

Week End in Modena

« I could tell you how many steps there are in the streets that climb like stairs, describe the type of the arches in the arcades and count the sheets of zinc on the roofs, but I already know this would tell you nothing. A city is defined not by these details, but by the relationship between the dimensions of its space and the events of its past. »

(I. Calvino, "Le città invisibili", Einaudi, 1972)

CITY OF MODENA: PIAZZA GRANDE AND THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 1 "PIAZZA GRANDE AND THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL"

PHOTO N. 2 "PIAZZA GRANDE AND THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL, VIEW FROM HIGH"

PHOTO N. 3 "THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL"

PHOTO N. 47 "BAS-RELIEF BY WILIGELMO IN THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL"

The Cathedral

Even wandering at random it is impossible to miss Piazza Grande, the geographical and historic centre of the city, where the monumental and the everyday, the religious and the secular, and past and present all meet. The apse and south side of the Duomo, as the cathedral is known, overlook the square, and this splendid example of Romanesque architecture, work on which started in 1099, is Modena's most important historic building. The motif of the blind arcaded loggia with triforium, the hanging arches, the columniferous lions, the porches and, on the main facade, the bas-reliefs by Wiligelmo are all typically Romanesque, but combined here in a building of unique character. It is worth visiting Modena to see the cathedral alone, since it encapsulates the art and culture of the late Middle Ages. Looking at it, the visitor realises that the cathedral is still alive and capable of communicating clearly with anyone able to interpret the meanings of its marble forms. A first sight it is obviously a blend of architecture and sculpture of rare beauty, and it is no coincidence that in an age when artists were considered mere craftsmen and only the names of their patrons who commissioned their works survived, the name of Lanfranco appears in the plaque on the main apse, and that of in the last line of the plaque on the facade supported by the prophets Enoch and Elias.

The Cathedral doors

The cathedral is basically uniform in design; any contrasting elements date from different periods. In the case of the doorways, for example, it is not difficult to see that only three of the six were originally planned. If we consider the portico and columniferous lions as the unifying design features, then four of today's doorways are similar, but if we look carefully, the great doorway on the south side (the "Porta Regia) does not blend into the building behind; it breaks up the line of the blind arcade with triforium, it is in pink rather than white marble, and its dimensions, as well as the sculpture of its lions and the decorations in the splayed opening of the doorway itself, are different. In fact, it is of more recent date than the main body of the cathedral and is the work of the Maestri Campionesi.

The two side doorways on the main facade also seem rather out of place. They are not large, but they seem to have forced the first and fourth panels of Wiligelmo's sculptures to move up to make room for them. The addition of the rose window in the facade had a similar effect, as the porch was crushed a little to create space for the imposing glass and marble of the new window. In their different ways, the columniferous lions all express the same ancient message: wild beasts protect the doorway and mark the passage from the profane to the sacred and from outdoors to in.

The sculpted decorations on the doorways

The three doors in Lanfranco's original design all carry decorations in which a vine-like plant with leaves and tendrils surrounds the figures of men, monsters and animals. The greenery represents the forest, a metaphor for the world, life and sin (the "selva oscura" mentioned by Dante). In the forest, man encounters monsters and fights wild beasts, just as he has to struggle against evil in his life.

On the main doorway, with imagination and skill that should be savoured image by image, Wiligelmo portrays the drama of human life right up the sides of the doors to the archivolt.

The sculptures on the facade

The facade of the cathedral is truly a "poor man's Bible", as Romanesque sculpture is often described. In the stone cartoons in his panels, Wiligelmo tells a story from the Old Testament in images which even the illiterate can understand. First God appears in the glory of the almond tree, and then we see the creation of Adam and Eve and original sin. In the second panel, God accuses Adam and Eve, who show guilty awareness that they are at fault; they are then driven from Paradise and condemned to labour. The whole of the third panel is dedicated to the drama of the second generation: Cain and Abel bring their offers to God's altar, Cain kills Abel and God curses Cain. In the fourth panel, Cain is slain with an arrow by the blind Lamech, whose son Noah takes to the Ark in the second scene to escape from the Deluge. Finally, the Deluge over, Noah is shown with his sons, all looking hopefully to the future. The events described are tragic, but significantly they finish on a hopeful note.

But what is the link between the Biblical stories portrayed by Wiligelmo's chisel and the other figures on the facade?

On the portico, we see lions fighting snakes and stags drinking, in the top right-hand corner a man fighting a lion, and two cherubs holding torches on the sides of the portico. To understand them, we have to dive into the obscure world of Medieval symbols.

Piazza Grande

The square used to be the site of the weekly market governed by the statutes issued in 1327 and held on Saturday until the day was changed to Monday by the French in the 1790s. On these occasions, the Piazza Grande was a colourful meeting place. However, in the early 1900s this colour was seen as a health risk and unattractive, and unworthy of a square next to such a splendid cathedral.

And so in 1931 the fruit and vegetable market was transferred to the new covered premises in Via Albinelli, well worth a visit for anyone interested in the daily life of Modena.

The Monday weekly market is still a feature of life in Modena, but now it is held in Parco Novi Sad, also the venue for the antiques market on the fourth Saturday and Sunday of each month, except for July, August and December. However, Piazza Grande still plays an important role in Modena's traditions, as people cram into it on the feast day of S. Geminiano, the local patron saint (31 January) and on "giovedì grasso", the Thursday before Shrove Tuesday, when a member of the local dialect association dresses up to impersonate "Sandrone", a peasant character supposed to personify the Modenese identity, and addresses the crowd in dialect from the balcony of the town hall. These are almost the only occasions when the square can be seen with its old bustle of stalls, awnings and people, as life makes a colourful return to an area which is no longer the commercial heart of the city. Piazza Grande's former role in civic life is reflected by the "ringadora" stone in its north east corner, in front of the stairway of the town hall, traditionally the pulpit from which speeches used to be made to the assembled populace. In a later period the stone acquired a different function: debtors used to have to beat on it three times with bare buttocks as a sign of humiliation, and the bodies of the drowned were placed on it to await recognition. The standard measures of the pole, yard, roofing-tile and brick are still carved on the apse of the cathedral opposite the "ringadora", reflecting the square's past status as the centre of economic life.

The Ghirlandina Tower

The Ghirlandina Tower soars skyward beside the cathedral. Almost 90 metres high, it is an attractive combination of two architectural styles: the square base section is the same age as the cathedral and is in Romanesque style, while the octagonal and pyramidal upper parts are later and more clearly Gothic in taste (work on them started in 1261 to a design by Arrigo da Campione, and they were completed in 1319). The Ghirlandina, which perhaps takes its name from the two rows of garland-like balustrading which crown it, is proudly viewed by the people of Modena as the symbol of their city. This is no coincidence: although this fact is no longer retained in the collective memory, the

Ghirlandina did not only have the religious function deriving from its status as cathedral tower, but was also a defensive tower used to store important civic documents and charters. One important symbol of the way the tower is bound up with Modena's identity is still preserved in the first room of the Ghirlandina: it is a wooden bucket which is actually a kind of trophy stolen from the Bologna army by the Modena forces during the war between the two cities in 1325. It provided the inspiration for the mock heroic poem written by Alessandro Tassoni in 1622, entitled "La secchia rapita", or "The Stolen Bucket".

