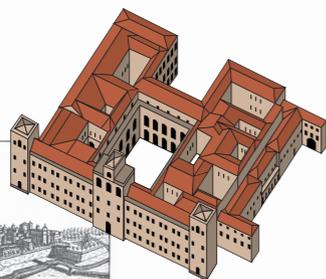


## Historical and architectural information



### MODENA, CAPITAL OF THE ESTE DUKEDOM

After devolution of Ferrara to the papacy, in 1598 Modena became the **capital of the Este Dukedom** and Duke Cesare d'Este set up residence in the medieval castle that was originally built for military defence, but was no longer suitable for court requirements.

1598

### FRANCESCO I DUKE OF MODENA FROM 1629 TO 1658

1634

So Duke Francesco I d'Este had a new palace built, and construction started in 1634 to plans by **Bartolomeo Avanzini** and contributions from famous architects like Girolamo Rainaldi, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Francesco Borromini and Pietro da Cortona. The Palazzo Ducale is the biggest monumental building in Modena, legacy of the history of the Este family and a sumptuous example of Baroque architecture.



The **façade** has three rows of windows in pairs, crowned by balustrades with statues representing classic divinities. With its three-arch loggia and clock dating back to 1757, the **central tower** stands out of the façade. Either side of the **main entrance** are the statues of Hercules and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, made between 1565 and 1568 by Prospero Sogari Spani known as "Il Clemente".

1757

### CONSTRUCTION OF CLOCK



### FRANCESCO V THE LAST DUKE OF MODENA

1859

After the **Entrance Hall**, visitors come to the rectangular **Cortile d'Onore** (Courtyard of Honour), surrounded by a colonnade. This leads to the **Scalone d'Onore** (Staircase of Honour), decorated with Roman statues and up to the **Loggia** and the many rooms where the Este family lived, with spectacular décor, such as the **Salone d'Onore** (Hall of Honour) and the **Salottino d'Oro** (Golden Parlour). Palazzo Ducale is one of the most prestigious European palaces and it was home to the Este Court through to the last duke, **Francesco V Archduke of Habsburg-Este** (1859).

After the Este family was exiled and the former dukedom of Modena was annexed to Piedmont, the palace became the property of the Royal House of Savoy. On his first visit to Modena on 4 May 1860, King Victor Emmanuel II conferred it to the Military Academy of Infantry, opened by General Fanti. After the two terrible World Wars, when the palace suffered dreadful damage and looting, on 8 December 1947, President of the Republic Enrico De Nicola returned Palazzo Ducale to the **Military Academy**, which is today headquartered here.

## INFORMATION

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[www.visitmodena.it](http://www.visitmodena.it) [info@visitmodena.it](mailto:info@visitmodena.it)

## WHAT YOU CAN VISIT

Inside **Palazzo Ducale** you can visit: the main entrance (Piazza Roma), the Reception Hall, the Courtyard of Honour, the Staircase of Honour, the Loggia, the Museum Hall of the Military Academy, the State Apartments, the Officers' Club Staircase, and the Courtyard of the Military Academy of Turin.

Inside the **Museum Hall of the Military Academy**, you can visit: the Gallery of Memory (Trabant Room), Academy Room (Noble Guards' Room), Commanders' Room (Audience Room), Illustrious Cadets Room (Coffee Chamber), Course Room (Golden Chamber), Temple of Glory (Oval Room with Columns).

Inside **State Apartments**, you can visit: the Gallery of Bronzes, Colleoni Room, Stringa Room, Hall of Honour (only from outside), Green Chamber, Throne Room, Golden Parlour (only from outside), Red Chamber, Bathing Chamber.

## OPENING DAYS AND TIMES

The Ducal Palace of Modena houses the Military Academy and is therefore not normally open to the public for independent visits. Access is only possible through guided tours by reservation, available on Saturdays and Sundays. Reservations are accepted until all available spots are filled (25 per tour). It is recommended to book in advance.

## PRICE

Full price € 10,00; reduced price (up to 12 years old) € 8,00; free for children up to 5 years old.

## RESERVATIONS

You can book online at this link: <https://www.visitmodena.it/en/discover-modena/art-and-culture/historic-buildings-and-castles/ducal-palace-military-academy> by paying with a credit card, or by sending an email to [info@visitmodena.it](mailto:info@visitmodena.it) indicating the desired time slot and the names of the participants.

The tour of the Ducal Palace is not accessible for wheelchair users, as the historic building contains some architectural barriers.



By the City Promotion and Tourism Services

2025



Comune di Modena



territori Bologna Modena

VISIT EMILIA ROMAGNA

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Visitor's guide

# MODENA PALAZZO DUCALE





From left to right:  
The Staircase of Honour, the Museum Hall of the Military Academy, the fresco of Franceschini in the Hall of Honour and the Golden Parlour.



