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CITY OF VICENZA AND THE PALLADIAN VILLAS OF THE VENETO

“The work of Andrea Palladio, reduced in the memory to an essence of white and blue, respectively the stone and summer nights, into the midst of which I was born and grew up, appears regularly in my dreams. I take the occasion to put forward the hypothesis that Palladio was not a particularly Veneto genius [...]. His neoclassic inventions respond to abstract mathematics, with ectoplasmatic properties so to say, which are as valid in Vicenza as in Leningrad.”

La mia repubblica, in Corriere della Sera, 23 April 1970, Goffredo Parise

The language coined by Andrea Palladio in the buildings of this UNESCO site influenced the trajectories of Western architecture for more than three centuries, uniting the north-east of Italy with Washington, Dublin and St Petersburg with a common style. The extraordinary architectural development of which Palladio is the leading figure is a result of the annexation of Vicenza to Venetian domination, which transformed the city into one of the main laboratories of experimentation of the Renaissance. Thanks to the protection of the poet and humanist Gian Giorgio Trissino, and after years of study and profound metabolisation of the classical inheritance, Palladio grafted 23 symbolic buildings on to the medieval fabric of the city, ideal models of style that were to make it one of the cradles of classicism. Vicenza is inextricably linked to Palladio. It is also the countryside that is affected by this impetus, which is simultaneously aesthetic and value-related: it is here that the architect worked out the formula of the suburban villa, where both the residential and agricultural functions converge and gain new meanings in the aspiration of an arcadian Venetian ideal.



SERIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO DOSSIER: 712

PLACE OF INSCRIPTION: PHUKET, THAILAND

DATE OF INSCRIPTION: 1994-1996



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: Based on a classicism brought alive by a constant urge to experiment, drive, the buildings designed by Andrea Palladio had a decisive influence on the architectonic and town-planning image of Western countries.



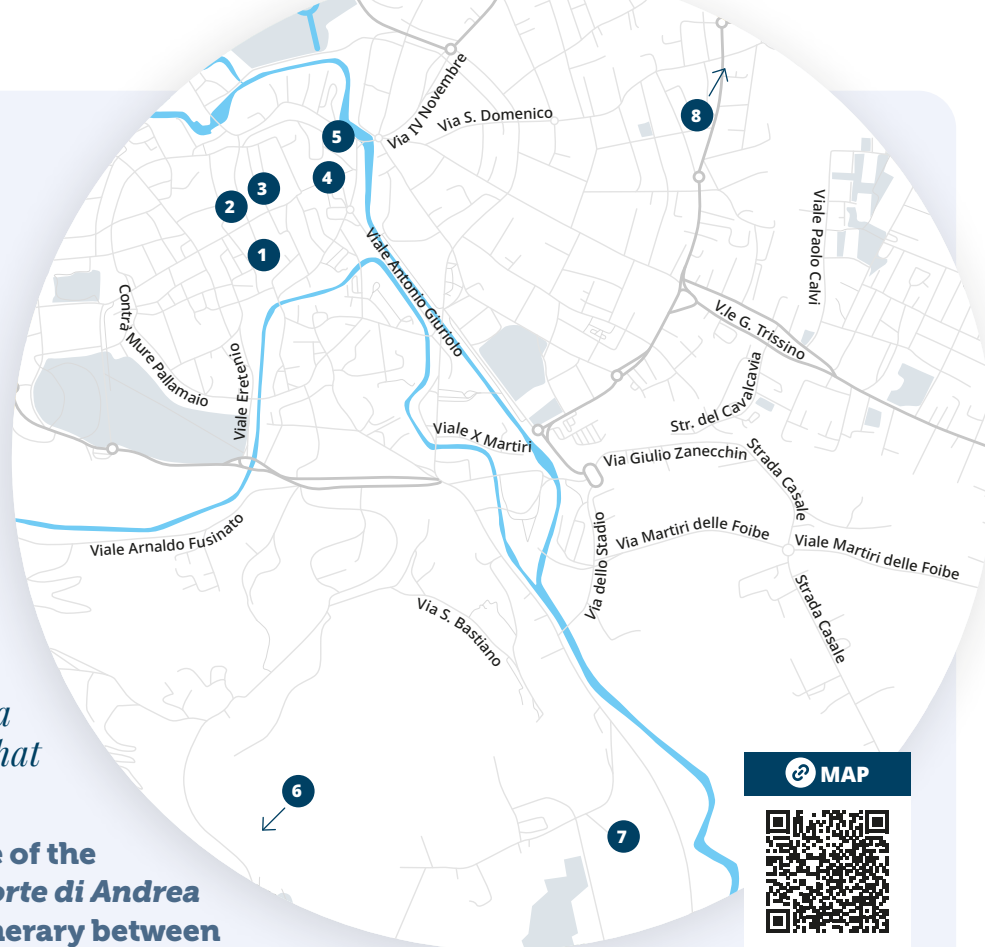
“There is not a town-house or a villa or a church or a bridge in Vicenza that does not bear his name.”

