



**CICERONI**  
T R A V E L

## COURTLY ITALY: FERRARA, MANTUA & MODENA

WEDNESDAY 25 – SUNDAY 29 APRIL 2018 (5 DAYS)

LECTURER: PAULA NUTTALL

£1595

- Enter the sophisticated world of the renaissance courts
- Meet the Este and Gonzaga families at close quarters
- Visit two marvellously preserved medieval and renaissance cities
- Rare opportunity to visit a fortified palatial village, Sabbioneta and the important city of Modena
- Comfortable city centre hotel and very good food and wine!



Andrea Mantegna, The Ceiling Oculus  
of the Ducal Palace in Mantua

### OVERVIEW

The Este and Gonzaga families are two extraordinary dynasties who ruled the small, independent and highly cultured states of Ferrara and Mantua in northern Italy during the Renaissance. Their courts and artistic patronage will form the focus of this ideal introduction to a world of sophisticated princes and their families, together with the courtiers and artists who served them.

This tradition of courtly rule has a long history. It stretches back to the disintegration of the Roman Empire and the consequent emergence of powerful medieval families who led fiercely independent cities, dominating large areas of the Po Valley. This coincided with the transition to the culture of the Renaissance when rulers used art, not just as a means of enjoyment, but as a tool in the furtherance of dynastic ambition and the achievement of fame amongst their contemporaries. Architects, sculptors, painters, decorative craftsmen, poets and musicians all played a vital role in shaping this arcane world.

Our visit will be based in Ferrara, a truly lovely walled city, with its distinct, separate and atmospheric medieval and renaissance quarters. It will be the perfect setting for this visit, full of magnificently preserved buildings and with wonderful things to see and do. We shall spend four nights at the 4\* Hotel Ferrara. It could not be better located in the absolute centre of the city, directly opposite the Castello Estense, the former centre of Este power. The hotel is relatively new and modern with simple, comfortable bedrooms, most of which only have showers.

We shall also visit magical Mantua which is completely different in style and mood. Here, an indulgent lethargy seems to suffuse the city, preserving its magnificent monuments from anything as vulgar as 'tourism'. The home of the Gonzaga family for centuries, it is perhaps the most surprising of these northern Italian 'courtly' enclaves with its masculine city palace and the much more sophisticated villa-like Palazzo Te in its outskirts.

In addition, time will also be found to visit the fortified and princely town created at Sabbioneta by a member of the Gonzaga family. Our final morning will be spent in Modena, to where the Este family were exiled at the end of the sixteenth century and from where came that unhappy princess, Mary of Modena, to marry James, Duke of York, brother of Charles II and eventually the short-lived James II.

### ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Wednesday 25 April – We fly from Heathrow to Bologna, arriving mid afternoon. We then drive up to **Ferrara** and check into our hotel, the 4\* Hotel Ferrara. There will be a **short orientation walk** around the historic core and later that evening we have our first group dinner in a local restaurant – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Thursday 26 April – In **Ferrara** we begin with a visit to the great **Castello Estense**, the former palace of the Este counts, marquises and dukes. A limited number of the former family rooms, some with fine frescoes, are on show. We shall then go on to the renaissance quarter of the city to the **Palazzo Diamante**, now the **Pinacoteca Nazionale**, to see the city's picture collection. While some of the great works of art once in the Este family collection were long ago dispersed, enough remains to make the collection rather more than just a 'cul-de-sac' destination.

We then break for lunch, which is not included, and in the afternoon we visit the **Duomo**, famed for its portal sculptures and with some good paintings inside. The nearby **Cathedral Museum**, though small, has exquisite paintings and some very fine tapestries. We then continue on to the **Palazzo Schifanoia**, a late fourteenth century building extended over the following two centuries. The famous *Salone dei Mesi* has renowned frescoes of the Months, now somewhat decayed. These reflect the courtly and chivalric enthusiasms of Duke Borso d'Este who ruled in the second half of the fifteenth century. The evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Friday 27 April – Today we drive over to **Mantua**, perhaps the most sophisticated of all these courtly cities? Here, the splendours of the Gonzaga family include **Alberti's church of S. Andrea** and the huge semi-fortified **Palazzo Ducale**. This contains rooms frescoed by Pisanello and above all the remarkable *Camera degli Sposi* by Andrea Mantegna, the most influential of all the painters working at these courts. After some free time for lunch, which is not included, we continue on to view Giulio Romano's profoundly Mannerist work in architecture and painting at the **Palazzo Te**. Trained in Rome where he became Raphael's principal assistant, on moving to Mantua in 1524 he became one of the principal artists via whom Mannerism was introduced to northern Italy. It is an astonishing and complex environment. On our return to Ferrara the evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Saturday 28 April – Saturday morning in **Ferrara** is a delight as the elegant locals visit the temporary open markets, shop, gossip and as we are there, why not we too?! Thus, you will have some free time to explore independently. In the afternoon we shall drive over to visit **Sabbioneta**. This is a unique survival, a fortified town built by Vespasiano Gonzaga in 1556. Here we shall see the fine **Palazzo**, the **Galleria degli Antichi** and the **Teatro Antico**, this last designed by Palladio's assistant and successor, Vincenzo Scamozzi. Lunch will not be included today but later that evening we shall have our final group dinner when we return to Ferrara.

**Day 5:** Sunday 29 April – In the late sixteenth century the Este family of Ferrara became embroiled in a disastrous conflict with the Papacy. This led to their defeat and exile by Pope Clement VIII to another of their possessions, **Modena**. Here they remained as rulers until 1796. This is the city from whence came the tragic Mary of Modena, despatched to marry the future James II in the later seventeenth century. The most important building in Modena is the splendid Romanesque **Duomo**, with a fine facade and one of the most atmospheric interiors of any cathedral in northern Italy. We shall enjoy a Sunday morning visit, followed by a visit to the **Galleria Estense** and a final group lunch and then continue to Bologna for the return flight home.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £1595      **Deposit** £250      **Price without flights** £1455

**Single Supplement** £175 (Double for Sole Use)

**Hotel** 4 nights with breakfast at 4\* Hotel Ferrara

**Flights** British Airways

Outward:      **BA542** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1445** arrive Bologna **1755**

Return:      **BA545** Depart Bologna **1850** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **2010**

**Price includes** 2 dinners & 1 lunch with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Paula Nuttall & tour manager Geoffrey Nuttall

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 2 dinners & 3 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL  
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL  
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167      Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188  
Email [info@ciceroni.co.uk](mailto:info@ciceroni.co.uk)      Website [www.ciceroni.co.uk](http://www.ciceroni.co.uk)

