



*Reference Guides to National Architecture*

# *Architecture of ITALY*

JEAN CASTEX



# Architecture of Italy

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Architecture  
of Italy

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## Entries by Location

Entries are listed below by region and then by city or town within each region.

### NORTHERN ITALY

#### **Liguria**

##### *Genoa*

Renovation of the Old Harbor,  
Genoa  
Viaduct of the Polcevera,  
Genoa

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##### *Mantua*

Palazzo del Te, Mantua  
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##### *Milan*

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Emmanuel Gallery), Milan  
Milan Cathedral, Milan  
Monte Amiata Housing, Gallarate,  
Milan  
Velasca Tower, Milan

##### *Vigevano*

Piazza Ducale, Vigevano

#### **Piedmont**

##### *Chieri*

Confraternity of San Bernardino,  
Chieri

##### *Lake Maggiore*

Isola Bella Gardens, Lake Maggiore

##### *Novara*

San Gaudenzio Dome, Novara

##### *Stupinigi*

Royal Hunting Lodge, Stupinigi

##### *Turin*

Fiat Lingotto Plant, Turin  
Palace of Labor, Turin  
Piazza Vittorio Veneto (Piazza Po),  
Turin  
Santissima Sindone (Holy Shroud  
Chapel), Turin

## Veneto

### *Padua*

Caffè Pedrocchi (Café Pedrocchi),  
Padua

### *Ravenna*

San Vitale, Ravenna  
Sant' Apollinare in Classe,  
Ravenna

### *Venice*

Ca d'Oro, Venice  
Saffa Area Public Housing,  
Canareggio, Venice  
Saint Mark's Square, Venice  
San Marco (Saint Mark's Basilica),  
Venice  
Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

### *Verona*

Castelvecchio Museum of Art,  
Verona  
San Zeno Maggiore, Verona

### *Vicenza*

Villa Rotonda, Vicenza

## CENTRAL ITALY

### **Latium**

#### *Bagnaia*

Villa Lante Gardens, Bagnaia

#### *Caprarola*

Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola

#### *Ostia*

Horrea Epagathiana and  
Epaphroditiana, Ostia

#### *Tivoli*

Hadrian's Villa (Villa Adriana),  
Tivoli

## Marche, Umbria

### *Assisi*

San Francesco (Saint Francis Basilica),  
Assisi

### *Orvieto*

Orvieto Cathedral (Church of the  
Assumption of Virgin Mary),  
Orvieto

### *Perugia*

Augustus Gate, Perugia  
Palazzo dei Priori, Piazza Grande  
(Platea Comunis), Perugia

### *Todi*

Santa Maria della Consolazione,  
Todi

### *Urbino*

Collegio del Colle and Extensions,  
Urbino  
Ducal Palace, Urbino

## Rome

### *Rome*

Baths of Caracalla, Rome  
Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), Rome  
Colonnade of Saint Peter's Basilica,  
Rome  
Colosseum, Rome  
Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della  
Vittoria, Rome  
Forum Romanum, Roman Forum,  
Rome  
Mausoleum of Constantina (Church  
of Santa Costanza), Rome  
Pantheon, Rome  
Saint Peter's Dome, Rome  
San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane,  
Rome  
Sant' Andrea al Quirinale, Rome  
Santa Maria della Pace Cloister, Rome

Spanish Steps, Rome  
Trevi Fountain, Rome  
Tuscolano II Public Housing,  
Rome

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Church of the Autostrada, San  
Giovanni Battista, Campi  
Bisenzio

#### *Collodi*

Garzoni Gardens, Collodi

#### *Florence*

Florence Cathedral Dome, Florence  
Laurentian Library, Florence  
Palazzo Vecchio, Florence  
Pazzi Chapel, Franciscan Convent  
of Santa Croce, Florence