### Military Academy

The Military Academy is a military educational institute with a university format that trains future officers in the Italian Army and Carabinieri Corps. It was originally the **Savoy Military Academy**, the first military academy in the world, founded in 1678 by Marie Jeanne Baptiste of Savoy-Nemours (wife of Charles Emmanuel). Initially attended by Europe's aristocratic youth, in 1756 the academy started offering courses specifically for officers and Victor Emmanuel I of Savoy then turned it into a **Royal Academy**, opening its doors to young citizens of any social class. There had been a **Military Academy** in Modena since 1757, set up by Duke Francesco III d'Este. The Cispadane Republic brought the opening in Palazzo Ducale of the **Military Academy of Engineering and Artillery** in 1797, which was praised by Napoleon. With the return of the Dukes of Este after the Congress of Vienna (1815), Francesco IV of Habsburg-Este founded the **Estense Military Academy for Nobility**, housed in the San Pietro Barracks and open only to those of noble rank. With the demise of the Este Dukedom (1859), General Manfredo Fanti opened the

**Military Academy of Infantry**, linked to the Royal Military Academy in Turin. In 1923, the academy in Modena was promoted to the ranks of **Military Academy of Infantry and Cavalry**. After 8 September 1943, the academies in Turin and Modena were closed. In 1944, the Royal Academies Special Command was set up, changing its name to **Royal Military Academy** in 1945 and offering the first Combatants Extraordinary Course, which trained officers for permanent service in all the army bodies and corps. In 1946, with the birth of the Republic of Italy, the academy was renamed **Military Academy**, and in 1947 it returned to its location in Palazzo Ducale in Modena. In 1950, Enrico De Nicola, the first president of the newly formed republic, conferred the academy its official coat of arms, bearing the motto "*Una acies*" (a single rank of troops).

### Museum Hall of the Military Academy

It is housed in the **Private Apartments** in Palazzo Ducale and you can visit **6 rooms**. The **Gallery of Memory** was the **Guard Post of the Royal Trabant**, a corps founded in 1824 made up of paid volunteers who had distinguished themselves in defending ducal properties. A lapidary exhibition illustrating the contribution of the Military Academy to the history of Italy. The **Academy Room** was the **Noble Guards' Room**, the antechamber to the adjacent Private Audience Room. The coffered wooden ceiling with silvered and gilded stucco decoration is in seventeenth-century Baroque style. On the walls hang the flags of the Duchy of Savoy, the Cispadane Republic, the Duchy of Modena, the Kingdom of Italy and the Republic of Italy and portraits of famous people at the Military Academies. The **Commanders' Room** was the duke's **Private Audience Room**. Dating back to the Baroque period, it has a wooden coffered ceiling, with stucco work and decorations in pure gold. The walls are hung with portraits of the military academy commanders since 1859 to date. Gifts from foreign military academy delegations are displayed in the glass cabinets. The **Illustrious Cadets' Room** was the **Coffee Chamber**. It has a wonderful Baroque ceiling in carved wood with

oval coffers and houses a selection of portraits, documents, and memorabilia that belonged to illustrious military academy cadets, such as Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour. The **Course Room** was called the **Golden Chamber** due to the richness of its mirrored ceiling and embossed hides from the Baroque era. It features mementos from the various military academy courses, including the "Stecca" (the stick used for polishing uniform jacket buttons), given by final-year cadets to their first-year successors, at the end of the Mak π 100 ceremony, celebrating the 100 days to go before they became fully fledged officers. The **Temple of Glory** was the **Oval Room with Columns**, so called because of the architectural features used to conceal the joins between the old castle and the new building. This oval room was built between 1812 and 1814 and was used as a dining room by the dukes. Today it is a memorial dedicated to all those who fought and died for Italy in any war.



### State Apartments

The **Reception Apartments** were used for parties and banquets and as accommodation for prestigious guests. Some of the rooms are open to visitors. The **Gallery of Bronzes** houses bronze sculptures portraying the various corps in the Italian Army (Carabiniere, Dragons, Infantry, Sappers, Artillery, Bersagliere, Grenadiers, Alpine Troops). The **Colleoni Room** has a large walnut table used for the dukes' luncheons, a secret hiding place where a servant would hide to spy on conversations later reported to the duke and the walls are hung with paintings of the Princes of Este. The **Stringa Room**, an antechamber where gentlemen of the court would stand to greet esteemed guests. The ceiling was painted by F.Stringa with "*The wedding of Cupid and Psyche*" and the walls are decorated with stucco work and portraits of the Princes of Este. The **Hall of Honour** is the biggest room in the building, used for balls and receptions. The ceiling was frescoed in 1695 by M.A. Franceschini with "*Jupiter crowning Bradamante in Olympus*", which celebrates the link between the House of Este and the House of Bavaria thanks to the marriage of Rinaldo I and

Charlotte Felicitas of Brunswick. The **Green Chamber**, with paintings of the Princes of Este, was an antechamber where ambassadors and illustrious guests waited before being received in the Throne Room. The **Throne Room** was the primary symbolic place of ducal power, and only selected guests and visitors were received here. Carved, gilded wooden mirrors hang on its walls. The **Golden Parlour** was the duke's office, a delightful room dating back to the eighteenth century with (removable) wooden panelling covered in pure gold and relief decorations depicting mythological scenes and chinoiserie. Originally a bedroom, the **Red Chamber** is now the reading room for the Officers' Club. The **Bathing Chamber**, also known as the "Duchess' bathroom" is an octagonal room with frescoed ceiling.

