

# MONZA

## EXPERIENCE THE BEAUTY

The Villa Reale,  
the historic center,  
the Duomo  
and much more.



Discover  
Experience  
Love  
Monza turismo



# MONZA

Monza is a city of many faces and many vocations.

The millenary historical legacy, fascinating and engaging, of the Lombard tradition embodied by the **Duomo** and its Treasure, a witness ideally collected by the **Hapsburgs**, **Napoleon** and finally the **Savoy**, and made materially visible by the building of the Villa Reale.

The collected atmosphere of the **old town**, on the other hand, retains a human dimension, in the balanced relationship with the building fabric layered over the centuries, the bright ribbon of the river and the exploding greenery of the Park just a few steps from the heart of the city.

## HISTORICAL NOTES

The origins of the City of Monza are strongly linked to **Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards**.

Already an important Roman vicus, it was during the Lombard era that the city became a center of fundamental importance. One legend reports that the Queen is said to have had, near the Lambro River, a vision of a dove whispering to her the word “Modo” (“**here**”), to which the Queen is said to have responded by exclaiming “**Etiam**” (“**yes**”).





It was on that very spot that Theodolinda had a **palace and chapel erected around 595 in honor of St. John the Baptist**, later transformed into the basilica of the same name and endowed with a treasury, while the fusion of the two spoken words would give rise to the toponym **Modoetia**, the ancient name for **Monza**.

The origin of Monza's royal tradition is enhanced by the unique presence of the **Iron Crown** preserved in the Duomo and by the 18th-century construction of the **Reggia di Monza** wanted by another reigning woman: Empress **Maria Theresa of Austria**, who in 1777 had its construction begun as the summer residence of her son, Archduke **Ferdinand of Habsburg**. At the beginning of the 14th century, the Visconti family provided the town with walls and a castle, and in 1300 they began the reconstruction in Gothic forms of the Duomo.

Under Spanish domination the city was reduced to a fiefdom: among the lords of the borough were the De Leyva, a family to which Virginia, the **Nun of Monza**, consecrated to eternal memory in the pages of *The Betrothed*, belonged.

In 1706 Austrian domination took over, which marked for Monza a real cultural, urban and economic rebirth, culminating in 1777 with the construction of the **Villa Reale**. With the Napoleonic era came the start of land acquisitions that led to the creation of the great **Park of Monza**, which was authored by Viceroy **Eugene de Beauharnais**.



Duomo of Monza

With the **Restoration** Monza returned to the **Habsburgs**, who developed the infrastructure by building the **first railroad in northern Italy** with the Milan-Monza (1840).

From the mid-19th century there was the industrial takeoff of the city with the rise of the hat industry.

The presence of the Savoy court in Villa Reale gave the city national and international visibility, but it ended tragically on July 29, 1900 with the assassination of **King Umberto I**.

In 1922 the **Autodromo Nazionale Monza** was built in the park, which immediately became the temple of speed in the world.

Rich in history, art, culture and an important service center, Monza is currently the **third largest city in Lombardy** in terms of population.

# HISTORIC CENTER

Characterized by an urban fabric in which the Roman and medieval imprint can still be recognized, the historic center roughly corresponds to the area occupied by the ancient village, once surrounded by walls, which were almost totally demolished in 1813.

## DUOMO OF MONZA

Imposing stands out from afar, thanks to its high bell tower, the **Duomo** (Insigne Basilica Collegiata di San Giovanni Battista) with its vast marble facade dominating the square in front. Enlarged and restored several times over the centuries, starting in the year 1300 the original church founded by **Theodolinda** was replaced by a new building under the auspices of the Visconti family. The protagonist of a second campaign of works that occupied the second half of the century was the architect and sculptor **Matteo da Campione**, who completed the facade.

Recently restored to its original appearance, the facade of Monza Cathedral is characterized by the two-tone of its marble, which can now be admired as it appeared until the end of the 19th century. Inside, the high altar, created by **Andrea Appiani**, is a masterpiece of marble and gilded bronze. Of note on the back wall of the right transept is the Tree of Life, frescoes by **Giuseppe Arcimboldi** and Giuseppe Lomazzo known as il Meda, dated 1556.





