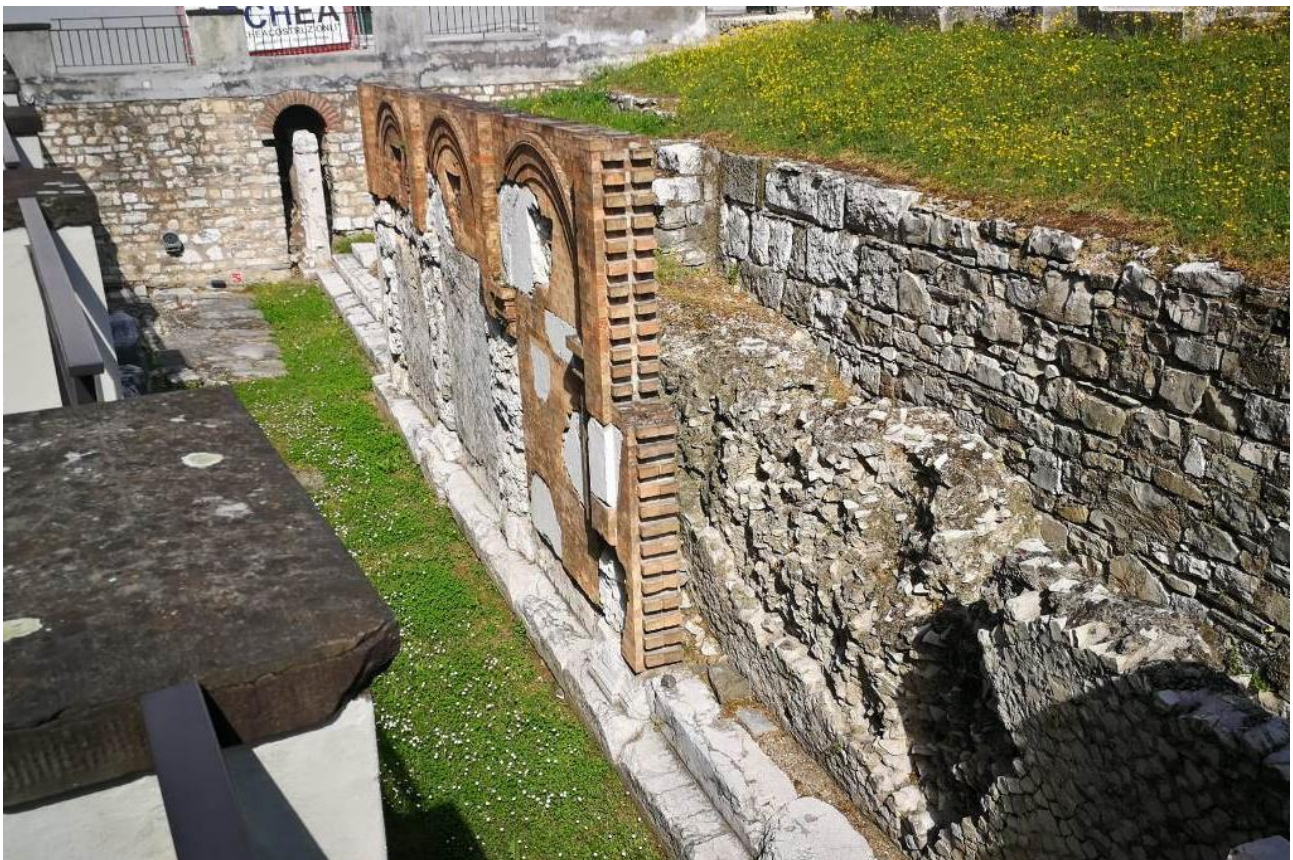


The city, called Brixia by the Romans, was inhabited continuously since at least the 5th century BC. The first to leave their traces here were the Cenomani, one of the groups of Celts who chose Brescia as their capital, as the historian Livy also tells us. The Cenomani mostly had a good relationship with the Romans, through trade and intermarrying, which gradually led them to absorb the Roman culture in its entirety, to the point that they ultimately obtained effective Roman citizenship and held prestigious public offices. Brixia thus became one of the most important cities in northern Italy, at the mouth of alpine valleys offering a wealth of natural resources, at the northern edge of a fertile plain and located along the so-called Via Gallica, an ancient road that connected some of the most significant centres of Celtic origin north of the Po. The urban section of this road coincided with the decumanus maximus, the main street running east to west, which corresponds to today's Via Musei. You can still see its ancient paving if you look out from the parapet of the present street.



This road connected Brixia to the rest of the Roman road network, facilitating the movement of people and goods to other important centres such as Milan, Cremona, Verona, Trento and Aquileia. The place where we are standing was the main city centre, like in every city throughout the Roman Empire. It was here that religious, political,

commercial and social life unfolded. In front of the temple was the large Forum square, which was rectangular in shape.



