



ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM "PAOLO GIOVIO"

You can find this point of interest in Como – Path 7 - Stage 2

INFORMATION

Location: the “Paolo Giovio” Archaeological Museum is in Piazza Medaglie d'Oro 1 in Como

Pavement: Piazza Medaglie d'Oro is paved with porphyry tiles, with stone paving bands (characteristic pavement of many streets of the walled city)

Access: Palazzo Giovio (where the museum itinerary begins) can be accessed from the main entrance at number 1; Palazzo Olginati, on the other hand, has its entrance on the adjacent side of the square, beyond Via Balestra

Architectural barriers: at the entrance of Palazzo Giovio there is a sort of semicircular stone slide, which connects the street level to the atrium level. However, care must be taken with the low opening of the solid wood entrance door. To access the ticket office there is a step. The museum itinerary runs over several floors, but there is an elevator

Services: Car park in Viale Lecco / Via Dante (515 parking spaces); urban and suburban bus stops available outside the walled city; ATMs in Via Giovio and Piazza Duomo; Post office in Via Vittorio Emanuele; Pharmacy in Via Vittorio Emanuele; Municipality of Como in via Vittorio Emanuele

Leisure and Catering: bars, restaurants and shops of various kinds in Viale Lecco, Via Vittorio Emanuele; a small garden with playground in Via Vittorio Emanuele

Other information: The Museum is currently (2024) closed for structural adjustment works. For information on its reopening, you can consult the website of the Municipality of Como <https://www.comune.como.it/it/servizi/cultura/musei-civici/museo-archeologico/>

DESCRIPTION

The Archaeological Museum of Como takes its name from Paolo Giovio born from a noble family from Como, doctor, humanist, historian and writer, Paolo Giovio was the creator of the very concept of a Museum, intended as a collection and exhibition of works of art. In fact, it was in Como, in his villa located by the lake in a spot dear to Pliny the Younger, that he collected (1537-1543) a famous series of portraits of illustrious people, thus creating the first museum in the world in the modern sense. In fact, the term Museum has more ancient origins, conceived in the third century BC in Alexandria in Egypt as a "place of the Muses", that is, as a place designed to take care of the arts and culture, without necessarily referring to the presence of an exhibition collection.

The archaeological collections of the Museum are divided between the complex of Palazzo Giovio and Palazzo Lucini, whose hanging garden rests on a stretch of the Roman walls of Como, and the nearby Palazzo Olginati (a building that in another part houses the "Giuseppe Garibaldi" Historical-Risorgimento Museum), connected to each other by two passages suspended on Via Balestra.

On the first floor of Palazzo Olginati, four exhibition rooms are dedicated to Roman finds from private collections. One of these rooms is dedicated to writing and to *Studia humanitatis*, or classical studies. In this room there are some works from the library of the Giovio Counts, the oldest of which is an edition of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* dated 1507.

On the ground floor, overlooking the courtyard of Palazzo Olginati, there are various epigraphic, architectural and statuary finds attributable to Roman Como, some of which are also linked to the times of the Plinys, and also further materials recovered from residential and domestic contexts and from burials, relating to the same period.

From a late ancient tower located on the corner of Viale Varese and Via Cinque Giornate come several blocks of marble reused in the construction of the tower itself. They consist of four cube-shaped column bases, decorated mainly with refined mythological scenes in bas-relief and presumably intended for a small portico leading to a building. Together with these "cubes", the base of a statue with an epigraph dedicated to Caius Pliny Caecilius the Second, or Pliny the Younger, was also found, a statue perhaps connected to the Library of which Pliny was the founder - the first library in Como! It is probable that this library stood near the tower that was built in later times, since - in the search for salvaged materials - it was a common practice to dismantle neighbouring buildings

The Museum exhibits a copy of the famous epigraph, divided into six plates, which recalls the *cursus honorum*, i.e. the

career of Pliny the Younger and the actions he carried out for the benefit of the city. The original epigraph, also known as the "Testament of Pliny" was destroyed and only one of the original six slabs was saved, since it was stolen by the Milanese when, in 1128, they destroyed the city of Como. It is currently located in the basilica of Saint Ambrose (Ambrogio), walled up in the atrium of Archbishop Ansperto.

In the exhibition hall there are also several finds from the Como area associated with the Roman era, such as objects relating to the different aspects of daily life and burial items, in which personal ornaments are often on display.