#### *Pienza*

Piazza Pio II, Pienza

#### *Pisa*

Cathedral, Campanile, Baptistery,  
and Campo Santo, Pisa

#### *San Gimignano*

Casa Torre, San Gimignano

#### *Siena*

Piazza del Campo, Palazzo Pubblico,  
Siena

## **SOUTHERN ITALY AND SICILY**

### **Campania**

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Villa Malaparte, Capri

#### *Naples*

Palazzo Sanfelice, Naples  
Theater of San Carlo, Naples

#### *Paestum*

Temple of Poseidon, Paestum

#### *Pompeii*

House of the Faun, Pompeii

### **Puglia**

#### *Alberobello*

Trulli, Alberobello

#### *Puglia*

Castel del Monte, Puglia

### **Sicily**

#### *Palermo*

Monreale Cathedral and Cloister,  
Palermo  
Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace,  
Palermo

#### *Selinunte*

Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus,  
Selinunte

#### *Taormina*

Theater, Taormina



# Entries by Architectural Style and Period

Entries are listed alphabetically within styles and periods.

## ANTIQUITY

### **Greek Colonies in Italy**

Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus,  
Selinunte

Temple of Poseidon, Paestum  
Theater, Taormina

### **Etruscan and Italic Architecture**

Augustus Gate, Perugia

### **Roman Architecture**

Baths of Caracalla, Rome

Colosseum, Rome

Forum Romanum, Roman Forum,  
Rome

Hadrian's Villa (Villa Adriana),  
Tivoli

Horrea Epagathiana and  
Epaphroditiana, Ostia

House of the Faun, Pompeii

Pantheon, Rome

### **Early Christian**

Mausoleum of Constantina (Church  
of Santa Costanza), Rome

Sant' Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna

## MIDDLE AGES

### **Byzantine**

San Marco (Saint Mark's Basilica),  
Venice

San Vitale, Ravenna

### **Romanesque**

Cathedral, Campanile, Baptistry,  
and Campo Santo, Pisa

Monreale Cathedral and Cloister,  
Palermo

Palatine Chapel, Norman Palace,  
Palermo

San Zeno Maggiore, Verona

### **Gothic**

Ca d'Oro, Venice

Casa Torre, San Gimignano  
 Castel del Monte, Puglia  
 Florence Cathedral Dome,  
     Florence  
 Milan Cathedral, Milan  
 Orvieto Cathedral (Church of the  
     Assumption of Virgin Mary),  
 Orvieto  
 Palazzo dei Priori, Piazza Grande  
     (Platea Communis), Perugia  
 Palazzo Vecchio, Florence  
 Piazza del Campo, Palazzo  
     Pubblico, Siena  
 Saint Mark's Square, Venice  
 San Francesco (Saint Francis  
     Basilica), Assisi

## RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE

### Renaissance

Ducal Palace, Urbino  
 Florence Cathedral Dome,  
     Florence  
 Pazzi Chapel, Franciscan Convent  
     of Santa Croce, Florence  
 Piazza Ducale, Vigevano  
 Piazza Pio II, Pienza  
 Saint Peter's Dome, Rome  
 Sant' Andrea, Mantua  
 Santa Maria della Consolazione,  
     Todi  
 Santa Maria della Pace Cloister,  
     Rome

### Mannerism

Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), Rome  
 Laurentian Library, Florence  
 Palazzo del Te, Mantua  
 Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola  
 Palazzo Vecchio, Florence  
 Saint Peter's Dome, Rome  
 Villa Lante Gardens, Bagnaia  
 Villa Rotonda, Vicenza

### Baroque

Colonnade of Saint Peter's Basilica,  
     Rome  
 Confraternity of San Bernardino,  
     Chieri  
 Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della  
     Vittoria, Rome  
 Garzoni Gardens, Collodi  
 Isola Bella Gardens, Lake Maggiore  
 Palazzo Sanfelice, Naples  
 Royal Hunting Lodge, Stupinigi  
 San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane,  
     Rome  
 Sant' Andrea al Quirinale, Rome  
 Santa Maria della Salute, Venice  
 Santissima Sindone (Holy Shroud  
     Chapel), Turin  
 Spanish Steps, Rome  
 Trevi Fountain, Rome

