



BORJA-BORGIA:
ITINERARY OF A
UNIVERSAL FAMILY



Ferrara

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BORJA-BORGIA:
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Following the Borgia

"Discover the legacy of the Borgia through this cultural tourism travel guide based on the lineage of this family of universal impact."

"Borja/Borgia: itinerary of a universal family" is a cultural tourism guide that brings together biographies, stories of the time, cities, places and cultural proposals, which value the story and history of this family of Valencian origin, of undoubted international attraction.

The Borgia and their time

Travel back in time and discover the daily life, culture and social rules of this unique historical period.

Lucrezia Borgia

Victim of tragedies associated with her father's political interests, she piously ended her life as Duchess of Ferrara.



Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia Borgia was born on April 18, 1480 in Subiaco, a town about 70 kilometers from Rome. Her father, the then Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who had relations with Vannozza Cattanei, had already had two sons, Cesare and Giovanni. Her other brother, Goffredo, would be born a year later.

At an early age she was placed in the care of Adriana Milà, the cardinal's cousin. Installed in the Orsini palace, together with Giulia Farnese, Adriana's daughter-in-law, she was instructed as a good Renaissance lady, simultaneously practicing Spanish, Catalan and Italian. Valencian was, in fact, the colloquial language of the Borgias. Sweetness, grace, ingenuity and joy were already manifested in Lucrezia as a genetic sample of her family.

He would soon discover that their destinies would depend at all times on his father's political strategies. She was used as a bargaining chip, when she was twelve years old she had a first arranged marriage with Querubín de Centelles and Ayora, son of the counts of Oliva, which she did not crystallize.

The new interests of the already pontiff Alexander VI ended up formalizing the marriage between Lucrezia, who was barely 13 years old, and the Count of Pesaro, Giovanni Sforza, nephew of the powerful Duke of Milan and twenty years her senior. The ceremony is held in the Vatican on June 12, 1493.

Relations between Alexander VI and his son-in-law are clouded to the point of mediating a possible assassination order by the pontiff. Giovanni Sforza flees from Rome and the Vatican machinery is set in motion to base the marriage annulment on the basis of a supposed homosexuality of the husband.

The outraged husband strikes back and launches the accusation of incest, which is soon taken up and spread by the enemies of the Borgias. Pamphlets begin to appear against Alexander VI and against Lucretia, in which they speak of orgies, unrestrained sex, murders. "The biggest whore in Rome", as Lucrezia is called, starts the seed of infamies that will haunt her for centuries.

The marriage annulled on December 20, 1497, the Pope negotiates a new marriage contract for his daughter. This time with Alfonso de Aragón, Duke of Biseglia, a wedding that takes place the following year. Cesare's relations with Alfonso are not good either and in July 1500, Lucrezia's husband is the victim of an attack in the middle of Saint Peter's Square from which he manages to survive, but during his convalescence, Cesare orders his death.

This fact deeply affects Lucrezia, who retires in strict mourning to Nepi's castle, away from all luxury and dedicated to a pious lifestyle.

Alexander VI does not miss the opportunity and negotiates a new marriage, this time with Alfonso de Este, heir to the Duke of Ferrara.

On January 6, 1502, Lucrezia said goodbye to her parents and her son Rodrigo, the fruit of her marriage to Alfonso de Aragón, whom she would never see again.

On February 2, she enters Ferrara and finds herself in a city that welcomes her with great luxury and spectacle. A population with a cultured court, with which she soon connected and that distances her from the intrigues that have led her life.

Lucrezia forges a new destiny here, which will turn her into a religious and prudent woman, with an intense Christian life, where she will spend the last stretch of her life watching her loved ones disappear from a distance. First to her father, in 1503, then to Cesare, in 1507, to his eldest son Rodrigo, in 1512, to her brother Goffredo, in 1517 and to her mother Vannozza, in 1518.

Lucrezia had six children and died at just 39 years old, on July 24, 1519.

Her body remains buried in the monastery of Corpus Domini in Ferrara, with the Franciscan tertiary habit with which she was buried, along with other members of her family.

Alexander VI

His figure, reviled by history, is a fundamental part of the legend woven around the Borgia lineage.



Alexander VI

Rodrigo de Borja y de Borja, the future Pope Alexander VI, was born in Xàtiva on January 1, 1431, into a family of local minor nobility. The premature death of his father caused his entire family to move to Valencia, to the palace of his uncle Alfonso de Borja, bishop of the city.

In 1449, already a canon of the Valencia Cathedral, he was summoned to Rome by his uncle, already a cardinal, to assist him in administrative and ecclesiastical tasks, accompanied by his brother, Pedro Luis, and his cousin, Luis Juan.

Under his protection he began an unstoppable career: he was appointed canon and cantor of the collegiate church of Xàtiva (1450) and studied law at the University of Bologna (1453).