The monument to the north of the Tower, overlooking the Via Emilia, is dedicated to Tassoni. Every so often, the bucket returns to the headlines when young people from Bologna stage an attempt to steal it back again. However, the one to be seen here is only a copy, since the original is stored in the Palazzo Comunale. The Museo Lapidario del Duomo in via Lanfranco, beneath the Ghirlandina, contains the original antefixes by the Maestro delle metope, figures which are rather disturbing in many ways, laden with symbolic allusions to peoples far from Europe. In Piazza della Torre, between the monument to Tassoni and the Ghirlandina, a small plaque known in the local dialect as "Al tvajol ed Furmajin" is dedicated to the memory of the eminent Jewish publisher Angelo Fortunato Formiggini, who committed suicide by flinging himself from the Ghirlandina in protest against the racial laws during the Fascist period.

The Palazzo Comunale

The north and east sides of Piazza Grande are bounded by an L-shaped arcaded building which houses some of the city council offices. The site is that occupied by the seat of the medieval city government, which consisted of two separate buildings that had grown up side by side, the city offices and the law courts. From the square, no trace of these older structures is now visible, since they were masked in the XVII Century by the arcaded facade which combines the two original palazzi into a single whole. High up on the end of this arcade, on the corner overlooking via Castellaro, stands the statue known as the Bonissima, another symbol dear to the hearts of the people of Modena; in fact, local personalities well known to the town are said to be "as famous as the Bonissima". The strange thing is that no-one knows what the female figure represents; one theory is that the name derives from the Ufficio della Bona Estima (later contracted to Bonissima), or Weights and Measures Office, in front of which the statue was placed in 1268 on a piece of marble supported by four pillars carved with the standard measurements, as symbolic guaratrix of fair measures. However, the popular imagination prefers another explanation, involving a very rich lady known as "Bona" or "Good", who spent generously to help the poor.

In Modena, in the two buildings which most clearly reflect civil and religious power (the City Hall and the Cathedral, both overlooking Piazza Grande) decorations are used to serve a dual purpose: they give the insides and outsides of the walls solemn grandeur, while also using symbols to instil civil and moral virtues in the citizen and the believer.

MODENA AS CAPITAL

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 4 "THE ARCADE OF COLLEGIO SAN CARLO"

FOTO N. 5 "THE PALAZZO DUCALE"

FOTO N. 45 "BUST OF FRANCESCO I BY BERNINI"

FOTO N. 46 "PORTRAIT OF FRANCESCO I BY VELAZQUEZ"

Modena as Capital city

The history of Modena's development includes a clear attempt to shift the focal point of the city from Piazza Grande, the economic, political and meeting centre of the late Middle Ages and the city state period. This shift took place above all during the XVII and XVIII Centuries; in other words, during the first two centuries when Modena was capital of the Este dukedom. In 1598, after the death without heirs of Alfonso II d'Este, Ferrara returned to Papal rule and so the Este's dominions were reduced to Modena, Reggio Emilia and Carpi. Cesare, the new Duke, chose Modena as his capital. The city was provincial and still strongly medieval in character, and so the Este family set to work to give it a new,

more monumental, more ducal look. It is true that the Este dukes had already engaged in rebuilding and expansion programmes in Modena in the XVI Century, but these were mainly of a military nature in the northern part of the city, where access to the surrounding countryside was by means of the "Castello" gate, named after the nearby fortress built in 1289 by Obizzo II d'Este. The city walls were lengthened to include the area of today's corso Cavour and the railway station, giving the city a new zone laid out on more modern, rational criteria, with wide, straight streets meeting at right-angles (corso Vittorio Emanuele II, via Ganaceto and via Santo'Orsola), very different from the narrow, twisting streets that had followed the routes of the city's canals in the medieval period. The change of focus towards the north symbolised the Este's aim of making Modena a true ducal capital, and their rejection of the medieval part of the city more closely associated with the independent city state.

The Palazzo Ducale/Military Academy

The first step in this transformation was the building of the Palazzo Ducale, started by Francesco I in 1634, to a design by B. Avanzini on the remains of Obizzo's castle. The palace, a fine example of XVII Century secular architecture, is elegant but massive, with its three towers emerging from two long wings of three floors each, surmounted by a marble balustrade. The central tower, featuring a rooftop loggia topped by a small tower, pillars and its lesenes, has a strong upward thrust balanced by the drier horizontal lines of the facade featuring pairs of windows. The building works dragged on for centuries, and the last statues sculpted by G. Graziosi were only added to the left-hand balustrade in 1926, replacing the worn wooden originals. (Anyone wishing to take a closer look at these statues can visit the Gipsoteca Graziosi in the Palazzo dei Musei, where the plaster models of Bacchus and Venus are on show). The keynote of the palace is dignity: large windows with copings that change from straight to curved to triangular in the succession from the ground to the second floor, pillars and pilasters, two double bands of moulding to mark the separation between the floors, curved windows in the cornice decoration, a marble balustrade surmounted by statues virtues and characters from mythology, and two imposing muscular statues (Hercules and Aemilius Lepidus) each side of the main doorway. Take a look at the Palazzo Ducale from the other end of via Farini; only the central section is visible, and it blends with the surrounding buildings imposingly but with a surprisingly light touch.

Since it now houses Italy's main Military Academy, the Palazzo Ducale is only open to the public on request for guided tours and on 4 November, or the Sunday nearest to that date. This is the only opportunity for taking a stroll through the main courtyard, or Cortile d'Onore, beyond the north facade of the palace, all the way to corso Vittorio Emanuele II (once the site of Modena's canal port), following a route much used by the whole city until the beginning of this century. It is also a chance to admire the sober beauty of the Cortile d'Onore, with its serliana motif giving it lightness and an austere elegance, also underlined by the marble balustrades on the ground and first floors.

On the left of the Cortile d'Onore, a side loggia leads to the Scalone d'Onore, or state staircase, which is the other architectural jewel normally concealed behind the facade of the Palazzo Ducale, and combines functionality and solid elegance with an unusual luminosity provided by the fact that it overlooks two courtyards. The interior of the Palazzo retains very little of the old ducal residence, the main traces of which are now found in the picture gallery in the Palazzo dei Musei.

The arcade of Collegio San Carlo

No survey of XVII Century Modena would be complete without mention of the Collegio San Carlo and the arcade (or "Portico") of the same name. Apart from its importance in the city's architectural history, this building is also a key point of reference for the people of Modena. When people agree to meet "in centro", they know very well that they mean the area between the College's arcade, the Molinari bar and the well known news stand on the cross-roads where via Farini and via San Carlo meet via Emilia. The work of Avanzini, who also designed the Palazzo Ducale, the arcade was designed to create a striking effect, forming a curve which leads the eye on along the 31 elegant marble columns transformed by perspective into a kind of wall. The arcade seems to force via Emilia into a curve leading to the entry to the College and the San Carlo church, but a slice of pavement which gradually projects beyond the columns really keeps the street itself on a straighter path.

Although it was built in a series of stages and only completed in the late XVIII Century, the arcade faithfully maintains the lines of Avanzini's design. It is curious to note that the shop at n. 151 has always been a pharmacy, ever since the first part of the arcade was completed, and tradition also states that there has always been a book shop under the arcade, although it has occupied a number of different premises.

The arcade crowns a building opened in 1626 to house the Collegio dei Nobili, which soon acquired the name San Carlo after the congregation which ran it. Transformed into a Foundation in the 1970s, it now contains a University Hall of Residence, a Library and an active Cultural Centre, which is open to the city.