Following the words spoken by one of the characters in the novel *L'oscura morte di Andrea Palladio* by Matteo Strukul, this itinerary between city and countryside touches on some of the greatest masterpieces by Palladio, in a panoramic ideal that embraces the whole creative parabola of the maestro.

The route starts from the **1 Basilica Palladiana**, the heart of medieval Vicenza. This redevelopment project ante litteram, of 1546, was the first great testing ground for the architect, who covered the Gothic structure with a rhythmic facing of Serlian windows in white stone. Very close by, the dialogue between epochs is resumed in Contrà Porti. At number 11, **2 Palazzo Barbaran**, built in 1570, is an architecture of monumental elegance, in which there is the Palladio Museum, wholly dedicated to the work of the maestro. Appreciate the “epochal” contrast with the 15th century forms of **3 Palazzo Thiene**, which faces it. Turning into Stradella Banca Popolare, to Stradella San Gaetano, you can have the 16th century view of

the palace, the result of a four-handed work between Palladio and the other great architect of the time, Giulio Romano. The last urban port of call on the itinerary is Piazza Matteotti, with the permeable volumes of **4 Palazzo Chiericati** and the spiritual testament of the **5 Teatro Olimpico**, the last work by the architect in the city. Leaving the city centre, the next destination on the itinerary dates back to the origins of the Palladian myth with **6 Villa Trissino**, where the talent of the young stonecutter was recognised and moulded by his Pygmalion, Gian Giorgio Trissino. The villa, which preserves the plan of a fortification, was not designed by Palladio, but by Sebastiano Serlio. On the Stradella della Rotonda, set

in the wooded Berici Hills, **7 Villa Almerico Capra** is an apparition midway between a dream and *déjà vu*. Its four fronts, protruding from the central parallelapiped crowned by a dome, make it one of the most influential Palladian icons. Its harmonious fusion with the landscape never ceases to amaze. Cross the plain to Bassano del Grappa, where you will be welcomed by the architectonic embrace of **8 Villa Angarano**. Despite the result of different epochs, it is one of the villas that exemplifies best the idea of the dual structure between the central body, reserved for the owners, and the colonnades, the two lateral wings, for the agricultural functions.



THE BERICI HILLS

“Every summer, my sister, from the end of June to the middle of September, with the whole family moved into the house on the road of La Commenda, in the Berici Hills, because the nights were always cool, and even on the hottest and muggiest days there was a bit of a breeze, and there was a very beautiful garden where she, and my brother and I, would play, in complete freedom, practically from dawn to dusk. But I didn’t remember, we didn’t remember.”

I quindicimila passi, Vitaliano Trevisan

The flatness of the Vicenza countryside, to the south, is interrupted by the Berici Hills, the traces of an ancient emergence of marine origin drifting in the alluvial plain. The curves of the hills alternate with ruggedness of a karstic nature and the various quarries that supplied the Palladian building sites with the soft white stone of Vicenza. The intertwining of woods, fields and vineyards are dotted with the numerous villas where the nobility of Vicenza would flee from the city. The house on the Strada della Commenda which is the hub of *I quindicimila passi* by Vitaliano Trevisan is one of these.



'PALLADIO IS ETERNAL AND HAS CONTINUED TO INSPIRE WORKS IN ITALY AND IN THE UNITED STATES, AND EVEN IN AFRICA!'

