

The city of Brescia



History

Various myths relate to the founding of Brescia: one assigns it to [Hercules](#) while another attributes its foundation as *Altilia* ("the other Ilium") by a fugitive from the siege of [Troy](#). According to another myth, the founder was the king of the [Ligures](#), Cidnus, who had invaded the [Padan Plain](#) in the late [Bronze Age](#). *Colle Cidneo* (Cidnus's Hill) was named after that version, and it is the site of the medieval castle. Scholars attribute the founding to the [Etruscans](#).



The Gallic Cenomani, allies of the Insubres, invaded in the 4th century BC, and used the town as their capital. The city became Roman in 225 BC, when the Cenomani submitted to the Romans. During the Carthaginian Wars, 'Brixia' (as it was called then) was usually allied with the Romans. In 202 BC, it was part of a Celtic confederation against them but, after a secret agreement, changed sides and attacked and destroyed the Insubres by surprise.



Subsequently the city and the tribe entered the Roman world peacefully as faithful allies, maintaining a certain administrative freedom. In 89 BC, Brixia was recognized as *civitas* ("city") and in 41 BC, its inhabitants received Roman citizenship. [Augustus](#) founded a civil (not military) colony there in 27 BC, and he and Tiberius constructed an aqueduct to supply it. Roman Brixia had at least three temples, an aqueduct, a [theatre](#), a forum with another temple built under [Vespasianus](#), and some baths.



Augustus and Vespasianus

When Constantine advanced against Maxentius in 312, an engagement took place at Brixia in which the enemy was forced to retreat as far as Verona. In 402, the city was ravaged by the Visigoths of Alaric I. During the 452 invasion of the Huns under Attila, the city was besieged and sacked. Forty years later, it was one of the first conquests by the Gothic general Theoderic the Great in his war against Odoacer.



Constantine,
Attila and
Odoacre

In 568 (or 569), Brescia was taken from the Byzantines by the Lombards, who made it the capital of one of their semi-independent duchies. The first duke was Alachis, who died in 573. The last king of the Lombards, Desiderius, had also been duke of Brescia.



Byzantines and Lombards

In 774, [Charlemagne](#) captured the city and ended the existence of the Lombard kingdom in northern Italy. Notingus was the first prince-bishop (in 844) who bore the title of [count](#) (see [Bishopric of Brescia](#)). From 855 to 875, under [Louis II the Younger](#), Brescia become de facto capital of the Holy Roman Empire. Later the power of the bishop as imperial representative was gradually opposed by the local citizens and nobles, Brescia becoming a free commune around the early 12th century.



Charlemagne and Louis II of Anjou

During the struggles in 12th and 13th centuries between the Lombard cities and the German emperors, Brescia was implicated in some of the leagues and in all of the uprisings against them. In the [Battle of Legnano](#) the contingent from Brescia was the second in size after that of [Milan](#). The [Peace of Constance](#) (1183) that ended the war with [Frederick Barbarossa](#) confirmed officially the free status of the *comune*. In 1201 the [podestà Rambertino Buvalelli](#) made peace and established a league with [Cremona](#), [Bergamo](#), and [Mantua](#).



The battle of Legnano and Frederick Barbarossa

After the fall of the Hohenstaufen, republican institutions declined at Brescia as in the other free cities and the leadership was contested between powerful families, chief among them the Maggi and the Brusati, the latter of the (pro-imperial, anti-papal) Ghibelline party. In 1258 it fell into the hands of Ezzelino da Romano.



Ghibellino



Guelfo



In 1311 [Emperor Henry VII](#) laid siege to Brescia for six months, losing three-fourths of his army. Later the [Scaliger](#) of Verona, aided by the exiled Ghibellines, sought to place Brescia under subjection. The citizens of Brescia then had recourse to [John of Luxemburg](#), but [Mastino II della Scala](#) expelled the governor appointed by him. His mastery was soon contested by the Visconti of Milan, but not even their rule was undisputed, as [Pandolfo III Malatesta](#) in 1406 took possession of the city. However, in 1416 he bartered it to [Filippo Maria Visconti](#) duke of Milan, who in 1426 sold it to the Venetians.



Coat of arms of
the house of
Scaliger of Verona



Coat of arms of
the house of
Visconti of Milan

The Milanese nobles forced Filippo to resume hostilities against the Venetians, and thus to attempt the recovery of Brescia, but he was defeated in the [battle of Macclodio](#) (1427), near Brescia, by general [Carmagnola](#), commander of the Venetian mercenary army. In 1439 Brescia was once more besieged by [Francesco Sforza](#), captain of the Venetians, who defeated [Niccolò Piccinino](#), Filippo's [condottiero](#). Thenceforward Brescia and the province were a Venetian possession.



The battle
of
Macclodio

Early in the 16th century Brescia was one of the wealthiest cities of Lombardy, but it never recovered from [its sack by the French](#) in 1512.

It subsequently shared the fortunes of the Venetian republic until the latter fell at the hands of French general [Napoleon Bonaparte](#); in Napoleonic times, it was part of the various revolutionary republics and then of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy after Napoleon became Emperor of the French.