The Palazzo dei Musei

The Este dukes' Gallery

At the beginning of the route along which visitors are guided, which passes through a series of large, well-lit rooms, the first work encountered is the bust of Francesco I by Bernini, which virtually sets the Este seal on the entire Gallery. The collection of pictures transferred here from the Palazzo Ducale consists of the most important paintings collected by the Este dukes. It is a large collection, with works by the Emilian and Tuscan primitives, by the XV Century painters of the Po Plain (particularly Cosmè Tura) and by Modena artists of the XIV and XV Century (from the lovely portable altar piece by Tommaso da Modena to the Polittico degli Erri). Amongst the faces of so many illustrious personalities there is also the most famous piece in the collection, the portrait of Francesco I by Velazquez, which was returned to the gallery in 1995 after it had been stolen in an armed robbery in 1992, together with other works of quality, including the Madonna Campori by Correggio and a Venetian scene by Guardi. One room is dominated by the Venetian painters, above all Palma il Giovane, Tintoretto and Veronese, with a splendid S. Menna. This is followed by a long series of altar-pieces, including the Crucifixion and S. Rocco in prison by G. Reni and a Martyrdom of St Peter by Guercino. The next room also contains two works by Guercino, one of them the famous Venus, Mars and Cupid. The last room contains works by artists of the school of Caravaggio of the XVII Century and two landscapes by Salvator Rosa.

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ARCHITECTURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 11 "DOOR OF THE ABBEY OF NONANTOLA"

PHOTO N. 5 "INTERIOR OF THE PIEVE OF ROCCA S.MARIA"

PHOTO N. 6 "MIRANDOLA CASTLE"

PHOTO N. 7 "FINALE EMILIA CASTLE"

PHOTO N. 13 "FORMIGINE CASTLE"

PHOTO N. 6 "MONTECUCCOLO CASTLE"

Modena, the city of the romanesque

When people refer to Modena as the city of the Romanesque, they are normally thinking of the Cathedral built by Lanfranco and Wiligelmo. Given the historic and artistic importance of this building and its creators, they are certainly justified, but this view is really an over-simplification when we consider the number of Medieval churches and abbeys dotted all over the Province of Modena. There is heated debate about the problem of restoring these buildings, as some people consider that any restoration work, however well done, is still an imitation, while others maintain that painstakingly correct repairs can ensure that important buildings survive the ravages of time.

Romanesque architecture on the Po plain

The Abbey of Nonantola

From the historical and architectural point of view, this is the most important Romanesque building in the area after the city cathedral. The Abbey, founded in 742 by the Lombard abbot Anselm and dedicated to St Silvester, was destroyed by fires and marauding invaders and then rebuilt several times. The last reconstruction in Romanesque style dates from the XII Century, and began a few years

after the damage caused by the earthquake of 1117. The restoration work carried out between 1914 and 1917 set out to remove the Baroque additions of the XVII and XVIII Centuries and restore the building to this Romanesque form. The crypt, which had been filled in during the XV Century and is certainly the oldest part of the abbey, since it survived the 1117 earthquake, was excavated and restored. Truly beautiful with its 64 pillars complete with capitals which support the cross-vaults, it was probably the model for the crypt of Modena Cathedral. The restorers working early this Century also raised the presbytery to the original level, demolished the XIII Century vaults (replaced with wooden trusses), lowered the level of the floor and revealed the massive cross-shaped columns. On the facade, the bas-reliefs on the outer faces of the door surrounds are particularly interesting; on the right, they show the story of the birth of Jesus, while on the left they illustrate episodes in the history of the Abbey itself. These sculptures are fine examples of work influenced by Wiligelmo. The Medieval spirit is reflected in the decoration of the inside door jambs and the archivolt, with vine tendrils and leaves surrounding figures, symbolising the "dark forest" of life. The birth of Christ is the New Testament episode on the right-hand door jamb, in scenes on the stone which are legible even for the illiterate: angels of the annunciation, the birth of Christ, a Nativity scene, sheep, shepherds and the adoration of the Magi. On the other side of the door, we find the story of the Abbey itself: the donation to Anselm, the consecration of the Abbey, and the transport of the relics of St Silvester and their burial in the new sacred building. In the last panel the symbolism may seem rather obscure, as it is difficult to understand what Samson dislocating the lion's jaw, taken from the Old Testament, has to do with scenes from the New Testament and the tale of the Abbey's foundation. But when people had not forgotten how to read the messages of symbols, it was easy for the faithful to see Samson as a metaphor for Christ. In fact, a similar image on the facade of Modena (see "The sculptures on the facade") Cathedral also emphasises the close link between the Old and New Testaments.

Romanesque architecture in the mountains

The Romanesque churches which have survived in the Modena Apennines do not have their own strong architectural personality but spring from the coming together of local experience and the highly skilled Lombard masters. Visiting them is rather like a treasure hunt, since they are often well off any modern beaten track, and in some cases it takes a trained eye to appreciate the authentically Romanesque features which have survived later reworkings.

Pieve di Rocca S. Maria

Also a short distance from the via Giardini, this time below Serramazzone, this ancient church (VIII-IX Century) has also undergone considerable restoration on its facade and in the upper part; the tower has been completely rebuilt. The interior is unusual, divided into a central nave and two side aisles resting on short, sturdy columns topped by capitals with floral decorations that are certainly the church's most interesting, authentic features; the stylised leaves are interwoven with plaits, coils and six-pointed stars with constant inventiveness.

Medieval castles and fortresses

The castles of the Po Plain

The castles of the Po Plain, built for defensive purposes during the centuries when struggles between families, towns or overlords made fortresses capable of withstanding enemy attacks a necessity, have generally undergone a great deal of reworking in later, less violent periods when comfortable residential accommodation became the top priority. Even more recently, some have become Town Halls and others museums, while a few are still the private property of ancient families. The castles of Spilamberto, Vignola and Savignano are to the south of Modena, along the line of the via Vignolese; although they were all built to defend Panaro river crossings against attack from the Bologna side, Vignola castle is the best preserved and most architecturally impressive of the three. Its massive central body (with a projecting rampart supported by corbels on all sides), with its tall corner towers, is in typical XIV Century style. The name of the tallest tower, known as the Nonantola tower, reminds us that the fortress used to belong to the Abbey of Nonantola. However, the fundamental structure of the

castle (now a museum) that has survived to the present day was created by the Contrari family, feudal vassals of the Este Dukes of Modena, who lived there at the beginning of the XV Century. The rampart walk gives an impressive view over the Panaro valley. The castles of Formigine (now the Town Hall) and Maranello (private property) lie along the via Giardini between Modena and the mountains, while Carpi, on the plain to the North of the city, has a large castle which now belongs to the municipality. Carpi castle is actually a combination of a large number of towers, fortresses, turrets and keeps built at different times between 1312 and 1520, the oldest of which, the tower with Ghibelline merlons known as the Torre del Passerino, is the work of the Bonaccolsi family. The two centuries which followed saw the addition of the Rocca Nuova, the splendid residence of the Pio family, the Rocca di Marsilio and the Rocca Antica keeps, and finally the Torrione di Galasso, with its ornamental turrets. The entire complex was transformed and embellished by Prince Alberto III Pio, who combined the previous keeps and constructed the elegant facade, to which the clock tower was added at a later date. The castle is in a dominant position, overlooking one of Italy's largest squares. The flat lands running towards the Po river also have other castles worthy of note. Finale Emilia contains the "Castello delle rocche", rebuilt by the Este family in the XV Century and then further modified by them for use as a residence. It now belongs to the municipality. Its four-sided ground plan with three corner towers and a donjon is duly imposing and some structural and decorative elements can still be traced, including the dovetail merlons and the postern with the impost which used to support the drawbridge. At S. Felice sul Panaro the castle is again in brick with corner towers, but its modern role is quite different, as it has been restored to serve as the Town Hall and library. The only reason for interest in Mirandola castle is the fame of its former masters, the Pico family, since only a few remains of the fortress have survived (the Palazzo Comunale is an imitation built in Medieval style).

