

Mantova  
play  
ground



# A city of people

a guide to explore Mantua  
with children of all ages



## WHAT IS MANTOVA PLAYGROUND?

Mantova Playground is a project promoted and supported by the Comune di Mantova and is born with the aim of transforming the city into a playground that children will use to approach the complexity of the world. Workshops, maps, events to help discover the city from unusual and unexpected viewpoints or to rediscover what you already know by suggesting a new perspective.  
[website mantovaplayground.it](http://www.mantovaplayground.it) · [mantova2016.it](http://mantova2016.it)  
[fb mantovaplayground](https://www.facebook.com/mantovaplayground)

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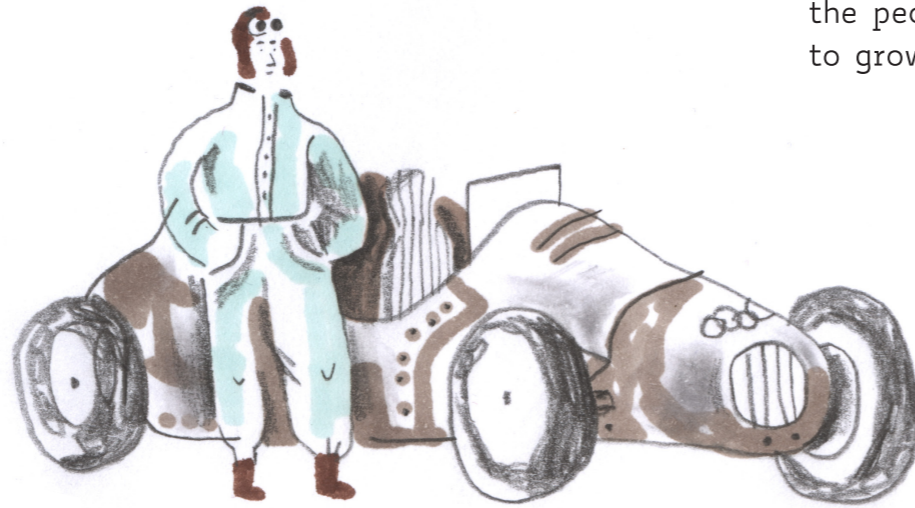


The following have helped in the writing of this guide: the Biblioteca Mediateca G. Baratta and the Cinema del Carbone

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**BOOKS RECOMMENDED**  
**BY BIBLIOTECA MEDIATECA G. BARATTA**  
**Come nuvole di roccia. Andrea Mantegna**  
**by Matteo Marchesini, Motta Junior, 2006**  
 A book dedicated to Andrea Mantegna, one of the greatest artists of the Italian Renaissance. Mantegna was an illusionistic artist: he used perspective to fool the viewers, creating illusionistic effects such as *trompe l'oeil* and *di sotto in sù*, that became the main features of his painting style. A book to learn more about the life and work of this great artist.



**FILMS RECOMMENDED BY CINEMA DEL CARBONE**  
**Wadja by Haifa Al-Mansour, Saudi Arabia, 2012, '92** Wadja is a little girl who wants a bicycle and does everything she can to save the money she needs to buy it. Unfortunately, the society she lives in won't allow it because girls and women who travel by bicycle are frowned upon. Luckily, her mother gives it to her as a gift, going against the conventions and habits of a male-dominated society. Even in Italy, there was a woman who, thanks to a bicycle, showed that men and women are equal: Alfonsina Strada was the first woman to take part in men's races like Giro d'Italia. Hooray for Alfonsina!  
**The Love Bug by Robert Stevenson, Usa, 1968, '104** This is the story of the friendship between Jim Douglas, a somewhat unlucky race driver, and an old Beetle, Herbie. The little yellow Volkswagen isn't like any other car: he has a life of his own, he thinks, he suffers, he plays tricks on those who are mean and, when he wants to, he goes faster than a Ferrari. Who knows if Tazio and Learco spoke to their cars and bikes?

**I nani di Mantova by Gianni Rodari, Giunti Junior, 2001** "In Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, the palace of the Gonzagas, there is a strange apartment that seems to have been designed and built to accommodate dolls. Little rooms and corridors, everything in miniature, as if it were a toy." That's how Gianni Rodari's story begins, imagining together with a group of kids the story of the dwarves of Mantua who have always lived in a special apartment in Palazzo Ducale, where everything is in miniature. But one day, they rebel against Captain Bombardo: they leave and stay among the people of the town because they decided to grow and become large.



## A CITY OF PEOPLE

In addition to buildings, streets, churches, houses, gardens and towers, a city is, more than anything else, made by the people who live in it, govern it, try to make it more beautiful, organise shows and concerts, think and place to make it fit for all, adults and children. Over the course of history, some people born in Mantua have gone on to become famous around the world for the exceptional things they have done. Others not born in Mantua but who have done so much for the city have gone on to become Mantuan in all respects. Others exists only in the imagination, but often fantasy becomes more real than reality itself!

## LONG LIVE FREEDOM!

€ **Martiri di Belfiore prisons · Palazzo Ducale**  
piazza Sordello, 40 · +39 0376 352100  
www.mantovaducale.beniculturali.it

**Monumento ai Martiri di Belfiore**  
viale VII Dicembre, 1

For a long time, Italy was divided into small states, duchies, kingdoms and some regions were even governed by foreign populations. Mantua, together with Veneto, Friuli and Trentino, was ruled over by the Austrians and was part of the Habsburg Empire. Many men and women, however, dreamt of a united Italy. That's why, from the mid-1800s onwards, they formed clandestine (secret) groups whose goal was to transform that dream into reality. Unfortunately, the Austrian police discovered one of these organisations in Mantua, headed by Don Enrico Tazzoli. The group members were arrested and some were even sentenced to death, including Tazzoli himself, Carlo Poma, Angelo Scarsellini, Tito Speri, Pietro Frattini and other people from the time. Despite this, many other men and women continued their fight until the realisation of the dream of a united Italy, from north to south, from Piedmont to Sicily, where everyone spoke the same language and shared the same culture and history.

