



Renaissance

This year marked 500 years since the death of Leonardo da Vinci – Milan has risen to remember its greatest maestro with a trail of dedicated to his mesmerising work

Leonardo da Vinci spent 17 of his most productive years in Milan, and 500 years on, Italy's northern metropolis allows visitors closest to his genius.

Arguably the greatest of all artists and intellects, Leonardo da Vinci is not just responsible for Milan's hottest tourist attraction, The Last Supper, which is housed in Milan's Santa Maria delle Grazie Convent. The city's criss-crossing canals are also a mark of his work, as well as aesthetic contributions to the historical Castello Sforzesco and a plethora of hydraulic engineering works still in use today, such

Above: The gothic Duomo di Milano Cathedral – the world's fifth largest – and the arch to the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II

as the Mitre Lock Gates (Porte Vincinane) first installed at Conca dell'Incoronata, Milan, in 1496.

While a trip to Milan could be wholly consumed by da Vinci's work, the city has been a beacon for art and culture since the mid-end of first century B.C. Serving as capital of the Western Roman Empire from 286 to 402, and the Duchy of Milan during the medieval period and early modern age, the earliest symbol still standing is the Milan Amphitheatre. It is the earliest known public building of the Late Republican Era or Augustan Age which testified to the important historical moment when Milan began to construct important public buildings, both sacred and secular.

Since then, the Roman Colonne di San Lorenzo, the fourth-century

basilicas at the city gates, the gothic Duomo di Milano Cathedral and the eighteenth-century Royal Palace were constructed.

Sempione Park and the Montanelli Gardens bring colour and life to the northern city, with the former containing a Napoleonic Arena, the Milan City Aquarium, a steel lattice panoramic tower, an art exhibition centre, a Japanese garden and a public library, leading up to the Arco della Pace.

The latter, created in the 18th century, hosts the Natural History Museum of Milan and the Civic Planetarium Ulrico Hoepli (Planetarium of Milan).

As the industrial centre of Italy and one of Europe's most dynamic cities in the 1950s and 60s, Milan rapidly became a global capital for

design and architecture. There was such a revolutionary change that Milan's fashion exports accounted for US\$726m in 1952, and by 1955 that number grew to US\$72.5bn.

Buildings such as The Pirelli Tower and the Torre Velasca sprung up, and artists Bruno Munari, Lucio Fontana, Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni were drawn to the city.

The most famous Italian fashion brands followed and headquarters opened for Valentino, Gucci, Versace, Prada, Armani and Dolce & Gabbana. Now, the city hosts the Milan Fashion Week twice a year, featuring around the main upscale fashion district, quadrilatero della moda, (Via Monte Napoleone, Via della Spiga, Via Sant'Andrea, Via Manzoni and Corso Venezia), in addition to Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, one of the world's oldest shopping malls.

Today, Milan has the third largest economy by GDP behind London and Paris and continues to flourish as the global capital of fashion and design, burgeoning with strategic government investment into culture and transportation.

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