On April 8, 1455, Alfonso de Borja is elected Pope with the name of Callixtus III and the influence of Rodrigo follows the rising trail. Despite his youth, in 1456 he was secretly appointed Cardinal and, a year later, Vice-Chancellor of the Church, a position of great influence that he held for more than 35 years.

After the death of his uncle, on August 6, 1458, Cardinal Borgia relaxes his personal habits, showing an interest in the female sex.

Around 1468, his first-born, Pedro Luis, was born to an unknown mother, followed by two sisters, Jerónima and Isabel. He later has four children with the Roman Vannozza Cattanei: Cesare (1475), Giovanni (1476), Lucrezia (1480) and Goffredo (1481). And two other sons are still known, Giovanni and Rodrigo, who he had later.

As Vice Chancellor, Rodrigo manifests an overflowing sumptuousness, complemented by the social position that all the components of the extended family are acquiring.

In 1472 he traveled to the Iberian Peninsula as a special legacy of the Pope, carrying the bull confirming the marriage of Isabella of Castile with Ferdinand II of Aragon.

Certain subsequent disagreements with Ferdinand were settled in 1485 with the purchase of the right to rule over the town of Gandia, now elevated to a royal dukedom, and with the marriage of his son, Pedro Luis, to María Enríquez, the king's first cousin.

His keen intelligence and his political ability make him one of the richest and most influential cardinals of the moment and, on the death of Innocent VIII, thanks to the division between the factions of the curia and some skilful negotiation, he is elected Pope on the 11 August 1492, under the name of Alexander VI.

In the private sphere, the new pontiff acquires a new mistress, Giulia Farnesse, 45 years younger than he, a woman of renowned beauty.

Very soon he has to face political and territorial balances at stake with the kings of France and Naples. Like his uncle, Callixtus III, he promotes his children and relatives, always with the board of earthly power at stake.

His daughter Lucrezia will marry Giovanni Sforza, lord of Pesaro, Cesare will be appointed cardinal and will hold, among others, the rich Valencian diocese, Giovanni will end up marrying María Enríquez, the suitor of his brother Pedro Luis, who had died suddenly in 1488, and Goffredo will marry Sancha de Aragón, daughter of the king of Naples.

Lucrezia, after the annulment of her first marriage, will marry Alfonso of Aragon, natural son of Alfonso II of Naples, who is assassinated by his brother Cesare, and later with Alfonso d'Este, heir to the Duchy of Ferrara.

Tragedy knocked on his door in June 1497, after his son Giovanni, Duke of Gandia, was found dead in the waters of the Tiber.

Cesare, his most brilliant and impetuous son, who has set aside his cardinal's hat, marries Carlota d'Albret (1499), a relative of the French king, and becomes Duke of Valentinois. A possession that will mark the legend of him as Cesare il Valentino. Cesare will also be Captain General of the Church (1500) and Duke of Romagna (1501).

On Friday, August 18, 1503, after a convalescence full of all kinds of repulsive details, Alexander VI died. Rumors attributed his death to the poison he ingested at a dinner, but it was malaria, in the pestilential summer of Rome, that ended his life.

His body was provisionally buried in the chapel of Santa Maria della Febbre, next to the Vatican basilica, alongside his uncle Callixtus III. In 1601 the remains of both pontiffs were transferred to the church of the Crown of Aragon in Rome, Santa Maria in Monserrato, where they still rest.

Alexander VI promoted the evangelization of the American lands discovered in 1492, showed tolerance towards the Jews, practiced artistic patronage, surrounded himself with a circle of humanists, showed special devotion to the Virgin Mary, and bequeathed a strong and powerful papal state. On the negative side, he practiced nepotism and showed a moral disorder for which he was censured by his contemporaries.

His figure, reviled and mistreated historically, was ardently defended by the distinguished Valencian novelist Vicente Blasco Ibáñez in his book on the Borgias: "What do they hold against Alexander VI?... His crime consisted in the fact that some of his children were energetic personalities, intelligent and daring, like true Borjas, eager for power and glory; and the children of the other popes were no more than simple parasites of the Vatican, intent only on fattening themselves like leeches with the blood of the Church, selling jobs and accruing fortunes."

Cesare Borgia

Image of the Renaissance prince, praised by Machiavelli and reviled by history.



Cesare Borgia

Cesare Borgia, the living image of the Renaissance prince, praised by Machiavelli and reviled by history, was the example of the intelligent politician, loved by his people and feared by his enemies, with whom he was implacable.

He was the first of the children that Cardinal Rodrigo de Borja had with Vannozza Cattanei, born in Rome in September 1475, who would be followed by Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo.

When he was only six years old, he already began to receive ecclesiastical positions, a social sphere to which he had been assigned by his father. In 1491, at the age of 16, he was appointed bishop of Pamplona.