Capitolium archaeological area

When the Faculty of Sciences, Literature, and Arts promoted the excavations that brought to light the entire monumental complex, the only visible architectural element was a white marble Corinthian column that stemmed from the ground. In 1823, all the other buildings were finally unveiled that used to overlook the Forum, which was the political, commercial, and religious heart of Roman Brescia (called Brixia).

The Capitulum Temple was built in 73 A.D. under Vespasianus, whose name appears on the fronton of the temple. Between the 4th and the 5th centuries, the temple was almost completely destroyed by a fire and was rediscovered only in 1823. Further excavations in 1826 enabled the discovery of a storage area where sculptures and bronze jewels were hidden, in a space between Cidneo hill and the Temple itself.

Among the other objects, the Winged Victory stood out. This bronze sculpture is on display inside the temple after being part of the Santa Giulia Museum collection for years. It has become the symbol of the city of Brescia.

Today, the temple has multiple coloured portions but this is due to a 1939 restoration. The white marble parts are original while the terracotta portions are recent additions. Under the Capitolium there is an older temple, maybe built around 89 B.C., known as Republican Sanctuary. Inside, you can admire perfectly preserved painted walls, whose lively, bright colours have stood the test of time.

The Capitolium, the most important religious building, was located in a dominant position overlooking the entire public area. It was connected to the square by monumental porticoes, which came to a stop where they met the street and descended like steps to the south, all the way down to the basilica. You can see some of the surviving columns a little further on, when we make our way into the Forum square, on the left. Beyond the grey building that you can see on the far side of the present square stood the basilica, the building in which the Romans administered justice and carried out business and financial transactions in the event of bad weather that made it unviable to use the forum. The walls of the ancient basilica, dating back to the 1st century AD, can still be seen today incorporated into the building in Piazza Labus, which houses some of the Superintendency offices.



The right side of the square is partially occupied by the stately Palazzo Martinengo. Further remains of the forum and structures predating this monumental structure can be visited beneath it. This area of the city was also home to a number of buildings that were originally residential. To the left of the temple we can see Casa Pallaveri, a 17th-century palace, while on the right is the stately Palazzo Maggi Gambarara, built directly over the remains of the Roman theatre. The archaeological area has been open to the public since 1830. A series of interventions carried out over the years have expanded it and made it more accessible. It has featured on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2011, together with the nearby Santa Giulia complex, as part of The Longobards in Italy, Places of Power serial site

Brescia is a Unesco World Heritage site

On 25th June 2011, UNESCO added Brescia to the World Heritage List with the site Longobards in Italy. Places of Power (568-774 A.D.).

For Italy, this is the 46th site included in the prestigious list, confirming the prominent place that our country has in the World Heritage category.

This recognition includes two of Brescia's most important historic sites, which are also some of the most significant and well-preserved Lombard sites in Italy. There are seven monumental complexes in Italy that UNESCO has selected to highlight the importance of Lombard populations in the development of Middle-Age artistic and spiritual expressions:

The monumental area of San Salvatore – Santa Giulia monastery and Capitolium Temple archaeological area in Brescia

Cividale with the small Lombard temple and the Episcopal complex in Cividale del Friuli (Udine)

Castrum with Torba Tower and the church of Santa Maria foris portasa in Castelseprio Torba (Varese)

San Salvatore basilica in Spoleto (Perugia)

Clitunno temple in Campello sul Clitunno (Perugia)

