



## PORTA PRETORIA\*

\* structure partially disappeared

You can find this point of interest in Como – Path 7 - Stage 1

### INFORMATION

**Location:** the remains of the Porta Pretoria are preserved in the basement of a building belonging to the “Teresa Ciceri” high school, which can be accessed from the door at number 8 of Largo Miglio in Como

**Architectural barriers:** presence of a descending flight of stairs, which can be avoided with an elevator

**Services:** parking in the dedicated area along Viale Varese; car park in via Auguadri (800 parking spaces); urban and extra-urban bus stops available in the area outside the walled city; ATMs in via Giulini, via Milano-corner of Piazza Vittoria; public toilets in the Viale Spallino underpass; pharmacy in via Cesare Cantù; Como Municipal Library in Piazzetta Venosto Lucati

**Leisure and Catering:** bars, cafes and shops of various kinds in the area; small public garden between Viale Spallino and via Milano

**Other information:** the remains of the Porta Praetoria are currently (2024) not open to visits, due to renovation works. For information: Museo Archeologico “Paolo Giovio”, Piazza Medaglie d’Oro 1, Como; Tel. 031.252550; [musei.civici@comune.como.it](mailto:musei.civici@comune.como.it)

### DESCRIPTION

At the centre of the southern stretch of the city walls stood the monumental *Porta Praetoria* (Praetorian Gate), the main entrance gate to the city, open on one side on the road that led towards Milan and then on towards Rome, on the other on the main north - south axis of the city, the *Cardo Maximus*.

The discovery of this structure occurred by chance in 1914, during the construction of the school building in Largo Miglio 8, now occupied by some classes of the “Teresa Ciceri” high school, which caused the partial destruction of the eastern tower of the door before works halted to allow for regular archaeological excavation.

Porta Pretoria consisted of an imposing driveway entrance with two openings surmounted by arches. On the sides stood two octagonal towers, originally between 8 and 10m high. The base of the western tower was crossed by a walkway closed by two doors. To close the two driveways there were two metal grates which, sliding along special tracks, were lowered at the end of the day to avoid dangers from outside.

Already towards the end of the 1st century AD, the expansion and strengthening of the Roman Empire made these defence systems superfluous, thus allowing for a rich decorative application made with slabs of marble applied to the masonry with special metal clamps, signs of which are still clearly visible on the stones flanking the openings.

Only towards the end of the Empire, political instability required reinforcing the city defences again and closing the eastern driveway, largely filled with materials from the ancient decorative application that had been previously dismantled. At this point there remained a single driveway, the western one, whose walking surface had in the meantime risen by about a metre due to the debris brought down by river floods, as can be seen from the level of the last threshold used - a granite slab which still bears the mark left by the passage of the wagons.

From the Porta Pretoria, as mentioned, the central road of the city, the *Cardo Maximus*, started, running through the urban fabric in a straight line from south to north and reaching the lake shore near the ancient amphitheatre, located on a peninsula overlooking the lake. The straight course of the street was compromised by subsequent building projects that affected the city, especially after its complete destruction by the Milanese, after the ten-year war that took place between 1118 and 1128. At the end of this war even the ancient Roman walls were completely razed to the ground and the new reconstruction, carried out thirty years later, did not always consider the ancient urban layout, so much so that the Porta Pretoria itself is currently off-axis compared to the current entrance to Como, marked by the medieval Porta Torre.