## THE CHAPEL OF THEODOLINDA



To the left of the high altar is the **Chapel of Theodolinda**, a splendid example of International Gothic, which recounts the **legend of Theodolinda in 45 scenes**, spread over 500 square meters with as many as 800 characters. The chapel's fresco cycle is considered one of the masterpieces of **International Gothic** painting in Italy, as well as the most important outcome of the activity of the Zavattari: a family of Milanese painters active in Lombardy throughout the 15th century. In the Chapel of Theodolinda, is kept the **Iron Crown**, one of the most important and dense products of goldsmithing in the entire history of the West.

Miraculously preserved to this day, an ancient tradition identifies within the Crown one of the nails used in **Christ's crucifixion**: a relic that St. Helena is said to have found in 326 during a trip to Palestine and inserted into the diadem of her son, **Emperor Constantine**.

The tradition, which links the Crown to the Passion of Christ and the first Christian emperor, explains the symbolic value attributed to it by the kings of Italy (or would-be kings, such as the Visconti), who would use it in coronations to attest to the divine origin of their power and their connection to the Roman emperors.

Having risen with the Viscontis as a symbol of royalty, **Charles V (1530)**, **Napoleon I (1805)** and **Ferdinand of Austria (1838)** in particular were crowned there.



## DUOMO MUSEUM AND TREASURE

A museum for a priceless treasure: **fourteen centuries of art and history** among unique masterpieces from Theodolinda's legacy to contemporary art.

The **Museum and Treasure of the Duomo** of Monza constitutes a unique collection in the world not only for the rarity and preciousness of the materials, but because it allows us to follow a path along more than 1,400 years, during which the history of the church has often been intertwined with that of the great political and religious institutions of Italy and Europe. Attached to the basilica, that museum houses a unique collection: **from the Treasure of the Lombard kings to the gifts of Napoleon I.**



## CIVIC MUSEUMS



A short distance from the Duomo, on Via Teodolinda, stands the historic building of the former House of the Humiliati, now home to the **Civic Museums**.

The museum's holdings consist of the collections of the **Pinacoteca Civica** (once in the north wing of the Villa Reale) and the **Museo Storico** (formerly at the Arengario), enriched over time by donations, purchases and bequests from individuals or institutions (Isia, Premio Città Monza, Biennale Giovani).

