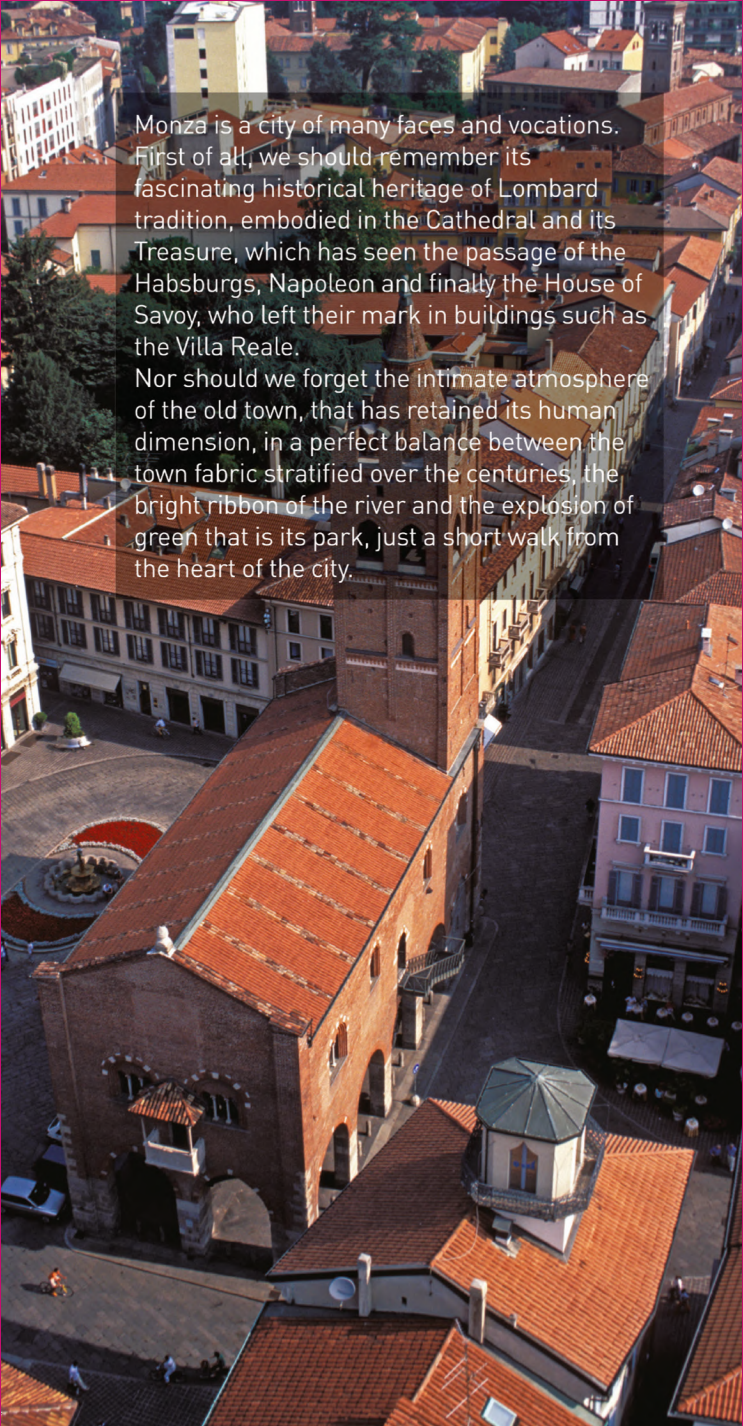




A ROYAL EXPERIENCE

The Historical Center, the
House, the Gardens and
the Park

MONZA TURISMO

An aerial photograph of Monza, Italy, showing the Duomo di Monza (Cathedral of Monza) with its prominent red-tiled roof and brick walls. The cathedral is situated in a historic town center with narrow streets and other buildings with red-tiled roofs. A small square with a fountain is visible to the left of the cathedral. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

Monza is a city of many faces and vocations. First of all, we should remember its fascinating historical heritage of Lombard tradition, embodied in the Cathedral and its Treasure, which has seen the passage of the Habsburgs, Napoleon and finally the House of Savoy, who left their mark in buildings such as the Villa Reale. Nor should we forget the intimate atmosphere of the old town, that has retained its human dimension, in a perfect balance between the town fabric stratified over the centuries, the bright ribbon of the river and the explosion of green that is its park, just a short walk from the heart of the city.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The origins of the City of Monza are strongly linked to **Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards**. Already an important Roman vicus, precisely in the Lombard period, the city became a centre of paramount importance. According to the legend, near the River Lambro the Queen had the vision of a dove that whispered the word **"Modo"** ("here"), to which the Queen responded **"Etiam"** ("yes"). It was on this site that in **around 595** Theodolinda had **a palace and a chapel built in honour of St. John the Baptist**, which was then transformed into the homonymous basilica and was given a treasure, while the merger of the two words gave **Modoetia**, the ancient name of **Monza**.