The pontifical election of his father, in August 1492, boosted his ecclesiastical career and he received the archbishopric of Valencia and the Cistercian abbey of Valldigna. In 1493 he settles in Rome and begins to show some of the skills that will make him famous: his bearing and his wit.

Charles VIII of France, on his way through Rome in 1493, on his way to Naples, took him with him as papal legate and hostage. Cesare stars in a resounding escape that will increase his prestige. Pretending that his trip is going to be long, he organizes a large retinue loaded with luggage. The French did not think that the famous cardinal would abandon all his trousseau and lower their guard. Cesare escapes, leaving behind bundles full of stones.

On the night of June 14, 1497, Cesare said goodbye to his brother Giovanni and his body was found a few days later floating in the Tiber. Knowing the disagreements between the two brothers, the gossip echoed the accusation of fratricide that floated in the environment. They never found the culprit.

In August 1498 Cesar managed to get his demands met and passed to the secular state.

Louis XII of France, after agreeing with the pope to divorce his wife Joan of Valois, grants him the Duchy of Valentinois and marries him to Princess Carlota of Albret (1499), with whom he would have a daughter named Luisa. Although he had no recognized mistresses, he would later have two natural children, Girolamo and Camila.

At the service of the French monarch, Caesar enters Italy with his troops (1499) and during his stay in Rome maintains tense relations with Alfonso de Bisceglie, husband of his sister Lucrezia, whom he orders assassinated (1500).

That same year he expands the Borgia territories throughout central Italy and his father grants him the title of Duke of Romagna (1501).

In this convulsive time, full of intrigues, he breaks up a conspiracy against him carried out by the Orsini, which ends in the prison and execution of the conspirators and the capture of the indomitable Catalina Sforza, whom he confines for a time in the castle of Sant'Angelo (1502).

On August 18, 1503, Alexander VI died. Cesare convalesces in the pontifical rooms, a victim of malaria. Some attributed his state of health to the poison, which his father would have also ingested.

The new Pope, Pius III, confirmed his charges, but died a few months later and was succeeded, like Julius II, by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the bitterest enemy of the Borgias.

Without influence and without power, he took refuge in the Castel Sant'Angelo, to embark for Naples in April 1504. But his freedom did not last long. Ferdinand II of Aragon orders his imprisonment and transfer to Spain in September of that same year.

In the peninsula he will be confined, first in Valencia, and later in the castles of Chinchilla and de la Mota (Medina del Campo). In the latter, he stars in a bizarre escape (1506) that takes him to the domain of his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, who appoints him general of his armies.

On March 12, 1507, he died in a skirmish in Mendavia, near Viana, where he was buried.

His body remained in the church of Santa María until the middle of the 16th century, when the Bishop of Calahorra ordered his remains to be taken out of the temple, in revenge for the murder of a family member

armed in his day by the Borgias.

A model of political cunning in the eyes of Machiavelli, history has presented him as a character without scruples or morals. But Cesare Borgia has also passed into the collective memory as the image of the Renaissance prince, cultured and of exquisite taste.

The motto that was engraved on the sword that accompanied it accurately described it: "Either Caesar or nothing".

Saint Francisco de Borja

His life of humility and the greatness he had renounced caused admiration at the time.



Saint Francisco de Borja

Francisco de Borja y Aragón was born in Gandia (Valencia) on October 28, 1510, the result of the union between Juan de Borja, third Duke of Gandia, and Juana de Aragón. His life is already marked by the lineages from which he descends. By paternal branch that of the Borgia popes and, by maternal branch, that of Ferdinand II of Aragon.

The early death of his mother will influence the spiritual process that will accompany him throughout his life.

After a first period of training in Zaragoza, when he was only 12 years old, he was sent to Tordesillas as a page for the Infanta Catalina, the youngest daughter of Joan la Loca, who is confined with her mother. There he remains from 1522 to 1526, to return to Zaragoza and complete his studies.

In 1528 he leaves for the court of Charles V. Francisco is seventeen years old. A year later he married Leonor de Castro, one of the ladies-in-waiting of Empress Isabella. After the wedding he is named Marquis of Llombay and Chief Equestrian of the Empress. Leonor, on her part, is appointed Chamberlain Mayor. The Borja marriage becomes the shadow of the Empress Isabella. In the court of Toledo, Francisco closes the relationship with Charles V, with whom he will forge a close friendship.

On May 1, 1539, the empress died. Charles V is dejected and Francisco is in charge of transferring her remains to Granada. The funeral procession takes 16 days to reach the city. The stench given off by the coffin and the disfigured image of the adored Isabella produce a great emotional and spiritual impact on Francisco.

Soon after, Charles V named him Viceroy of Catalonia, rewarding him for ten years in the service of the Crown.

On January 8, 1543, his father died and Francisco renounced the viceroyalty to become the IV Duke of Gandia.

