

Feel the history

FERRARA,
CAPITAL OF THE
RENAISSANCE

MAP

English



Castello Estense

Itinerary 2 At the Este court

The stones of Ferrara's **Castello Estense** still echo with the footsteps and voices of its former inhabitants. Its prison is where Ugo, son of Marquis Niccolò III, and Parisina, the marquis' young wife, died after they had had a secret love affair and where Giulio d'Este, half-brother of Duke Alfonso I, was imprisoned for 53 years. Meanwhile, on the main floor, Lucrezia Borgia, prima donna of the 16th century, and her retinue celebrated the pomp of an era when Ferrara was one of the most splendid courts in Europe, as immortalised by Ludovico Ariosto in his epic poem *The Frenzy of Orlando (Orlando Furioso)* and depicted by the artists of the great Ferrara school. Starting from this majestic symbol of Ferrara, with its four towers surrounded by a moat, elegant white balustrades, prisons and rooms for court games, and following **Corso Giovecca** takes visitors to **Palazzina Marfisa**, a magnificent example of a noble residence built by Francesco d'Este, son of Duke Alfonso I and Lucrezia Borgia. Nearby is **Palazzo Schifanoia**, a recently-restored "*Delizia*" conceived by Borso d'Este as a sublime place for *avoiding boredom*; its Salone dei Mesi boasts famous frescoes. Other stunning palaces on this route are **Palazzo Roverella**, **Palazzo Bonacossi**, **Palazzo di Renata di Francia** and **Palazzo Costabili**, also known as Palazzo di Ludovico il Moro.

Itinerary 1 Ferrara, ideal city

A walk through the heart of Ferrara becomes a step back into the Renaissance. The old town centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1995, is a wonderful example of a city designed in the 15th century that has remained largely intact. From **Palazzo dei Diamanti**, the Este family residence so named because of the circa 8,500 diamond-shaped ashlar that cover two façades, to the great expansion of the city under Duke Ercole I, known as the **Herculean Addition**. In 1492, architect Biagio Rossetti conceived an urban plan that extended the centre to include all the most prestigious buildings. In terms of uniqueness and rationality, it was the "first modern city in Europe" - an ideal city, with straight, wide roads, squares, gardens and superb architecture, crossed by Corso Ercole I d'Este, known as "the most beautiful road in Europe". Hosting many important collections, majestic and prestigious palaces, like the **Palazzo Massari** complex (currently closed for restoration), continue as far as **Piazza Ariostea**, home to the recently-restored statue of the poet Ludovico Ariosto. From here, it is easy to reach the huge and enchanting **Tempio di San Cristoforo alla Certosa** or the **house** once owned by the poet Ariosto. Continuing along Corso Ercole I d'Este and heading beyond **the walls** leads to the other modern addition, **Parco G. Bassani**, the city's "green lungs".



A detail of the entrance
to Palazzo dei Diamanti



Menorah

Itinerary 3 Crossing Jewish Ferrara

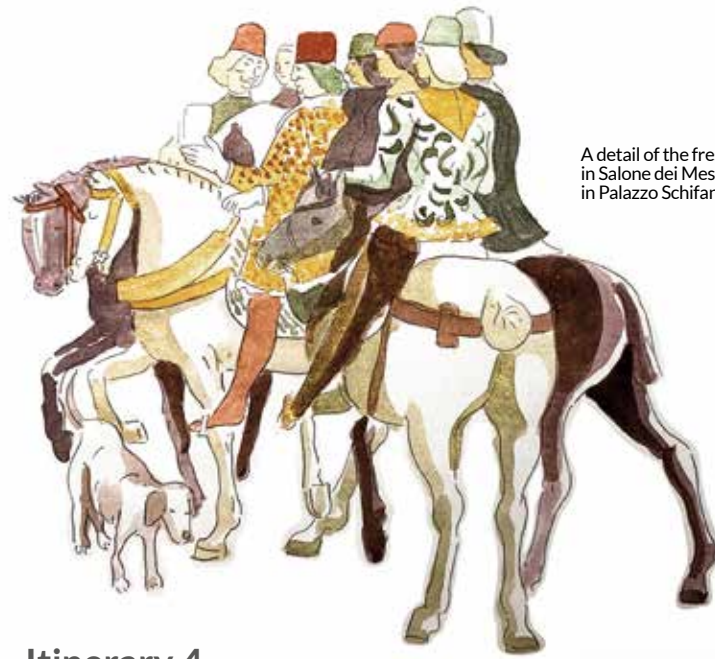
Located in the heart of Ferrara, the column topped by Borso d'Este consists in layers of Jewish gravestones from some old city cemeteries. Before the gates of the Jewish ghetto closed every evening on its inhabitants, Ferrara was safe and welcoming for the large community of Jewish refugees from other European countries. Walking around the streets of the Jewish ghetto means immersing oneself in the rich cultural dialogue between Hebrew culture, the predominant Christian culture and the Renaissance. The route meanders along charming mediaeval streets: **Via Mazzini**, the main road through the ancient ghetto, is lined with largely-intact old buildings and is where shops owned by Jews were once concentrated, **Via Vittoria**, with its palaces, ancient courtyards and charming balconies, was mentioned in the novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Il Giardino dei Finzi-Contini)*, and **Via Vignatagliata**. Nearby is **MEIS (National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah)** which offers evidence of the age-old history of Jews in Italy, including the tragic events surrounding racial persecution and the Shoah. It was established to promote the exceptional continuity of a prolific and uninterrupted relationship between the Jewish population and the city. Returning towards the centre and heading north leads to the **Jewish Cemetery**, where the writer Giorgio Bassani is buried.