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### Neoclassical and Eclectic

Caffè Pedrocchi (Café Pedrocchi),  
     Padua  
 Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (Victor  
     Emmanuel Gallery), Milan  
 Piazza Vittorio Veneto (Piazza Po),  
     Turin  
 San Gaudenzio Dome, Novara  
 Theater of San Carlo, Naples  
 Trulli, Alberobello

### Contemporary

Casa Rustici, 36 Corso Sempione,  
     Milan  
 Castelvecchio Museum of Art,  
     Verona  
 Church of the Autostrada, San  
     Giovanni Battista, Campi  
     Bisenzio  
 Collegio del Colle and Extensions,  
     Urbino

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Saffa Area Public Housing,  
Canareggio, Venice  
Tuscolano II Public Housing, Rome  
Velasca Tower, Milan  
Viaduct of the Polcevera, Genoa  
Villa Malaparte, Capri

## Preface

When David A. Hanser, series editor for the Greenwood Guides to National Architecture, asked me to write a book covering seventy-five of the most important architectural monuments in Italy as part of the series, I felt both pleasure and uneasiness. Much can be said about Italian architecture. It is a world in itself, and there are so many superb buildings. How could I reduce such a mass of information to simple and straightforward descriptions and to such a limited number of examples? Should I just comment on the best-known landmarks and ignore more ordinary but no less fascinating buildings, structures that often play a great role in the pleasure given by Italian architecture? An important decision, then, was the selection of buildings. I had to avoid being too passionate about certain periods, although, I confess I found the greatest delight in the Renaissance and Baroque periods. I tried to be fair with regions and chronological periods in Italy, but I also had to refuse a too broad distribution because buildings, in history, group themselves into a series of connected works of art, an understanding of which should be full of rewards. Limitations of space meant that two well-known buildings of the same kind and of the same period could not both be presented. I had to make a choice. The latest information, the latest criticism helped me in the selection. Of course, I had to rely not only on American and English books and essays but also on the most recent opinions presented by Italian researchers. The need to rely on recent debates to give a clear explanation of a building had often been the reason for choosing it.

When all the research was done and most of the writing completed, I felt I needed some corrections from a native English-speaking writer. A certain French logic and French ways of explaining would not totally fit an American or English reader. David Hanser proposed Janina Darling, author of another book in this series, *Architecture in Greece*. I feel grateful for the help she provided, and for the overall improvements she suggested.

Because architecture has a specialized vocabulary that is used to describe structures, details, and materials, a **Glossary** is included at the end of this book. It contains definitions for important terms that may, or may not, be fully explained in the entries. Words included in the Glossary are placed in *italics* the first time they appear in an entry. Frequently, the entry for a building includes comparison or reference to another structure included in this book. Where such a reference is made, the name of the building is indicated with **boldface** type when it appears for the first time.

Because Italy is in itself a world in architecture, I felt I had, in any case, to select with great care periods more difficult for the American reader to understand. If I had a chance to open eyes and minds, my own reward would be greater. Because I had to explain the characteristics of Baroque architecture, which a country like France (at least partially) ignores, I was pushed to greater efforts. Also such things as the notion of proportions typical of the Renaissance, which saw an image of the cosmos in a building's mathematics and geometry, needed to be clarified. Contemporary structural techniques also needed to be described, and their goals explained. When I sum up what I did during my own editing, I notice that eight items had played an invisible part in my comments. They should be a key for American readers to grasp my selection criteria and to discover a certain order of ideas, which, while mine, can be freely rearranged to make the book their own.