His wife died in 1546 and Francisco, who had already had contact with the Jesuits since the time of the Viceroyalty, intensified his spiritual life. That same year he makes the votes of the company with a code name to keep his identity secret. Ignatius of Loyola has advised against disclosing his purpose, since "the world has no ears to hear such a din."

After obtaining a degree in Theology in 1550, the time had come to make his decision public. At the age of 39, he leaves his land and his family on August 31 and leaves for Rome.

His arrival in the city causes great expectation. The cardinals and the pope himself offer him lodging, but the duke wants to be with Ignatius of Loyola.

The news of his return to Spain spread like wildfire. Borja settles in Azpeitia (Guipúzcoa) and accepts all the tests of humility that are imposed on him, among them those of the cook's assistant. Spiritual transformation is accompanied by a physical transformation. He shaves his head and beard and takes the clerical habit on May 26, 1551.

Joan de Austria, daughter of Charles V, widow of the heir to the crown of Portugal, calls Francisco to Tordesillas. The young woman, barely 20 years old, is captivated and makes the company's vows in secret, with the code name of Mateo Sánchez.

In 1554 he was appointed general commissioner of the Company in Spain and Portugal. The duke who has become a priest begins to become the sensation of the times and everyone wants to see him preach, from the poorest to the noblest. Thanks to Francisco's work, the company experienced a notable expansion.

Charles V, already retired in Yuste, asks him to spiritually assist his mother, Queen Joan, confined in Tordesillas, whom he accompanies in her last moments.

The news of the death of Ignacio de Loyola, on July 31, 1556, caused him "loneliness and grief". Already at that time, the Society of Jesus began to have powerful enemies who questioned its work in Spain.

After the death of Charles V (1558) Philip II returned to Spain as king and Francisco perceived the misgivings of the monarch towards the Jesuits. Without the protection of his former mentor, Borja's enemies prepare the assault on his person.

On May 21, 1559, the auto de fe is celebrated in the Plaza Mayor of Valladolid, presided over by Joan de Austria. Father Francisco's intervention saves Ana Enríquez, his daughter's sister-in-law, from death. A few months later, the Inquisition published a catalog of prohibited books, including a work attributed to Francisco de Borja. The Jesuits and their friends at court tried to defend him without success. Philip II washes his hands and the Inquisition continues with its procedure.

To the chagrin of the Spanish monarch, Francisco accepts an invitation from Cardinal Infante Enrique of Portugal and moves to the neighboring country, avoiding his possible imprisonment.

Borja remained in Portugal for almost three years until Pope Pius IV requested his presence in Rome, where he was appointed General Assistant of the Company.

After the death of the second general of the Company, Francisco de Borja is elected as the new General of the Jesuits on July 2, 1565. He is 54 years old and in poor health. As head of the Company, he completes the edition of the rules and the construction in Rome of the house and church of Saint Andrew in the Quirinal.

In 1571, a diplomatic mission takes him to the courts of Spain, Portugal and France. This long journey will become the agony of a Francisco de Borja plagued by illnesses. After a painful and eventful return, he will end up dying in Rome on September 30, 1572.

A century later, Francisco de Borja was canonized in 1671 by Pope Clement X.

His name day is celebrated on October 3.

Ángela Borgia and the disputes of the Este

An unfortunate comment produced unexpected consequences.



Celda de Julio de Este en el castillo de Ferrara

One of the people who accompanies Lucrezia to the Ferrara court is her cousin Ángela Borja. A woman of great beauty that causes one of the best known disputes between the Este.

Her charms made an impression on the court, putting the Duchess's two brothers-in-law, brothers of her husband Alfonso, at the center of attention: the womanizer Cardinal Ippolito and his brother Giulio, famous for his bearing and good looks.

One day, Ángela, courted by Ippolito, made a comment about his brother Giulio's beautiful eyes. Enraged and jealous, he ordered assassins to gouge out the eyes that Ángela so greatly prized.

They kidnapped Giulio and, in the presence of the cardinal, executed the order. The doctors were able to save one eye. The deed caused great commotion in the Court and the cardinal was temporarily banished.

Giulio, burning with revenge, allied himself with his other brother, Ferrante, to replace Alfonso, Lucrezia's husband, as Duke of Ferrara. The conspiracy was discovered and the accomplices were beheaded and quartered in the main square.

The two brothers were to be hanged in the castle courtyard on August 12, 1506, but Alfonso pardoned them and sentenced them to life imprisonment in the castle dungeons.

In 1559 Ercole II died, and his son Alfonso II, who was to be the last Duke of Ferrara, decided to free his great-uncle, the octogenarian Giulio, who had been imprisoned for 53 years. Ferrante had died in his cell in 1540.

Vanozza Cattanei

Mistress of Rodrigo Borgia and mother of Cesare, Giovanni, Lucrezia and Goffredo.

