

9. Via Galliera

Mystery surrounds the origin of tarot cards. Palazzo Felicini in via Galliera was the mansion of the Fabbia Castracani family, a member of which is linked to the origin of tarots and the beginning of their history.

In the Bolognini Chapel of San Petronio, we can admire the first representation of The Hanged Man in the Tarots. On this note, one cannot help but mention that it is precisely in the Piazza Maggiore that the "Rogo del Diavolo" (Devil's Stake) took place in 1423, an intervention targeted at eradicating gambling as Tarots were becoming more and more popular in the city. Today, contemporary art celebrates this arcane cards in the International Museum of Tarots (Museo Internazionale dei Tarocchi), in Riola di Vergato, in the surroundings of Bologna (www.museodeitarocchi.net).



mystery of the Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's examination to enter to the famous Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna and of his encounter with Giovanni Battista Martini.



Tombs of the Glossatori

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Archaeological Museum (Former S. Maria della Morte Hospital). Crest of the Flagellant Confraternity.

10. Via IV Novembre

At n. 3, we stumble upon the house where Guglielmo Marconi was born (1874-1937). Besides his renowned studies, Marconi also touched upon Spiritism, a matter which, at the time, many cultural centres in Bologna dealt with, while creating a bibliographical patrimony on paranormal phenomena. In via IV Novembre, a tombstone on the side of the Santissimo Salvatore church testifies of the first Astrology chair at the faculty of Medicine, in the Middle Ages. At the time, a physician also had to be a good astrologer! The place is also a reminder of the encounters of the Fedeli D'Amore (literally Eros followers), who were often referred to as a literary cult whose initiation lines gave origin to the Italian language.

Walking down the road where Gerolamo Cardano (1501-1576 ca.), an Italian mathematician, physician, astrologer and philosopher, had his house, we pass the Torresotto di Portanova, the abode of the most powerful witch in Bologna: Gentile Cimieri, known as the 'strega enormissima' (tremendous sorceress).



11. Piazza San Francesco

Crossing Malpighi square, we can admire the hermetic symbols of the tombs dedicated to the Glossatori (those who wrote comments or *glosse* on legal texts in the medieval Studium), in what was once the ancient cemetery of the San Francesco church. The tombs recall the anomalous burials which are found everywhere in the city's subsurface. Finally we arrive at the gothic church of San Francesco, which tells us tales of alchemy inside the convents, as well as the

Magic Bologna

The most mysterious side of Bologna unveils along its alleys through the secret stories of alchemists, astrologers, witches and heretics who are the custodians of an ancient and forgotten culture.



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Piazza Maggiore 1/e

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Comune di Bologna



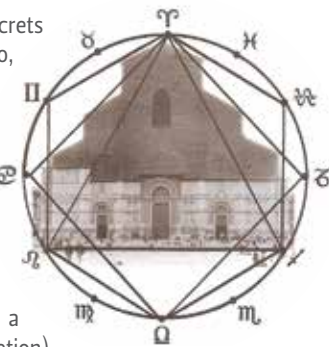
Bologna Welcome



1. Piazza Maggiore

The journey through the city's magic secrets starts from the Basilica of San Petronio, whose geometrical shape recalls a symbolism dear to the master masons. The paving in the interior houses a meridian line which revolutionised the calendar. The façade was built according to Astrology. Architectural balance is obtained by inscribing an equilateral triangle (a symbol of elevation), a square (which suggests a sense of stability) and a hexagon (which refers to man and completion) in a circle. These basic geometric forms mark twelve invisible dots outside the circle, which determine the height and volume of the church and remind of the never-ending circle of the zodiac.

For those who love their hidden treasures, the legend says that one is buried behind one of the three thousand flowers carved in the façade of Palazzo del Podestà. In the close-by via Gargiolari, a closed door hides the studio of the famous physician and astrologer Cecco D'Ascoli who was burnt at the stake. (Photo: St. Petronio's astrological diagram)



2. Piazza del Nettuno

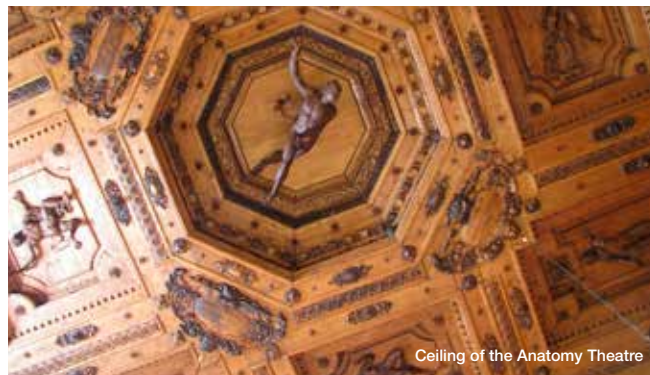
The city's most iconic fountain is a clear reference to the Council of Trent (Concilio Tridentino) (1545-1563): dedicated to the Pagan God Neptune whose trident crashes heresy. Opposite the fountain is the Palace where King Enzo, the son of Frederik II, was imprisoned: it is here that the wise wizard Michele Scoto (1175 ca. - 1232/36) collected his magic in the sumptuous banquets, as the legend has it. And let us not forget the Lambertini Tower with its ancient ghost stories.

