



A MEETING BETWEEN CULTURES AND LANDSCAPES, PLACES AND TIME

GRADARA A CAPITAL OF MIDDLE AGES

Malatesta Castle, whose massive fortress stands out for all to see, can boast a rich artistic and historic heritage and still now reminds us of its tormented history.

GRADARA AND ITS HISTORY

The medieval fortress lies on a hill providing complete domination on the ancient Via Flaminia. Gradara is a border land, a passageway. Presenting itself as a reference point all over the territory this ancient small town seems to emphasize and at the same time ideally annul any geographical and cultural boundary between the Marche and Romagna regions, between the hills and the sea, present and past times; even the local cuisine reflects its landmarking role offering a mixture of flavours that links together the various regional traditions to the most recent recipes. Year after year Gradara has become the meeting place between cultures and landscapes, places and times.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

More than in any other of Malatesta's castles, at Gradara a lively atmosphere still reminds us of the knights' heroic achievements and fatal declines: important figures and unforgettable events followed one another inside its walls,

bringing together a remarkable historical romance throughout the ages that has made Gradara known as the the "Capital of the Middle-Ages". Founded as "pagus" (rural district) of the Roman Campagna of Pisaurum, only in 1150 Gradara became independent from the Pesarese administration by building a Mastio, the first of its medieval towers. From that moment the most important lords of the area ruled the small town. The Mastio was bought by the Malatesta family that erected 300m-long walls around it, 17 battlemented towers and 3 drawbridges, turning it into an impregnable fortress : the ideal set for the Malatesta's saga, from its glory down to its decline. In 1464 they ceded the dominion to the Sforza family who enriched the fortress with valuable works of art, such as the Pala by Andrea della Robbia, the magnificent portico with a great staircase and the remarkable frescoes you can see in the apartments of Lucrezia Borgia. In 1513, when Giovanni Sforza died, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Pope Giulio II's nephew, came on the scene. The fortress, together with the whole Ducato di Pesaro e Urbino, passed to the Papal State in 1631 and a period of decline began, followed by the sacking of the French and then by the earthquake of 1916. In the year 1920 Ing. Umberto Zavettoni, in love with Gradara, devoted the whole of his resources to its restoration that lasted three years. After his death, his wife Alberta Porta Natale lived in the splendid residence that attracted noble people from all over Europe on the occasion of fashionable parties and classical music concerts. In 1983, when Lady Alberta Porta Natale died, the castle passed to the State. Not to be missed is a tour around Gradara at night.

THE ART: A SMALL BUT GREAT GEM

As ancient medieval town with a long and troubled life, Gradara can boast a rich historic and artistic heritage. The fortress perfectly integrates with the gentle surrounding landscape, featuring a trapezoidal line of 14-century battlemented walls provided with rectangular bastions and an intermediate second line of walls, that now can be walked throughout their length, supplied with some towers and an independent entrance, to surround the medieval atmosphere of the castle. The various lords that one after another ruled the area took care of both the enlargement of the fortress and the embellishment of its rooms, also enriched with various remarkable works of art. Today it is possible to visit the castle that houses an armoury, a torture room, a chapel whose altar has a precious terracotta by Andrea della Robbia and, on the floor above, some apartments with 15 and 16th -century original furniture. Very interesting also is a visit to the communal Picture Gallery with various late Renaissance works and to the new Museum "I Signori della Guerra" that contains a collection of arms, armour and military equipments that can be touched and even worn.

LOVE CHOSE GRADARA

In 1289, while the Malatesta were exiled from Rimini, it was here at Gradara that the passion of Paolo and Francesca ended in tragedy, then immortalized by Dante in the 5th Canto of *Inferno*.

*Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer si forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.*

...

*Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
esser baciato da cotanto amante,
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.
Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
l'altro piangëa; sì che di pietade
io venni men così com'io morisse.
E caddi come morto corpo cade.*

"Infinita Commedia", this is the name of the multimedia exhibition opened in 2005. It proposes an attracting "tour" through some selected passages of Dante's *Commedia*, carried out by a sophisticated interactive multimedia system. The visitor seems to enter the circles of Hell among the eternal damned, then to be raised up to the Celestial Sphere of Paradise: an experience that involves all the senses, in which the visitor must interact with the works of art/video system, to make them come to life and to discover what they hide.

EVENTS AT GRADARA

Learning to love Gradara

Literature, food tasting, shows and plays at St.Valentine's week-end.

Closing the Door

Every Thursday, throughout the summer, a historic celebration is held with a procession in costume and a performance with "fire-eaters". During the last but one week- end of July: The Siege of the Castle, with feasts, historic celebrations and a pyrotechnic/musical show unique of its kind.

The Castle at Christmas

Events, shows and street markets at Christmas.

The cuisine in the Middle Ages

Like going through a time frame, the visitor will find himself back in the past.
A unique opportunity to taste the savour and feel the atmosphere of a 15th-century tavern.

The siege of the castle

One of the most important events of historic memories. During the last but one week-end of July, the revival of the terrible siege of 1446 takes place at Gradara.

More than 100 participants recall the bloody battle to conquer the fortress with bayonet fights and artillery, medieval camps, musicians, minstrels and medieval food performing a live historic fresco.

At the end a unique pyrotechnic/musical show reconstructs the battle with fireworks, music and lights.

CUISINE

Gradara is strictly linked to the surrounding territory with its widespread olive groves and ancient vineyards. As for food and wine, Gradara - Town of Wine - is a display of typical products from all over the Marche region. The "passatelli", one of the typical dishes of Gradara, are cooked with grated bread, parmesan and some lemon skin and nutmeg that characterize their dainty taste.

Not to be missed "The Cuisine in the Middle Ages", a celebration of the medieval cuisine held during some periods of the year, with the town restaurants turned into 15th-century taverns, to make past ages come to life.

GETTING TO GRADARA

Gradara is 15 km from Pesaro, 20 km from Rimini, 5 km from the motorway exit of Cattolica and 5 km from Gabicce beach.

By car: A14 Cattolica exit, take SS16 towards Pesaro, Gradara exit, then follow the road signs to the town center

By air: "Federico Fellini" Airport - Miramare di Rimini

By train: Cattolica Station, St. Giovanni, Gabicce - Pesaro Station

Nearby: Tavullia km 8; Fiorenzuola km 7; Casteldimezzo km 12; Pesaro km 16; Fano km 28; Urbino km 31.

WEB: www.gradara-medievale.com - www.gradara.org - www.comune.gradara.pu.it
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USEFUL NUMBERS AND SERVICES:

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Comune di Gradara tel. 0541/823901 - Museo Nazionale della Rocca tel. 0541.964181