Castles in the Mountains

There are many castles, built as solid fortresses in dominant positions, in the Modena Apennines, and there would be even more of them if we were also to consider smaller defensive structures such as towers and "tower-houses", which reflect a history of local struggles and continuous unrest. We will limit our survey to the most important, best preserved castles. That of Guiglia, in a defensive position overlooking the Panaro valley, is now a hotel. Monfestino castle in the Frignano region is private property, so only the outside can be seen, but the battlements protecting the main entry and a circular tower connected to the walls are in clear view. Montecuccolo is a castle with fortified hamlet; the keep and the rampart walk were restored in the 1980s, in work which attracted criticism because of the use of modern materials such as glass on Medieval structures. Sestola has a sturdy fortress strategically sited above a sheer cliff, reached by a staircase, which offers an attractive view of the town. Near Sassuolo, Montegibbio castle belongs to a consortium of local authorities, who have opened its large park with beautiful old trees to the public. Rebuilt as a residence after the ravages of an earthquake in 1501 and centuries of war, it stands on a hilltop which has been fortified since the X Century at least. The castle at Montefiorino, in the Val Dragone, was originally constructed in the XIII Century by the Montecuccoli family; it has now been renovated as the Town Hall and also as the Museum of the Partisan Republic of Montefiorino. The ancient keep, with traces of a doorway on the second floor, still dominates the restored inner courtyard.

THE PROVINCE'S SECONDARY CAPITALS

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 14 "INTERIOR OF PALAZZO DUCALE OF SASSUOLO"

PHOTO N. 15 "THERMAL BATHS OF SALVAROLA"

PHOTO N. 17 "VIGNOLA"

PHOTO N. 44 "HISTORIC RECALL IN CARPI"

Sassuolo - Architecture and power in Piazzale Della Rosa

The Este palace stands just a short walk from the town centre, overlooking Piazzale Della Rosa; it was built to the design of G. Rainaldi, with contributions from B. Avanzini and G. Vigarani, who took

over the project in 1634. More than three centuries have battered and corroded it, but with the adjoining Peschiera or Fontanazzo, it is still an impressive building that testifies to the Este family's wish to demonstrate that its power was undiminished after the loss of Ferrara.

Today the palazzo is a secondary headquarters for the Modena Military Academy, and its interior with frescos by Boulanger and other decorations by Colonna and Mitelli can only be viewed with permission. However, the exterior, restored in the early '90s, is of considerable interest. Newly painted in ivory white, against which architectural features stand out in brownish shades, the facade now has an austere elegant air, very different from the harsh tones of its previous ochre. The square in front shows signs of careful architectural planning, since the facade of the church of San Francesco, on the right, is mirrored exactly on the other side, with an effect like the two wings of a stage set. Where no marble was available for the outside of the church, painters have made up the deficit by creating fake sculpted decorations; inside, the painted ceiling gives the illusion of unlimited perspective. The Este intention was to make the Fontanazzo into a complex fountain with a large number of jets and sprays leaping from imitation rocks.

Sassuolo - the Terme della Salvarola

The Salvarola spa centre stands on a green hillside near Sassuolo, just 20 minutes from Modena, 40 minutes from Bologna airport and a few kilometres from Maranello.

The spa, known as early as Roman times, has three types of water: sulphur-carbonic, bromine-iodine-brine and sulphur-bicarbonate-magnesium.

As well as the traditional inhalation and mud bath treatments, and gynaecological and mineral water cures, Salvarola also has a modern Beauty Centre able to provide top quality facial and body beauty treatments.

Other facilities include a well equipped physiotherapy department and a specialist outpatients' clinic.

Vignola - the Castle

Vignola is dominated by its castle, strategically located where the Panaro leaves the hills for the plain in order to control the ancient via Claudia, which led towards Bologna. This massive building is the sum of a number of different parts which have grown up over time, starting from the X Century. It is dominated by the Donne, Pennello and Nonantola towers, the last the only one built mainly of stones taken from the nearby riverbed and not of brick. The exterior reflects the defensive purpose of the castle, with a large moat, a succession of battlements, doors and the impostos to which chains used to be attached indicating where drawbridges used to be, and the rampart walkway which links the towers. Inside, the castle's residential character is more obvious. Low down, the sala dei Contrari and sala dei Grassoni are now used for conferences and concerts, while the rooms on the ground floor are known as the Lion, Leopard, Dove and Ring (Leoni, Leopardi, Colombe and Anelli) rooms, after the motifs in the frescoes on the walls. The state rooms are on the ground floor, with the Studio and the Chapel, frescoed in late Gothic style by the Maestro di Vignola.

Carpi - the town's vast rectangular heart

For anyone in search of the spectacular, Carpi is known only for its square: Piazza Martiri.

On the one side of this huge open space, the Castello dei Pio is a symbol of power, combining buildings of different periods and towers of various girths in a compact structure. On the other side, the Portico Lungo arcade is an eloquent example of an architectural feature typical of the Po Plain. They both demonstrate the effects that can be achieved using just the humblest local material: brick - both the castle, with its uneven jumble of skyward projections, and the complex of buildings fronted by the Portico Lungo, are in unplastered brick.

MODENA GOLD MEDAL CITY

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 10 "THE MUSEUM-MONUMENT OF THE DEPORTEES"

Modena, gold medal city

Modena was awarded a Gold Medal for its part in the Resistance, and there are discreet commemorations of the War years around the city. In piazza Grande, for example, two stone plaques on the wall of the Bishop's residence commemorate a massacre of Modena people and the shooting of three Partisan fighters, while a panel below the Ghirlandina tower contains the names and faces of the Modena people who died in the struggle for liberation. They are also recalled in the city's cemetery by a memorial chapel, where a sculpture by A. Pomodoro represents a wedge cutting into a globe, suggesting a world requiring change.

Carpi - the Museum-Monument to the Deportees

The Museum which commemorates political and racial deportees, housed in one wing of the palazzo dei Pio in Carpi, reminds the visitor of a wider historic tragedy. The rooms contain maps showing the sites of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, while an inner courtyard contains columns intended as a monument on which their names are written.

The events are recalled by objects shown in display cases and by photographs. The three-colour graffiti on the walls, to designs by Guttuso, Leger, Cagli and Picasso, are inspired by themes relating to the Nazi persecution. The extracts from letters by European Resistance fighters condemned to death, also engraved on the walls using the graffiti technique, have been selected to place the emphasis on hope and faith in mankind. However, there is a clear prophetic warning in a quotation from Brecht:

"And you, learn to see what you need to see
and not to look up in the air; actions,
not words are needed. This monster was once
about to rule the world!