Triumphs and tournaments

Imagine skilful hands moving across Este velvets, sewing the history of the pomp and ceremony of an era in which every noble palace in Ferrara took part in the great celebrations for the **Palio di San Giorgio**. Today, as then, citizens dress in lavish clothes as they prepare to parade through the city streets and take part in races, challenges and tournaments in its squares. The entire city brings to life an era rich in pomp and splendour for a timeless celebration. It is a competition between the eight *contrade* or districts of Ferrara, made up of the four quarters inside the mediaeval walls and the four hamlets located outside them. The same atmosphere of the past returns to life during the **Renaissance Carnival**, an historical commemoration of celebrations held by the Este in the 15th and 16th centuries. It is a step back to the times of Duke Ercole I d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia, with period masks, dances and celebrations in the historical palaces, flag wavers, jugglers, spectacles and banquets.



A detail of the fresco in Salone dei Mesi
in Palazzo Schifanoia



A detail of the fresco
in Salone dei Mesi
in Palazzo Schifanoia

Itinerary 4 The wonders of Este art

Renaissance art reflected the new centrality of mankind and his role in the world, an awareness that inspired artists, who used sacred and secular subjects in landscapes, architecture and portraits. One of the prime examples of Renaissance art is the cycle of frescoes in Salone dei Mesi in **Palazzo Schifanoia**; today, it can again be appreciated in all its beauty thanks to architectural restoration and new lighting. Inspired by the months of the year and the signs of the zodiac, the expressions, gestures and faces of the figures narrate a 550-year-old story. In the month of March, the mysterious *Vir Niger*, the black man, the last dean of the zodiac sign of Aries, accompanies Borso, Duke of Ferrara in 1471, and his court, protected by the Gods of the Olympus sitting on celestial chariots. Equally impressive are the frescoes of **Palazzo Costabili**, with its magnificent 16th-century ceiling painted by Garofalo, and the frescoes in Sala delle Sibille e dei Profeti in **Casa Romei**. The works in the **Museo della Cattedrale** and the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** collection, housed on the main floor of Palazzo dei Diamanti, are particularly impressive. The latter offers an important exhibition of Renaissance art, spanning from Cosmè Tura to Dosso Dossi and including the dramatic paintings of Bastianino, which brought an end to the Este era in Ferrara.



Delizia del Verginese
(Portomaggiore)

Itinerary 5 The landscape of the Delizie

Palazzo Schifanoia was built in 1385 by Alberto V d'Este, but it was Borso d'Este, marquis and then duke of Ferrara, who commissioned its current appearance to "*schivar la noia*" or avoid boredom, an expression referring to its role as a venue for entertainment and recreation. It is one of the few remaining architectural expressions of country houses known as *Delizie Estensi*. Commissioned by the Dukes of Este, these lavish villas, recognised as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, were a network of noble residences dotted all around the Ferrara area. Built on waterways, they acted as centres of political, economic and military control; they often had large gardens, rooms decorated with works by artists of the era and even game reserves to entertain noble guests. As well as **Palazzo Schifanoia**, located within the city walls, the province also boasts refined and elegant **Delizia di Benivngante** in Argenta (not open for visits), **Delizia del Verginese** (Portomaggiore), which became a ducal residence under Alfonso I d'Este, **Delizia di Belriguardo** (Voghiera), the richest and most sumptuous, and **Castello di Mesola** (Mesola), a cross between a fortress and a villa. Other *Delizie* include 15th-century **Villa della Mensa** in Sabbioncello San Vittore, **Delizia della Diamantina** in Vigarano Pieve, **Delizia di Fossadalbero**, prestigious **Delizia di Zenzalino** in Copparo and **Palazzo Pio** in Tresigallo – these latter villas can only be seen from the outside.