Vannozza Cattanei, mother of Cesare (1475), Giovanni (1476), Lucrezia (1480) and Goffredo (1482), is the best-known lover of Rodrigo Borgia, whose relationship began around 1470.

Vannozza, diminutive of Giovanna, born in 1442, nine years younger than Cardinal Borgia, must have been endowed with a rare beauty and sensuality to maintain such a lasting and fruitful relationship.

The relationship between Vannozza and Rodrigo was socially covered up with three marriages of convenience. Domenico d'Arignano (1474) was followed by Giorgio de Croce (1480) and Carlo Canale (1486). Everyone turned a blind eye in exchange for social and economic benefits.

When Rodrigo Borgia becomes Pope, the pontiff's heart has long been trapped by his relationship with the beautiful and young Giulia Farnese. Vannozza is no longer her mistress and is taking care of her children and managing the various lodging businesses she owns.

The last years of his life, after the death of Alexander VI, are peaceful. She gains social recognition and becomes a pious woman and patron of the Church.

She died at the age of 72 on November 26, 1518 and was buried in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, but her remains disappeared during the sacking of Rome in 1527.

His tombstone is preserved in the portico of the Basilica of San Marco, in Rome.

The language of the Borgia

All the sons of Alexander VI, despite being mestizos of Italian and Spanish and never having been to Spain, spoke Spanish to their father's friends and protégés, and used Valencian with him, as if such a means of expression give them more privacy.

Prevent poisoning.

"There was no ruler or rich character who failed to make his servants taste food and drinks before sitting down at table. Nor was there a Pope, king, prince, cardinal or simple condottiere who did not own a silver ship with unfurled sails, whose The hull was opened with a key, keeping their own cutlery, napkin, salt and all the spices inside, to avoid possible poisoning Every guest at a banquet sent his ship ahead with a faithful servant in charge of placing it in the table, and when he arrived he opened it with his key, taking out the cutlery and the spices, without the owner of the house being offended by such precaution". (Blasco Ibáñez - "At the feet of Venus - The Borgias")

It has been shown that many deaths caused by the legendary Borgia poison were really the result of syphilis, a very widespread disease at the time.

Ferrara

Lucrezia Borgia found herself in one of the first modern cities of the Renaissance, with a cultured and luxurious court.



The expansion of Christianity in the fourth century after the edict of Milan produced the proliferation of Benedictine monasteries, one of which was installed on the outskirts of the Po River. The popes were incorporating into their domains territories of the Carolingian empire, among which those of Ferrara were part.

The inability to control such vast spaces caused, from the fourteenth century, the split of Ferrara. The Este family, embodied in the figure of Alberto d'Este (1347 – 1393), took possession of the territory and began a policy of pacts with the kingdoms of France and Naples, which allowed it to maintain its hegemony.

Ercole I (1431 – 1505), married to Eleanor of Aragon, daughter of King Ferdinand I of Naples, agrees to the marriage of his son Alfonso with the daughter of Pope Alexander VI, Lucrezia, which offers him stability with the Holy See and with the southern borders.

The city, protected by a wall of more than nine kilometers and eleven bastions, had twelve access gates and was defended by powerful artillery. At the end of the 15th century, Duke Ercole ordered the circuit of old Ferrara to be tripled and the architect Biagio Rossetti designed this new space, known as the Herculean Addition, endowed with wide, straight streets, large squares and sumptuous buildings, surrounded by parks, orchards and gardens, being in full Renaissance the first modern city of Europe.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the Court of Ferrara had a feudal and military character, since the Este lineage had been hardened in constant and multiple warfare. As wealth began to flow in, the population and the nobility became fond of splendor and luxury, with the unstoppable incorporation of arts and letters.

Women also played a predominant role, taking part in games, tournaments, hunts, dances and shows, tempering the militarized spirit of the men in the territory. With Eleanor of Aragon, Duchess of Ferrara (1450-1493), the interest in Spanish language and literature began to spread, which increased in the time of Lucrezia Borgia.

The entrance of Lucrezia Borgia in Ferrara, on February 2, 1502, and her wedding with Alfonso de Este, caused a cataract of events and celebrations that made her soon forget the luxuries she had left behind in Rome. In 1505, after the death of Ercole I, her son Alfonso succeeded her and Lucrezia became Duchess of Ferrara.

His successors Ercole II and Alfonso II followed the general lines already established, but the splendor of the Este ended after the absence of legitimate successors and, in 1598, the Duchy of Ferrara returned to the hands of the Church.

Places of interest

Civil Architecture

House of Ludovico Ariosto

Built in the last stage of his life, which he dedicated to the definitive edition of *Orlando Furioso*.



House of Ludovico Ariosto

This house was built by the poet in the last stage of his life, around 1528 (he died in 1533), where it was dedicated to the third and definitive edition of *Orlando Furioso*, which appeared in 1532.

