

Ferrara

Emilia-Romagna · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Ferrara is a calm, flat city on the plain of the River Po, between Bologna and Venice. For three centuries it was the seat of the Este family, one of the great courts of the Italian Renaissance. Its centre is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Medieval lanes in the south meet wide, straight Renaissance streets in the north, an early example of modern town planning. An almost complete ring of brick walls still surrounds the whole old town.

Ferrara is a city of bicycles, and locals ride everywhere. It suits travelers who like art, history and a slower pace, with fewer crowds than its famous neighbours. Two or three days are enough to see the main sights. The poet *Ludovico Ariosto* wrote *Orlando Furioso* here, and the city is the setting of *Giorgio Bassani*'s novels about its Jewish community.

When to visit

Late spring and early autumn are the best times, with mild weather for cycling and walking. July and August are hot and humid. Winter is cold, grey and often foggy, but the museums are quiet.

The biggest event of the year is the **Palio di Ferrara**, with roots in the 13th century. In May the city's historic districts hold parades in Renaissance costume and flag-throwing contests. On the last weekend of May they race on horseback, on foot and on donkeys in Piazza Ariostea. In late August the Ferrara Buskers Festival fills the streets with street musicians from many countries.

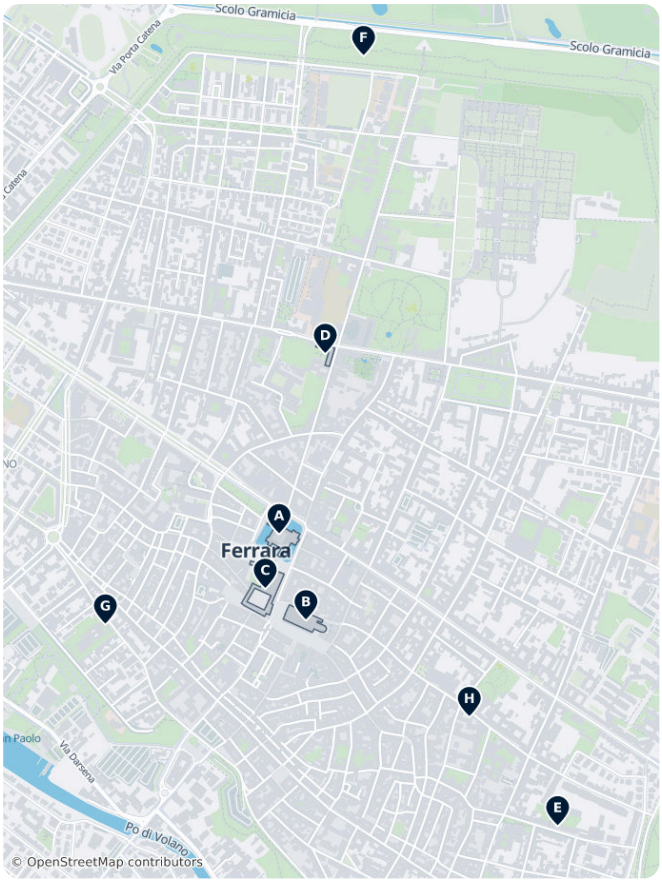
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for cycling	8° / 13° Feels like 4°	2° / -2°	Dry air · Calm winds
February	Good Good for cycling	10° / 16° Feels like 7°	2° / -2°	Dry air
March	Great Great for cycling	15° / 20° Feels like 11°	5° / 0°	Dry air
April	Great Great for cycling	19° / 24°	9° / 4°	Dry air · Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 29°	14° / 9°	Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for sightseeing	29° / 35°	18° / 14°	Calm winds
July	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 38°	21° / 17°	21 sunny days · Humid air · Calm winds · Up to 6 days above 35°
August	Fair Fair for sightseeing	32° / 38°	21° / 17°	Humid air · Calm winds · Up to 6 days above 35°
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 32°	16° / 12°	Calm winds
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	12° / 7°	Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for cycling	14° / 20°	7° / 1°	Dry air · Calm winds
December	Fair Fair for cycling	9° / 13° Feels like 5°	3° / -2°	Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: May, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

The main sights are close together in a flat centre that is easy to explore on foot or by bike.