Napoleon Bonaparte



In 1769, the city was devastated when the Bastion of San Nazaro was struck by [lightning](#). After the end of the [Napoleonic](#) era in 1815, Brescia was annexed to the Austrian puppet state known as the [Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia](#). Brescia revolted in 1848; then again in March 1849, when the Piedmontese army invaded Austrian-controlled Lombardy, the people in Brescia overthrew the hated local Austrian administration, and the Austrian military contingent, led by general Haynau, retreated to the Castle.



Italian revolt against Austrians

When the larger military operations turned against the Piedmontese, that retreated, Brescia was left to its own resources, but managed to resist recapture by the Austrian army for ten days of bloody and obstinate street fighting that are now celebrated as the [Ten Days of Brescia](#). This prompted poet [Giosuè Carducci](#) to nickname Brescia "Leonessa d'Italia" ("Italian Lioness"), since it was the only Lombard town to rally to King [Charles Albert](#) of Piedmont in that year.



The Ten Days of Brescia



In 1859, the citizens of Brescia voted overwhelmingly in favor of its inclusion in the newly-founded [Kingdom of Italy](#).

The city was awarded a Gold Medal for its resistance against Fascism in [World War II](#).





Giuseppe Garibaldi

The Kingdom of Italy

Some panoramic views





An historical picture



Town centre



The modern part



The University



The Stadium



A sport show



The Chrystal Palace



BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS

Capitoline Temple and Roman Theater

The temple, constructed in 74 BC enclosed the ancient forum on its north side. A marble staircase leads to the temple façade, formed by 6 columns. Inside the temple, there were 3 cells with marble floors. On the side, there is the theater, constructed in the 1st century BC and renovated in the 2nd century. The theater stands on a hill, in the Greek style, and hosted as many as 15,000 spectators.



The winged Victory



The Castle

It is located on the top of the Colle Cidneo, in a scenic position overlooking the city. This was the settlement of the city's first inhabitants and later the Romans built an enormous temple on the site. It is one of the most important fortified complexes in Italy and was constructed in various stages beginning from the 12th century to the Venetian period. It is a true fortified citadel with towers, bulwarks, buildings, courtyards, drawbridges and cellars that can be visited and that house the Museum of Ancient Weapons and the Museo del Risorgimento. The gardens are also worth a visit and, in the summer, the Brescians transform them into a much loved meeting point.





Piazza della Loggia

The piazza was designed in 1433, commissioned by the mayor, Marco Foscari, to give the Brescian nobility a new place to gather. The piazza became the center of the city's political and economic life. It was not completed until a century later. Gradually, the Loggia, Monte Vecchio and Monte Nuovo di Pietà, with its porticos and clock tower were constructed.



The Loggia

It was the city's public building and is the city hall today. Some of the greatest architects of the day contributed to the design, such as Sansovino and Palladio. The ship's keel dome was destroyed by fire in 1575 and it was only in 1915 that it was decided to rebuild it in lead following the original design. The rich sculptural decorations adorning the palazzo are also worthy of note.



The Monte Vecchio di Pietà (Old Pawnbroker's)

It is the oldest building on the piazza and is an example of the Venetian Renaissance style. It is decorated with ancient Roman stones found during excavations.

On the side opposite the Loggia, in the center of an elegant Venetian portico, you will find the Clock Tower. This 14th-century tower houses a precious mechanical astronomical clock, plated in gold, portraying the sun and the signs of the zodiac. On the top of the tower, you can see two statues nicknamed “i macc de le ure” (the madmen of the hours), who strike the hours on the bell.



The Broletto

Dominated by the 11th-century Torre del Pégol , the monument is one of the most important Medieval Lombard palazzi. What you see today, is the result of various superimposed buildings: the stone part is the oldest, while the terra cotta parts is latter. The palazzo also incorporates the façade of the preceding Romanesque church of Sant'Agostino.



The Grain Market

It is located in Piazzale Arnaldo, one of the most fascinating piazzas of Brescia. The palazzo was used as a grain market and is a magnificent example of how public utility can be combined with great esthetic concepts. The piazza's tall statue commemorates Arnaldo, a 12th-century monk condemned to death as a heretic for having publicly condemned the corruption of the Brescian clergy. In the piazza at the corner with Porta Venezia, you will find Zilioli, one of the city's most famous pastry shops, which is a good place to take a break.



CHURCHES

AND

MUSEUMS

The Duomo Vecchio or “Rotonda”

A Romanesque building on a circular plan surmounted by a tambour with conical roof. Its interior consists of a central space formed by eight pilasters that support a majestic dome. From the lower level, one descends to the crypt of San Filastro, constructed using Roman and Byzantine materials from the preceding basilica. The Rotonda contains interesting paintings by Romanino and Moretto and the sarcophagus of Bishop Berardo Maggi (1308).



The Duomo Nuovo

Its construction began in 1604 but was not finished until 1825, when the dome was completed. Due to the slow pace of construction, its style is anything but homogeneous: one notices this immediately in the majestic façade, which has a Baroque lower part and is Neoclassic over the portal. The interior has a Greek cross plan with columns and pilasters supporting an 80-meter high dome. The church preserves many sculptures and paintings from the Renaissance on.