## THE UNBEATABLE MANTUA

€ **Museo Tazio Nuvolari**  
via Giulio Romano (crossing via Nazario Sauro)  
+39 366 4218816 · www.tazionuvolari.it

The names Learco and Tazio are synonymous with speed: the former was an exceptional cyclist while the latter was an unbeatable race driver. They competed in the same period, defeating all opponents and winning almost every race that they took part in. And both were given nicknames that explained how fast they were: Learco Guerra was known as the "Human Locomotive", while Tazio Nuvolari was the "Flying Mantuan" or "Nivola"

## A MANTUAN IN MUSIC

🕒 **Casa del buffone Rigoletto**  
piazza Sordello, 23 · 0376 288208

**Rocchetta di Sparafucile · Parco del Mincio**  
via Legnano · +39 0376 391550  
www.parcodelmincio.it



Rigoletto, protagonist of the opera written by Giuseppe Verdi, is the misshapen jester at the service of the Duke of Mantua.

He is mean to everyone and is ready to do anything to remain the Duke's favourite.

Rigoletto has a daughter, Gilda, who he loves very much and who is beautiful and kind, unlike her father.

A story filled with surprise and adventure which investigates people's minds and reflects on the fact that every action has consequences. A character created from the imagination of a great musician, who has become one of the city's most famous legendary people.

## THE INDOMITABLE SOVEREIGN

**piazza Matilde di Canossa**

Matilda of Canossa was possibly born in Mantua in the Middle Ages, a period of constant battles and intrigue but she was a great sovereign thanks to her intelligence and leadership, capable of governing a vast territory which stretched from Lombardy to Tuscany. She was so powerful that she was asked to mediate between the Pope and the Emperor, taking on a very difficult role: at that time, women were not allowed to do everything that men could, and were even considered to rank lower than them. Do you think that's still the case today? Are there jobs only for women and some only for men? Why is that?

## BECOMING MANTUAN!

€ **Camera degli Sposi · Palazzo Ducale**  
piazza Sordello, 40 · +39 0376 352100  
www.mantovaducale.beniculturali.it

**Casa di Giulio Romano**  
via Carlo Poma, 18

€ **Studiolo di Isabella d'Este · Palazzo Ducale**  
piazza Sordello, 40 · +39 0376 352100  
www.mantovaducale.beniculturali.it

€ **Casa del Mantegna**  
via Acerbi, 47  
www.casadelmantegna.it



Among the figures who transformed the city despite not being born here, three stand out, tying their destinies to that of Mantua: their names were Andrea Mantegna, born nearby in Padua, Isabella d'Este, born in Ferrara, and Giulio Pippi, known as Romano because he was born in Rome. Andrea Mantegna, one of the leading artists of the Renaissance, moved to Mantua with his entire family as the court's official painter. Over the course of the long period spent here, he met Isabella, wife of the Marquis Francesco II Gonzaga. He created some paintings in her private studio: Isabella needed a "room for herself." She was a great scholar, a lover of art and literature, so elegant that she was admired by all the other ladies and princesses. She was also very determined and intelligent and she ruled the city in her husband's place for a number of years. She was so on top of things that she advised her son Federico II to bring Giulio Romano, a pupil of Raphael, who would later go on to create Palazzo Te.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE CITY: THE MANTO FAMILY

**Arcipelago di Ocno · Lungolago Gonzaga**

€ **Sala di Manto · Palazzo Ducale**  
piazza Sordello, 40 · +39 0376 352100  
www.mantovaducale.beniculturali.it

Some cities were founded because groups of people stopped being nomadic and chose a territory to build homes, cultivate fields, breed animals and raise their own children. However, every city almost immediately invented fantastic stories to tell about their own foundation. This is what the inhabitants of Mantua did, and the story goes that the sorceress Manto, after the death of her father, the prophet Tiresia during the siege of Thebes, escaped and wandered through many lands, until she arrived at the banks of the river Mincio. Manto cried so much that her tears turned the river into a lake. According to legend, these waters had the magical gift of giving prophetic skills to those who drank it. During her wandering, Manto met and fell in love with the river god Tyrbis (the Tiber) and together they had a child, Onco, who founded the city of Mantua on the banks of the Mincio, near the lake that his mother had created. Now try to imagine the legendary head of your family.



## VIRGIL, ITALY'S POET

**Palazzo del Podestà**  
piazza Broletto

🕒 **Biblioteca Comunale Teresiana**  
via Ardigò, 13 · +39 0376 338450  
www.bibliotecateresiana.it

🕒 **Archivio di Stato**  
via Ardigò, 11 · +39 0376 324441  
www.asmantova.beniculturali.it

Virgil was the greatest of the Roman poets, and he was born near Mantua, in Andes, which is now Pietole. His father was a small landowner who practised bee-keeping, breeding and created handicrafts, while his mother, who was called Magia Polla, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant. Virgil enjoyed studying and writing, so his parents quickly sent him to study grammar in Cremona. He then went to Naples to study philosophy before moving to Rome to study rhetoric, where he learnt to speak in public and persuade through words. His major work is the Aeneid: it tells the story of the hero Aeneas who fled after the fall of his home town, Troy, and journeyed along the Mediterranean until he landed in Italy on the coast of Lazio, the region in which Rome was later founded. This was how Aeneas came to be considered the legendary father of the Italian people and founder of the Italian nation.

