

## **Lesson Five: Zoom in on Bologna**

### **All about Bologna**

Bologna is the Capital City (Capoluogo) of the Emilia Romagna Region in Northern Italy. It is not one of Italy's biggest cities, but it is very famous and has a very important story to tell. Bologna is one of the richest cities in Italy, not only for its economy but also for the architecture and cultures. Bologna is a beautiful city because it is a Portico city. This means that there are many covered walkways to keep you dry on wet days! Bologna is at the foothills of the Apennines and you can even see the Alps on a clear day. It has a busy city centre, but in only fifteen minutes you can be in the hills enjoying a walk or even snowball fight in the winter months!

#### **Food**

When you think of the word Bologna, you might have heard the word before - does Spaghetti Bolognese sound familiar? Have you ever tried it? There are many foods which come from Bologna, for example Tortellini, Mortadella Ham, Lasagna, and of course, Spaghetti Bolognese. But, if you visit Bologna you will be very surprised to see that Spaghetti Bolognese looks and tastes very different. Italian cooks hardly ever cook meat with spaghetti and therefore the dish is made with Tagliatelle – a thicker type of pasta. There is only a very small amount of tomato, and the dish is called Ragu!

#### **Discovering Bologna**

So who discovered Bologna? Bologna was an Etruscan city and this civilisation called the city Felsina. The Romans were quick to take Bologna from the Etruscans and even though the Etruscans fought hard Bologna became a Roman city. There were many other groups who conquered Bologna and during the Middle Ages, Bologna became an important city in Italy for trade and education. Bologna had many canals which made trading with other cities easier for medieval people. You can still see the canals today, but they are underground. There are many medieval buildings in the centre of Bologna today and there are many Roman and Etruscan artefacts in the Archaeological Museum.

#### **Culture**

There are many museums in Bologna, such as 'the International Museum and Library' of Music of Bologna. Here you can find very old manuscripts and instruments. Bologna has always been the home of famous musicians and has even been recognised as a UNESCO Heritage Site for music.

So, has this made you want to visit the city? Many people come every year to visit this city. It is very easy to reach Bologna by road and train. The tourists come to see

the famous churches, museums, university streets and of course, the two towers. No visit to Bologna can be complete without a very long and high climb up the Asinelli Tower built in 1105 and completed four years later. Bologna used to have over 100 towers but now only a few remain.

## **Education**

The very first universities began in Bologna, originally teaching law and religion. Bologna is known to be one of the best Italian universities today. Bologna is also the city where the very first human dissection took place: you can still see the room where it happened.

Many different types of people live in Bologna from all over the world, and the university attracts many foreign students. There are a huge number of restaurants, shops and cafes, and many interesting buildings to spot - and when that gets too tiring there are lots of gelato (ice cream) shops to try!

## **Repairing the City**

Bologna is an ancient city and parts of the city are in need of repair. The Comune of Bologna has to think carefully about which buildings and roads needs to be repaired first and how to spend their money. The Comune want to maintain the historical feel of the city but have to be careful to make sure it is a safe place to visit and live in.

## **Earthquakes**

One thing that makes the city a dangerous place to live is the threat of earthquakes. Bologna sits above a fault line and can be prone to earthquakes. The last major earthquake was on May 29 2012 near Modena and it shook Bologna, closing some buildings for a couple of months until safety could be assured. The Comune of Bologna have to think very carefully about how to make sure the city is a safe place to live in.

To conclude this fact sheet, there is a little saying about Bologna. It reads,

*“Bologna la Bella, Bologna la Grassa!”*

In English this translates to,

*“Bologna the Beautiful, Bologna the Fat!”*

Everything in Bologna is beautiful including the food, so expect to leave Bologna with a very happy and full tummy!