An inscription on the simple facade reads: "The house is small, but suitable for me, clean, not taxed and bought only with my money."

Inside there is a small museum dedicated to the poet, where the bronze reproduction of his inkwell, some editions of his works and the many medals that represent him are preserved.

Behind the house is the garden created by the poet himself.

Romei House

Usual place of retirement of Lucrezia Borgia when it was part of the Corpus Domini monastery.



Romei House

This 15th-century stately home was built by the banker Giovanni Romei, who bequeathed it to the adjacent Corpus Domini monastery.

Its courtyard, with a double loggia, is dominated by a large brick monogram of Christ and its architecture combines medieval and Renaissance elements.

In the rooms on the ground floor you can see the frescoes of the original decoration, in International Gothic style, as well as a large painted medieval fireplace. In other rooms on the same floor there is a small tombstone museum.

On the main floor, you can visit a room built in the 16th century for Cardinal Ippolito II of Este and used for centuries by distinguished guests who visited the monastery. In the decorative bands of the building, the presence of the white eagle, heraldic symbol of the cardinal, who felt a special predilection for the place and in which he made some improvements, is notorious.

Lucrezia Borgia frequently retired to this place, to meditate and pray, as part of her beloved monastery of Corpus Domini.

Estense Castle

Residence of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este and vital center of the Ferrara court.



Estense Castle

The Estense castle is an imposing building ordered to be built in 1385 by Nicolò II to defend the Este family from popular insurrections, linked to the Ducal Palace through a raised passageway, which took the name of Via Coperta, which is still preserved.

The typical structure of a medieval fortress, its marble balconies and its terraces evoke the function of a ducal residence that it had in the 16th century.

It is from that moment on that the castle undergoes various modifications to adapt an old military structure to a residential building, with wide spaces inside and viewpoints in the towers and the addition of a new floor. This aspect is what has been preserved to this day, converted into a hallmark of the population.

The tour of the ground floor leads us to the old kitchens, to the cells, in the basements of the Torre de los Leones, where Ugo and Parisina, stepson and stepmother, protagonists of a forbidden love story, were locked up, and the prison of don Giulio d'Este, imprisoned for a love rivalry and for conspiring.

A long ramp, formerly intended for the artillery, leads to the main floor where the orange garden is located, an entertainment terrace for the court, and the main rooms, decorated with frescoes, among which the Ducal Chapel, the Chamber and the Games Room, the Government Room and the Shields Room, all from times after Lucrezia's death.

In the tower of the Lions you can see a wide view of the entire city, from which you can see the famous extension of the urban area, the Addizione Erculeale, begun at the end of the 15th century.

The Estense castle was the place of residence of Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este. The newlyweds settled in Castel Vecchio, while Duke Ercole maintained his residence in the Ducal Palace, the current Municipal Palace.

In this complex, the rich palatial life that surrounded Lucrezia as Duchess of Ferrara was ostentatiously manifested. A wide range of gold and silver pieces, Flanders tapestries, silks and precious stones that covered all kinds of garments and objects.

Ferrara walls

This extensive nine kilometer wall was one of the most imposing defensive systems of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.



Ferrara walls

This extensive nine kilometer wall that surrounds Ferrara was one of the most imposing defensive systems of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The northern wall was built between 1493 and 1505 after the construction of the Addizione Erculea (enlargement of the city to the north), characterized by semicircular turrets and a long walkway for sentinels.

At the northwest end, the tower of the Ship stands out, to the north the Porta degli Angeli and to the east the tower of San Giovanni.

The eastern section of the wall was conceived by Alfonso I d'Este between 1512 and 1518, in which the Doccia di San Tommaso stands out, a conduit for the discharge of urban waters, and the artificial hill of the Baluarte della Montagna.

The southern fortification is characterized by four imposing bastions located in the shape of an "ace of spade", built between 1575 and 1585 by the will of Alfonso II. In this section, the Porta di San Pietro, which connects the city with the Volano River, has been reopened.

South of the walls is the Porta Paola, built in 1612 after the transfer of Ferrara to the Papal State.

The part of the wall that leads to the west is the one that has undergone the greatest transformations. There are two bastions that were part of a grandiose pentagonal fortress, which was later demolished.

Marfisa d'Este Palace

Built by Francesco de Este and bequeathed to his daughter Marfisa, a princess who lived here until the end of her days.



Marfisa d'Este Palace

An excellent example of a 16th century stately residence, built by Francesco d'Este and bequeathed to his daughter Marfisa, a princess who lived here until she died, refusing to leave Ferrara even when her family moved to Modena.

The mansion, decorated with 15th and 16th century furniture, preserves the period frescoes, partially redone in the 20th century. Among the pieces on display are the marble bust of Duke Ercole I and the sculpture of the Virgin adored by Duke Alfonso I, from the 16th century.