In front of the Palace, inside the Salaborsa Library are the remains of an unknown Roman *Bononia* and of the first Botanical Garden which brought with it the magic of the herbs treasured by the city witches.

3. Via Archiginnasio

Here we find the first statue ever dedicated by the city of Bologna to one of its inhabitants: Luigi Galvani (1737-1798), whose studies inspired Mary Shelley's (1797-1851) masterpiece: *Frankenstein*. This square hosts the Archiginnasio, the first seat of the *Alma Mater Studiorum* - the University of Bologna. Its stones recreate a sun-lunar calendar, while it is inside that for centuries the magic of Theriaca, the panacea of all ills, took place. On the first floor we can find the most mysterious astrological cycle of the city, on the ceiling of the Anatomy Theatre, designed by Ovidio Montalbani, a restless 17th century astrologer.

A famous Bolognese saying «Tra la Vita e la Morte solo un passo...» (only one step between life and death) leads us to the Santa Maria della Vita church in Clavature street, on the way that the condemned had to walk before arriving at the stake.



Ceiling of the Anatomy Theatre

4. Via D'Azeglio



The Bastardini porch. The Sorceress

The church of San Procolo is where the first Freemasonry and the first Chart of the rights and duties of the arts and crafts saw the light in 1248. Opposite the church, under the Bastardini arcades, an unsettling emblem makes its appearance: the bolognese *Diavolessa* (Lady Devil), perhaps a reminder of the story of Caterina The Sorceress, who lived in this neighbourhood in the 15th century.

5. Piazza San Domenico

The church of San Domenico was the seat of the Holy Inquisition Courts. Here the stories of heretic perversion intertwine: the Cathars', the Dulcinians' and, of course, one of the most impenetrable religious orders of the Middle Ages - the Templars. Not far from here, in via degli Arianti, was the home to the Gaudenti friars who gave the city one of the most obscure riddles of the *Aelia Lelia Crispis* story: the mysterious funeral stone of Bologna.

6. The Stefaniano complex

The complex rises at the centre of a square whose sculptures carved in the capitals represent the knowledge linked to the symbols of the Arcanes. It was built around the 1st century A.D., with a small temple dedicated

to the cult of Isis, and has been there through two thousand years of history. Between real life and legend, one can still see the moon shadows of the hermetic and alchemic symbols which embellish its walls. Once defined as the Holy Jerusalem of the West, the church of Santo Sepolcro is an exact scale replica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. According to the hermetic tradition, the Holy Grail would be represented in the basin in Pilate's courtyard.



Santo Stefano. The two-tailed mermaid

7. Bologna's two towers

Myths and stories on the Two Towers introduce a fascinating, magical journey at the discovery of the Templars who had their seat in Strada Maggiore. This street starts at the foot of the main tower, the Asinelli tower. The legend has it that the devil personally built it overnight. The towers are the mast of a circle of walls which still today marks the rhythm of time and of the Zodiac. Already in the 17th century, the twelve doors opened on the third curtain walls of Bologna were assimilated with the twelve constellations.

8. The former Jewish ghetto



Hermes and Athena. Achille Bocchi

At the foot of the smaller tower, the Garisenda, we find the old gates of what was once Bologna's Jewish ghetto, with via dei Giudei (Jews street) as a reminder. It is here that the most mysterious studies on Alchemy and the Kabbalah were conducted. Here Vincenzo Casciarolo (1571-1624), while trying to find the philosopher's stone, created the phosphorous stone which still today is known as the Bologna stone or *pietra luciferina* (Luciferin stone), whose magic virtues were praised even by Goethe.

Entering via Goito, we retrace the steps of Achille Bocchi (1488-1562), a local scholar suspected of

heresy, who gathered his thoughts in the ancient academy in Palazzo Bocchi. The academy was known as *Hermatena*, a fusion between Hermes and Athena, and was meant as a hosting place for the great minds of an age which rediscovered the hermetic epic deeds of the Ancient Egypt, often on the verge of the greatest heresies of the time.