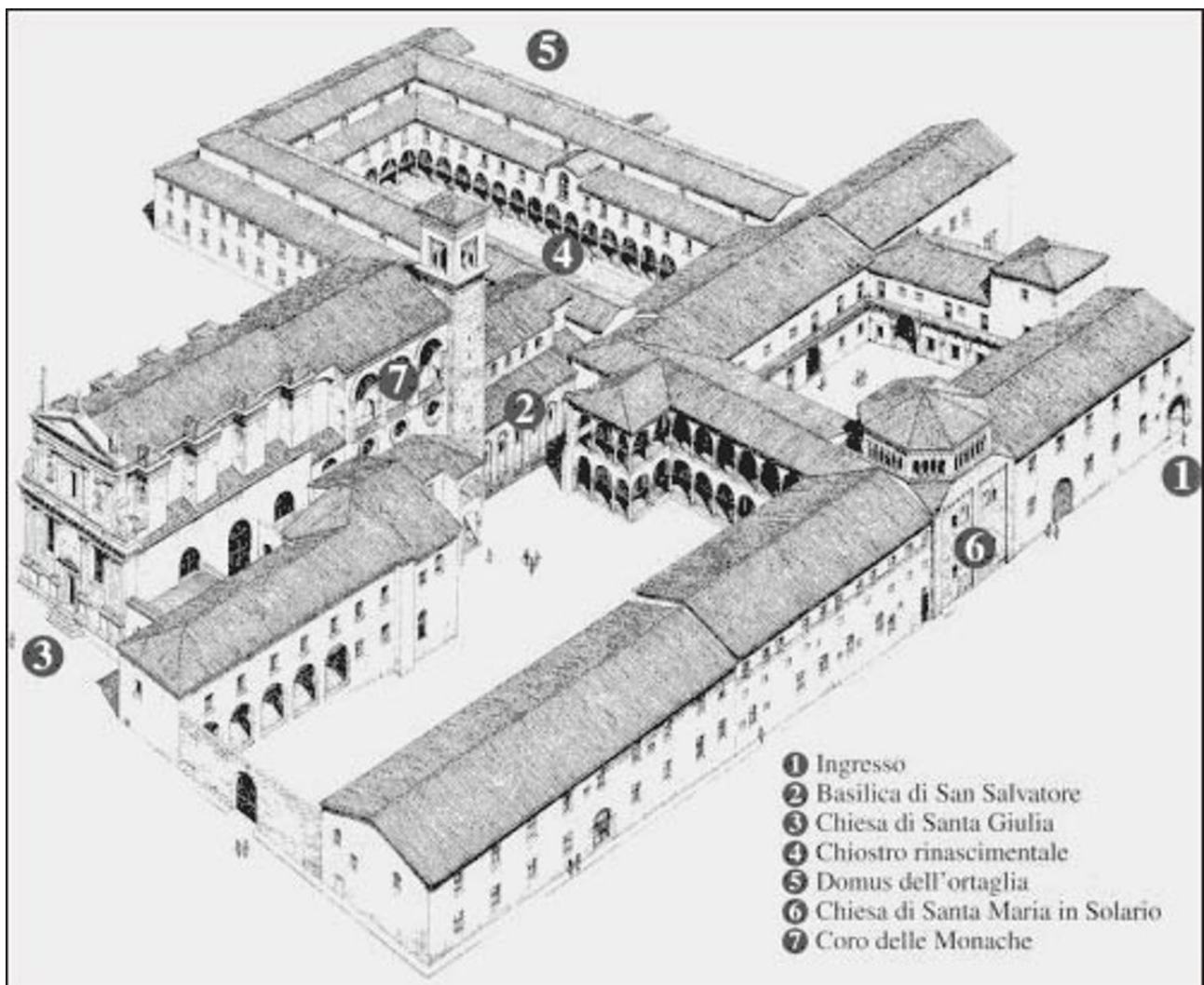
Santa Sofia complex in Benevento

San Michele Shrine in Monte Sant'Angelo (Foggia)

The monumental complex of San Salvatore – Santa Giulia

SAN SALVATORE - SANTA GIULIA

Founded in 753 A.D. by Desiderius, Duke of Brescia and future King of the Longobards, San Salvatore – Santa Giulia monumental complex is a former Benedictine nunnery. Over the years, it became the European point of reference for the education of noble Longobard and Carolingian girls. This prestige lasted for centuries and is still visible in some of the portions of the monastery.



The church of San Salvatore represents one of the most important examples of late medieval religious architecture. It is divided into three naves defined by columns and capitols where Longobard, Classic, and Bizantine decorations coexist. This combination creates an equilibrium of styles in the space. The crypt, the most sacred devotional site in

the monastery, used to host the relics of St. Giulia and today is one of the most evocative spaces in the complex.

The façade of San Salvatore was demolished in 1466 to build another valuable building: Coro delle Monache (Nuns' Choir), a large space where the nuns attended the religious functions, covered by a cupola with elaborate frescoes.



Finally, the church of Santa Maria in Solario is another stunning building. Old treasury of the nunnery, today a masterpiece of Lombard jewellery is displayed here: Desiderius Cross. It's an imposing wooden cross covered by a metal sheet and encrusted with cameos, gems, and stones from different periods of time, from the Romans to the 17th century. It is kept in the upper room of the church, which boasts a splendid cupola painted in blue with golden stars.



Today, the complex hosts Santa Giulia Museum, the custodian of Brescia's long history, narrated through sculptures, arms, and religious objects.

Inside the museum, significant space is given to the Roman house (Domus), with an archaeological area where remains of two dwellings are on display. They were found under what since the Middle Ages had been the orchard and vegetable garden (orto) of the monastery, which is why the space is called "Domus dell'Ortaglia".