- **A** Este Castle is a moated brick fortress from 1385 in the very centre, with the ducal apartments inside. Restoration works began in 2026 and will run until 2030. The castle stays open during the works, but some rooms may be closed, so check before you go.
- **B** Cattedrale di San Giorgio Martire was consecrated in 1135. Its carved façade mixes Romanesque and Gothic styles, and a row of small shops still lines its south side.
- **C** Palazzo Municipale was the first home of the Este family. It faces the cathedral, and its inner courtyard has a grand staircase.
- **D** Palazzo dei Diamanti is famous for its façade of about 8,500 marble blocks cut like diamonds. It holds the city's picture gallery and large art exhibitions.
- **E** Palazzo Schifanoia was a pleasure palace of the Este. Its Hall of the Months is covered in 15th-century frescoes of court life, the zodiac and the seasons.
- **F** Mura di Ferrara run for about 9 km around the old town. Today they form a green belt with bastions, trees and a path on top.
- **G** National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah tells the story of more than two thousand years of Jewish life in Italy. It is housed in the city's former prison.
- **H** Museo di Casa Romei is a 15th-century merchant's house with painted rooms, wooden ceilings and a quiet courtyard.

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What to experience

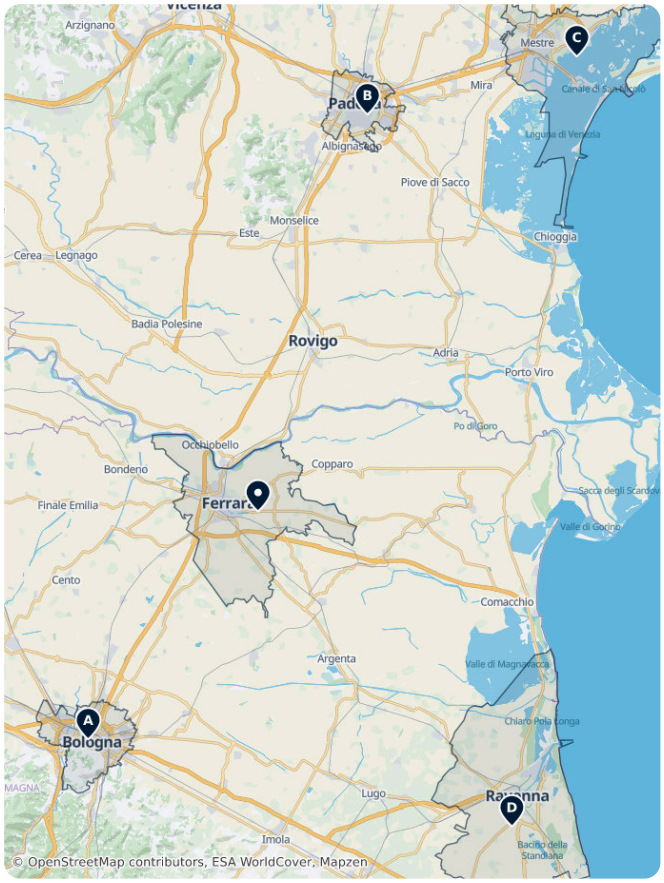
These activities are typical of Ferrara and part of local life.

- **Ride a bike around the walls**: the path on top of Mura di Ferrara makes a 9 km loop under the trees. Locals walk, run and cycle here, especially at sunset.
- **Follow the places of Bassani's novels**: walk from the old ghetto streets around Via Mazzini to the Cimitero Ebraico, where the writer is buried. These are the settings of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*.
- **Watch street performers in August**: during the Ferrara Buskers Festival, musicians and acrobats play on squares and corners all over the centre for several evenings.
- **See an opera or concert**: the Teatro Comunale di Ferrara, opened at the end of the 18th century, has a full season of opera, concerts and theatre.

Day trips

Ferrara sits between the big art cities of the north and the wetlands of the Po Delta. These trips are easy in a day, listed from closest to farthest.

- Ⓐ Bologna (≈30–50 min by train): the regional capital, known for its arcades, medieval towers and food.
- Comacchio (≈40 min by car): a small lagoon town with canals and bridges. It is the gateway to the Po Delta Park, good for boat trips and birdwatching.
- Pomposa Abbey (≈45 min by car): a Benedictine abbey with a tall Romanesque bell tower and medieval frescoes, alone in the flat countryside near the coast.
- Ⓑ Padua (≈30–60 min by train): a university city with Giotto's frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel and the large Basilica of Saint Anthony.
- Ⓒ Venice (≈1–1.5 hours on fast trains): the city of canals, reachable for a long day out.
- Ⓓ Ravenna (≈1 hour 15 min by train): famous for its early Christian and Byzantine mosaics.
- Mantua (≈1 hour 20 min by car): another Renaissance court city, set between three lakes, with the vast Ducal Palace.



