



## Padua, Italy

### The City of the Three “Withouts”

Most cities promote WHAT there is to see, but not Padua! Located just 30-minutes to the east of Venice, Padua—Padova in Italian—is known for being the city of the three “withouts”—*la città dei tre senza*. What is it that this beautiful historical city is without?



The first without is a **field without grass—*un prato sense erba***. Simply called il Prato—never piazza—by the locals, it is one of the largest elliptical squares in Europe. Until the end of the 1700s, it was a marshy area with no grass. Now at least there is grass, but the name has stuck. At its center is a small island surrounded by a moat

bordered with statues. It's a beautiful place to take a stroll, read a book, or just people watch.

The second without is **the**

**saint with no name—*il***

***santo senza nome***. This refers to St. Anthony's Basilica. In Padua, St. Anthony is considered the saint and therefore does not need to be named. No one from Padua would say "Let's go to visit St. Anthony's Basilica." Instead, they would say, "Let's go to *il santo*." The



Basilica, dedicated to St. Anthony, was built over many centuries and is very eclectic in style: Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque. St. Anthony's tomb and his relics, in particular his tongue, can be viewed inside. Millions of the faithful pilgrimage to the Basilica each year.



And speaking of churches, nearby *il santo* is the Scrovegni Chapel with its spectacular frescos by Giotto. Completed in 1305, these frescos are considered one of the most important masterpieces of Western art.

The third without is **a café without doors—*un caffè senza porte***. This is the Café Pedrocchi which until 1916 never closed, day or night, so it had no doors. In that era, one could sit down inside to read a book or newspaper without being obliged to order something. Women were offered flowers, and if it started raining, umbrellas were lent to the clients. Today, it closes at night and has transparent glass doors.



This is no ordinary café or coffee bar. Here, you can browse in the green



room without purchasing anything, have lunch or dinner in the white room, enjoy a coffee in the red room, or visit the museum upstairs. The specialty coffee, called **Caffè Pedrocchi** of course, is a coffee in a medium-size cup with mint-flavored cream and a sprinkle of cocoa powder. The precise recipe is a secret. It is served with no spoon because they say you must not

stir. Cream on the end of your nose, perhaps?

As if three withouts wasn't enough for one city, Padua actually has several more lesser-known withouts—seven more to be exact! Here is just one of them: Within the Palazzo della Ragione, there's a column missing from the portico. This architectural oddity is called **the Capital without a Column—Il Capitello senza Colonna**. Local legend says the missing column was stolen by someone from the rival city of Vicenza. This myth would serve as an excuse for the people of Padua to wage war on the other city. But in reality, it's more likely that the column was removed for practical purposes, as its absence has created a wider passageway for vendors to move their goods to and from the marketplace.



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