Through what remains of the large garden you reach a frescoed loggia, which was used as a venue for concerts and small shows.

Costabili Palace

Evidence of the original 16th century pictorial decoration remains on the ceiling of the so-called Treasure Room.



Costabili Palace

Its construction began in 1500 at the request of Antonio Costabili, ambassador of the Este to the family of Ludovico il Moro, the palace is an important work of Biagio Rossetti who left it unfinished.

Noteworthy is the marble decoration of the protruding pilasters and the steps of the honorary step, the work of Gabriele Frisoni.

Evidence of the original 16th century pictorial decoration remains on the ceiling of the so-called Treasure Room.

The building is the headquarters of the National Archaeological Museum.

Diamanti Palace

Built in 1493, a masterpiece by Biagio Rossetti and a symbol of the prestige of the House of Este.



Diamanti Palace

Palace built in 1493, masterpiece of the court architect and urban planner, Biagio Rossetti.

Its name refers to the 8,500 "diamonds" that make up the marble ashlars of the original cladding.

Decorated with carved chandeliers and a later added balcony, the palace was designed for a diagonal view and its optimal focal point is the angle.

Located at the crossroads between the two main arteries of Addizione Erculeia, the building is the symbol of the prestige and glory of the House of Este, who lived in it until 1641.

On the ground floor is the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art and on the main floor is the National Pinacoteca.

Schifanoia Palace

Palace of relaxation of the Este dedicated to rest, parties, banquets, games and theater.



Schifanoia Palace

Built outside the old walls at the request of Alberto V d'Este in 1385, it was enlarged and transformed during the time of Borso.

Both the façade and the interior decorations have undergone numerous interventions. The most famous space is the Room of the Months, painted in fresco by the masters of 15th-century Ferrara painting.

In the adjacent Sala degli Stucchi there is an important coffered ceiling from the 15th century that represents the cardinal and theological virtues, and the companies of the Este.

Today the palace houses the Municipal Museum of Ancient Art.

The Estes had several palaces, castles, villas in the city and outside the walls, which they temporarily inhabited to rest, go hunting or fishing, invite friends or to flee the city in case of plague or danger.

These residences received the name of *delizie*, places of courtly pleasure, with all the necessary components for that purpose.

The oldest of the *delizie* was the Schifanoia palace, from the verb *schivare* (to avoid, move away, avoid) and the noun *noia* (penalties, government concerns).

It was a palace dedicated to rest, but also to parties, banquets, games and theater.

Palazzo Comunale

Residence of the Este family until the 16th century.



Palazzo Comunale

The Municipal Palace (former Ducal Palace) was built from 1243 and was the residence of the Este family until the 16th century, when the court moved to the Estense castle.

Opposite the façade of the cathedral is the Vault of the Horse, the former entrance to the Palace of the Court, on whose sides are the statues of the Marquis Niccolò III on horseback, and of Duke Borso d'Este on the throne.

Crossing the vault leads to the old Ducal Courtyard (today Piazza Municipale), where the marble windows of the Este rooms overlook.

An honorary staircase from 1481 serves as access to the current municipal buildings, inside which you can visit the Cabinet of the Duchesses, a small room designed for Eleonora and Lucrezia de Este, decorated in the second half of the 16th century, and the Sala dell 'Arengo, frescoed between 1934 and 1936 by Achille Funi.

Via delle Volte

In this long and narrow street, much of the commercial activity of the medieval city took place.



Via delle Volte

Medieval street along which Ferrara developed between the 7th and 11th centuries.

Much of the commercial activity of the medieval city took place on this long and narrow road.

Along its route there are numerous raised passageways, vaults that linked the houses of the merchants (on the south side), with their warehouses (on the north side).

According to another interpretation, the vaults served to take advantage of habitable spaces in an area of high urban concentration.

Via delle Volte has preserved eight and via Capo delle Volte, three.

Via San Romano

Artery of the city that communicated the market square and the port.



Via San Romano

Via San Romano takes its name from the church of the same name, already existing in the 10th century and built before the cathedral (from the 12th century). One of the busiest commercial arteries, where many houses with arcades appear.

Street that dates back to the 12th century Ferrara and that was the main link between the market square (the current piazza Trento e Trieste) and the port, located where via Ripagrande is today.

At the end of it was the San Romano gate, currently missing.

Ferrara Cathedral

Its great façade combines the Romanesque style with the Gothic.



Ferrara Cathedral

The cathedral, which remains closed, began construction in 1135 and was decorated with marble motifs towards the end of the 13th century.

Its great façade, with a structure of three cusps, began in the Romanesque style, which has been preserved in the lower part, the upper parts being already in the Gothic style. Saint George and the scenes from the New Testament above the central door should be highlighted.

Inside, the decorations and structure date back to the 18th-19th centuries.