At the table with Messisbugo

In Ferrara you can still savour the ancient flavours of the Renaissance every time you visit an inn. Culinary tradition finds noble origins in the cuisine of the Este family, when banquets were a time to come together and satisfy the palate, be entertained and consolidate public relations. In the Renaissance period, "*coppia*" ferrarese or twisted bread as it was known then, was fragrant and crisp, with crumbly tips and a soft heart. The famous chef of the Este court, Messer Cristoforo da Messisbugo, mentioned it in his book "*Banchetti, composizione di vivande e apparecchio generale*" (Banquets, Recipes and General Utensils for the Kitchen and the Table). Court master of ceremonies and responsible for the sophisticated banquets of Alfonso I d'Este and then Ercole II d'Este, his books also celebrated many other specialities that have been handed down to us – delicious **salama da sugo**, seasoned with wine and spices and served with mashed potatoes, **pasticcio di maccheroni** in a sweet short pastry case, **cappellacci** pasta parcels filled with pumpkin, once spicier than they are now, and **pampapato** to end on a sweet note... and the Renaissance is served.



Coppia
ferrarese bread

The ceramics loved by the Este

Ladies, page boys and other court figures, along with deer, dogs and rabbits surrounded by cornices, medallions and religious and heraldic symbols and accompanied by a sophisticated collection of undulating or interwoven ribbons, crumpled leaves, meadows in bloom and dotted backgrounds: these are the delicate, decorative motifs typical of **Renaissance sgraffito ceramic** with unmistakable colours – pastel nuances of yellow and green – that fire melts and blends into unusual chromatic effects. Duke Alfonso d'Este was a great lover of Ferrara sgraffito ceramics, so much so that he made it the main feature of his court table. The fascinating practice of engraving and the use of colours are still the main feature of this type of ceramic that, after four centuries, a group of ceramists from Ferrara are continuing to create using the same techniques and creativity of times gone by, in the workshops and laboratories of Ferrara and its surrounding area. But please remember, these are not handicrafts, they are genuine works of art.



Ferrara sgraffito
ceramics

Con il patrocinio del
COMUNE DI FERRARA
Città Patrimonio dell'Umanità

FERRARA
FEELINGS

The Italian bond of dolce vita
Romagna

in Emilia Romagna

United Nations
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Ferrara, City of
the Renaissance
and its Po Delta



Bicycle hire in Ferrara:

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Ceragioli
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Hotel Annunziata
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Ricicletta (Factory Grisù)
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Ferrara, ideal city

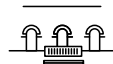
At the Este court


Crossing Jewish Ferrara


The wonders of Este art

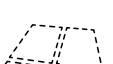
At the table with Messisbugo


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Palazzo dei Diamanti
Covered in about 8,500 pink and white marble ashlars, it is considered one of the masterpieces of the Renaissance and was once home to Sigismondo d'Este.
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Palazzo di Giulio d'Este
A monumental Renaissance palace designed by the architect Biagio Rossetti.
- 


