

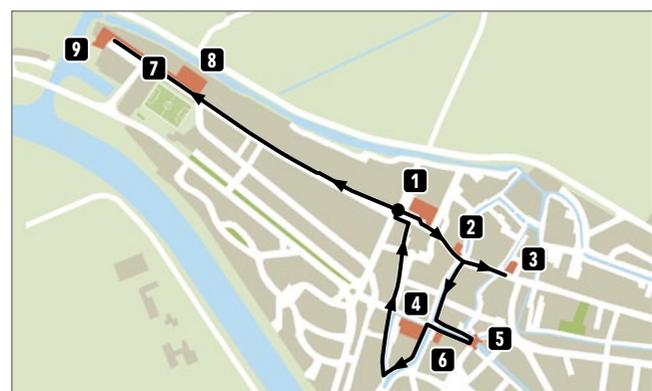
COMACCHIO

The tour begins at **Piazza XX Settembre** that faces the **Cathedral of San Cassiano 1**, an ancient church founded in the 8th century that owes its façade to reconstruction work in 1659. The interior is particularly noted for the 17th century *Crucified* by Germano Cignani and the organ by Gian Domenico Traeri (19th century). To the right in front of the main altar is a beautiful portrait of the patron saint and beneath this is a picture of Comacchio in days gone by when it was surrounded by water.



The cathedral **bell tower** was built in 1751, collapsed after only seven years and was rebuilt in 1868 but never completed (inside the cathedral near the entrance you will see a sketch of the original bell tower design).

Take the somewhat narrow Piazzetta Ugo Bassi and continue until you reach the **Loggia del Grano 2**, built in 1621 at the behest of Cardinal Giacomo Serra. The first floor held a room that was used to keep grain for the poor while the first floor housed a spacious gallery where traders could do business in comfort while in Comacchio. This gallery is still visible today.



The clock tower or **Torre dell'Orologio** was built in 1842 to replace 14th century construction and stands alongside the gallery. Free tours around the town's canals depart from near the tower.

Going through Piazza Folegatti, take Via Sambertolo (to the left is a shortcut by the **Canale Maggiore** to the *Church of Carmine*), at the beginning of which you will find the splendid 17th century **Church of Rosario 3**. There are some very precious canvases housed there including the Decollation of the Baptist by Carlo Bononi (17th century) and works by Mezzogori and Van Schayek.

Turning left into **Via Gramsci** will take you to where most of the splendid brickwork bridges over the canals are located.

This part of town has best kept its original design and the little waterways and canals are very reminiscent of Chioggia and Venice. Indeed, Comacchio was founded long, long ago on a group of islands in the middle of an immense lakeland. Like other Laguna towns, Comacchio, in the high middle ages was a flourishing trade centre and its fleet was used by Charlemagne in the war against the Byzantines. A war against the rival Venice, in 946 left it half-destroyed and killed its business aspirations. For hundreds of years, the town could only be reached by water and the canals acted as streets. This isolation ended in 1821 when the first road along the riverbanks connected it with Ostellato. Nowadays, following the great land reclamation works of the 1900's, Comacchio is framed by the valleys only in the southeast.

You will soon see the **Chiesa del Carmine** (17th century) that you can reach by taking **Via Carducci**. After crossing the *Ponte del Teatro*, continue along the left of **Via Cavour** that will lead you back to the *Torre dell'Orologio*. After the clock tower turn into **Via Fogli**. The tall building at number 34 is the ancient Comacchio **Bishop's Palace**. When you reach a junction of the canals, you will see the **Ponte degli Sbirri** that was built by Luca Danese in the 17th century. The view from here is without any doubt the best in Comacchio. To one side you can see the former **Ospedale di San Camillo 4**, an elegant, and at the same time, imposing classical style building that features a central portico supported by terracotta and marble pillars with a small bell tower to either side of it. The hospital was built between 1778-1784 by Cosimo Morelli.

The 19th century **Palazzo Bellini** sits facing the hospital and close by The Roman Ship Museum.

Turning into **Via Pescheria** you will find the small brick **Fish market** (17th century) that is rarely used, then take the steps up to the **Trepponti 5**. The symbol of Comacchio is to be found at the end of a section of the canals.



This 17th century bridge complex was the work of Luca Danese and has some rather peculiar elements. There are five sets of steps that all lead to a central landing featuring two small towers.

When you cross the bridge you will find the **Museum of the Roman**

Ship 6, at number 2 that houses the hull (still being restored) and cargo of an ancient merchant ship recovered near the town.

In ancient times, the **Comacchio wetlands** were part of an immense system of lagoons that were dotted all along the Northern Adriatic coastline. These lagoons with their sheltered waters allowed navigation from Romagna right up to Grado. Despite the relative safety of navigation in these inland lagoons, there was no shortage of shipwrecks and many of the ships that foundered in these waters are now buried under the land surrounding Comacchio that appeared as a result of the reclamation schemes.

Turn left into Via Agatopisto and follow the paths that perhaps best represent the town with the bright colours of the houses mirrored in the canals. When you have crossed **Ponte di San Pietro**, take Via Buonafede and this will lead you back to *Piazza XX Settembre*. From the piazza, turn left into Corso Mazzini and after a short walk you will find the **Porticato dei Cappuccini 7**. This arcade is supported by 143 arches and was built as an ex-voto in 1647. Through a passage way situated under the arcade, you reach the **Marinade manufacture 8**, the old eel marinating factory, now a museum and a laboratory of this traditional production.

At the end of the arcade you come to the **Sanctuary of Santa Maria in Aula Regia 9** that was founded in the early 10th century then rebuilt to its current form in the 17th century. The main altar is particularly note-worthy and is overlooked by the Madonna. The annex houses a small museum dedicated to contemporary religious art.

CASA MUSEO REMO BRINDISI
Via N. Pisano, 45 • Lido di Spina



About 7 km from Comacchio, at **Lido di Spina** stands the Museum of Contemporary Art "**Remo Brindisi**". This building with its modern design was the summer home of the artist Remo Brindisi for many years, right up to his demise. It was built between 1971

and 1973 to a design by the architect Nanda Vigo, and is clearly inspired by the Bauhaus style. The exhibits inside afford a truly outstanding and exhaustive historical account of contemporary art and painting. Modigliani, Picasso, Fontana, Dali, De Chirico, De Pisis, Morandi, Chagall, Boccioni, Guttuso and others are all admirably represented.

Tourist Information Office

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