Where to explore

Ferrara is one of several historic cities in Emilia-Romagna linked by regional trains.

- The regional capital and main rail hub: Bologna, to the south-west.
- Toward the coast: Ravenna and the beach resort of Rimini.
- Farther west, along the Via Emilia: Modena and Parma, both famous for food.
- North across the Po, in the Veneto: Padua and Venice.

Getting there

- **By air**: the nearest airport is Bologna Guglielmo Marconi, about 50 km away. A private airport bus to Ferrara takes about 1 hour; check its times in advance. Otherwise, take the Marconi Express monorail to Bologna Centrale station, then a train to Ferrara.
- **By train**: Ferrara station is on the main line between Bologna and Venice, a 15-minute walk west of the castle. Regional trains reach Bologna in 30–50 minutes and Padua in 30–60 minutes. Some high-speed trains between Venice and Rome also stop here. Check times on Trenitalia.
- **By car**: the A13 motorway between Bologna and Padua passes just outside the city.

Getting around

- **By bike**: this is the local way to get around. The centre is flat, many streets have little traffic, and bikes can be rented near the station and in the centre.
- **On foot**: all the main sights are within a 20-minute walk of the castle.
- **By bus**: city buses are run by TPER. You can pay on board by tapping a contactless bank card on the green validator, with no extra charge. Tickets from the machine on board cost more. Buses are most useful from the station to the centre. See TPER.
- **Tourist information**: the official tourist office has maps and cycling routes. See Ferrara tourist information.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The historic centre is flat and compact; the main sights are within a 20-minute walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

Ferrara is a bicycle city: flat streets, little traffic in the centre and a 9 km path on the walls.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: not for the city, which is best on foot or by bike. A car helps for the Po Delta and the countryside.
- **Restrictions**: much of the historic centre is a **limited traffic zone (ZTL)** with cameras. Do not drive in without a permit, or you will receive a fine by post.
- **Parking**: use the paid car parks just outside or along the walls and walk or cycle in.
- **Fog**: in winter, thick fog is common on the roads of the Po plain. Drive slowly.

Food & drink

Ferrara has its own cooking, different from Bologna's. Try cappellacci di zucca, pasta stuffed with pumpkin and served with butter and sage or meat sauce. Salama da sugo is a spiced pork sausage, slowly boiled and served with mashed potatoes. The local bread, the coppia ferrarese, is twisted into four crunchy arms. For dessert, look for pampepato, a spiced chocolate cake, and tenerina, a soft chocolate cake. Eel from the Comacchio lagoons appears on many menus.

Good places to eat cluster in the medieval lanes south of the cathedral, around Via Mazzini, Via Saraceno and Via delle Volte. The squares around the cathedral and the castle are busy with cafés and wine bars at aperitivo time.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Ferrara is a very safe city, and violent crime against visitors is rare. Bike theft is the most common problem, so always lock your bike to something fixed, even for a short stop. In summer, mosquitoes are common in the evening, especially near the walls and parks, so bring repellent. Tap water is safe to drink.

History

The Este family took power in Ferrara in the 13th century and ruled for more than three hundred years. After a revolt in 1385, *Niccolò II d'Este* built Este Castle to protect his family. The 15th century was the golden age of the court, when artists painted the frescoes of Palazzo Schifanoia. In 1492 Duke *Ercole I* doubled the size of the city. His architect *Biagio Rossetti* planned the straight streets of the new northern quarter, with Palazzo dei Diamanti at its main crossroads. The poets *Ariosto* and *Tasso* worked at the court, and *Lucrezia Borgia*, duchess of Ferrara, is buried in Monastero del Corpus Domini.