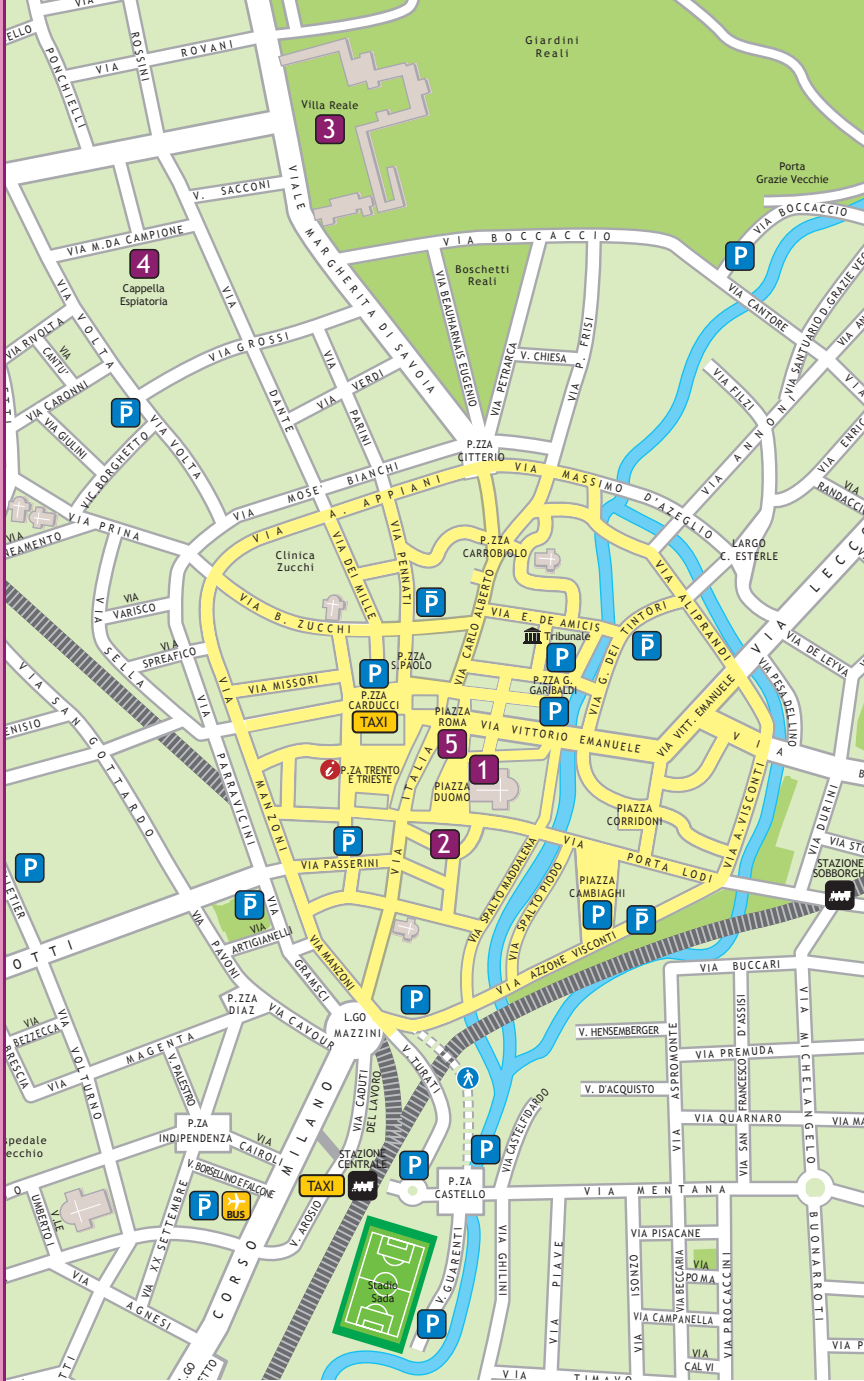
Among the main works of art preserved, the paintings and sculptures from the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century by **Mosè Bianchi, Pompeo Mariani, Anselmo Bucci, Arturo Martini, and Marino Marini** stand out for their importance.

## ARENGARIO

Past the Duomo Square, in the adjacent Piazza Roma stands the ancient **town hall** known as the **Arengario** (from the Latin arengarius, a place for assemblies): built at the end of the 13th century in a position almost contiguous to the Duomo to represent also visually the **distinction of powers** - religious and civil - of the communal period. Consisting of a wide portico on the ground floor and a large hall on the second floor, on the short side it opens outward with a small loggia balcony (the "parlera") from which proclamations were read.







## HISTORIC CENTER

- 1. Museum e Treasure of Monza Duomo
- 2. Civic Museums of Monza

- 3. Villa Reale of Monza
- 4. Expiatory Chapel
- 5. Arenario

# OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

From the Arengario starts **Via Vittorio Emanuele**, the old Ferdinandea military road, opened by the Austrians in 1847. The continuous curtain of nineteenth-century houses and palaces that flanks it leads to the monumental Ponte dei Leoni bridge, built in 1842 on the remains of the **ancient Roman d'Arena bridge**.

Branching off again from the Arengario are the main streets of the city's core, **Via Italia** and **Via Carlo Alberto**, along which stand numerous buildings bearing witness to the city's rich history: from the church of **Santa Maria in Strada**, an important example of Gothic-Lombard architecture with an elegant facade decorated in terracotta, to the church of **San Pietro Martire** with the adjacent convent, a jewel of 14th-century religious building, and finally the complex of **Santa Maria in Carrobiolo**, built for the Order of the Umiliati and later passed to the Barnabite Fathers, now in predominantly Baroque form.





Monuments in the historic center also include the **Torre Viscontea** in Via Azzone Visconti, the only evidence of the ancient castle built by Galeazzo Visconti; the **San Gerardino** complex (Via Gerardo dei Tintori), once the site of the city's oldest hospital founded in the 12th century by **Saint Gerard**, co-patron of Monza, and dating in its present form to the late 18th century, with the nearby **San Gerardino bridge** and the **Mulino Colombo - Monza and Brianza Ethnological Museum**, dating from the 18th century and now a museum and exhibition venue.