## Architectural Landmarks

These architectural landmarks could be classified by the following periods and types:

1. **ANTIQUITY, GREEK, ETRUSCAN, ROMAN:** The entries under this heading include a Greek Doric temple, the **Temple of Poseidon**, Paestum, 480–470 BCE; a large domed structure, typical of Roman building methods, the **Pantheon**, Rome, 118–125; a theater, originally Greek, later Roman, the **Theater of Taormina**, third century BCE; an arena, the **Colosseum**, Rome, 70–80; an entertainment complex, the **Baths of Caracalla**, Rome, 212–235; a basilica (a multipurpose hall), the **Roman Forum**, first century BCE; the late evolution of the basilica into an Early Christian church, **Sant' Apollinare in Classe**, Ravenna, consecrated in 549; and two domed structures of the late Roman period, the **Mausoleum of Constantina**, Rome, 337–350 and **San Vitale**, Ravenna, 526–548.
2. **MIDDLE-AGES:** A Byzantine basilica, **Saint Mark's**, Venice, 1064–1094; a well-known “precinct,” or complex of buildings, with the famous **Leaning Tower, Cathedral, Baptistry, and Campo Santo** at Pisa, 1064–1277; Cathedral churches, **Orvieto Cathedral**, 1290–1330 and **Milan Cathedral**, 1386 (its main altar consecrated in 1418).

3. **RENAISSANCE:** Famous domes, **Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore**, Florence, 1420–1436; **Saint Peter's Dome**, Rome, 1505–1590; princely palaces (palazzi), **Ducal Palace**, Urbino, 1444–1482, as well as the **Palazzo del Te**, Mantua, 1524–1534, and the **Palazzo Farnese**, Caprarola, 1530–1575; and villas, the **Villa Rotonda**, Vicenza, 1567–1569, with decoration from around 1580.
4. **NINETEENTH CENTURY:** A large iron and glass gallery, **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele**, Milan, 1863–1877.
5. **TWENTIETH CENTURY:** An automobile plant, **Fiat Lingotto Plant**, Turin, 1915–1923; a skyscraper, **Velasca Tower**, Milan, 1956–1958; an exhibition hall, **Palace of Labor**, Turin, 1960–1961; and a museum of art, **Castelvecchio Museum of Art**, Verona, 1957–1964.

### Components of the Antique City

Among the entries in this volume are a fortified city of the Etruscan period, **Augustus Gate**, Perugia, 2nd century BCE; and a good example of a Greek town, the **Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus (Selinunte)**, the “queen of colonies in Sicily,” 651–250 BCE, which can also provide some elements for the history of the house. Urban planning and the meaning of Roman government can be derived from the entry on the **Forum** of Republican Rome from the first century BCE. For the Roman period, the entries can illustrate the differences between a large aristocratic residence in Pompeii (**House of the Faun**, 180 BCE–79 CE), and the densification of the city during the second century CE through social stratification and mixed building uses (**Horrea Epagathiana and Epaphroditiana**, Ostia).

### Cultural and Political Changes

Buildings cannot be understood if the cultural, social, and political changes they cause or reflect are ignored. Thus, certain buildings were selected because they offer a clear picture of the society around them. The prosperity and the growth of the city had a powerful influence in the Etruscan period (**Augustus Gate**, Perugia), in the period of the Greek colony and rival of Carthage (**Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus**), and in Republican Rome (the **Roman Forum**). Strong internal and social oppositions threatened the peace of San Gimignano (**Casa Torre**), of Orvieto (**Orvieto Cathedral**, 1290–1330), and Perugia (**Palazzo dei Priori**, **Piazza Grande**, Perugia, 1300–1443). The power of Renaissance princes played a decisive role in Urbino (**Ducal Palace**, 1444–1482). The crisis of the Protestant Reformation obliged the Roman Catholic Church to reconsider its interior politics and its cultural goals (**Saint Peter's Dome**, Rome, 1505–1590; **Campidoglio**, 1538–1655). The Catholic Reformation was the period of self-reform for the Roman Catholic Church,

whose propaganda was expressed in the most advanced creations of the Baroque age (**Cornaro Chapel**, Rome, 1647–1652; **Sant’ Andrea al Quirinale**, Rome, 1659–1670).

