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Itineraries



THE HOLY ROUTE

Following the fall of the Roman Empire Mantua, which was then known for its role as the birthplace of Virgil, experienced a gradual decline. It declined, to become a modest village situated along the Mincio river with apartments among the marshy forests. Then in the year 804 an event occurred that was to change its history. On the site where the impressive basilica of Sant'Andrea now stands was found what was held to be a part of the blood that Christ shed on the Cross. The relic attracted the interest of both the emperor and the pope, and before long the village had become a diocese and shortly afterwards a county. Gradually it gained religious, political, economic and cultural relevance; in short, Mantua became a city.

With similar origins and with its exceptional civic buildings, it is hardly surprising that the city should have witnessed the creation of several uniquely distinctive churches, designed, built or decorated by artists such as Andrea Mantegna, Leon Battista Alberti, Correggio, Giulio Romano, Paolo Veronese, Tintoretto, Ludovico Carracci, Peter Paul Rubens, Filippo Juvara and numerous others. At its height the city had around a hundred religious buildings, many of which were of outstanding beauty. Although the tragic events of the second half of the 18th century destroyed much of this heritage, a great deal still remains, making Mantua one of the major destinations for those in search of sacred art in Italy.