

BRINDISI – HISTORIC AND ARTISTIC ITINERARIES

Itinerary 1: the city centre travelling west



Departing from Crispi Square which is at the Railway station, one turns left and heads towards "via Bastioni San Giorgio"; after approximately 400 meters, on the right you can admire **1** the "**Bastions**" – the defensive system of the XVI century. On the external wall you will also see the coat of arms of Charles the Vth. During certain periods of the year these premises are opened for public meetings, art exhibitions and other events. Arriving at "**Porta Mesagne**", this is one of the ancient main entrances to the city; this ogee arched entrance is of Swebian origin which ages back to approximately 1243, the smaller entrance was built in the 1930's. Passing through the gate and turning right, you will find the ruins of the Roman aqueducts, called **Vasche Limarie**. These tanks collected drinkable water by means of pipes running from a place named "Pozzo de Vito", which is 12 km away. The subsequent flow of water through several tanks, allowed for its cleansing by decantation, before distributing it to the cities many fountains. Leaving these tanks behind you, you will arrive in "via C.Colombo", and continue up until you reach "via della Libertà", where you will find on the left, the ancient Aragon walls, dating back to the mid XV century.

A little ahead is the entrance to the **2 Swabian Castle**, which was commissioned by Federico II in 1227; today it is a military centre and therefore not opened for tourist visits.



The Swabian Castle, which was commissioned by Federico II in 1227, built from materials obtained from the old walls and monuments of the city.

In 1488 Aragonese built up another external wall; this way, inner svevo. the inner Swabian part has been preserved during centuries.

The Castle has been utilized as an important naval base during last two world wars; it hosted King Vittorio Emanuele III in 1943 and was used as a central command base during Brindisi's capital period (Sep 10th 1943 to Feb 14th 1944).

Continuing on “via dei Mille” and turning into the narrow lanes which lead into the historical centre (via Cittadella, via Monopoli), you will reach “via Marconi”, where on the left is the **3 Church** and the **cloister** of **Saint Benedict**, XI century.

The church of S.Benedict, built in 1089, is a typical example of Romanesque art, with cross-shaped.

Very important is its portal with architrave (XI century), that reproduces hunting scenes between men and dragons.

Of great interest is the medieval cloister, also accessible from the old benedictine's convent. The bell tower has a square shape.



Continuing on “via S.Benedetto” you can admire the antique architrave which rests on top of the doorway of the church of St. Anna, where inside, there are some beautiful frescos from XIV century.

Arriving at “via Carmine” you can admire the baroque style of the **4 Cafaro building**; leaving this palace on your right and continuing on this road, you will reach “Largo Angeli” where you will find the church of **5 St. Mary of Angels**, which was commissioned on his family property by capuchin friar Julio Cesar Russo from Brindisi, who later become **Saint Lawrence**.



The Church of St. Mary of Angels (XV century) was built by will of capuchin friar Julio Cesar Russo from Brindisi, who later become Saint Lawrence, on the area of his family property.

The original facade was along Via S. Lorenzo, nowadays on the left side of the church.

The church has a elegant facade with a wooden door (XVII century) with bas-reliefs of some Saints. Inside there are four lateral chapels for each side; in one of these chapels some Saint Lawrence relics and some holy pieces bought by himself, including an ivory crucifix and the cross used in the battle of Albareale, are kept.

Valuable are: the wooden pulpit (XVII century), the painting on the ceiling and the "Our Lady among Angels" painting on the main altar.

Continuing on “via Fornari”, and turning into “via Vannini” and “via Pisanelli”, you will come to the **6 Market Square**, where characteristically, in Liberty style, you will find stalls selling the fresh produce of Brindisi.

Returning and crossing via F.Fornari and going through the little streets of “vico Scalese” and “via Palma” on the left you will reach “largo Concordia”, where there is the beautiful renaissance **7 lodge of De Marco building**.

Continuing on "via Marco Pacuvio", turn left to approach the small square where you will find the characteristic circular construction of **8** of **St. John's Temple**.

The Temple of St. John is a circular construction, built up from the Crusaders in XI century, and is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in all Southern Italy.

Of remarkable artistic interest is the main portal, with a marble architrave and two columns with marble lions. Inside there are eight columns with capitals, the original roof has been replaced by a new wood roof.



The temple was used as museum from 1850 to 1955 and was a center of cultural meetings attended by illustrious persons, like Mahatma Gandhi and R. Tagore

Leaving the temple behind and following the road, you will arrive at "via G. Moricino" on "largo S. Paolo", where the gothic church of **9** **St. Paul the Hermit** overlooks its square.



The Church of S. Paul is the most ancient and eloquent testimony of gothic architecture of XIV century, although its facade has been remade and the church has been shortened.