Palazzo Prosperi Sacrati
This is the oldest palace in the Herculean Addition. Mentioned in the poems of Carducci, it has a magnificent monumental portal.
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Quadrivio degli Angeli
The crossroads overlooked by Palazzo Prosperi Sacrati, Palazzo Bevilacqua, Palazzo Turchi di Bagno and Palazzo dei Diamanti.
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Herculean Addition
An urban plan commissioned by Ercole I d'Este and created by the genius of Biagio Rossetti, who made Ferrara the first modern city in Europe.
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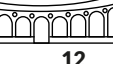
Corso Ercole I d'Este
This leads from the castle to Porta degli Angeli, without business premises, it is flanked by beautiful Renaissance palaces.
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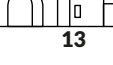
Parco Massari
This is the biggest public park within the walls and has two ancient Lebanon cedars at the entrance.
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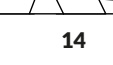
Palazzo Massari
The last important building constructed in the Este era.
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Piazza Ariostea
An unusual oval-shaped square with a lowered floor, famous for hosting the Palio races.
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Home of Ludovico Ariosto
The home of the famous poet, who wrote the last version of his epic poem *The Frenzy of Orlando (Orlando Furioso)* here.
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Tempio di San Cristoforo alla Certosa
This is one of the most original works of the Renaissance in Ferrara.
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Certosa Monumental Cemetery
The city's main burial site within the walls of Ferrara, it houses the tomb of Duke Borso d'Este.
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Porta degli Angeli
The only gateway to the city, it can also be visited internally.
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The Walls
The city centre is surrounded by 9 km of walls, which combine monumental beauty and a green park, which can be covered on foot or by bicycle.
- 


Parco Bassani
Once an Este game reserve, these 1,200 hectares of green are now a city park dedicated to the writer Giorgio Bassani.


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Castello Estense
A majestic symbol of Ferrara with its four towers, elegant white balustrades, prisons and rooms for court games and entertainment.
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Palazzo Schifanoia
It was Borso d'Este, first marquise and then duke of Ferrara, to request the current appearance in order to *schivar la noia* or avoid boredom. A *Delizia Estense*, it is home to the Salone dei Mesi.
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Palazzo Costabili
Also known as Palazzo di Ludovico il Moro, it now houses the National Archaeological Museum of Ferrara.

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Corso Giovecca
This ancient road is flanked with numerous buildings and places of historical importance.
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Palazzo Roverella
A magnificent 16th-century palace.
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Palazzina Marfisa d'Este
A magnificent example of a noble residence built by Francesco d'Este.
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Palazzo di Renata di Francia
A residence of the Este family designed by the architect Pietro Benvenuto degli Ordini.
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Palazzo Bonacossi
A 15th-century palace allocated by Borso d'Este to Diotisalvi Neroni.

Jewish Ghetto
The mediaeval quarter of Ferrara preserves the memories of one of the oldest Jewish communities in Italy.

Colonna di Borso d'Este
The column of Borso d'Este, also known as the Jewish column, consists in layers of gravestones from old Jewish cemeteries.

Jewish Cemetery
The cemetery is the resting place of many figures including Giorgio Bassani, Renzo Ravenna and Paolo Ravenna.

Via Vittoria
With small palaces, internal courtyards and charming balconies, the road is mentioned in the novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Il Giardino dei Finzi-Continis)*.

Via Mazzini
The main road in the ancient ghetto where the shops and old buildings have largely retained their original structure.

MEIS (National Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah)
Established to bear witness to the two thousand years of events that have marked the presence of Jews in Italy and promote the prolific and uninterrupted relationship between Jews and the city.

Frescoes in Salone dei Mesi in Palazzo Schifanoia
The Salone dei Mesi has one of the most important 15th-century cycles of frescoes by the leading artists of Ferrara.

Frescoes in Palazzo Costabili
In the Sala del Tesoro, the magnificent 16th-century ceiling was frescoed by Garofalo.

Frescoes and paintings in Casa Romei
The Sala delle Sibille e dei Profeti, the wooden ceilings, the frescoed vaults and the "Alcove" make up a unique artistic corpus.

Pinacoteca Nazionale
Cosmè Tura, Ercole de' Roberti and the other creators of the "Ferrara Workshop", as well as Gentile da Fabriano, Mantegna and Carpaccio, are just some of the artists in the Pinacoteca Nazionale on the main floor of Palazzo dei Diamanti.

Museo della Cattedrale
This houses a rich collection of work by the Renaissance school.

