



The historical city of Monza is home to a host of unique attractions and is an ideal base to explore the Brianza area. It is both industrial and residential and its population is approximately 121,000. Evidence of its origins dates back to Celtic days. However its historic importance evolved during Longobard times when Queen Teodolinda converted the population to Catholicism.

The main monument of the town is the splendid **Cathedral**, dedicated to **St. John the Baptist**, patron saint of Monza. This beautiful example of Gothic church, which stands in the homonymous square, was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century on the site of the previous baptistery ordered by Queen Teodolinda at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The facade of the church, made in green and white marble, was extended and finished by Matteo da Campione (+1396). On the left side of the Basilica is the Bell Tower, 80 metres high, which was erected in 1606 by the architect Ercolo Turati. The interior of the Cathedral was transformed into a pure Baroque style during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The magnificent rose glass window, made by the Bertini brothers in 1890, can be fully admired against the light. In the central nave, on the left side, the Chancel by Matteo da Campione is one of the oldest part of the church. The altar, superb piece of jewellery decorated by Borghino del Pozzo in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, bears the scenes of the life of St. John the Baptist on a silver gilt plate, which is one metre high and over two metres wide. On the left side of the presbytery is the so-called Chapel of Queen Teodolinda, frescoed by the Zavattari, distinguished artists belonging to the pictorial current called flowery or international Gothic style (1444). The "Golden Legend" of Teodolinda is represented in a sequence of scenes of rare taste, from her arrival to Italy as the wife of Autari, king of the Longobards, followed by the welcome she received in Verona, then the death and the funerals of Autari and finally her wedding with Agilulfo, new king of the Longobards. However the masterpiece of the frescoes is that representing the miracles - Teodolinda's vision and the preparation for building the Cathedral, then consecrated in 595 AD. The superb procession of the Emperor

Constant II, after his coming to Italy to wage war upon the Longobards, closes the sequence.

The Iron Crown (Corona Ferrea) is kept in the same Chapel. An ancient tradition tells that one of the spikes of Christ's Cross, found by St. Helena and given to his son, the Emperor Constantine, was inserted into the Crown. For centuries the Iron Crown was used to crown kings of Italy illustrious people such as Charlemagne, Otto I, Berengario I, Conrad II, Conrad III, Frederick Redbeard, Henry IV, Charles IV, Charles V, Napoleon and Ferdinand of Hapsburg. The historic and artistic value are both very great. It is made of six golden segments joined together and decorated with big precious stones set in the form of crosses and flowers on a big iron ring - the Holy Spike of Christ's Cross.

From the fine cloister in Baroque style on the left of the church, you can enter the **Museum and Treasure of the Cathedral** where the famous Treasure is kept. The Museum, recently renovated, has a rich collection of barbarian antiquities dating back to the period between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century, noteworthy artefacts of later periods and modern works of art. Particularly worth considering are the Dipych of Stilicone (5<sup>th</sup> century) which consists of two ivory plaques and the Evangeliarium of Teodolinda, in gold with several cameos. The most popular and peculiar pieces of the whole treasure are the so-called "Golden Her" with its seven chicks, the Cross of Agilulfo (6<sup>th</sup> century) and the reliquary of the "Tooth of St. John" (8<sup>th</sup> century). Also worth seeing are the ancient early Christian dress-materials, the marvellous collection of Lombard silverware (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries), the nine tapestries of the 16<sup>th</sup> century showing episodes of the life of St. John the Baptist and the millefleurs tapestries. The visit of the museum ends with the Baroque paintings and jewellery, examples of decorative cycles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, neo-classical evidences and contemporary works like The Crucifixion by the contemporary artist Lucio Fontana.

As you enter the city centre you will see the **Arengario**, the ancient Town Hall built in 1293. On the southern side you can see a massive balcony (called the "parlera") used for the speeches to the people. Back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century dates the church of **Santa Maria in Strada**. Its rich

facade, in Gothic-Lombard style, is made in red baked clay. On the front, particularly worth seeing is the magnificent Gothic statue, of French school, of the Virgin Mary and the Child.

The **Royal Villa** (Villa Reale), one of the most important neo-classical buildings in Italy, was commissioned by the archduke of Austria, Ferdinand. The Villa was built between 1777 and 1780 on the project of the architect F. Piermarini, the same who designed the Teatro alla Scala of Milan. The elegant avenue, which starts from the main entrance of the Villa, derives its name from Cesare Battisti. It was designed by the Viceroy of Napoleon, Eugenie de Beauharnais, who used the Villa as his favourite summer residence. The ground floor apartments which enclose the Main Hall, the rooms of Umberto I, king of Italy, and of his wife, Margherita di Savoia, the enchanting chapel and the small theatre are worthy of mention. All around the Villa you can admire the well kept lawns and the small pond populated by swans and wildfowl. Attractive trees and shrubs abound and visitors can relax here in picturesque surroundings. The conservatory is joined to the Villa by the Rotonda, a round shaped room decorated in 1789 by Andrea Appiani with delightful stuccoes and frescos representing the fable of Eros and Psyche. Particularly worth visiting is the conservatory in spring and early summer to admire the splendid rose garden. Created in 1806 by Eugenie de Beauharnais, the Park covers an area of 800 ha, most of which consisting of woods and meadows. Only a small part is under cultivation. The park is a delightful place to explore. Paths and trails through the woods and by the river Lambro offer glimpses of the many animals and birds which make the park their home. Green meadows and shady trees provide a wonderful picnicking area in summer, but it is also open to the public for riding and walking at any time of the year.

The famous racing track, built in 1922 on the initiative of the "Automobile Club of Milan", is situated in the northern area of the park and it is open all year round. The motorcar and motorcycle races held here are world famous. Among these worth mentioning are the Italian F1 Grand Prix, the Italian Motorbike Championship and the World Superbike Championship.

