

# Ravenna

## Early Christian Architecture and Mosaics 14th to 16th May 2010

*A tour with Dr Paul Wilkinson and a local guide that reveals the perfectly preserved mosaics of ancient and medieval Ravenna. Ravenna was the last capital of the Roman Empire in the West, before becoming the capital of Byzantine Italy. The city has wonderful examples of early Christian architecture and some of the best early Christian mosaics in the world.*

*Our preferred flight is with Ryanair leaving Stanstead at 07:10 on Friday 14th May to Bologna on Flight 194 arriving at 10:20. We will then travel by mini-bus or train to Ravenna arriving at about lunchtime. Cost for the trip is £120.*



### Friday 14th May

In the afternoon we visit the church of San Francesco, a 10th to 11th century church built on a 5th-century site. We will peer beneath the altar to see mosaics from the early church, where the floor level is so low that the mosaics are covered by a pool of

water in which goldfish swim. In 1321 the funeral of Dante Alighieri was held here. Later we visit the National Museum, in the monumental complex of San Vitale, before we explore the breathtaking mosaics in the basilica. As well as the lovely biblical scenes in mosaics and frescoes on the walls and ceiling, there is a maze mosaic on the floor of this octagonal building. If time, we will go to the cross-shaped Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, where the early mosaics include a star-encrusted cupola. Another cross-shaped building, the Archbishop's Chapel, features a mosaic of Christ as a Roman warrior and another of a park full of the flora and fauna typical of the local pinewoods.

### Saturday 15th May

There are two octagonal baptisteries in Ravenna; one Catholic the other Arian. The Catholic one has Hellenic-Roman style mosaics dating from 450AD, and the Arian Baptistery depicts a very human Christ who was central to the belief that made the Arian cult heresy. After a late lunch we visit two basilicas which stand opposite each other. The Basilica of San Giovanni Evangelista was rebuilt after bomb damage in 1944.



The basilica was commissioned by the Empress Galla Placidia in 424. Expanded in the 6th century the interior was redecorated with mosaics by Archbishop Marinianus, some of which survive as framed sections along the side walls. The Basilica of St Apollinare Nuovo was built by Theodoric sometime after 500AD as an Arian cathedral dedicated to Christ. Dating from the same era as the Arian Baptistery it was converted to a Catholic church dedicated to St Martin around 560AD. The dedication was changed again in the 9th century to St. Apollinare, first bishop of Ravenna. The walls are covered with glittering mosaics which are world renowned and include the famous mosaic which shows a long procession of Virgins and Martyrs (above).



### Sunday 16th May

We visit the remains of Theodoric's palace and the mausoleum just outside Ravenna (left) that he built for himself in 520AD. The mausoleum is built of great blocks of local stone and covered by a single monolith stone some 11 metres in diameter. Legend tells us that the king was afraid of storms as his death had been predicted by a thunderbolt. Wishing to escape this fate, the king had received a prediction that his death would be caused by a thunderbolt. Unfortunately a thunderbolt hit the structure, broke the roof and killed the king.

After lunch we travel to Sant' Apollinare in Classe. When it was built, in the 5th century, it stood on the Adriatic coast, where the harbour for the Roman fleet once moored. Now the sea

is far away, but we can still enjoy this beautifully preserved basilica. The most important mosaics are in the Presbytery and apse. The apse mosaics date from the 6th century and depict two scenes. At the top a symbolic depiction of the Transfiguration with Christ represented by a golden cross while the three apostles who were present at the Transfiguration- Peter, James, and John- are represented by lambs.

The walls of the side aisles are lined with early Christian sarcophagi of Ravenna bishops including Bishop Theodorus who in 688AD was buried in an earlier sarcophagus dating from the 5th century.

### Prices:

The cost of £120 includes transport from Bologna to Ravenna and return, guiding by Dr Paul Wilkinson and a local guide, and all entrance fees.

Paul and Catherine Wilkinson are travelling on Ryanair Flight 194 on Friday May 14th leaving Stanstead at 07:10 and arriving at 10:20. Our return flight is Bologna to Stanstead Ryanair Flight 197 leaving Bologna at 20:40 and arriving at 22:00. Cost for the return flights (May 2010) are £110.

We are staying at the Hotel Centrale Byron at a cost of 85EU for two people for one night (info@hotelbyron.com). Other hotels are [www.bisanziohotel.com](http://www.bisanziohotel.com) [www.jollyhotels.it](http://www.jollyhotels.it) [www.hoteldiana.ra.it](http://www.hoteldiana.ra.it)

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