands as one of the great works of the High Renaissance. Ceiling frescos were very rare at the time.

Piazza Garibaldi

Parma has a number of charming squares, but Piazza Garibaldi is the most notable. In the center is a statue of Giuseppe Garibaldi, who was instrumental in unifying Italy. There are loads of shops, eateries, and outdoor cafes. A great place for lunch and people watch.

Palazzo del Governatore

The Palazzo del Governatore, a Baroque and Neo-Classical building, dominates the Garibaldi square. Inside is the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art.

Via Ferdinando Maestri

Be sure to wander down the hidden side streets. Every street features beautiful houses in different colors. Via Ferdinando Maestri is picturesquely strung with lamps and lanterns.

Castello dei Burattini - Castle of Puppets

This free museum was established thanks to the Giordano Ferrari collection, the most important collection related to animation theatre in Italy. Inside the museum is an exhibition features a considerable part of the material that was patiently collected by the Parmesan puppeteer during more than sixty years of activity. The collection does not only contain items produced by the Ferrari family; it primarily consists of pieces from various sources, that were collected, acquired or donated by other artists. Approximately 500 pieces are on display (puppets, marionettes, heads, stage props, photographs and posters), a small part of a much larger collection that includes, in addition to the wooden actors, scenery, scripts, works on the theatre and a paper archive that is an important testimony of the world of theatrical entertainment.

About Me



Hello!
I'm Pamela



I have been organizing and leading tours throughout Italy since 2011.

Fond experiences of time with my Italian grand-parents (grandfather born in Sicily) lead me to seek out and share authentic adventures in Italy.

- ❖ 23 years of experience in traveling to and from Italy. Currently living in Florence Italy.
- ❖ Passionate to work with local, family-owned, small businesses for authentic Italian experiences.

I can't wait to see what we can create together in the future. *Pamela Bomkamp*

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