Inside there are interesting Barocco Altars, some paintings, a sacristy's built-in wooden wardrobe (1725), the frescoes and the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament.

Very important is the wooden statue of Our Lady, also defined "Virgin Mary of the earthquake" because peoples believed it to be miraculous for saving the town from the earthquake of February 1743.

Exiting this church, you will find via de Vavotici on the left and from here you will reach **10** St. Teresa Square, where you will see, in the centre of the square, a **War Memorial**, to the fallen soldiers of world war I, built by the Brindisnian sculptor Edgardo Simone.

On the outer part of St. Theresa square, which is shaped in a half-circle, there is the **Empire's Fountain**, constructed in 1940 by the then Provincial Government.

On the left of the square there is the **Church of St. Theresa** with the adjacent cloisters, built in XV century as a convent, today this is the Records Office.

The Church of St. Theresa, a example of baroque architecture, was completed in 1697 in the ancient Spanish quarter.

The facade is adorned with capitals and pinnacles. Inside there are valuable paintings in the chapels ("St. Andrew" and "The education of Our Lady") and, on the ceiling, a wooden statue of Our Lady of "Carmine" and other statues.



Off the side of the church, is the narrow street of "via Moricino", you will find the "case terranee". These characteristic, quaint homes were constructed for the modest folk of the city in 1714 (photo).

From "via De Leo" turn to the right to reach, what is referred to as the "living-room of the city", this is Duomo Square (Piazza Duomo): here you can visit the **11 Cathedral**, the **12 Diocesan Museum "G. Tarantini"**, located within the **Seminary**, which hosts archaeological findings, old paintings, and the "Idria delle Nozze di Cana", which is one of the six marble vases, the last to have survived, in which Jesus made his first miracle: In these vases, Jesus turned water into wine during the wedding ceremony in Cana. Also you will find the silver ark that once contained the remains of St. Theodore, and a parchment paper signed by the emperor Federico II. Next the ancient **Archbishops Library "A. De Leo"**, founded in 1798, home to over 60,000 books, most of which are of great historical importance.



The Cathedral Church, also known as St. John's the Baptist Church, was originally built between 1098 and 1132.

It has been almost entirely rebuilt, following the original design, after the earthquake in 1743. Inside one can admire a polychrome mosaic from 1178 (detail) and a crown in wood from 1594).

Here Ruggiero, son of Tancredi, was crowned King of Sicily in the year 1191, and in the year 1225 celebrations were held for the marriage of Isabella of Brienne, queen of Jerusalem, to the emperor Federico II

Valuable paintings of several ages are collected in the chapels, sacristy and altars.

A chapel is dedicated to S. Teodoro's relics, the Saint of the city together with Saint Lawrence.

It's located side by side to the cathedral's bell tower, that was completed in 1795; from the other side there are the Bishop's palace and Seminary building, built in 1720 by using the materials obtained from the demolished Basilica of Saint Leucio.

Opposite the Seminary you can see **13** the medieval (14th century) **Loggia** (lodge) of the **Balsamo building**, which probably housed the mint of the Angevin period. The lodge has eight very fine arches which house sculptured figures of people and animals. On the right the **14 Archaeological Museum "F. Ribezzo"**.

At the entrance of the museum, on the left is the **stone arcade** with its beautiful arches, which formed part of the De Cateniano family's residence from the XIV century

On the narrow street "via Santa Chiara" next the arcade, there is the former convent of St. Clair, today restored and opened to the public for art exhibitions and events. On the inside wall on the left side of the entrance there are burial epigraphs as well as Rodrigo De Valdez's coat of arms, lord of the castle during 1584-85.

Crossing the pointed arch to the base of cathedral's bell tower, which was completed in 1795, and continuing on "via Colonne" it is possible to observe the facades of the **Scolmafora** building (on the right) and **Perez** building (on left) before reaching the little square which is named after the famous **15 Roman** or **Harbour Column**, the symbol of Brindisi.



The Roman Columns rests has always been considered the symbol of Brindisi.

For many years the columns, thought to symbolise the ending of the road, 'Via Appia', was in fact a referral of that time to navigators of the port of Brindisi.

Of the two twin columns only one is intact, with a sculptured capital, at the top; meanwhile, from the other column, which fell in 1528, only the base and a rock are still in place; the other part was given as a gift to the city of Lecce, to form a part of the column to St. Oronzo.



On the right of the square there is the epigraph to the remains of the house in which the Latin poet Virgil died.

From here a beautiful panoramic view can be admired on the inner port: forehead the Argones Castle (see the Itinerary 4) and the Pigonati Channel, the East and West Coves of the inner port with the imposing Sailors Monument (see the Itinerary 3).

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