Three hours in the heart of our city

Your journey of discovery around Bologna starts at the Fountain of Neptune, one of the symbols of our city and the work of the Flemish sculptor known as Gaetano. Before visiting the splendid Strada Maggiore, your route will take you through the lively, multi-media area of San Petronio and enter Salaborsa. In the 19th century, this was the city’s economic centre and today it is a place of culture. With its rich, multi-media library, it has become one of the favourite meeting places for the people of Bologna. In the middle of the building there is a covered square, where you will meet the first unexpected side of Bologna. Below your feet, a glass floor will offer you a view of the original city. Here, you will be able to sip a coffee spanning two thousand years, while admiring the art nouveau ceilings and seeing close up the archaeological remains on which our city stands today.

After observing the beginning of Bologna’s history, you are now ready to continue your journey, entering Piazza Maggiore, known simply as the “piazza” by the locals. Let yourself be fascinated by this wide square, the great area surrounded by some of the buildings that have marked the history of this city for centuries. First, you will return home to the City Art Collection and the Basilica of San Petronio, housing the largest sundial in the world. Before leaving Piazza Maggiore, play a little game. Below the open arcade of the so-called “four corners of the arch”, you will be heard by anyone who is at the opposite corner.

From the piazza, walk along Via dell’Archiginnasio, with its beautiful loggia. Following the road that runs alongside the Basilica San Petronio, you will reach the Museo Civico Archeologico (Archaeological Museum) and here, if you are so inclined, you can find out more about Etruscan and Roman Bologna through the archaeological exhibits. You can also visit the museum’s superb Egyptian collection. Here you will see Palazzo dell’Archiginnasio, the first unified seat of the University of Bologna, founded in 1088.

From Via Zamboni, going towards Via Indipendenza, you will discover another unexpected side of Bologna, the underground waterways that were canals until two centuries ago. Under the arcade of Via Piella, you will glimpse a talk in the splendid “Fountain of Water”, dedicated to the River Reno. Shortly afterwards, you will reach the ground level again, where the buildings have been restored and where the Bolognese people can enjoy an aperitif at the end of the day.

After this refreshing interval, cross Via Castiglione and be astonished to discover that it is not one church but four of the former seven. However, the consequence of the historical events that took place in this corner of the city, from Piazza Santo Stefano, along the covered passageway of Corto Boldi and soon you will be in Strada Maggiore. From this point, at last you can see the Asinelli and the Garisenda Towers, side by side at the centre of a circle from where all our city’s main streets radiate. Continue along Strada Maggiore to the Two Towers, the tallest of the twenty still standing in this city of towers, which in medieval times towered over one another in the fight for power in central Italy. Go back to Piazza Maggiore, walk along Via Indipendenza, the main shopping street. If you’ve lost track of how many culture, a tiny video will allow you to visit some of the most delightful museums in the city, the Museo Medievale (Medieval Museum).