

9. Guidozaghi Tower House (20 m)

Via Albioli, 1-3

This is the only surviving tower of the four once owned by the Guidozaghi family, a member of a family of noble origins related to the Guelph party that took part in two Crusades (in 1094 and in 1291). Taking few steps down via Albari and turning to face the Coronata, the sight of these two towers so close to one another really allows to imagine how the tower-crowded Medieval Bologna must have looked like.

10. Two Towers

Piazza Ravegnana

They are the landmark of the city. The taller one –Asinelli– was raised to the current 97.2 m when it became Municipal property (at the end of the 13th century). Originally, it had a height of about 60 m: from that point upward the walls actually become thinner showing the builder's intention to raise the tower's height without overburdening it with a weight that could have made it unstable. Moreover, the current height would have been completely pointless for the tower's original (defensive) purpose, while it served the need of the Municipality for a beacon tower to communicate with the countryside. The Garisenda tower must have been 60 m high too before it was lowered to 47.5 m mid-14th century for fear it would collapse; sure enough, the tower's tilt is believed to have started immediately, caused by the sinking of

land (the overhang measures 3.2 m). It was certainly leaning in the time of Dante, who in the Inferno in canto XXXI compared it to the giant Antaeus (these lines are written on the commemorative stone on the tower's east side), but it has a completely different tone from that of another sonnet attributed to Dante himself by the poet Carducci, which sings the praises of the tower as follows: <<Never could these my eyes correct the grievous / error that they would make unless struck blind, / if, having seen the Garisenda Tower / with such bright ornaments one may find, / they failed (the curse on them!) to realize / it is the greatest tower men talk about>>. The poet complains that his gaze, captivated by the sight of the Garisenda tower, missed that of a beautiful lady passing by.



11. Alberici Tower (27 m)

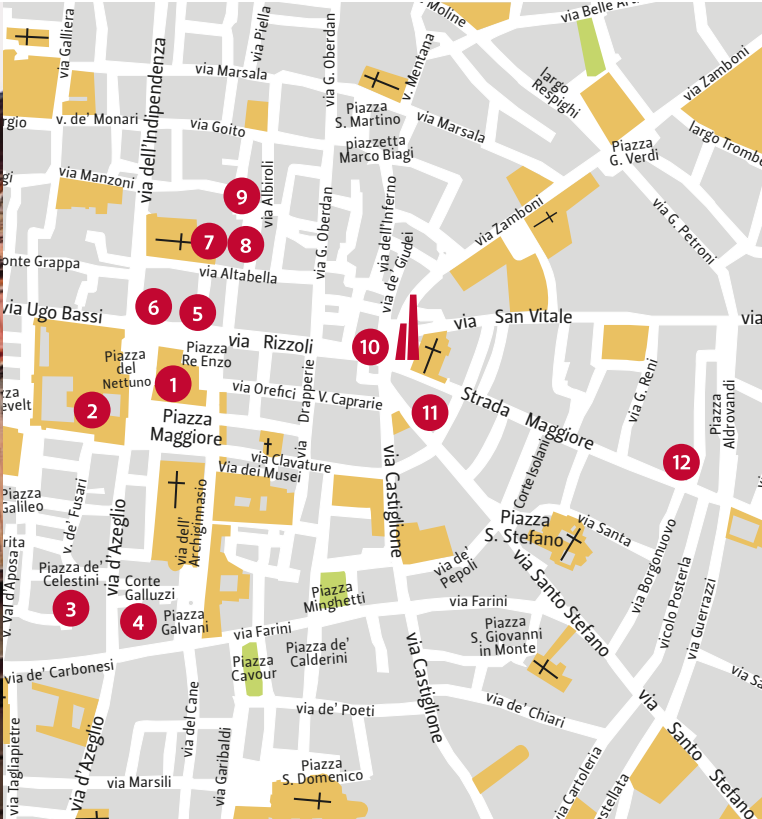
Via Santo Stefano, 4

The Alberici tower has a peculiar structure: a *belvedere* has been built on the top and, in the place of a selenite base, there is what could be the oldest shop in Bologna. It was in 1273 that the contract for the ground floor extension done by master craftsmen Aldrovandino and Bonaventura was stipulated.

12. The lost towers

Fifty-two are the “lost towers” of which we know exactly the location of. The Mussolini one for example, a Guelph family that, hard to believe, did not participate in the political life of the city. On the corner of Strada Maggiore (No. 42) and vicolo Bianchetti remains a section of stones with ashlar wall of almost 20 meters.