Monza's **royal tradition** is given further weight by the presence of the unique **Iron Crown** in the cathedral, and the



18th-century **Reggia di Monza**, built by another woman ruler: **Empress Maria Theresa of Austria**, who in 1777 started work on what was to be a summer residence for her son, Archduke Ferdinand of Habsburg.

At the beginning of the 14th century, the **Visconti** family gave the town walls and a castle, and in 1300 began building the Gothic Cathedral. Under **Spanish rule**, the town was reduced to a feud, and its lords included the **De Leyvas**, the family of Virginia, the **Nun**

of Monza, consecrated to eternal memory in the pages of Manzoni's **The Betrothed**. In 1706 there was the arrival of **Austrian rule**, which marked for Monza a real cultural renaissance, in terms of town planning and the economy, culminating in 1777 with the construction of the **Villa Reale**.

The **Napoleonic period** saw acquisitions of land that led to the creation of the extensive **Parco Reale**, commissioned by the Viceroy **Eugène de Beauharnais**.

Modoetia, the ancient name of Monza, is thought to be from the merger of the two Latin words "Modo" and "Etiam".



With the **Restoration**, Monza returned to the Habsburgs, who developed infrastructures, including the Milan-Monza line, the **first railway in Northern Italy** (1840). From the mid-19th century there was the industrial boom of the city with the establishment of the

hat-making industry. The presence of the court of Savoy in the Villa Reale gave the city national and international visibility, but ended tragically on 29 July 1900 with the assassination of King **Umberto I**. In 1922 the **Autodromo Nazionale Monza** was

built in the park and immediately became an international temple of speed. Rich in history, art, culture and home to important services, Monza is currently the **third largest city in Lombardy** in terms of inhabitants (123,000).

HISTORICAL CENTRE

With an urban fabric which still shows its Roman and medieval layout, the historical centre roughly corresponds to the area occupied by the old town, once surrounded by walls, almost totally demolished in 1813. Visible from afar, thanks to the imposing **bell tower**, the **Duomo** (Insigne Basilica Collegiata di San Giovanni Battista) has an imposing marble façade overlooking the square. Enlarged and restored several times over the centuries, in 1300, under the Viscontis, work began on building a new church to replace the original one founded by **Theodolinda**. A second campaign of work in the second half of the century was led by the architect and sculptor **Matteo da Campione**, who completed its façade. To the left of



the main altar is the Cappella di Teodolinda, a splendid example of international Gothic style, which tells the **legend of Theodolinda**, in 45 scenes spread over 500 square metres with 800

characters. The major work by the **Zavattari** family dates back to the mid-15th century. In its altar-reliquary, the Chapel hosts the **Iron Crown**, a precious item of Carolingian jewellery but also



a major relic, since according to tradition it contains one of the nails of the crucifixion of Christ. Considered by the Viscontis as a symbol of royalty, it was used in the coronation of **Charles V** (1530), **Napoleon I** (1805) and **Ferdinand of Austria** (1838). Attached to the church is the **Museo e Tesoro del Duomo** which houses a unique collection: from the **Treasure of the Lombard kings** to the gifts of **Napoleon I**. A short distance from the Duomo, in Via Teodolinda, there is the historical building of the former Casa degli Umiliati, recently restored and now home to the **Musei Civici**. The museum's exhibits comprise the collections of the town's art gallery, the Pinacoteca Civica

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(formerly in the north wing of the Villa Reale) and the Museo Storico (formerly at Arengario), whose assets over time have grown thanks to donations, purchases and bequests from individuals or institutions (ISIA, Premio Città Monza, Biennale Giovani). Among the main works of art, we should mention for their importance the paintings and sculptures from the second half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century by Bianchi, Pompeo Mariani, Anselmo Bucci, Arturo Martini, and Marino Marini. The museum is just a stone's throw from the vast **Piazza**

Trento e Trieste, previously Piazza del Mercato, which was recently redeveloped, and is overlooked by the imposing town hall, the **Palazzo Comunale** (1932).