In 1598 the Este line ended and the city passed to the Pope. Ferrara became a quiet provincial town, which is why so much of its old fabric survives. Its large Jewish community lived in a ghetto from the 17th century until Italian unification, a story told in the National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah. In 1995 the Renaissance city became a UNESCO World Heritage site, later extended to the Po Delta.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

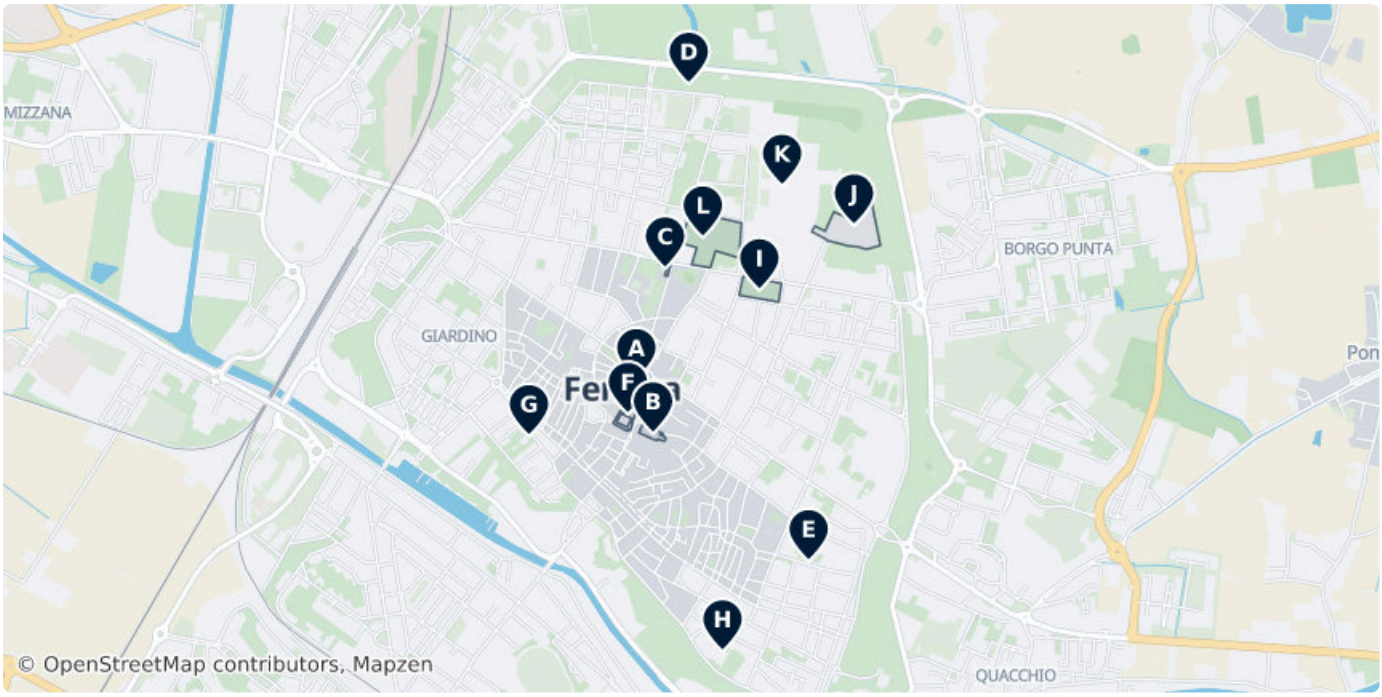
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Ferrara Unmissables

The essential sights of Ferrara, a UNESCO World Heritage city. Start at the moated Este Castle and the cathedral, walk north into the planned Renaissance quarter of the Addizione Erculea, and finish with a walk or bike ride on the nine-kilometre ring of city walls.





A Castello Estense

The moated brick castle of the Este dukes, begun in 1385 in the heart of the city. Visit the ducal apartments, the prisons and the towers, with views over the old town.

Largo Castello 1, 44121 Ferrara (44.83770, 11.61946)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:00

castelloestense.it, +39 0532 419180



B Ferrara Cathedral

The cathedral of San Giorgio, consecrated in 1135, with a carved Romanesque and Gothic façade and a row of medieval shop arcades along its side.

35 Piazza Trento e Trieste, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83557, 11.62040)



C Palazzo dei Diamanti

A Renaissance palace famous for its façade of about 8,500 marble blocks cut like diamonds. It holds the city's art gallery and major exhibitions.

Corso Ercole I D'Este, 21, 44121 Ferrara, Italy (44.84216, 11.62107)

palazzodiamanti.it, +39 0532 244949



D Walls of Ferrara

An almost complete ring of Renaissance walls, about 9 km long, now a green belt with bastions. Locals walk, run and cycle along the top.