The peoples defeated it, but
now we cannot take our victory for granted:
the womb from which it sprang is still fertile".

The walls and pillars of another room, with a cross-vaulted ceiling, are covered from top to bottom with the names of deportees who died in the Nazi camps, a commemoration of the victims with strong emotional impact.

The Fossoli concentration camp

At Fossoli, a few kilometres from Carpi, the local people can point the way to a series of tumble-down buildings abandoned to total neglect; this is what remains of the Fossoli holding camp, at one time the first stop in prisoners' journey to Germany.

For decades, nothing has been done to preserve these remains, but inevitably the chance visitor wonders why the authorities have waited so long to do something to conserve the Fossoli camp, one of the few on Italian soil. Or perhaps this neglect has a symbolic significance, and time and the nettles are deliberately being left to destroy the last traces of this reminder of man's inhumanity to man.

ENJOYING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE NATURAL WORLD

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 8 "PLAIN OF MODENA"

PHOTO N. 9 "VILLA SORRA PARK"

PHOTO N. 12 "SECCHIA FLOOD RETENTION BASIN PARK"

PHOTO N. 16 "PARK OF THE SALSE OF NIRANO"

PHOTO N. 2 "ROCCAMALATINA ROCKS PARK"

PHOTO N. 28 "EXCURSIONISM WITH MOUNTAIN BIKE"

PHOTO N. 29 "EXCURSIONISM WITH BIKE"

Hydrocarbons and geology at the Salse di Nirano

The Salse di Nirano near Fiorano are an interesting geological curiosity. Eruptions of salty mud have formed miniature volcanos with craters, explosions and emissions of inflammable gas. These are due above all to underground deposits of hydrocarbons (particularly natural gas), which escape to the

surface, bringing with them salty water and mud. Together with the mud, the volcanos also emit small amounts of brown coloured liquid hydrocarbons, which used to be exploited for medicinal purposes and for lighting in the last century. However, these deposits are of no economic value today.

A landscape sculpted by the weather

The Sassi di Rocca Malatina, easily accessible from the Passo Brasa road a few kilometres beyond Guiglia, stand out strikingly from the surrounding landscape. Over the millennia, the formations which used to cover these rocks have eroded away, revealing the underlying crags of yellowish sandstone. This has created the immense sculpture of the Sassi, which soar upwards 312 metres, from 298 to 610 metres above sea level; the top 74 metres of the tallest rock can easily be climbed in about ten minutes. Already so unusual in themselves, the Sassi are also home to the peregrine falcon, which nests in this rocky habitat. Because of its interest to naturalists, the 300 hectares around the Sassi have been protected through the creation of the Parco Regionale dei Sassi di Roccamalatina. A short detour from the via Giardini, before Lama Mocogno, brings one to Prê Canina, between Monzone and Brandola. This is the site of a rock bridge 33 metres long, known as the Ponte Ercole . This long monolith, given its curved shape by the water which has worn away the softer ground beneath, is so strange that locals call it the Devil's Bridge.

Natural parks and areas of special scientific interest

The Parco regionale dell'alto Appennino modenese was created in 1990 to protect an area of outstanding natural beauty of great importance for its flora and fauna. The new park covers an area of about 15,000 hectares of high mountain land near the towns of Fanano, Sestola, Montecreto, Riolunato, Pievepelago, Fiumalbo and Frassinoro. Visitors' centres are planned at Fanano and Fiumalbo.

Cycle-ways and wetlands in the Po plain

The Province of Modena contains a number of areas of river and canal water of considerable naturalistic value as wetlands, with specific flora and bird life. Their suitability for walks and cycle-ways has also made them very popular leisure venues

Secchia flood retention basin park

The retention basins, constructed between 1975 and 1980 to control the floodwaters of the Secchia river, consist of about 200 hectares of water and islands, where birds of various species winter and nest (including the grey heron, little egret, kestrel and widgeon). The entire area has been incorporated in the 1500 hectares of the Riverside Park, which also includes farmland, sand and gravel quarries, and areas for water sports. Bird-watching and educational visits are encouraged, with informative notices and a Visitors' Centre in the Corte di Rubiera building, offering exhibitions, videos and publications.

ALTERNATIVE APENNINE

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 21 "THE PASS OF ARCANA CROSS"

PHOTO N. 20 "NOCTURNAL LANDSCAPE OF SESTOLA"

PHOTO N. 22 "NINFA LAKE"

PHOTO N. 23 "SANTO LAKE"

PHOTO N. 24 "MOUNTAIN CIMONE"

PHOTO N. 25 "SKIERS"

PHOTO N. 26 "ALPINE SKINGI"

PHOTO N. 27 "CIMONE CABLE RAILWAY"

PHOTO N. 30 "EXCURSIONISTS AT THE TOP OF MOUNTAIN GIOVO"

Beautiful places for lovers of tranquillity

The Lago della Ninfa and Lago Santo are lakes of glacial origin with the typical shape of the Alpine lake, surrounded by dense coniferous woodland.

Lago della Ninfa, easily reached by car just off the road between Pian del Falco and Passo del Lupo, has an unusual history. It used to be lovely enough to deserve its name, which means "The Nymph's Lake", but its water level dropped to the point where it seemed it might even dry up altogether. The authorities stepped in in the early '90s to dredge it and apply a layer of clay to improve water retention, and the situation seems to have improved. The lake is still very attractive from many angles, in winter or summer, but above all in the autumn, when the yellow of the larches contrasts with the green of the other conifers.

Lago Santo is the largest of the Apennine lakes. 500 metres long and 1500 metres in perimeter, its 58 thousand square metres of water lie below Monte Giovo, one of the peaks on the ridge which divides Emilia from Tuscany. It is also accessible by car and this, together with the beauty of its landscape, make this spot one of the favourite destinations for Modena's Sunday trippers during the summer months. However, Lago Santo is also well worth a visit at other times of year, when the absence of crowds allow its natural beauty to be appreciated to the full.

The Apennine ridge

Many people look down on the Apennines as a poor relation to the Alps, but anyone familiar with these mountains knows that they have their own capacity to thrill. To discover this, one only has to walk the ridge path number 00, which leads from Passo delle Radici to Abetone, and on to Passo della Croce Arcana, at heights between 1500 and 2000 metres above sea level. The long line of peaks and rocky heights rising majestically above the tree-line and the slopes falling away on both sides, often very steeply, create an almost Alpine landscape very different from the gentle hills often associated with the Apennines. Anyone who does not suffer from vertigo will have little difficulty in walking the whole path, although a little experience and great caution are needed at Altaretto and Grotta Rosa (walking towards Lago Baccio) on Monte Giovo, at Denti della Vecchia overlooking Val di Luce, and at Cima Tauffi, between Libro Aperto and Passo di Croce Arcana.

Amongst the marmots on Monte Cimone

From Passo del Lupo, the ski centre above Sestola, a cable-car carries visitors to Pian Cavallaro (1861 metres). From here, the climb to the top of Monte Cimone (2165 metres) is not very hard. First, a well walked section of path 441 leads to Buca del Cimone (1966 metres). Then path 439 takes us to the junction with path 447, which brings us to the top in just a few minutes. The peak itself is marred by the Airforce Weather Observatory, but on particularly clear days the view from the Tyrrhenian Sea in the South West to the Alps in the North is breathtaking. Even in hazy conditions, the panorama stretches from the towns on the edge of the Po Valley to the Apuan Alps and right along the Apennine Ridge from the province of Bologna to that of Reggio Emilia. Path 485 leads down the other side of the mountain to path 449, which quickly returns to the chair-lift. At many points on this walk, one may catch glimpses of marmots, which live on Monte Cimone in large colonies. They are quite used to people, but the sentinel of each group still gives a piercing whistle of alarm at the approach of intruders, and this tells the walker that marmots are close at hand. They can often be picked out by the trained eye, although their coats offer excellent camouflage amongst the mountain rocks.