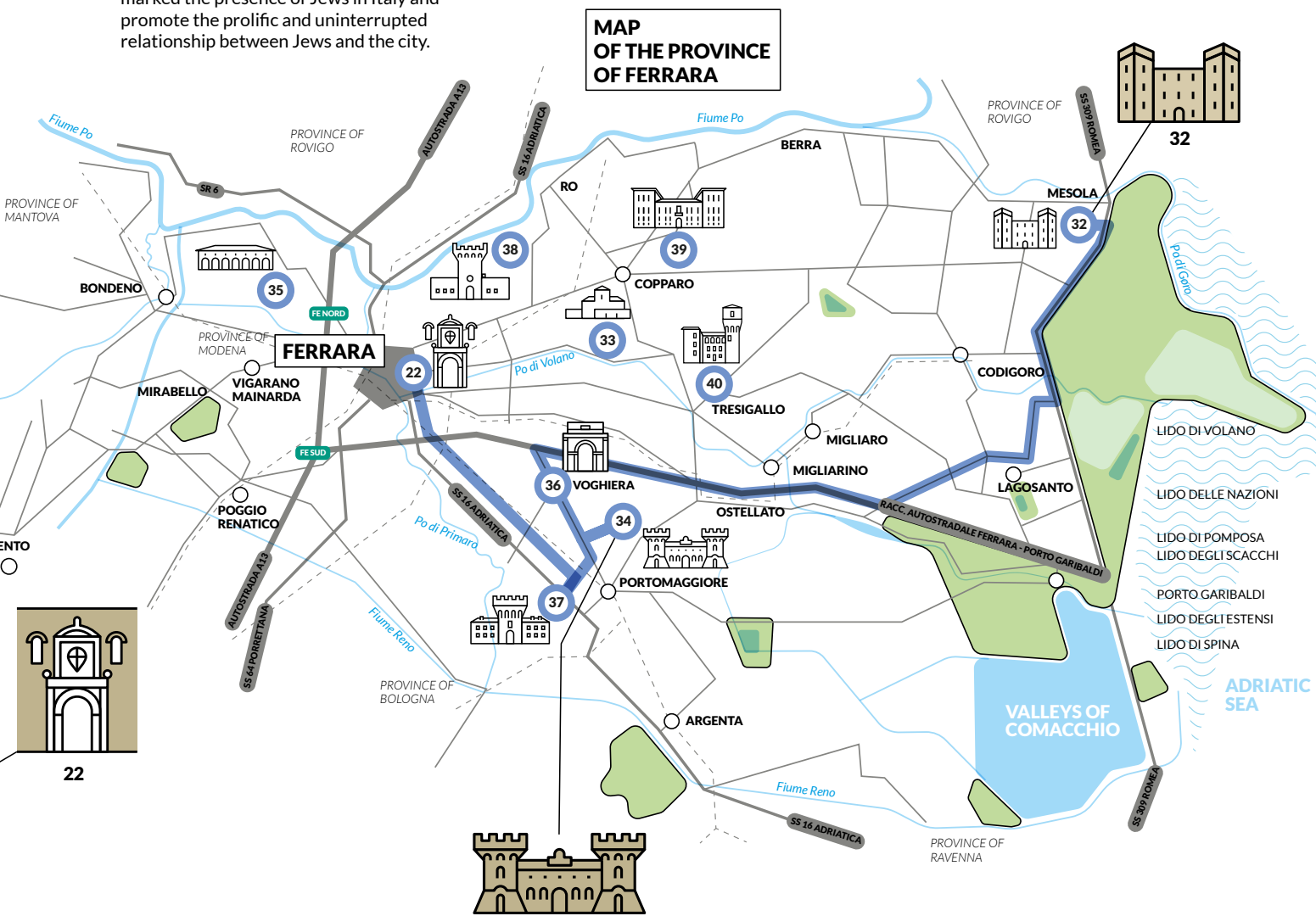
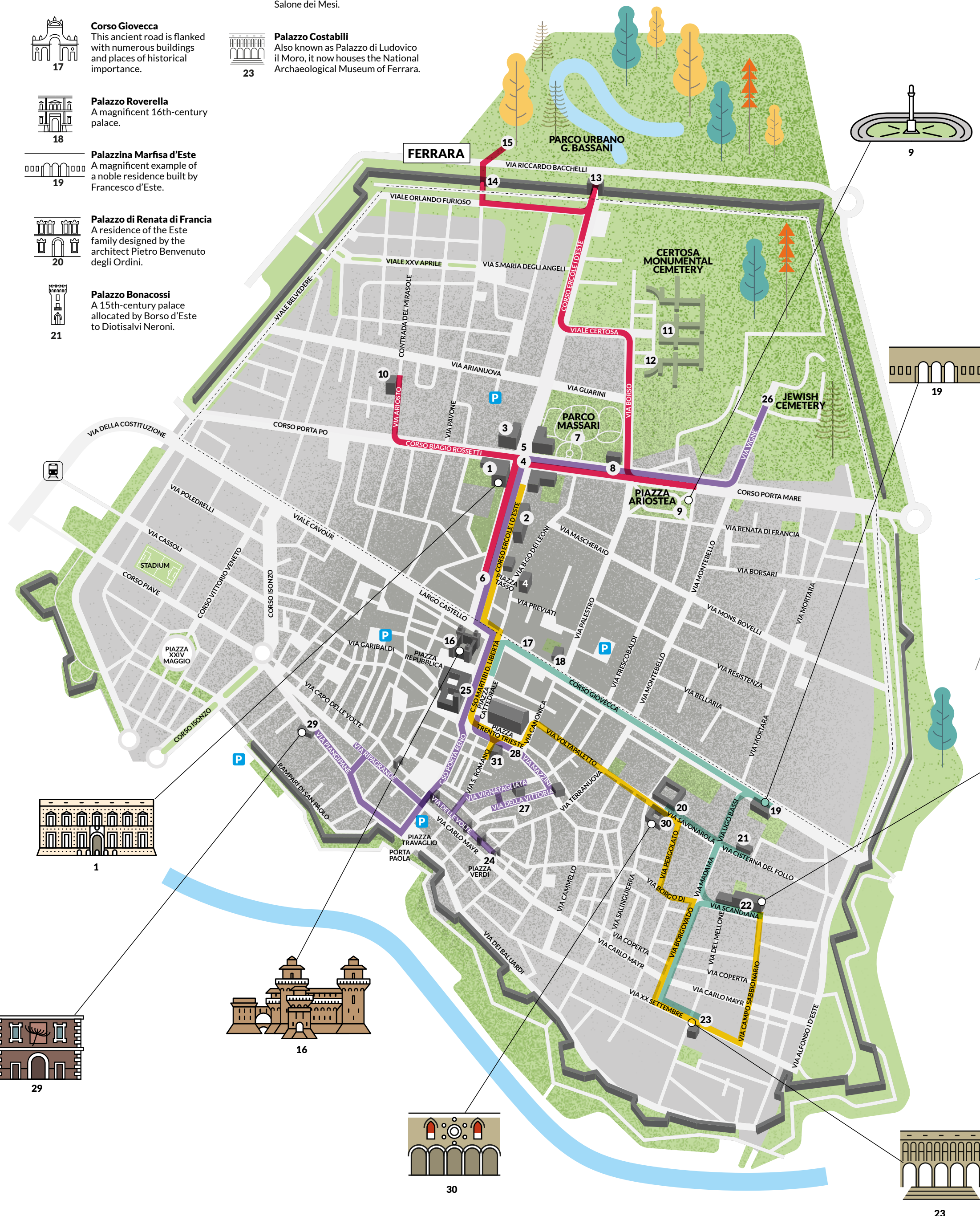
Pumpkin cappellacci