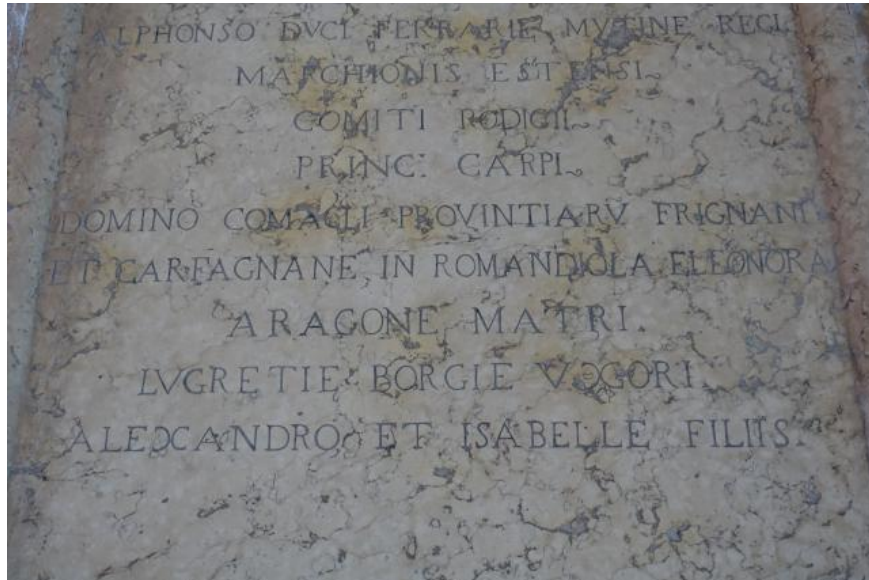
On the right side of the cathedral there is a picturesque 15th century arcaded gallery, decorated by small columns, called Loggia dei Mercati (Merchant's Lodge), occupied by shops since the Middle Ages.

In the central part of this side, the Porta dei Mesi was opened, destroyed in the 18th century, whose name refers to the sculpted panels with the representation of the daily activities that were carried out during the months of the year. His remains are preserved in the Museum of the Cathedral.

The unfinished bell tower, made of pink and white marble, was built between 1451 and 1493.

Corpus Domini Convent

Burial place of Lucrezia Borgia and part of the Este ducal family.



Corpus Domini Convent

Founded in 1406, the cloistered monastery of the Clarisse of Ferrara gained prominence thanks to Saint Caterina Veri, of noble origin, who abandoned the luxuries of the court to devote herself to religious life and who died in 1456. She was a mystic and writer, declared a saint in 1712.

The decoration of the current church, which is accessed through a Gothic portal, is from the Baroque period and has a large fresco on the ceiling, the work of Giuseppe Ghedini.

Some characters from the Este family are buried in the choir, such as Eleonora of Aragon, Alfonso I, Lucrezia Borgia, Lucrezia Medici and Alfonso II.

The tomb of Lucrezia Borgia is in the center, at the foot of the altar, and in it are, in addition to her mother-in-law, her husband Alfonso I and her children Alejandro and Isabel.

Lucrezia was a great protector of the convent. The last years of the Duchess of Ferrara were of Christian preparation for her death. She very often left her residence at Castel Vecchio (the Estense castle) and settled in Casa Romei, which belonged to the convent, to pray or to solve health problems.

Church of San Giorgio

It was the cathedral of Ferrara until the 12th century.



Church of San Giorgio

The church of Saint George, patron saint of the city, is documented from the 10th century and was the city's cathedral until the 12th century. In the mid-15th century, the complex formed by the church and the monastery passed into the hands of the Congregation of Monte Oliveto.

The bell tower was built in 1485 and its current configuration is the result of a restoration from the 16th century and another from the 17th.

With a basilica floor plan, with three naves and an apse, in the presbytery area there is the sepulchral monument of Lorenzo Roverella from the 15th century, Bishop of Ferrara.

At the bottom of the left aisle is the chapel of Saint Maurelio, with the tomb of the martyr bishop, co-patron of Ferrara.

The church is located on the other side of the river, south of the town.

Church of Santa Maria in Vado

Temple built around the Eucharistic miracle of the Wet Vault.



Church of Santa Maria in Vado

Built on a ford of the River Po, the church has been documented since the 10th century. In 1171 the miracle of the Wet Vault took place, by which drops of blood gushed during the consecration of the host, which wet the vault of the temple.

Rebuilt in 1495, its interior has a basilica plan, divided into three naves with two rows of columns.

The transepts of the crossing house a 16th century organ and the Sanctuary of the Most Precious Blood, where the old vault with traces of the Eucharistic miracle is preserved.



BORJA-BORGIA:
ITINERARY OF A
UNIVERSAL FAMILY

Actividad subvencionada por el
Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte



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