64 Viale Giacomo Leopardi, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.84953, 11.62241)

servizi.comune.fe.it/8103/mura-estensi



E Palazzo Schifanoia

An Este pleasure palace whose Hall of the Months is covered in 15th-century frescoes of court life, the zodiac and the seasons.

25 Via Scandiana, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83047, 11.62917)



F Palazzo Municipale

The first residence of the Este family, begun in 1245 and now the town hall. Its courtyard and grand staircase open onto the main squares.

14 Piazza del Municipio, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83635, 11.61898)



G National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah

The national museum of more than two thousand years of Jewish life in Italy, housed in the city's former prison.

Via Piangipane 79, 44121 Ferrara (44.83546, 11.61340)

Fr–Su 10:00–18:00

meisweb.it, +39 0532 769137



H Sant'Antonio in Polesine

A quiet Benedictine convent still home to nuns. Its church holds medieval frescoes from the 13th and 14th centuries.

15C Via del Gambone, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.82687, 11.62432)



I Piazza Ariostea

A large Renaissance square with a column topped by the poet Ariosto. The sunken centre hosts the horse and flag races of the Palio.

10 Piazza Ariostea, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.84129, 11.62639)

Mo–Su Open 24/7



J Cimitero Ebraico

A green, peaceful cemetery inside the walls, in use since the 17th century. The writer Giorgio Bassani is buried here.

Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.84387, 11.63172)



K Ferrara Charterhouse

A former Carthusian monastery, now the monumental city cemetery, with long arcades around a wide lawn and the church of San Cristoforo.

Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.84546, 11.62767)



L Parco Massari

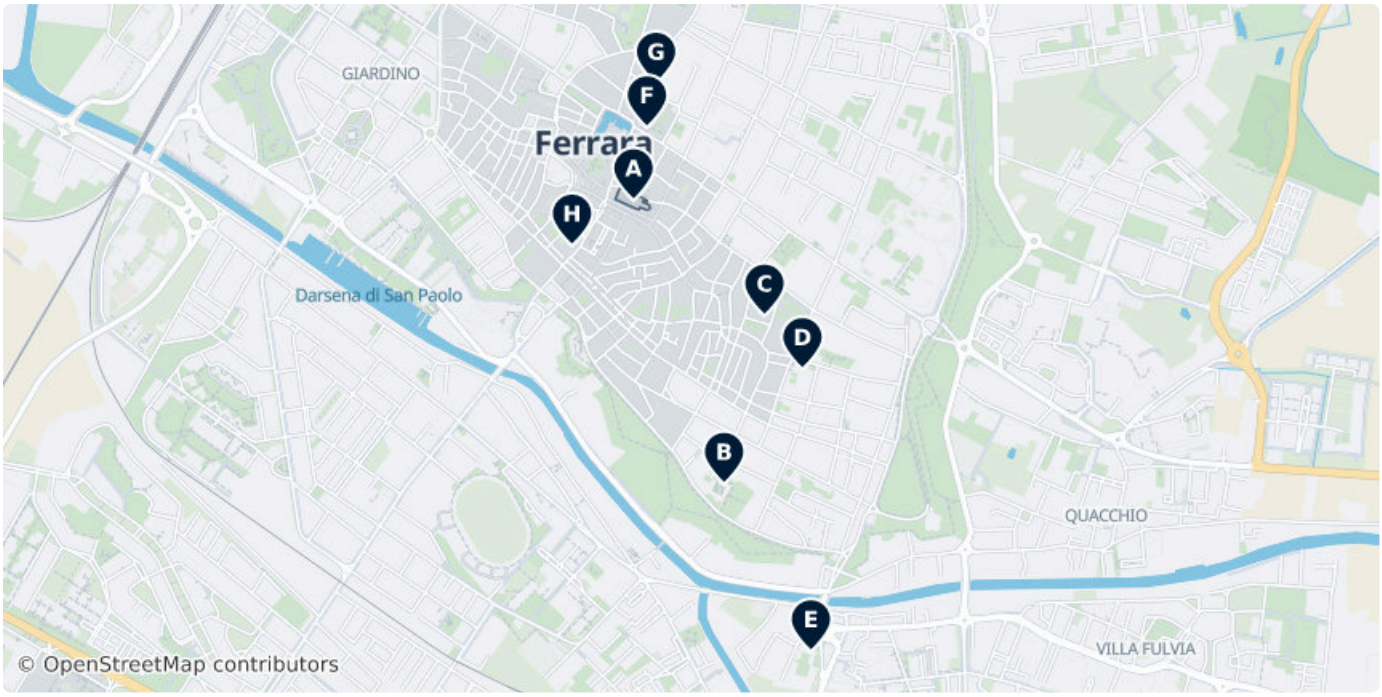
The largest park inside the walls, laid out in 1780 as an English-style garden with tall old trees. A good shady break between museums.

Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.84340, 11.62320)

Nov-Feb Mo–Su	08:00–18:00
Mar Mo–Su	08:00–20:00
May-Sep Mo–Su	07:00–24:00

Ferrara's Sacred Sites

Churches and convents inside Ferrara's walls, from the 12th-century cathedral to quiet cloisters where the Este family and their court are buried.





A Ferrara Cathedral

The city's main church, consecrated in 1135, with a richly carved façade and a museum of its treasures nearby.

35 Piazza Trento e Trieste, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83557, 11.62040)



B Sant'Antonio in Polesine

A Benedictine convent with medieval frescoes in its inner chapels, still home to a community of nuns.

15C Via del Gambone, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.82687, 11.62432)



C Corpus Domini, Ferrara

A convent of Poor Clare nuns where several members of the Este family, including Lucrezia Borgia, are buried.

4A Via Pergolato, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83203, 11.62606)



D Santa Maria in Vado, Ferrara

A large Renaissance basilica, rebuilt in the late 15th century, linked to a 12th-century Eucharistic miracle.

9 Via Scandiana, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83039, 11.62770)



E San Giorgio fuori le mura

The site of Ferrara's first cathedral, just south of the walls, with a Renaissance bell tower and the tomb of Bishop Lorenzo Roverella.

25 Piazza San Giorgio, Ferrara 44124, Italy (44.82174, 11.62807)



F San Carlo Borromeo

A small Baroque church on Corso Giovecca, with an unusual oval interior.

21 Corso della Giovecca, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83780, 11.62098)



G Gesù, Ferrara

The Jesuit church, known for a dramatic terracotta Lamentation group by Guido Mazzoni.

7B Via Gaetano Previati, Ferrara 44121, Italy
(44.83914, 11.62137)



H San Paolo, Ferrara

A Carmelite church rebuilt after the 1570 earthquake, with a cloister next door.

52 Corso Porta Reno, Ferrara 44121, Italy
(44.83418, 11.61773)

Renaissance Palaces and House Museums

Step inside the houses of Ferrara's Renaissance court. These palaces and house museums keep painted halls, courtyards and collections from the age of the Este dukes.





A Palazzo Schifanoia

An Este pleasure palace whose Hall of the Months is covered in 15th-century frescoes of court life, the zodiac and the seasons.

25 Via Scandiana, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83047, 11.62917)



B Palazzo Costabili detto di Ludovico il Moro

A palace by Biagio Rossetti that houses the National Archaeological Museum, with Greek vases and Etruscan finds from the ancient port of Spina.

122 Via 20 Settembre, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.82714, 11.62714)

Mo–Su 09:00–17:00



C Casa Romei

A 15th-century merchant's house between Gothic and Renaissance, with painted rooms, wooden ceilings and a quiet courtyard.

Via Savonarola 30, Ferrara (44.83317, 11.62609)

Mo–We	08:30–14:00
Th–Sa	14:00–19:30
Su	08:30–14:00

casaromei.cultura.gov.it, +39 0532 234130



D Palazzo dei Diamanti

The palace of diamond-cut marble blocks, home to the city's picture gallery of Ferrarese Renaissance painting.

Corso Ercole I D'Este, 21, 44121 Ferrara, Italy (44.84216, 11.62107)

palazzodiamanti.it, +39 0532 244949



E House of Ludovico Ariosto

The modest house where the poet of Orlando Furioso spent his last years. A small museum with free entry.

Via Ludovico Ariosto 67, 44121 Ferrara (44.84433, 11.61684)

Mo–Su	12:30

+390532244949



F Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea

The city library in Palazzo Paradiso, a former university seat. It keeps Ariosto's tomb and his manuscripts.

9 Via Giuoco del Pallone, Ferrara 44121, Italy (44.83270, 11.62170)

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