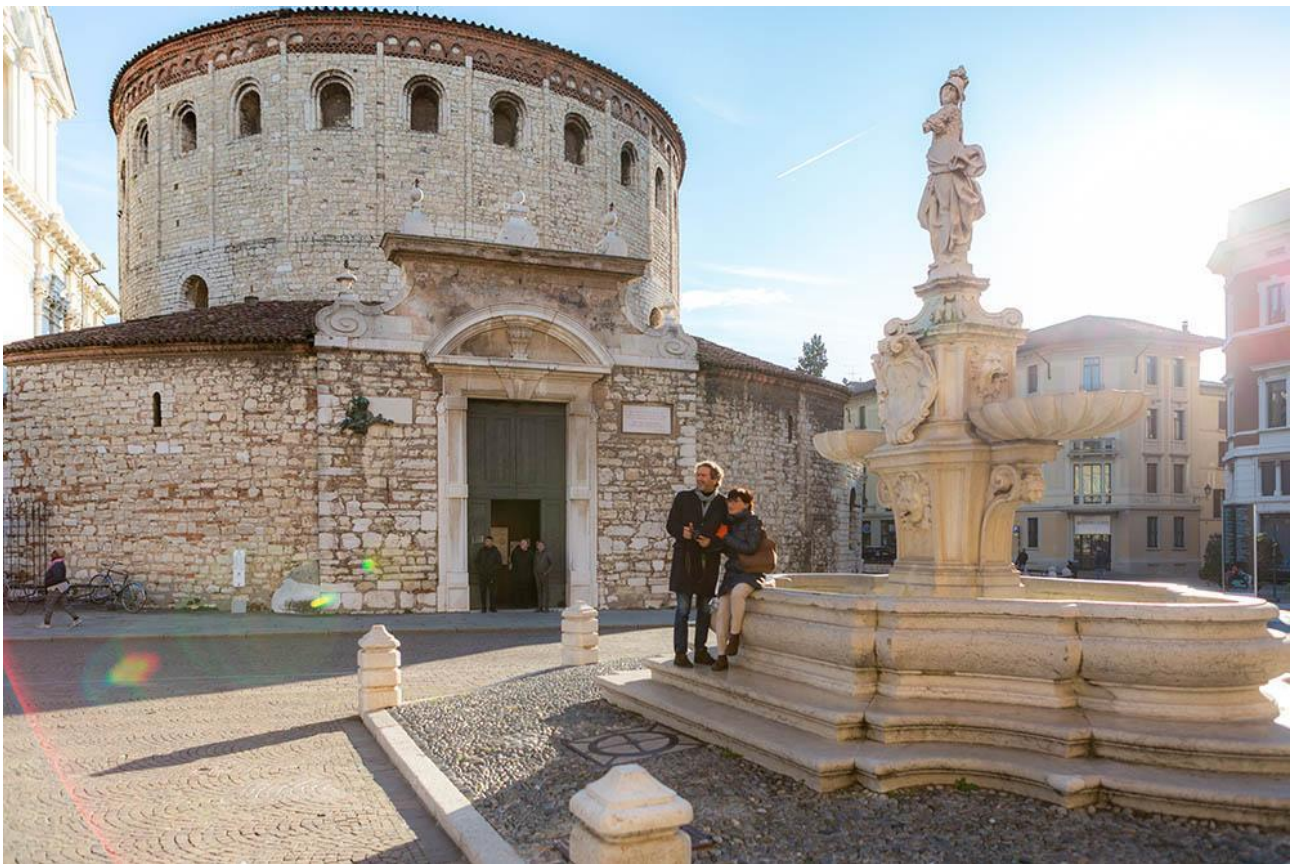
Duomo Nuovo and Duomo Vecchio, Brescia's two cathedrals

In addition to several artistic, architectural, and cultural gems, Brescia is also famous for a **rather unique phenomenon in Italy: a square with two cathedrals.**

Designed by architect Giovanbattista Lantana and built on the remains of the old San Pietro de Dom church starting from 1604, Duomo Nuovo majestically stands in the middle of the square. It has a **splendid Baroque façade in Botticino marble** and a rather complicated history: due to financial difficulties, construction was delayed and the Cathedral was completed only in 1825 with the **dome, the third tallest in Italy**.

A Romanesque triumph: Brescia's Duomo Vecchio

True gem of the city, it is the **most prominent Romanesque circular church** still in existence. Duomo Vecchio was built starting from 1100 by a very old Corporation of specialised masons. Also called "Rotunda" for its circular shape, it is the official **co-cathedral of Brescia** together with Duomo Nuovo.



There are countless artistic treasures inside the church. The first thing you see when you enter is the **sarcophagus of Berardo Maggi**, nominated Bishop of the city in 1275. It's a typical example of Romanesque sculpture and is made of red marble.