Monte Cimone: the region's largest skiing centre

In the winter, access to the mountains is made difficult for walkers by deep snow. Of course, experts can use crampons and ice-axes or off-piste skis, but most snow-lovers prefer the less risky options of downhill or cross-country skiing. Modena's Apennines have a consolidated downhill ski tradition. The five points of access to the Monte Cimone slopes (Passo del Lupo, Lago della Ninfa, Cimoncino, Polle and Montecreto) are gateways to 50 km of pistes (20 of them served by snow cannon) connected in a "carousel" pattern, no less than 24 lift facilities of various kinds (the cable-car and four-seater chair-lift from Passo del Lupo to Pian Cavallaro at the foot of Monte Cimone, as well as 3 three-seater and 6 two-seater chair-lifts and 13 ski-tows), which can all be used with a single ski-pass. The Doccia, Fiumalbo pistes are on the other side of Monte Cimone, and downhill skiing is also available at Piane di Mocogno and Piandelagotti.

Cross-country skiing is a more recent introduction to the Modena Apennines, except for at Frassinoro, the home of one of the sport's great champions. All the same, the area now offers no less than 12 cross-country skiing centres, with trails of varying length and difficulty. There are three around Monte Cimone, at Le Polle (Riolunato), Lago della Ninfa (Sestola) and Cimoncino (Fanano), and a fourth in the nearby valley of Ospitale, around Capanna Tassoni. There are others at Frassinoro (Tonino Biondini), Piandelagotti (Bosco Reale), S. Anna Pelago (Piana dell'Acqua Chiara), Barigazzo (Ducale Vandelli), Lama Mocogno (Piane di Mocogno), Pavullo (Airfield), Serramazzone (La Fondaccia) and Montecreto (Cervarola).

TRADITION AT TABLE

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 31 "TYPICAL GASTRONOMY OF MODENA"

The genuine taste of Modena

Modena's cuisine is popular with gourmets from all over Italy and a large number of countries worldwide, and offers specialities including prosciutto ham, tortellini, zampone, balsamic vinegar, parmesan cheese, lambrusco, cherries and nocino. Special long-established Consortiums do valuable work in guaranteeing the authenticity of these products and providing information, documentation and promotion. However, the Chamber of Commerce has now combined with them to launch the "Modena a tavola" (Modena at table) mark, awarded only to the best food and drink, to promote knowledge and consumption of genuine local products. A typical Modena menu owes almost everything to locally produced pork and cheese, and starts with hors d'oeuvres of prosciutto, which must be from the best production zone of the Panaro valley, and cured at Samone, Vignola, Verica or Montecenere. After 10/11 months, hams produced in this area are more strongly flavoured than those from the Parma production zone.

Traditionally, the pasta course has to consist of tortellini, delicious little packages of pork, prosciutto and parmesan cheese folded in a special way.

The main course, especially in winter, is inevitably zampone, pig's trotter stuffed with minced pork and natural flavourings. In bygone days housewives had to struggle to cook zampone without allowing the skin to burst, but thanks to the convenient foil-packed pre-cooked variety provided by modern technology, these worries are now a thing of the past.

The salad has to be seasoned with the traditional balsamic vinegar, a product with centuries of history. The grape must used in its production should be made from Trebbiano white grapes grown in the hills, while time and a series of transfers to barrels made of different woods do the rest. Traditional balsamic vinegar, which can command astonishingly high prices amongst connoisseurs, is a greatly prized local product with a delicious blend of sweet and sour in its flavour. The cheese course inevitably consists of parmesan cheese; to appreciate its full quality and the grainy consistency which is behind its local name of "grana", parmesan should never be cut into slices. Simply sink the small knife provided into the cheese and press gently to the side to break off a mouth-watering flake.

Naturally, the wine will be a lambrusco, from Sorbara, S. Croce or Castelvetro, all with D.O.C. guaranteed authenticity and an ideal accompaniment to the entire meal. The Sorbara type, with its ruby red colour and fragrance of violets, is the most delicate and has the lowest alcohol content. S. Croce lambrusco is the strongest (although it still only reaches 11°) with the most intense fragrance, while the Castelvetro wine is red in colour and comes from the dry soil of hillside vineyards.

There is no point in scouring Modena for lambrusco which has been aged, since this wine is at its best young, savoured as soon as the cork leaves the bottle, with all its sparkle intact. The foam that fills the glass when the wine is poured should disappear immediately, as an old proverb tells us. In the words of an imaginary patron of a hostelry where lambrusco is served, "if the foam goes away I'll stay, but if the foam stays I'll be the one to leave". Another proverb in strictly Epicurean vein recommends "bread one day old, wine one year old and a girl eighteen years old".

If the season is early summer, the fruit course will be Vignola cherries (for the rest of the year, these are available preserved in spirits, produced by local companies to the type of recipe still in use in

many homes). The liqueur will be nocino, made by steeping green walnuts, traditionally picked on the night of St John the Baptist's Day, in alcohol.

More humble dishes with sharper flavours

The vast choice of restaurants and trattorias in and around Modena offer alternative menus outside the scope of the "Modena a tavola" mark but still very much in line with local tradition. As well as the most highly prized prosciutto, hors d'oeuvres may include a whole range of salamis made from different types of meat, with different proportions of fat, minced in different ways and containing different natural flavourings. The most typical is the so-called "salame montanaro" or mountain salami, made from pure lean pork, minced medium-fine, flavoured with salt and peppercorns, stuffed into pork gut and cured. Another very fragrant local product is mortadella, or Bologna sausage, traditionally made by grinding meat with a pestle and mortar - hence the name. Before pepper arrived from India, mortadella used to be flavoured with myrtle berries. The thirty per cent fat added to the finely minced lean meat is cut into cubes, so a large slice of mortadella looks like a circle of pink with lots of white eyes. Then come the whole series of pancetta and coppa products, made from rolling combinations of lean meat and fat. The most humble of all these products are coppa di testa, a kind of brawn, and ciccioli, pressed pork scratchings, both highly prized delicacies in spite of their ingredients. In country trattorias, one of the favourite pasta dishes is maccheroni al pettine, macaroni made by hand from strips of egg pasta and decorated with ridges by wrapping them round a stick and passing them over a traditional comb-like implement, served with a meat ragout. As main course, particularly in cold weather, there are two equally delicious variants on the zampone. Cotechino consists of a filling with slightly more fat than that of zampone stuffed into pig gut, while cappello da prete is made by wrapping zampone filling into the skin of a pig's cheek and sewing it into the shape of a three-cornered hat. The local pork sausages, or salsicce, are also mouth-watering and very meaty. Modena's most characteristic type of cake is known as "bensone or belsone". Baked in the shape of a long loaf of bread, when oven-fresh this dessert has the fragrance and goodness of all the best simple foods. It used to be eaten cut in slices and dunked in lambrusco or the local sweet white wine.