San Francesco

An exquisite example of a Franciscan monastery, constructed in the 13th century in a late Romanesque style. Its simple façade encloses a splendid rose window. Even the interior is characterized by a simple style, but it preserves important works, frescoes and paintings including a masterpiece by Romanino. The splendid cloister built in 1394, with its red marble columns, is also worth a visit.



Santi Nazario e Celso

This church is worth a visit just for one masterpiece it contains: the Averoldi polyptych by Titian.



Santa Maria dei Miracoli

This church is considered a jewel of Lombard Renaissance sculpture. It was constructed to celebrate a miraculous image of the Madonna that was painted on the wall of a nearby house. The sacred image is now kept in the church's apse. The façade was decorated by master sculptors who worked on the construction of the Loggia during the same period.



St. Mary of Charity



Monastery of Santa Giulia

This incredible museum is one of the most important complexes of the early middle ages in Northern Italy. Founded in 753 by the Lombard King Desiderio, the monastery was expanded several times until the Renaissance.

The complex contains the Basilica of San Salvatore, of Lombard origin, the Church of Santa Giulia, the Church of Santa Maria in Solario, which houses the Treasure of Santa Giulia, and three Renaissance cloisters. Three Roman villas were discovered under the larger cloister, the Domus dell'Ortaglia. The monastery area was acquired by the Municipality, which has turned it into the “Museo della Città” where one can follow the history of Brescia from the Bronze Age through to the Renaissance.

The museum regularly hosts large art shows.





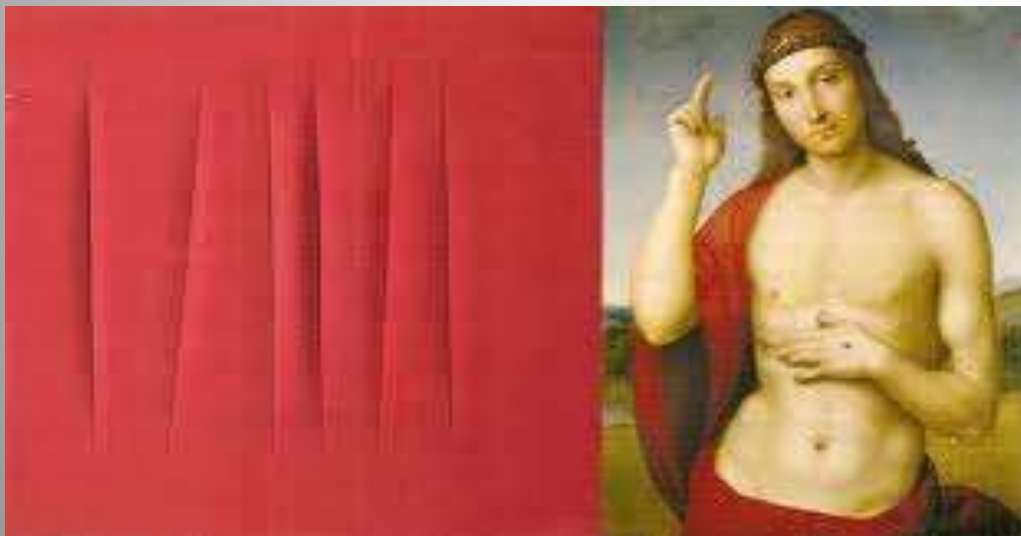
Museum of Ancient Weapons

The museum is located in the Castello di Brescia and is one of the most important collections of ancient weapons in Europe. The visitor will find himself surrounded by over 500 weapons and armors fabricated in Italy and Europe from the 15th to the 18th centuries. There are very rare pieces, masterpieces of technique and refinement and many made in Brescia. The museum also contains the remains of a Roman temple found during excavations.



Pinacoteca Civica Tosio-Martinengo

This is one of the most important Italian painting collections. The works on display range from the 13th to 18th centuries. The main nucleus consists of paintings by Renaissance Brescian masters such as Foppa, Romanino, Moretto and Savoldo; to these are added masterpieces by Raffaello, Paolo Veneziano, Lotto and others. The Pinacoteca also hosts many works coming from city palazzi and churches. The museum organizes extremely important art exhibits on a regular basis.



Museo del Risorgimento

The museum traces the history of Italian Unification from the end of Venetian domination until 1870. The collection contains a great many canvases, prints, letters, announcements, decrees, coins and knickknacks from that period.



Memorial day of terrorist
bombing in Piazza Loggia on
28th may 1974



The inauguration of
the underground



CULTURAL EVENTS



Momix

Eumenidi



Art Expo







Kimbell Art Museum
Forth Worth, Texas

FIERY POOL: THE
MAYA
AND THE MYTHIC SEA



CONCERTI
POESIA
EVENTI
DANZE

FU.TURISMO
MO.RCIANESE



THAT'L ALL,

FOLK!

THANKS FOR

YOUR

ATTENTION!