The unification of Italy (the Risorgimento movement) of the nineteenth century created a new kind of public space treated on a monumental scale, for example, a “caffè” (**Caffè Pedrocchi**, Padua, 1826–1842), or, in surprisingly huge monuments to celebrate the economic and financial success of a city like Novara (**San Gaudenzio**, 1841–1878). In scale, this “brick Eiffel Tower” had been anticipated by a gallery in Milan, ten years before it was finished. It opened to the vast middle-class crowds and contained a dome as big as the Renaissance dome of Saint Peter (**Galleria Vittorio Emmanuele**, 1863–1877). Contemporary architectural movements expressed the political conflicts and social rivalries of the twentieth century.

### Decision Making by the Architect

Is it possible to penetrate the hidden side of architectural conception? Great attention should be paid to how the profession names the designers. In antiquity, “architects” may have been known by name, but this designation disappeared and the designer gradually took on the title of “master-mason” or cleric of the work, in charge of the main building decisions. This medieval system of building was based on the collaboration of different crafts. The birth of a new profession—architect—could be traced in the construction of the dome in Florence (**Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore**, 1420–1436). Most succeeding architects have so protected their talent that the historian must rely on isolated papers, on debates, on modern interviews in architectural magazines, and on elaborate research to know their decision-making process.

In any case, architects must achieve precise goals in a building, and these may orient the research. The proportions of the **Temple of Poseidon**, Paestum, 480–470 BCE, or of the Doric Temples of Selinunte (**Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus**) were a great challenge for the architects. Combining a classical Greek temple with a more Roman-appearing rotunda was the aim of Hadrian’s architect for the **Pantheon** in Rome, 118–125. In designing the **Basilica of Saint Francis, Assisi**, a strong debate occurred between those who wanted to express the spirit of humility of the Franciscan order and those who wanted to communicate the sense of modernity brought by French Gothic builders. Designers of **Orvieto Cathedral**, 1290–1330, could not follow the bishop’s choice of the Gothic style, which he could only realize by moving to Florence. **Milan Cathedral**, 1386 through the fifteenth century, proved a failure of the traditional methods of the Gothic masters. Because Renaissance architecture is sometimes difficult for the nonscholar to understand, time must be devoted to such three-dimensional architectural manifestos as the **Pazzi Chapel** of Florence, 1429–1459, a work of Filippo Brunelleschi, and, for the Renaissance

system of proportions, the **Cloisters of Santa Maria della Pace** in Rome, 1500–1504, a work by Donato Bramante. Baroque design strategies are discussed in two of Bernini's creations, the **Cornaro Chapel**, 1647–1652, and **Sant' Andrea al Quirinale**, 1659–1670, both in Rome. Contemporary architects belong to various movements or ideologies. Giovanni Michelucci (**Church of the Autostrada**, 1961–1971) was an expressionist architect. M. Aymonino and Aldo Rossi's interest in the history of the city could not prevent them from expressing their belief in the “modern” project, as it was opposed to the “traditional” city; their **Monte Amiata Housing** in Milan, 1967–1972, was a countermodel for the city of the future. Giancarlo de Carlo maintained an open-minded discussion with the future inhabitants in preparing his project for the **Collegio del Colle** in Urbino, 1962–1983. Carlo Scarpa's **Castelvecchio Museum of Art** in Verona, 1957–1964, explains clearly how he conceived of his creative method. As engineers also create new forms, Giuseppe Mengoni's conception of an iron and glass gallery (**Galleria Vittorio Emanuele**, Milan, 1863–1877), Nervi's use of steel and concrete in the “modern Parthenon,” the **Palace of Labor** in Turin, 1960–1961, or the sense of fluidity developed by Riccardo Morandi (**Viaduct of the Polcevera**, Genoa, 1961–1964) needed a detailed study.