Flour, the traditional staple

Many traditional recipes were developed by poor people who had only the few basic ingredients produced in a closed agricultural economy that was self-sufficient by necessity. They have survived in the local tradition, and have now been rediscovered in numerous trattorias in the countryside and in the mountains, as part of the search for genuineness noticeable in eating habits since the 1960s. The flour-based recipes of the different areas of the province vary quite distinctly; in the richer areas of the plain, fat is used in the cooking method, while in the mountains where life was a hard struggle against poverty, no fat is used. Gnocco fritto is made from flour, salt and water fried in lard from home-fattened pigs. The dough is rolled out into a sheet somewhat thicker than an egg pasta and then cut into small diamond shapes which are tossed into the boiling melted lard, where they swell and become crisp, ready for eating with any of the local charcuterie products, or grapes when in season. The equivalent in the hill and mountain areas is known as tigella or crescenta. The dough is very similar to that for gnocco fritto, but the cooking method could not be more different, as the small pieces of dough are crushed between two flat, clean stones or pottery moulds (often decorated with the typical rose or six-pointed star motif) which are then placed in the hot embers of a fire.

This original method has now been replaced by moulds consisting of two cast iron plates, each with cavities for six or more tigella muffins, which fit together and can be placed on the gas burner of a modern kitchen hob. Tigella muffins are usually cut in half and filled with sliced cured meats or with a special mixture of minced pork fat, rosemary, garlic and parmesan cheese. Polenta, or maize porridge, served with mushroom sauce, cheeses or a meat ragout, or cut into slices and fried to accompany other dishes, is another traditional food common in all areas of Modena's Apennines. Borlenghi are only found in a more limited area around the Panaro valley. They are a kind of thin pancake, flavoured with garlic and seasoned with parmesan cheese, produced by cooking a semi-liquid mixture of water and flour on a steel plate. One of the most distinctive mountain specialities is ciacci, made from

chestnut flour. A very liquid mixture of flour and water is cooked on a steel plate to produce a thin disk which is filled with local ricotta cottage cheese and sugar and rolled. Castagnaccio is also made from chestnut flour; it is an oven-baked cake, flavoured with lemon rind and these days also with cocoa powder.

THE FOOD INDUSTRY

PHOTO REFERENCES:

FOTO N. 32 "BALSAMIC VINEGAR (AND THE GHIRLANDINA TOWER)"

FOTO N. 33 "BARRELS OF LAMBRUSCO VINE"

FOTO N. 34 "HAMS"

FOTO N. 35 "SHAPES OF PARMESAN CHEESE"

FOTO N. 36 "ABLOOM CHERRY TREES "

Parmesan cheese

The Province of Modena produces 1/4 of Italy's officially certified parmesan cheese, processing immense quantities of milk for the purpose (it takes 16 litres of milk from the authorised production areas to make just one kilogram of cheese). Parmesan, classified as a semi-fat, cooked, matured cheese is the only cheese which does not melt and become stringy when added to hot, moist dishes but dissolves in them to give added flavour. With its seven centuries of history, the genuineness of parmesan is naturally guaranteed; only cheese made by skilled cheese-makers using top grade milk from the traditional production area and the traditional methods has that unmistakable grainy consistency and delicious flavour. However, consumers are further protected by the specially established Consortium (Consorzio del Formaggio Parmigiano Reggiano) which implements strict controls over production and trade, assuring production standards are met and applying its own mark to approved cheeses to guarantee that authentic parmesan is clearly identified.

Pork products

The countryside around Modena contains many small dairies, with low buildings often painted white or pale blue, and beside them there is often a second shed which houses the pigs traditionally reared on the by-products from the cheese-making process (particularly the whey). So it is no coincidence that pork is another of the basic ingredients of Modena's local cuisine. These days there are also factory farms, between them producing tens of thousands of pigs of breeds specially selected through genetic research. This abundant supply of quality pork is necessary to feed the industry that makes Modena the Italian capital of processed pork products such as salami and ham; like Parma, the Province now has its own Consortium (Consorzio del Prosciutto di Modena) to certify the authenticity of locally produced hams.

Lambrusco

There is no denying that Modena's traditional cuisine is rather rich, but local food-lovers swear by the digestive properties of another product typical of the zone: lambrusco, said to be the only wine capable of washing down the highly flavoured, fatty foods in which Modena specialises. In 1888 a local poet sang the praises of its ruby-red colour, fragrance of violets and sparkling good cheer. On 1 May 1970 the President of the Republic of Italy issued a decree awarding "doc" status to Lambrusco di Sorbara, Lambrusco Salamino di Santa Croce and Lambrusco Graspa Rossa di Castelvetro wines. A Consortium (Consorzio Tutela del Lambrusco) applies strict control to assure that only grapes from the approved production areas are used, and in the 1980s lambrusco enjoyed a real boom, with outstanding success in the United States and Canada.

Balsamic vinegar

Balsamic vinegar represents one of Modena's most ancient and authentic traditions. There are traces of it in the records as far back as the XI Century, and it was certainly used by the Este dukes as a special gift and sign of favour. For centuries, balsamic vinegar was produced in the dry air of attics passed on from generation to generation by families of all ranks, for their own consumption or as a

precious gift. It was in 1967 that balsamic vinegar came into the market place, when the Town Council of Spilamberto organised a competition for producers of natural balsamic vinegar as part of the town's traditional St John's Fair. Interest grew quickly, and 1969 saw the establishment of a Consortium (Consorteria dell'Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale) to promote the production and status of traditional balsamic vinegar. Most of its members were amateur producers, but this Consortium was followed by another to safeguard the quality of traditionally produced vinegar intended for sale. The unique characteristics of this vinegar, perhaps the product which best illustrates the homely origins of Italy's most delicious foods, are the result of an ageing process which may take from 12 to 25 years or even more. Traditional balsamic vinegar may only be sold in the special bottles designed for the Consortium, with the producer's name indicated on the label.

Nocino

Nocino (a walnut liqueur) is another product which makes use of a local natural resource. It was originally produced around Formigine and Sassuolo, since the countryside towards the foot of the Apennine mountains used to be rich in walnut trees. For a long time, nocino was produced by individual families, each of whom jealously guarded its own recipes, no two of them exactly alike in combination of green walnuts and amount of alcohol, the proportions of water and sugar added, and the natural flavourings used in the brew. After centuries as part of the local tradition, nocino has now moved beyond the walls of the home and is in ever-increasing demand in Italy and abroad; it is included in the catalogue of Italian liqueurs recognised in the EC. Its commercial success means that large quantities are now produced, while a local Consortium (Consorzio del Nocino Tipico Modenese) guarantees the maintenance of quality standards.

Vignola cherries

In spring, the Panaro valley around Vignola attracts large numbers of visitors, who come to admire the abundant blossom of its vast cherry orchards. In a few short months this beauty is converted into an economic asset, with a crop of thousands of tons of cherries, a large proportion of them exported to other EC countries. Vignola also has companies which make other cherry-derived products, cherries preserved in spirits being particularly popular. A Consortium (Consorzio della ciliegia tipica) ensures that only genuine local cherries can bear the Vignola name.

