



The hearts of Mantua

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.
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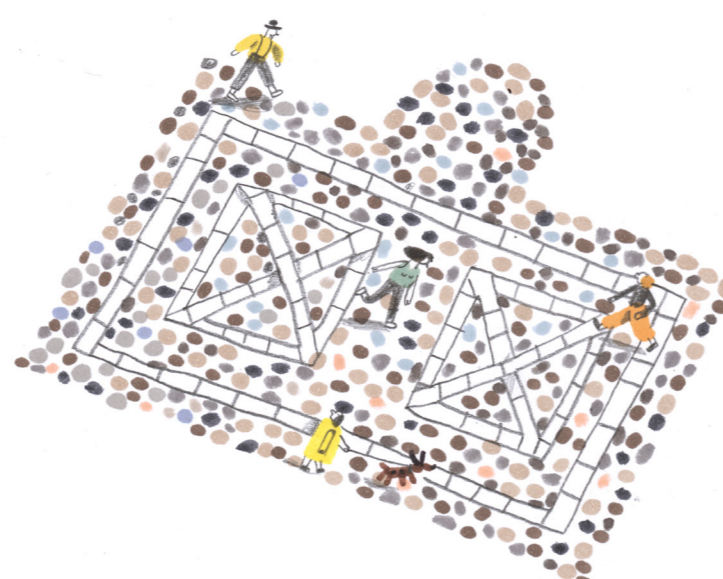
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Illustrations by Noemi Vola

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY BIBLIOTECA MEDIATECA G. BARATTA
Pimpa va a Mantova by Altan, Franco Panini Ragazzi, 2016 A special guide to get to know Mantua, its secrets, its characters, its streets and squares, together with Pimpa.



FILMS RECOMMENDED BY CINEMA DEL CARBONE

Back to the Future by Robert Zemeckis, Usa, 1985, '116 This is the story of a young man, Emmett Brown together with a nutty but brilliant professor makes a series of trips to the past, changing his flat and colourless life. Against the backdrop of these trips to the past, with its square and its clock tower: they too will be protagonists of this fantastic story, in balance between past, present and future.
Nuovo Cinema Paradiso by Giuseppe Tornatore, Italy and France, 1988, '123 After the end of the Second World War in a Sicilian village, the town square becomes the only entertainment venue thanks to the first film screenings. Toto, a poor child who lives with his mother and sister, falls in love with the cinema and its instruments and, thanks to this passion, forms a pact of friendship with the old projectionist Alfredo, from whom he learns the craft.



Il salto di città in città by Gek Tessaro, Artebambini, 2007 Jumping is the greatest desire of a child who measures and imagines the world through the jumping of kangaroos, fleas or lions. His desire is to try and complete with the surrounding environment, to make movements softer or more incisive, adapting to the environment. This book by Gek Tessaro reveals how jumping, in the end, is giving substance to the irrepressible desire to get to know yourself and the world.



THE HEARTS OF MANTUA

One of the most important spaces in Italian cities is the *piazza*, thought of as a public space, belonging to all, enclosed within an inhabited city and wider than the streets joining it. In Ancient Greece, the citizens' assembly gathered in the square, known as the Agorà, to discuss and sometimes argue, taking decisions together to govern the city. The Romans took inspiration from the Greeks: they built majestic, beautiful squares, known as Fori, which were to symbolise their greatness. Over time, the public square continued to serve as a space where citizens could gather in a large space to trade, exchange opinions, have fun, protest, celebrate, sing, draw and, ultimately, to be together. What do you do in the town square? What would you like to do?



THE HEART OF THE CITY

piazza Sordello

Just as the heart is more or less at the centre of the human body to carry blood and oxygen to the organs, near and far, piazzas are in city centres because it is from there that cities are governed and everything is controlled to run smoothly. If you look at the buildings lining this square, you will notice one thing straight away: they are all imposing, lavishly decorated and important... and this is because, for centuries and centuries, these were the homes of the city's most important families and representatives, such as the Bonacolsi family, the Uberti, the Acerbi and the Bishop. On the other side of the piazza stands the Palazzo del Capitano from which, over centuries, at the hand of the Gonzagas, branched out the set of buildings which make up the immense Palazzo Ducale. This square was also the centre of religious life, attested to by the presence of the Duomo, the city's main church. And, as if that's not enough, the remains of a floor of a Roman domus were discovered in 2006 in the south-east corner of the square, suggesting a hypothesis to scholars: could this square be considered the heart of Mantua since the Roman time?

A PERFECT SETTING

piazza Mantegna

A special square that leads to one of the city's most important churches, the Basilica of Sant'Andrea, designed by Leon Battista Alberti. This open space gives you a chance to sit down and admire the symmetry and balance of the architecture, from which many architects have been inspired over the centuries, to image and design new buildings palaces and churches.



A SQUARE FOR LORDS

piazza Canossa

This square takes its name from the palace built by the family of the Marquis Canossa.

If you were a Marquis, how would you imagine your streets?

THE "GREEN" SQUARE

piazza Virgiliana

Take a good look at this square. Why is there such a large square/garden in an area of the city where streets are not so big? Close your eyes for a moment and imagine in the place of the lawn, red gravel walkways, the water and the playground, boats moored at docks. Try to imagine new sounds, not the ringing voices of children playing, but the voices of boatmen or fishermen who sell their produce from the stalls where nowadays we see kiosks. If you'd have visited Mantua at the end of the 1700s, you wouldn't see Piazza Virgiliana here but the port known as the Porto dell'Ancona!

A SQUARE FOR ENTERING

piazza Castello

This space, known as Prato di Castello, served as the grand *en plein aire* anteroom at the Palazzo dei Gonzaga. This vast square must have been really crowded when the Gonzagas lived in the palace, a continuous coming and going of people: in those days, in fact, there were many people working at the court. To the west, where there are no archways, there was the old chancellery where the officials administered the city, following the directives of the Lords of Mantua. This is where the National Archaeological Museum stands today and before that the Bozzoli Market: here, there was the seat of the court theatre! And just so you never got bored, at the end of the eighteenth century this square and the nearby Santa Barbara were home to the trade fair, a kind of periodic large market: if you look closely, you can see the hooks that were once used to support the curtains that protected the merchants' stalls from sun and rain. What would you like to do in this huge square?

A SQUARE FOR EVERYONE

piazza Lega Lombarda or piazza Pallone gardens

How nice is to play ball, even more so in a park?! Our grandparents' grandparents must have had the same idea, as this square was where they used to play ball! Nowadays it is a nice garden and even though you can no longer play ball, it is very pleasant to have a nice picnic and rest here before heading off on new adventures around the city.

THE HEART OF BUSINESS

piazza Erbe

Casa del Mercante

piazza Erbe, 23

A name that already tells the history of the square: "erbe", which means, in fact, fruit and vegetables that have been sold in this square since the Middle Ages. This was the place for trade: livestock was sold here and many shops were built around the square where merchants displayed and traded their goods. This is where you will find the home of the merchant Boniforte da Concorezzo who, as a good entrepreneur, realised the value of advertising. Under the portico, engraved on the architrave, you can see the tools and objects that the merchant was selling: gloves, spoons, knives...

Draw an advertisement here to promote your favourite game/book/film.

TREASURE HUNT IN THE SQUARE!

piazza dei Mille

The trees in this garden were planted with a clear aim: to lead the visitors to the centre of the square to admire the monument of Giuseppe Garibaldi. This garden was built in 1929 in place of the market and to mark the occasion: lime trees, acacias, cedars, magnolias, privets and roses were planted... try to find them! Did you manage to spot them?