Some architectural elements of the square refer to the activities that once took place there: the two portals are inspired by the **"chiodere"**, traditionally used for the processing of wool cloth, while the two small canals mark the path of the Pelucca drainage canal, and the series of **tiles** in the pavement depict the marks of 15th-century merchant families.

DOWNTOWN



Reggia di Monza: the House, the Gardens, the Park.

The **Villa Reale**, a splendid example of neoclassical architecture, was built between 1777 and 1780 by **Giuseppe Piermarini** for Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, Governor General of Lombardy.



Under the Habsburgs, the villa was the Archduke's residence, and the viceroy's under the French (Eugène de Beauharnais, however, preferred to live with his wife Amalia of Bavaria in the more intimate Mirabellino), and finally a royal residence under the Savoy (Vittorio Emanuele II, Umberto I and Margherita). While the villa's style recalls the great European palaces (such as Schönbrunn or Caserta), the "U"-shaped layout evokes the villas of 18th century Lombardy.

Near the Villa, on the right side of the wide avenue that is the monumental entrance to the palace, stands the **Cappella Espiatoria** (1910), built on the site of the assassination of King Umberto I, killed on 29 July 1900 by the anarchist Gaetano Bresci and now open to the public free of charge. Alongside the Villa are the **Gardens**, the first in Italy designed "in the English manner". In 1805 a Napoleonic decree ordered the start of

work for the building of a "great royal park" on the model of Fontainebleau, to which were annexed the estates of existing stately homes and surrounding forested areas. Thus was born the **Parco di Monza**, the **largest contained town park in Europe**, whose northern section since **1922** has been home to the **Autodromo Nazionale Monza**, an important venue for world-famous motorcycle and automotive events such as the F1 Grand Prix.

The Park today represents an incredible opportunity for sports, leisure, wellness and culture.



At the centre stands the **Monumento ai Caduti** (1932), by Enrico Pancera: twelve powerful figures representing the **victorious assault** led by Victory. The longest side of the square is occupied by the great neoclassical building of the former Seminary, now the **Palazzo degli Studi**, which houses the **Liceo Classico Zucchi**, the **Biblioteca Civica** and the **Raccolte Storiche del Comune**.

In the adjacent Piazza Roma is the old town hall, known as the **Arengario** (from Latin arengarius, place for assemblies), built in the late 13th century almost next to the Duomo, a visual representation of the **separation of powers** - religious and civil - in the period of the medieval communes. It consists of a large arcade on the ground floor and a large hall on the first floor, whose short side opens to the outside with a small

loggia balcony (the 'parlera') from which proclamations were read. The Arengario also marks the start of **Via Vittorio Emanuele**, built in 1847 by the Austrians.

The uninterrupted line of 19th century houses and buildings along its route leads to the monumental **Ponte dei Leoni**, built in 1842 on the ruins of the ancient **Roman bridge** de Arena. From the Arengario the main streets of the town centre branch off, Via Italia and Via Carlo Alberto, with several buildings that testify

the town's rich history: from the church of **Santa Maria in Strada**, an important example of Lombard Gothic architecture with an elegant terracotta facade, the church of **San Pietro Martire** with its adjacent convent, a jewel of 14th century religious architecture, and finally the complex of **Santa Maria in Carrobiolo**, built for the Order of the Humiliati and subsequently passing to the Barnabites, with its predominantly Baroque style. Among the sights of the old town, we

Along the main streets, there are numerous buildings that testify the town's rich history.





should also remember the **Torre Viscontea** in Via Azzone Visconti, the only evidence of the castle built by Galeazzo Visconti; the complex of **San Gerardino** (Via Gerardo dei Tintori), once the seat of the oldest hospital in the town, founded in the 12th century by St. Gerard, co-patron saint of Monza, and dating back in its current form to the end of the 18th century; the nearby **ponte di San Gerardino**; and the **Mulino Colombo**,

dating from the 18th century and now home to a museum and exhibition centre.

Just outside the medieval centre are the church of **San Maurizio** (Piazza Santa Margherita), built in 1736 on the site where there was previously the convent of Sister Virginia De Leyva, Manzoni's **Nun of Monza**, and the church of **San Gerardo al Corpo** (19th century), the resting place of the saint's remains.

Slightly further away, bordering the park, is the sanctuary of **Santa Maria delle Grazie**, the most important example of Renaissance architecture in Monza.

The **train station** (1884) still retains its **Saletta Reale**, the royal waiting room that welcomed Umberto I and Margherita of Savoy during their summer holidays in the Villa Reale between 1884 and 1900.



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