MODENA INDUSTRIES SUPPLY THE WORLD

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 39 "FERRARI GALLERY IN MARANELLO"

PHOTO N. 40 "FERRARI SUPPORTERS"

PHOTO N. 37 "FASHION SHOW IN CARPI"

PHOTO N. 38 "CERAMIC TILES OF SASSUOLO"

Modena, capital of speed

Ferrari: the car with the rearing horse emblem. In a game of free association, a large proportion of people will immediately link Modena with Ferrari. Formula 1 racing, with its prestige, thrills and tragedies, is news world-wide and brings fame to the cars that achieve success, including Ferrari itself. Ferrari's international prestige has been consolidated over time through victory in 42 world championships and over 5,000 races, 105 of these in formula 1. However, the rearing horse emblem does not only appear on racing cars, as Ferrari is an important automobile manufacturer on the Italian scene, with a workforce of 1700 working in production facilities of 346,400 square metres, 101 thousand square metres of this area under buildings. The foundry, machining, composite materials, assembly and painting shops for both formula 1 and GT cars are at Maranello, while the body production shop is in Modena. Output is about 3000 cars a year, 80% for export, generating a turnover of over 500 billion lire. At present the Maranello factory turns out 12 cars a day, 8 with eight cylinders and 4 with twelve. The latest 8 cylinder model, launched in 1995, is the F355 sports car which marks a return to the company's tradition of open-topped designs. Ferrari's largest market is the United States, followed by Germany, Italy, South America and the Far East. The name of Fiorano, where a test circuit

for formula 1 cars has been built, is now almost as famous as that of Maranello itself. Maserati (which celebrated its 80th birthday in 1994) also has a consolidated tradition in the production of formula 1 and GT cars in Modena. For many years it rivalled Ferrari for the rank of leading company in the racing sector - in fact, between 1926 and 1957 Maserati achieved about 1000 victories in races all over the world (from Indianapolis to formula 1). Then, in the 1960s, the firm was restructured to concentrate on the production of GT cars (Mistral, Ghibli and Bora). After 1975 Maserati, managed by Gepi-De Tomaso, enjoyed a period of success with the launch of the new Biturbo car. The company has now been a Fiat subsidiary since 1993, and has made a come-back on the world's prestige car market with the Quattroporte model. The tradition established by Ferrari and Maserati has also inspired new companies with the same commitment to building GT cars of high technology and striking elegance.

De Tomaso was founded in Modena in 1959 as a manufacturer of luxury cars such as the Mangusta, the Longchamp, the Deville and the Pantera (the last-named still in production). 1990 saw the establishment of Bugatti, with a modern factory of 240,000 square metres at Campogalliano custom-built to produce the EB110 GT, EB110 super roadster and EB112, with performance and sophisticated styling that have given new life to the old name of Bugatti, so famous in Europe between 1909 and 1939.

"Galleria Ferrari", Maranello

Some historic Ferrari racing and sports cars, together with a number of products from the racing department.

A large number of cups and trophies are also on display, and the museum is equipped with a video room.

The development of the mechanical engineering sector

Modena has a thriving industrial life, in which mechanical engineering plays a dominant role. It is the home of New Holland (FIAT group), Italy's largest tractor factory which exports its output all over the world, where with the exception of China and Eastern Europe, one in five tractors is a New Holland. A few data give an idea of the dynamism of mechanical engineering in Modena: a tractor consists of about 4000 pieces, but only just over 10% of these are actually produced by Fiat. The remainder come from Modena's factories, varying in size from the small workshop to the medium-sized industrial concern, which share the orders placed by the Turin group.

Carpi, European knitwear capital

Until a few decades ago Carpi was just one of the many country towns surrounding Modena, its only industry of any importance the processing of shavings to produce the braids used for the manufacture of hats and bags. Then, in the 1950s, came the knitwear boom, which transformed Carpi's economy with the foundation of a myriad of small and medium-sized family firms. Now Carpi, with its population of 60,000, can be considered the knitwear capital of Europe, with its 200 industrial concerns and its small production workshops, 746 of these producing directly for the market and 1884 on a subcontract basis (weaving fabrics, making-up garments, adding embroidery or laundering and pressing finished products). 35% of turnover, worth about 2000 billion lire, is from exports. Competition from the Far East has led Carpi to increase the design input of its products and focus on the top end of the fashion market; between 1979 and 1980 this brought about a real revolution, as instead of turning out huge quantities of knitwear and other garments of medium and medium-fine quality, the town turned its attention to medium-fine and fine-boutique products of high fashion. During the '90s, the industry has concentrated on reducing times to market, to meet demand for the latest fashions virtually at once.

Sassuolo and its tiles: another world leader

Until the post-war years, Sassuolo was a small town at the foot of the Apennines, its salubrious climate reflected by the Este family's decision to build a summer palace there in the middle of a large park now almost obliterated by building development. And then came the ceramic tile boom, bringing

with it the new Sassuolo of tens of factories. The explosion in tile production started with the realisation that ceramic tiles do not necessarily have to be white and their use does not have to be restricted to the bathroom. Sassuolo's new companies offered the market tiles of thousands of different colours, shapes and sizes for interior design at all levels. Growth was so rapid that in 1991 the annual output of the ceramics district straddling the provinces of Modena and Reggio Emilia was over 312 million square metres of tiles. If Italy is the world's largest producer and exporter of ceramic tiles, Sassuolo is Italy's main production centre (in 1991, 14,000 people were employed in the province of Modena's production factories). Output is becoming increasingly specialised to the point of personalisation, with some firms calling on the services of leading fashion creators to design their products.

Under the slogan "Your home is a lovely woman waiting to be clothed", the most prestige names in the world of fashion transfer their style and taste to the stuff of ceramic tiles.

THEATER - MUSIC

PHOTO REFERENCES:

PHOTO N. 41 "PAVAROTTI & FRIENDS"

PHOTO N. 42 "COMUNALE THEATER OF MODENA"

PHOTO N. 43 "HORSE RACING TROPHY"

The public theatres

The Teatro Comunale stands in the centre of the city, in corso Canalgrande, a street lined on both sides with mainly XVIII Century buildings which can justly claim to be one of Modena's most attractive thoroughfares. On evenings when performances are to take place, the building is lit up so that it stands out clearly as a focal point in the city's cultural life. Designed by Vandelli, the architect of the Este dukes, the theatre was opened in 1841. Its facade features a large arcade topped by a balustrade on marble columns. The moulded decorations on the outside, by L. Righi, pay homage to artistic activities in the Modena area; the pediment displays the Presiding Genius of Modena, holding a torch and resting his other hand on the city's coat of arms. The theatre, which seats 1200, offers seasons of opera, classical music and ballet running from October to May. Modena's play-goers are served by the Teatro Storchi, the city's other XIX Century theatre, built between 1885 and 1888 to the design of the architect V. Maestri. It stands a few hundred metres from the Teatro Comunale, on the piazza now known as Largo Garibaldi, overlooking the fountain by Graziosi portraying the Secchia and Panaro rivers. After radical renovation, the Teatro Storchi has become a prestige cultural centre of equal importance with the Teatro Comunale. In 1991 it became the base for ERT (Emilia Romagna Teatro), one of Italy's fourteen permanent theatre companies. The different uses of the two public theatres make it possible to offer a wider range of types of entertainment and have also given opera fans a specific venue for enjoying the "bel canto" tradition which has produced the tenor Luciano Pavarotti and the soprano Mirella Freni, both singers of world renown. Another famous soprano, Raina Kabaivanska, has also been resident in Modena for some time.