Coppia ferrarese

Salama da sugo

Pasticcio ferrarese

Pampapato



The landscape of the Delizie

Palazzo Schifanoia
A *Delizia Estense* built within the city walls of Ferrara that is home to the Salone dei Mesi, with frescoes commissioned by Borso d'Este.

Castello di Mesola (Mesola)
Four imposing towers and embattled walls make the castle a building that is halfway between a fortress and a *Delizia*.

Villa della Mensa (Sabbioncello San Vittore)
A 15th-century villa commissioned by Bartolomeo della Rovere.

Delizia del Verginese (Portomaggiore)
This villa was transformed into a ducal residence in the early 16th century by Alfonso I d'Este.

Delizia della Diamantina (Vigarano Pieve)
A splendid estate known as Diamantina due to one of the emblems of the House of Este, the diamond.

Delizia di Belriguardo (Voghiera)
Commissioned by Niccolò d'Este, it was the first of the famous *Delizie Estensi*, the family's most lavish and sumptuous summer residence.

Delizia di Benignante (Argenta)
A splendid example of the sober and refined elegance of Ferrara's architecture during the Renaissance.

Delizia di Fossadalbero
The palace where Ugo, son of Marquis Niccolò III, secretly met Parisina, the marquise's young wife, for one of the most infamous stories from court life.

Delizia di Zenzalino (Copparo)
A prestigious villa and one of the showpieces of Duke Borso.

Palazzo Pio (Tresigallo)
A 16th-century palace belonging to the nobleman Alessandro Feruffino, captain of the guards of Duke Alfonso I d'Este.