

The Top 7 Places to Visit in Emilia-Romagna, Italy

BY ELIZABETH HEATH | Updated 06/19/18

The Emilia-Romagna region of Italy is best known for its Medieval and Renaissance cities and its culinary traditions. While many travelers pass through the region on their way to better-known destinations like Milan or Venice, to skip the Emilia-Romagna means to miss out on some of Italy's most elegant and historic cities. The region itself is geographically diverse, stretches across most of north-central Italy and includes a large swath of Adriatic Sea coastline, the Po River Delta, vast plains, and a chunk of the Apennine Mountains. Each of its major cities has some combination of historic sites and culinary traditions that make them worth visiting.

Refer to our [Emilia-Romagna regional map](#) in order to get your bearings, then consider these top seven cities of the Emilia-Romagna for your next visit to Italy.

01 [Bologna](#)

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The capital of the Emilia-Romagna region, Bologna, has much to offer, from the learned atmosphere of Europe's oldest university, to a thriving economy (the healthiest in Italy), and its well-preserved Medieval center and cuisine that even other Italians consider the best in the country.

Bologna is a great city for walking, as its flat *centro* is closed to car traffic on weekends, and its sidewalks are covered with soaring, arched porticoes to protect pedestrians from inclement weather. Highlights to see include the Due Torri, two tall Medieval watchtowers, one of which has a marked lean, plus Piazza Maggiore, one of Europe's grandest squares.

02 Parma

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The fertile countryside surrounding Parma makes it a breadbasket for two of Italy's best-loved foods—*prosciutto di Parma*, a cured ham, and sharp *Parmigiano Reggiano* cheese. Don't leave Parma without sampling both these delicacies and maybe buying some to pack in your suitcase.

But there's a lot more to Parma than ham and cheese. It has a lovely, compact historic center with several important churches, including its main cathedral

and a baptistery dating to the late 1100s. The Palazzo di Pilotta houses several museums, as well as a 17th-century theatre constructed entirely of wood. The theater was mostly destroyed during WWII air raids but rebuilt after the war.

03 Modena

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As the home of beloved tenor Luciano Pavarotti and legendary carmaker Enzo Ferrari, the birthplace of balsamic vinegar, the site of one of the world's highest-rated restaurants, *and* a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Modena has a lot to brag about.

Plan to spend some time in its World Heritage Site *centro storico*, sample and buy some real balsamic vinegar, visit the palaces and civic buildings of the Este,

once the ruling family of Modena, and tour museums dedicated to Ferrari and Pavarotti.

04 Ravenna

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In the waning days of the Roman Empire, Ravenna served as the Western capital, and afterward as the capital of the Ostrogoth Empire until it was conquered by Byzantium. This tumultuous past left an incredible artistic heritage and today, Ravenna is famous for its early Christian basilicas and breathtaking mosaics, which show the heavy influence of Byzantine style. Seven buildings in its *centro storico* are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, as is

another outside of town, the Basilica of Sant' Apollinaire in Classe.

You can buy a combination ticket to enter Ravenna's UNESCO sites. The tomb of Dante, Roman ruins, and other interesting churches are located in the *centro*.

05 Ferrara

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In the elegant walled city of Ferrara, the mark of the noble Este family, who ruled the city until the 1600s, is clearly felt. The massive Castello Estense de Ferrara dominates the city and can be seen from several vantage points along the nearly six miles of city walls, which can be walked or biked. The 12th-century Romanesque cathedral has a soaring, atmospheric interior.

06 Rimini

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If you're ready for a beach break in your Italian itinerary, head to Rimini, a major seaside resort on the Adriatic coast. This lively city offers more than nine miles of fine sandy beaches, plus a seafront lined with bars, restaurants, hotels, and shops. The center of Rimini is interesting as well, with Roman ruins, a nice central piazza, and several museums.

07 Piacenza

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If you want to slow down the pace of your trip and visit a small, authentic city in Emilio-Romagna, Piacenza is a good place to stop, especially if you are en route to Milan or the lakes. Piazza Duomo and Piazza Cavalli form the heart of its center, which contains several interesting palaces and churches. The lands around Piacenza are famous for producing both red and white wines, as well as rice, corn and the

pork used in countless varieties of cured meats.