### Domestic Architecture

The history of the house is begins with a Greek house of the fourth or third centuries BCE (**Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus**) and an aristocratic home in Pompeii (**House of the Faun**). A warehouse in the ancient port of Ostia is an example of Roman utilitarian design (**Horrea Epagathiana and Epaphroditiana**). For the Middle Ages, a house in a tower (**Casa Torre**, San Gimignano, twelfth century) is contrasted with a more welcoming merchant's house in Venice (**Ca d'Oro**, 1424–1437). The Renaissance arrangement of a large urban palazzo (palace) around a central courtyard can be grasped in the entry of the **Ducal Palace** of Urbino, 1444–1482, and that of large villas (**Villa Rotonda** of Vicenza, 1567–1580). A Neapolitan example of a large palace, arranged around an immense staircase, shows the eighteenth-century evolution of the residence (**Palazzo Sanfelice**, 1725–1728).

During the twentieth century, domestic architecture for the middle and lower classes became a characteristic activity for architects. The creation of a new type of urban residence (**Casa Rustici**, Milan, 1933–1936) illustrates the broad research for unprecedented solutions, with the **Villa Malaparte** on Capri, 1938–1942, representing a modern design full of reminiscences of the primitive past of Greek Mediterranean architecture. Three generations of housing estates were selected: **Tuscolano II Public Housing** in Rome, 1950–1954, was typical of post-World War II attitudes; **Monte Amiata Housing** in Milan, 1967–1972, indicates the tough debates of the late 1960s about the city



and its history; and the **Saffa Area Public Housing** in Venice, 1984–1987, shows the intelligent integration of a new housing development into an old urban fabric that respected Venetian traditions.

## Landscape and Gardens

Landscape and architecture sometimes combine into a single unit. A sense of landscape was a fundamental element in creating a Greek city; the Acropolis of Selinus was positioned on a peninsula that offered a vast view of the sea (**Ruins of the Greek City of Selinus**) and the **Theater at Taormina** opened onto a symbolic landscape. Even in Rome, the **Baths of Caracalla**, 212–235, entertained the people within splendidly designed gardens. In commissioning the town square in Pienza, 1459–1462, Pope Pius II, who was fascinated by nature, ended the medieval tradition of a walled-in city by opening the square to wide vistas of distant mountains. A similar Renaissance love for gardens justifies the **Villa Lante Gardens** in Bagnaia, 1560–1600.

The **Palazzo Farnese** in Caprarola, 1530–1575, with its gardens and its “palazzina,” imposes its order on a disrupted area and creates its own landscape. Andrea Palladio, in his **Villa Rotonda**, 1567–1580, imposed his powerful design on the hills around Vicenza. The Baroque period was rich in garden designs. For example, the **Garzoni Gardens** in Collodi, 1650–1690, were erected on a steep slope, and the **Isola Bella Gardens**, 1631–1671, were created as an artificial mountain on an island in the Lake Maggiore. The **Royal Hunting Lodge** at Stupinigi, 1729–1733, in the vicinity of Turin offered an unusual dialogue between architecture and a rearranged landscape of regional dimensions. Twentieth-century works tend to increase the importance of the landscape: the **Villa Malaparte** on Capri, 1938–1942, plays with the sunny stretches of the Mediterranean Sea. In Genoa, the **Viaduct of the Polcevera**, 1961–1964, is a freeway, conceived as a link along the Ligurian coast of the Mediterranean. In Urbino, the **Collegio del Colle**, 1962–1983, kept at a distance from the old city, provides a unique view of its silhouette against the mountains and hills of the Apennines.

## Construction Techniques

Technical methods and innovations in construction and materials can play a great role in shaping a building. The skeleton of a Greek temple, made of columns and lintels (horizontal spanning elements), was based on the weight carried by the columns and the strength of the stone (**Temple of Poseidon**, Paestum). Romans developed audacious new techniques of wall building and vaulting, using brick, arches, and a type of concrete (**Pantheon**, Rome, 121–138). Construction techniques evolved from the Early Christian period to the Middle Ages from reinforcement of walls by transverse arches connected to