From the Museum we quickly reach the vast **Trento and Trieste Square**, formerly the Market Square overlooked by the imposing Town Hall (1932). Some elements of the square hark back to the activities that took place there: the two portals are inspired by the ancient "**chiodere**" used for the traditional processing of woollen cloth, the two small canals recall the course of the Pelucca irrigation ditch, and the series of **tiles** in the pavement reproduce the trademarks of 15th-century merchant families.

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In the center stands the **Monumento ai Caduti** (1932), by Enrico Pancera twelve mighty figures representing **The victorious assault wave** led by Victory. The largest side of the square is occupied by the large neoclassical building of the former Seminary, now the **Palazzo degli Studi**, which houses the **Liceo Classico Zucchi** and the **Civic Library**.

Slightly outside the medieval core are the church of **San Maurizio** in **Piazza Santa Margherita**, built in 1736 on the site of the convent of Sister Virginia De Leyva, the Manzonian Nun of Monza, and the church of **San Gerardo al Corpo** (19th century), which houses the saint's remains inside. Slightly further away, on the border with the Park, is the **sanctuary of S. Maria delle Grazie**, the main evidence of the Renaissance in Monza.

The **Railway Station** (1884) preserves intact the **Saletta Reale**, which welcomed Umberto I and Margherita di Savoia during their summer stays in the Villa Reale from 1884 to 1900.

Along the main streets,  
numerous buildings  
testify to the city's  
rich history.



## REGGIA DI MONZA: THE VILLA, THE GARDENS, THE PARK.



Built at the behest of Empress **Maria Theresa of Austria** between 1777 and 1780 as a summer residence for her son **Ferdinand**, it echoes the model of the Lombard villas.

The building was designed by **Piermarini**, in neoclassical style, with a "U"-shaped plan and central body for representation, to which were added two side wings for rooms and two more sections for servants and stables, for a total of almost seven hundred rooms.

The tour **includes 28 rooms** including apartments and halls: **a true journey through history** from the Habsburgs to the Savoy.

The visit begins from the entrance hall that leads to the reception rooms on the first noble floor, which most of all still bear the neoclassical decorations; it then continues in the spaces of the Second Floor with the very famous apartment of the **Prince of Naples**, adapted by the architect **Majnoni** on the occasion of the wedding of **Vittorio Emanuele III**; then it will be the turn of the library and its fascinating boiserie made of walnut wood and the royal apartments of Umberto di Savoia and Queen Margherita, finally ending in the central hall with the splendid view of the **Royal Gardens**.

Thanks to the **Reggia Contemporanea** project, the Royal Villa houses about 100 works by the most important contemporary Italian designers and artists within the tour route.







The villa was with the Habsburgs an archducal residence, viceregal with the French (Eugene de Beauharnais preferred, however, to live with his wife Amalia of Bavaria in the more collected Mirabellino) and finally royal with the Savoy family (Vittorio Emanuele I, Umberto I and Margherita).

If in layout the villa recalls the great European mansions (from Schönbrunn to Caserta), the “U-shaped” plan solution reconnects it to the Lombard villas of the 18th century. Near the Villa, on the right side of the great avenue that serves as the monumental entrance to the palace, stands the **Expiatory Chapel** (1910).

This was the birth of **Park of Monza**, the largest enclosed urban park in Europe, which since 1922 has been home, in its northern part, to the **Autodromo Nazionale Monza**, an important setting for world-renowned motorcycle and automobile competitions such as the F1 Grand Prix.



The Park today represents an incredible opportunity for sports, recreation, wellness and culture.

## EXPIATORY CHAPEL

Near the Villa, on the right side of the grand avenue that serves as the monumental entrance to the palace, stands the **Expiatory Chapel** (1910). The Chapel stands on the spot where on July 29, 1900, the anarchist Gaetano Bresci killed King Umberto I of Savoy at the end of a sporting event.

The Chapel is decorated in **Greek-Byzantine-inspired mosaics** with angels and saints. A black marble memorial stone marks the spot of the assassination; the ceiling is a mosaic starry sky, accompanied by palm trees, the Christian symbol of Martyrdom. On the walls, however, are some 180 bronze crowns, sent from all over the world in tribute to the king.



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