With the same spirit of adventure of the main characters of *Palladio e il segreto del volto* by Elena Peduzzi, this itinerary in the city centre will lead you in the footsteps of Andrea Palladio, from his first works to the last major designs left to his city of adoption. The journey begins from a place that can't have left Andrea indifferent. The shadow of the tall tower that was part of the largest medieval fortress in the city looms over

1 Piazza Castello, and on the corner with Corso Palladio there are two works which are almost a summary of the life of the maestro. **2 Palazzo Capra** is one of the first works of Palladio in Vicenza, to the extent that we are not yet certain that it actually is his. **3 Palazzo Thiene Bonin Longare** is, on the other hand, a design from the last period of Palladio, so much so that it was begun only after the death of the maestro and completed by his pupil Vincenzo Scamozzi in 1608. Taking Corso Palladio, you have to zigzag between the many buildings designed by Palladio. Between numbers 90 and 94 there is the "crossable" façade of **4 Palazzo Poiana**, built to

join together two previous buildings of the family of the same name. Turn right into Contrà del Monte to admire the grandiose **5 Basilica Palladiana**, the ancient Palazzo della Ragione whose external loggia was built by the architect in white stone. Exactly opposite, recognisable for the tall brick Corinthian columns, there stands the **6 Loggia del Capitaniato**, the seat of the representative of the Republic of Venice in the city. Going back on your steps, from Corso Palladio, you have to deviate into Contrà San Gaetano Thiene to see one of the most impressive mansions in Vicenza: **7 Palazzo Thiene**; the building is a mixture of the work of two of the greatest architects of the Renaissance: Giulio Romano and, obviously, our Palladio. Going back once again into Corso Palladio, you reach Piazza Matteotti at its opposite end. Admire the spacious porticos of **8 Palazzo Chiericati** and get ready to remain open-mouthed in front of the scenic design of the **9 Teatro Olimpico**, the last masterpiece of the maestro and the first indoor theatre of the modern era. If you want to continue exploring Palladio's architecture, with models, multimedia content and in-depth explanations on the building techniques, there is no better place than the **10 Palladio Museum** (Contrà Porti 1).



VICENZA in books

Suggestions for further reading to get to know Vicenza and its surroundings.

- **The Priest Among the Pigeons**, Goffredo Parise (1954). The torments of adult life in a Vicenza which is a fresco, at the one and the same time lucid and surreal, of the small world of fascist Italy are seen through little Sergio's innocent eyes. Between the misery of the people and the rundown nobility of the deep province, the child's eyes focus on the story of Don Gastone Caoduro, an attractive young priest and fervent supporter of the regime, who features largely in the prohibited dreams of the parish's spinsters.
- **Opere, II, Scritti vari**, Goffredo Parise (1968-86). His writings, with a biting style and civil conscience, range from artistic and literary criticism to controversies. The articles mainly appeared in newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera* and magazines including *L'Espresso* and *Libri Nuovi*.

• **I quindicimila passi**, Vitaliano Trevisan (2002). Thomas has one obsession: that of counting his steps. Counting fills the empty distances, saturates him with the obsessions of numbers, making its way through the industrial gangrene which has devoured the wooded landscapes of his childhood. Advancing step by step towards the centre of Vicenza, the book is the account of the rhythmic and crazy sinking of the main character into the abyss of his loneliness, where the only thing which he inexorably succeeds in approaching is the most atrocious of truths.

• **Giallo Palladio**, Umberto Matino (2022). The theatre of the first heinous murder of a series which bloodies the Veneto countryside between Vicenza, Padua and Venice, the cradle of the immortal designs of the maestro, is a masterpiece by Palladio. With twists of the plot and flashes of genius, lost drawings and solitary villas, Inspector Monturi and Sergeant Piconese have to get out of a plot that aims to have the sophistication and the formal balance of an architectural design.

• **L'oscura morte di Andrea Palladio**, Matteo Strukul (2024). Far from the golden glories of the Renaissance, this historical thriller puts the life of the great architect and his family at the centre, catapulting the reader into the darkest corners of 11th century Vicenza, amid blood-filled feuds, the threat of the plague and the rumours of the Inquisition. Page after page, the author constructs the dramatic architecture of events that will throw new light on the mystery of Palladio's death.

Children's books:

• **Palladio e il segreto del volto**, Elena Peduzzi, Andrea Oberosler (2023). For Nina, Jamal and Lorenzo, the three fearless heroes of the cycle of *I misteri di Mercurio*, the time has come to be catapulted into the Vicenza of 1560, with the task of solving a mystery which seems thicker than ever. Tackling dangerous criminals and great artists, the three art history detectives will have to save the lost face of the greatest architect of the Renaissance.