

The Museum is hosted in the imposing neoclassical architecture of the XVIII century Hospital of the Infirm (1771/1784), realized by Antonio Foscini and Gaetano Genta. It is one of the most important and monumental buildings of the historical city center of Comacchio.

Archaeological finds coming from the territory, ranging from the proto-history period to the Middle Ages, are exhibited. Through the exhibition of almost two-thousand finds, and thanks to reconstructions and guide apparatuses, the museum narrates the history of the ancient Po delta that, with its numerous navigable canals and land ways, over the centuries was an important trade junction that connected the civilizations of the Mediterranean world with continental Europe. Noteworthy are the sections dedicated to the Etruscan city Spina, with objects coming from the residential area, the rich funerary artifacts of the tombs, the Roman world, and Comacchio in the High Middle Ages as trade center and Bishop's seat. The precious cargo of the Roman ship of Comacchio was also transferred to the Museum.

The museum is divided into theme and chronological sections.

The section dedicated to the **Transformations of the Territory** covers the environment changes of the delta over the millenia, from the formation of the Po plain up to today, through alternating cycles of glaciation and rising sea level, very different environments such as tundras, forests, lagoons, up to human settlements.

The section of the final years of the Bronze Age and early Iron Age (**Before Spina**) exhibits the most ancient archaeological finds of the area that evidence contemporary human settlements in Frattesina, well-known trade center between the Mediterranean and continental Europe in that period, which covered that role before Adria and Spina. The Greek myth of the fall of Phaeton in the ancient Eridanus and the search for amber dates back to this period.

The Archaic and Classic Age (**Spina**) section is focused on the story of the Etruscan city of Spina, Etruscan port and outpost for trade towards the Eastern Mediterranean. Spina's relations with Athens and the Greek civilization, with Etruscan, Veneto, and Celtic people, and its "light" lagoon city structure on the river are illustrated in it.

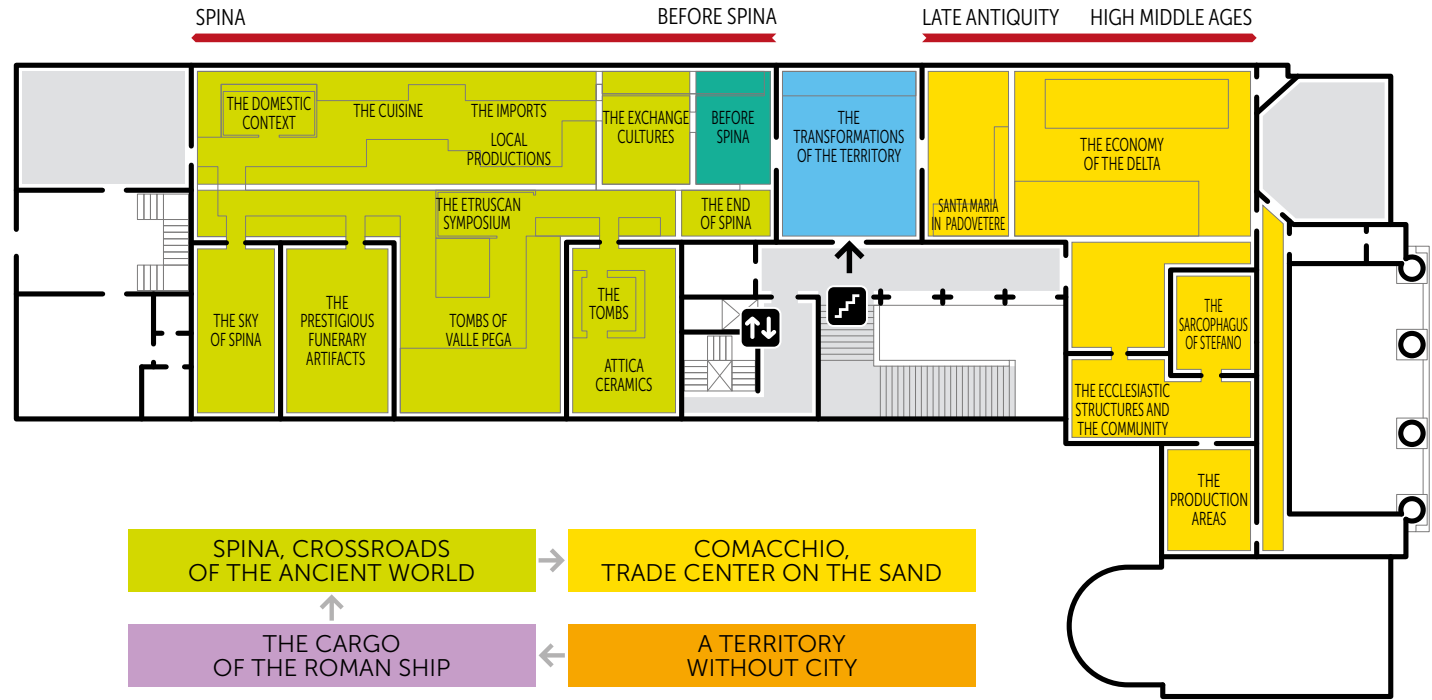
The **Roman Age** section presents a delta area included in the orbit of Ravenna, seat of the imperial Adriatic fleet. A land of agricultural and industrial productions, fish farming, and salt production, and fundamental connection center, by water and land ways, between Rome and northern Italy, the Adriatic, and Balkan regions.

The delta evidences its trade vocation through the exceptional finding, in 1981 in Comacchio (Valle Ponti), of a **Roman ship** with its entire cargo, dating back to the period of Augustus and the globalized world of Rome.

The **High Middle Ages Period** section narrates how, in a period in which the Roman cities declined and in some cases disappeared, a series of settlements along the northern Adriatic coast emerged almost out of nowhere in areas protected by rivers and lagoons (such as Comacchio and Venice), in an area contended by Goths, Byzantines, and Longobards. Therefore, Comacchio emerged in times in which the Mediterranean trade ways, those along the Po River, were still active and efficient.

The narration ends when, after the XII century, the main course of the Po river moves northwards and Comacchio ceases its trade function, becoming a center fundamentally dedicated to the economy of the valley and fish.

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