Written by Roberto Colombari



The towers of Bologna

The towers of the noble Bologna families, built between the end of the 11th and the first half of the 13th century, were a defensive means and, at the same time, a status symbol. There are more than 20 towers left of the original 100, nonetheless we know the exact position of 52 which are no longer in existence. The towers literally crowded the inner part of the first, and most ancient, line of walls, defending an area of almost 50 acres.



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1. Arengo Tower (47 m)

Piazza Maggiore, 1

The Arengo tower boldly sits on the *Voltone del Palazzo del Podestà* sustained by four corner pilasters. It was commissioned not by a noble family, but by the Municipality (in 1252) in order for it to house the bells used to assemble the citizens (the assembly was called *arengo*).

2. Clock Tower (48 m)

Piazza Maggiore, 6

The tower was part of the house of Accursio, who is maybe the most famous representative of the Bologna School of Glossators (the glossa, from the Greek word for tongue, is a brief marginal notation explaining the meaning of an unclear word or wording). The house was sold from his eldest son Francesco to the Municipality in 1287. A mechanical clock was installed on the tower in the 15th century; a wooden structure on which mechanically animated figures representing the Magi, a knight and an angel carrying a trumpet glided to bow in front of the Madonna and Child to strike every hour of the day and of the night was removed in 1796.

3. Catalani Tower (16 m)

Vicolo dello Spirito Santo

Built in the first half of the 13th century, it was the Malavolti family tower house. It would later be known as Catalani tower from the name of Catalano, a *podestà* born approximately in 1210 who ruled in nine different cities. Along with Loderingo degli Andalo', he was a supporter of the Knights of St. Mary (also known as

the Jovial Friars), an order which was founded with the purpose of pacifying the Guelph and Ghibelline factions. Loderingo and Catalano ruled Bologna twice and in 1266 they were appointed to rule Florence. They failed in their task though, and because of this Dante put them among the hypocrites – damned to listlessly walk along wearing gilded lead cloaks – in his Divine Comedy. The outer part of the tower is characterized by narrow windows and an architrave door with selenite corbels surmounted by a half-circular pediment with a brick arch.

4. Galluzzi Tower (30 m)

Corte de' Galluzzi, 1

Corte Galluzzi keeps showing to this day how it happened that the most powerful families occupied public land and built fortifications on it in order to best protect the buildings they lived in. Sure enough, the tower, the houses, the warehouses, the stables, the well and also the family chapel used to look onto the courtyard, or *curia*. The early door of the Galluzzi tower can be clearly seen up over 6 m off the ground: the towers were born as fortifications, therefore the entrance was commonly built above the ground level; in the eventuality of an attack, the floorboards on the entrance story used to be removed. A chronicle from the second half of the 15th century accounts of the love-story between Virginia Galluzzi and Malatesta, member of the rival family of Carbone: the brothers of the girl discovered their secret marriage and killed them both making it look like a double suicide.



5. Lambertini (25 m) and Ramponi (25 m) Tower

Piazza Re Enzo e via Rizzoli, 8

The Lambertini tower house, commissioned by one of the most important families in the city, was built in the first half of the 12th century and given to the Municipality in 1294. The most famous member of this family is Cardinal Prospero, who was one of the five popes from Bologna, and took up the pontifical name Benedict XIV (1740-1758). More difficult to locate is the Ramponi tower; standing between via Rizzoli and via Fossalta and long turned into a shop, it lacks the characteristic selenite blocks at the base, which have been removed as early as the 18th century.



6. Scappi Tower (39 m)

Via Indipendenza, 3

Legend has it that the Scappi family owes its name to an ancestress who, seeing king Enzo's (son of Emperor Frederick II captured in battle in 1249 by the Bolognesi) blond hair peer out from inside a *brenta* (a sort of barrel carried on the shoulders thanks to leather straps), started yelling "Scappa! Scappa!" [He's fleeing! He's fleeing!] preventing him from successfully escaping.

7. Azzoguidi Tower (61 m)

Via Altabella, 7

Via Altabella [tall beauty] owes its name to the Azzoguidi tower, the only tower standing perfectly vertical. One of the member of the notable family is Baldassarre, the first typographer (or editor) in Bologna: the first book he published was not, contrarily to what one might think, a law book, but Ovidio's works (1471).



8. Prendiparte Tower (60 m)

Via Sant'Alò

The Prendiparte tower is also known as the Coronata [the crowned one] for the crown-shaped *risega* (thinning in the thickness of the walls) it presents at about 50 m from the ground level. Cardinal Paleotti had it built in the second half of the 12th century and it was used as an extension of the Archiepiscopal Seminar. Later, in 1751, when the Seminar was moved elsewhere, Cardinal Lambertini – Pope Benedict XIV – turned it into an Archbishopric Jail for crimes against religion.

