

5 : Piazza Tre Martiri and its buildings



Here we are in Piazza Tre Martiri. The square in part respects the ancient Roman forum of Ariminum, and is situated at the intersection between the two main streets, the cardus maximus – that connected the hills to the sea – and the decumanus maximus – the present day Corso d'Augusto that links Augustus Arch to Tiberius Bridge.

The ancient forum, that stretched as far as Via San Michelino in Foro, was paved with large, rectangular slabs, sections of which are currently visible in the enclosures.

The square, now dedicated to three partisans from Rimini killed here during the Second World War, was previously named after Julius Caesar. Local tradition, in fact, states that in 49 BC he made a celebrated speech to his legions after the historic crossing of the Rubicon, the river that at that time marked the boundary of the State of Rome. In actual fact, Caesar, in *De Bello Civili*, affirms that he spoke to his soldiers in Ravenna, before crossing the Rubicon. However, the story that has been handed down from ancient times states that it was really in the forum in Rimini that this event took place and a bronze statue of Caesar, a copy of a Roman original, was placed here in his honour.

Before and during the Middle Ages the Churches of San Michele in Foro, Sant' Innocenza and San Giorgio were built on the eastern side of the square but have all disappeared.

In the Middle Ages, the Civic square took over from the dwindling importance of the old square, which became a market place. The products of the farms nearby reached the square through Via dei Magnani (now Via Garibaldi), where there was once an arch among the outer ring of houses. The square also became the scene of jousting, tournaments and public ceremonies linked to the Malatesta family. Every year saw the conclusion of the San Giuliano tournament, which started in the local village of the same name beyond Tiberius Bridge, and which enjoyed great popular participation.

The arcades on the western side of the square are adorned with Gothic and Renaissance capitals.

Stand in the centre of the square and you will get a good idea of the whole area. If you face the sea, on your right you will see the tiny temple dedicated to St Anthony of Padua. It was built in the early 1500's in remembrance of a 13th century miracle which claims that a mule worshipped a consecrated Host. It was rebuilt in the 17th century, but various restoration work has altered the original form. Behind this chapel, the Minims of St Francis of Paola founded a religious centre in the early 1600s. It was rebuilt in 1729 but in 1963 became the seat of the modern Paolotti Church.

The block of buildings with the clock-tower was built in 1547, thus delineating the square and giving it its present form and dimensions. The ancient butchers' shops that used to be there, were substituted by buildings with arcades. The clock-tower was redesigned by Francesco Buonamici in 1759. Then, after the earthquake of 1875, the upper part was demolished. Besides the clock, the tower boasts a dial with a calendar, zodiac movements and phases of the moon, which were included in 1750.

The square has always accommodated markets and, therefore, been a meeting place for the residents. Its present look was designed and carried out in 2000, and aims at appraising the ancient system and the signs of the past.

Recent history links the past to the tragic events of the war. The memory is kept alive by the Monument to the Fallen and by the very name of the square itself, dedicated to the three partisan martyrs hanged on the 16th August 1944. The exact place is marked by a marble insert in the paving near the little temple.

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Now leave the square and take Via IV Novembre in the direction of the station. Before reaching the Tempio Malatestiano, you will be able to see the outer remains of the apse of San Michelino in Foro, that you can reach through a gallery that opens up on your left. Back on Via IV Novembre, you will shortly see the Tempio Malatestiano on your right.

Once in front of the Temple, listen to file number six.